

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday 15 October 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.

Bills

CHILDREN (EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW APPLICATION) AMENDMENT BILL 2025

First Reading

Bill received from the Legislative Assembly, read a first time and ordered to be published on motion by the Hon. Penny Sharpe, on behalf of the Hon. Rose Jackson.

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

Statement of public interest tabled.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: 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. PENNY SHARPE: I move:

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

Motion agreed to.

Visitors

VISITORS

The PRESIDENT: I welcome to the gallery two very special guests. They are Tomasz Cieślak from the University of Lodz and Monika Lama, President of the Polish Australian Chamber of Commerce.

Motions

TAFE NSW FASHION DESIGN SCHOOL

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (10:03): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that on 12 May 2025 TAFE NSW Fashion Design School presented "Innovators – the Next Garde", which provided a platform for collections from student designers:
 - (a) Eidan Ceilidh;
 - (b) Emily Hon;
 - (c) Daisy-Rose Cooper; and
 - (d) Shiva Yousefpour.
- (2) That this House acknowledges the role TAFE NSW plays in nurturing and upskilling the next generation of designers.
- (3) That this House congratulates the designers and TAFE NSW for an impressive show which showcased collections that embraced a circular approach to fashion design.
- (4) That this House commends the Government for rebuilding TAFE NSW to support students to achieve their ambitions.

Motion agreed to.

ORRY-KELLY

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (10:04): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) the Government has honoured Orry-Kelly with a blue plaque, celebrating the enduring legacy of the Kiama-born "designer of the stars", and one of Australia's most prolific Oscar winners;
 - (b) the blue plaque was unveiled on Saturday 26 July at the Sebel in Kiama by:
 - (i) the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine, MLC;
 - (ii) Gillian Armstrong, director of the award-winning documentary on Orry-Kelly *Women He's Undressed*; and
 - (iii) Sue Eggins, president Kiama Historical Society.
 - (c) this is the second blue plaque in Kiama in less than two years, with the blue plaque for Charmian Clift unveiled in April 2024.
- (2) That this House further notes that on Saturday 26 July Kiama Icons and Artists also held the inaugural Orry-Kelly Dressing Hollywood Gala which showcased original costumes, replicas of his Academy Awards and a selection of his original paintings.
- (3) That this House recognises the historical and continuing cultural contribution to New South Wales by the creative community in Kiama.

Motion agreed to.

PROFESSOR DR JACQUELINE CRAMER

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (10:04): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on Tuesday 26 August 2025 the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine, in collaboration with Ainsley Simpson, CEO of Seamless, hosted Professor Dr Jacqueline Cramer at New South Wales Parliament House;
 - (b) Professor Dr Cramer is visiting Australia to identify opportunities for Australian and Dutch businesses to accelerate the energy and circular economy transition in the textile sector, funded by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency; and
 - (c) Professor Dr Cramer met with industry and government representatives to discuss European responses to sustainability, particularly in the fashion and textiles sector, and to engage in an open dialogue on the shared challenges and collaborative solutions to sustainability in textiles and beyond.
- (2) That this House acknowledges the significant contribution of Professor Dr Cramer to advancing sustainability through her engagement with industry and government representatives and recognises that addressing the growing issue of textile waste will require coordinated action and collaboration between government and industry stakeholders.

Motion agreed to.

JEAN ARNOT RECOGNITION AWARDS

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (10:05): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) the Jean Arnot Recognition Awards lunch was held at New South Wales Parliament House on Wednesday 13 August 2025 by the National Council of Women NSW to recognise women in their nineties;
 - (b) Dr Sarah Kaine attended the awards, representing the Hon. Jodie Harrison, MP, Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault;
 - (c) the following women were recipients of the Jean Arnot Recognition Awards:
 - (i) Doreen Abood;
 - (ii) Beverley Adcock, OAM;
 - (iii) Heather Austin;
 - (iv) Dawn Beaumont-Stevens;
 - (v) Judith Blanksby;
 - (vi) Dr Barbara Gillian Briggs, AM, PSM;
 - (vii) Nola Buck, OAM;
 - (viii) Dr Rohma Cummins;
 - (ix) Adele Deane;
 - (x) Rosemary Frost, JP;
 - (xi) Anne Maria Meredith;
 - (xii) Helena O'Neill;

- (xiii) Pamela Elizabeth Palmer;
 - (xiv) Mary Josephine Pedersen;
 - (xv) Gwen Eileen Platt;
 - (xvi) Gloria Joan Walter;
 - (xvii) Associate Professor Dr Betsy Wearing; and
 - (xviii) Reverend Sister Constantina Zapaia, OBSM.
- (2) That this House recognises the outstanding recipients for their exceptional dedication to advancing women's lives and strengthening communities across diverse backgrounds, including academia, community leadership, disability advocacy, music and faith.

Motion agreed to.

JAMBEROO RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (10:05): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) the Jamberoo Rural Fire Brigade celebrated its eighty-fifth anniversary on 17 August 2025 in Kiama where three national medals, seven long service medals and three commissioner's certificates of commendation (unit) were presented; and
 - (b) the event attendees included:
 - (i) RFS Deputy Commissioner, Ben Millington;
 - (ii) the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine, representing the Minister for Emergency Services;
 - (iii) Mrs Fiona Phillips, MP, member for Gilmore;
 - (iv) Councillor Cameron McDonald, Mayor, Kiama Municipal Council;
 - (v) Mr Dave McNeil, Manager People & Business, Greater Sydney Area Command;
 - (vi) Mr Ross Leonard, Operational Officer, Illawarra Sutherland Team;
 - (vii) Mr Andrew Sweeney, AFSM, Group Officer, Illawarra Sutherland Team;
 - (viii) Captain Hannah McInerney, Jamberoo Rural Fire Brigade; and
 - (ix) brigade officers and members.
- (2) That this House recognises the contribution of the Jamberoo Rural Fire Brigade to not only their community but also communities across New South Wales and, in particular, recognises:
- (a) national medal recipients Hannah McInerney, Craig Downes and Lindsay Delamont;
 - (b) long service medal recipients David Brennan, Peter Leeson, John Tremlett, Kay Brennan, Leanne McParland, John Friedmann and John Downes; and
 - (c) members of the Shoalhaven district and Fire and Rescue NSW Regional South 1: Jordan Casson-Jones, Leanne Deen and John Staniforth, recipients of the commissioner's certificate.

Motion agreed to.

Documents

SPECIAL MINISTERIAL INQUIRY INTO THE OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S GUARDIAN

Production of Documents: Order

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (10:05): I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within seven days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Families and Communities and Minister for Disability Inclusion relating to the Special Ministerial Inquiry into the Office of the Children's Guardian:

- (a) the *Special Ministerial Inquiry into the Office of the Children's Guardian, Part 2, Confidential Annexures to Report*;
- (b) all correspondence between the Minister and Mr Steve Kinmond regarding the special ministerial inquiry;
- (c) all submissions provided to the Minister from Mr Steve Kinmond regarding his potential removal from office for misbehaviour; and
- (d) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

Motion agreed to.

*Motions***CONSULATE GENERAL OF TONGA**

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

- (a) the Tongan consulate in Sydney celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in September 2025 and marked the occasion of 55 years of diplomatic relations between Tonga and Australia; and
- (b) a series of events were held in September 2025 to mark the occasion, including:
 - (i) a choral service of thanksgiving;
 - (ii) a reception at New South Wales Parliament on 13 September 2025 in the presence of their Majesties King Tupou VI and Queen Nanasipau'u at which the President, the Hon. Ben Franklin, and Consul General Louise Waterhouse addressed guests, which was attended by numerous members of the New South Wales Parliament;
 - (iii) a service at St Stephen's Uniting Church on 21 September 2025; and
 - (iv) receptions in Sydney on 23 and 24 September 2025, which were attended by various dignitaries and community members.

Motion agreed to.

CONSTITUTION OF TONGA

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

That this House notes that:

- (a) 2025 is the 150th anniversary of the Constitution of Tonga;
- (b) Tonga's groundbreaking 1875 constitution drew inspiration and was modelled upon the Constitution of New South Wales;
- (c) on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Consulate of Tonga in Sydney and the fifty-fifth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Tonga and Australia, it is important to understand the significant history and indelible ties between these jurisdictions;
- (d) in the 1820s Wesleyan missionaries from Australia arrived in Tonga and sparked a relationship that has evolved from its religious beginnings to a modern one of shared legal, economic, trade and cultural ties;
- (e) King Tupou I visited Sydney in 1853 and, following his experiences here, was determined to modernise Tonga, and by adopting a western-style legal system and government it would protect Tonga from colonisation; and
- (f) upon his return to Tonga, the Constitution of Tonga was developed by utilising the Constitution of New South Wales and Constitution of Hawaii as its inspiration and was proclaimed in 1875.

Motion agreed to.

TRIBUTE TO EMERITUS PROFESSOR ANTHONY ROLAND BLACKSHIELD

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:07): I move:

- (1) That this House notes with sadness that:
 - (a) on 12 September 2025 Professor Emeritus Anthony Roland "Tony" Blackshield, AO, FASSA, died;
 - (b) Professor Blackshield was one of Australia's most distinguished constitutional law scholars whose research profoundly shaped the understanding and development of Australian constitutional law;
 - (c) he was an internationally renowned expert on Australian constitutional law and jurisprudence, with long tenures at the law schools of Sydney;
 - (d) he began his academic career in the 1960s at the University of Sydney's department of jurisprudence and international law;
 - (e) he was a founding member of the Faculty of Law at the University of New South Wales in 1971;
 - (f) he joined Macquarie University as Professor of Law in 1988, which is a position he held with distinction until 1999;
 - (g) *Blackshield and Williams Australian Constitutional Law and Theory: Commentary and Materials*, co-authored with Professor George Williams, became the definitive textbook in its field, shaping the education of generations of law students and practitioners;
 - (h) Professor Blackshield served as a trustee of the Lionel Murphy Trust from 1986 to 2006 and provided scholarships to students in science and also law;
 - (i) Professor Blackshield's academic achievements were recognised with numerous honours, including appointment as an Officer of the Order of Australia, a Fellowship of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia, and an Honorary Professorship at the Indian Law Institute in New Delhi, amongst many others;
 - (j) Professor Blackshield's core belief that the law was much more than mere technicality but infected at its heart with an obligation of social responsibility and moral judgement brought the law alive for his students;

- (k) Professor Blackshield encouraged his students to not only examine the law as it currently exists but also think about how it should be developed, and was an inspiring teacher to many students of the law who later became academics themselves, advocates and judges; and
 - (l) Professor Blackshield survived his late sister, Clytie, was a loving father and grandfather to his son, Simon, and grandson, Joe, and a loving husband to his wife, Rosemary.
- (2) This House extends its deepest condolences to Professor Blackshield's wife, his children and grandchildren and his extended family and friends.

Motion agreed to.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA INDEPENDENCE

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:08):

That this House notes that:

- (a) 16 September 2025 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of Papua New Guinea;
- (b) until 16 September 1975, Papua New Guinea had endured almost a century of colonisation and foreign rule, first under Germany, then Britain and Australia;
- (c) the territory of Papua New Guinea was split in the 1880s between German New Guinea in the north and the British Territory of Papua in the south;
- (d) from 1906 Australia ruled parts of the nation and in 1949 went on to unify the territories of Papua and the former Germany colony of New Guinea under one administration based in Port Moresby; and
- (e) the Whitlam Government granted Papua New Guinea self-government in 1973 and ultimately its independence through the Papua New Guinea Independence Act 1975 (Commonwealth).

Motion agreed to.

AMBASSADOR OF IRELAND TO AUSTRALIA

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:08):

That this House notes that:

- (a) in September 2025 the Republic of Ireland appointed Her Excellency Fiona Flood as its new ambasadóir na hÉirean (ambassador of Ireland) to Australia; and
- (b) the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Ireland welcomes the appointment of the new ambassador and looks forward to working with her in furthering cultural exchange between our jurisdictions.

Motion agreed to.

LIMBO: THE FORGOTTEN PROMISE FILM SCREENING

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:09): I move:

That this House notes that:

- (a) on 17 September 2025 Kobi Shetty, MP, and Minister Janelle Saffin, MP, hosted a special screening of the documentary film *Limbo: The Forgotten Promise*, a film which provided an important opportunity for members of the community to learn of the struggle for self-determination and decolonisation of Western Sahara;
- (b) Kobi Shetty, MP, and the Hon. Cameron Murphy introduced the screening and spoke in support of self-determination for Western Sahara; and
- (c) the screening was followed by a question and answer session with Mr Kamal Fedel, Representative for Frente Polisario in Australia.

Motion agreed to.

CONSUL GENERAL OF IRELAND TO SYDNEY

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:09): I move:

That this House notes:

- (a) in September 2025 the Republic of Ireland appointed Ms Lorraine Christian as Consal Ginearálta na hÉireann (Consul General of Ireland) to Sydney; and
- (b) the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Ireland welcomes the appointment of the new consul general and looks forward to working with her in furthering cultural exchange between our jurisdictions.

Motion agreed to.

NORTHERN RIVERS BUSINESS AWARDS

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (10:09): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) the Northern Rivers Business Awards were held in Ballina on Saturday 27 September 2025; and
 - (b) this ceremony marked the celebration of the vibrant and prosperous business community across the region, including Lismore, Ballina, Byron and the Tweed.
- (2) That this House congratulates:
 - (a) all nominated businesses that received recognition at the awards, particularly accounting firm Collins Hume, who won Business of the Year and multiple awards, illustrating excellence in services and sustainability; and
 - (b) the event organisers, Business NSW, on a successful night showcasing the outstanding local business sector.
- (3) That this House acknowledges the hard work, innovation and resilience of businesses across the Northern Rivers, particularly following the impacts of natural disasters and financial hardship over recent years.

Motion agreed to.

NATIONAL POLICE REMEMBRANCE DAY

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (10:10): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) National Police Remembrance Day is commemorated on 29 September each year, and is the day that police and the community stop and pay honour to those police officers who have paid the ultimate sacrifice while protecting the people of New South Wales;
 - (b) National Police Remembrance Day is observed on the feast day for Saint Michael the Archangel, patron saint of police; and
 - (c) a service of commemoration was held at 8.30 a.m. on 29 September 2025 in the Domain, Sydney at the NSW Police Wall of Remembrance.
- (2) That this House thanks the brave and committed men and women of the NSW Police Force who work tirelessly to maintain the peace and good order of our State.
- (3) That this House offers its sincere condolences to those who are grieving the loss of a loved one or colleague.

Motion agreed to.

GERARD CARR AND ROBERT BARRETT

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

- (1) That this House notes that, during the recent United Services Union [USU] Conference, Gerard Carr and Robert Barrett received a joint life membership nomination from the Energy and Utilities Branch of the USU.
- (2) That this House further notes that:
 - (a) Gerard and Robert were integral to achieving one of the most significant wins in the region, the successful establishment of an enterprise award at Goldenfields Water;
 - (b) Gerard and Robert worked effectively with USU members, gathering vital information, developing and articulating claims, coordinating meetings, and maintaining open lines of communication day and night; and
 - (c) because of Gerard and Robert's leadership and unwavering dedication, their work ensured the award delivered industry-leading wages and working conditions.
- (3) That this House congratulates:
 - (a) Gerard Carr and Robert Barrett for their joint life membership nomination of the USU; and
 - (b) USU General Secretary Graeme Kelly, OAM, and all USU delegates and members for continuing to uplift and support their members in gaining and fighting for workers' rights.

Motion agreed to.

Committees

SELECT COMMITTEE ON FOUNDATIONAL AND DISABILITY SUPPORTS AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Extension of Reporting Date

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I move:

That the reporting date of the Select Committee on Foundational and Disability Supports Available for Children and Young People in New South Wales be extended to 24 December 2026.

Motion agreed to.

*Motions***NATIONAL CARERS WEEK**

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (10:11): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that National Carers Week 2025 will be held from Sunday 12 October 2025 to Saturday 18 October 2025 and is an opportunity to raise awareness and educate Australians about carers and their caring role.
- (2) That this House recognises the 958,500 people in New South Wales and three million Australians who provide care to a family member or friend, acknowledging that the role of a carer is diverse and includes supporting parents, children, siblings, relatives, friends and community members across all ages.
- (3) That this House acknowledges:
 - (a) the challenges faced by carers, including the effects on their health and wellbeing, as well as the constraints these challenges place on their capacity to engage in paid employment, family responsibilities, and social and community activities; and
 - (b) the need to support policy and invest in programs that reduce or address the challenges that carers experience.
- (4) That this House acknowledges that the theme of this year's National Carers Week is "You are, know, or will be one", which serves to highlight the universal nature of caring and emphasises that it affects almost every person at some stage in their life.
- (5) That this House acknowledges that, during National Carers Week 2025, over 17 landmarks across New South Wales will light up in blue to show support for carers, and Carers NSW will be hosting a range of free events including movie days, carer connection days, young carer events and more.
- (6) That this House commends the vital role of carers across New South Wales and thanks all carers for providing care and support to family members and loved ones.

Motion agreed to.

AUSTRALIAN ISLAMIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION LIFESAVERS PROGRAM

Dr AMANDA COHN (10:11): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that cardiopulmonary resuscitation [CPR] performed immediately by a person who is not a medical professional ("bystander CPR") significantly increases survival rates for cardiac arrest.
- (2) That this House commends the Australian Islamic Medical Association's Lifesavers Program, which provides free training in lifesaving skills, including CPR, open to the community at mosques and Islamic centres across Australia, including five in New South Wales this year.

Motion agreed to.

INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Dr AMANDA COHN (10:11): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) 2025 marks the sixtieth anniversary of the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement; and
 - (b) the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is guided by seven fundamental principles adopted in Vienna in 1965, being humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality, which underpin:
 - (i) the ethics of the worldwide movement;
 - (ii) the tools and methods it uses to achieve its goal of alleviating suffering wherever it may be found; and
 - (iii) the organisational principles that support its operations and impact.
- (2) That this House:
 - (a) acknowledges the significant impact that the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement have had in alleviating suffering particularly in times of conflict, crisis and other emergencies, both in New South Wales and around the world; and
 - (b) commends Australian Red Cross and all members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement for its principled humanitarian action.

Motion agreed to.

NATIONAL SCIENCE WEEK

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (10:12): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that National Science Week Australia is held annually in August, celebrating science, technology, engineering and mathematics [STEM] careers and highlighting the achievements of researchers, innovators and educators nationwide.
- (2) That this House celebrates National Science Week 2025, which was held from 9 to 17 August 2025.
- (3) That this House recognises that National Science Week provides a valuable opportunity for engagement between schools, research institutions, industry and the broader community via hands-on experiments, public lectures, exhibitions and online events.
- (4) That this House asserts that this engagement builds scientific literacy and inspires the next generation of STEM practitioners.
- (5) That this House further notes:
 - (a) in 2024 Australia's STEM workforce was just under 1.8 million, an increase of around 450,000 jobs since 2014; and
 - (b) the particular importance of ensuring access and participation by rural, remote and under-represented communities, First Nations peoples and those with limited resources in National Science Week activities.
- (6) That this House recognises the impact of Australian scientists, including:
 - (a) 2025 Chemistry Nobel Prize winner, Professor Richard Robson, whose work in the development of Metal-Organic Frameworks [MOFs] has the potential to help capture carbon dioxide, store hydrogen safely, clean polluted water and even harvest moisture from desert air;
 - (b) 2025 Young Australian of the Year, Dr Katrina Wruck, a green chemist working to improve the lives of First Nations peoples and the environment through research on "forever chemicals" and a reusable laundry system to combat rheumatic heart disease; and
 - (c) 2025 Australian of the Year, Neale Daniher, AO, who is not a scientist by profession but works closely with the scientific community to further motor neurone disease research.
- (7) That this House congratulates the scientists of New South Wales, including the State's Chief Scientist and Engineer, Professor Hugh Durrant-Whyte, for their commitment to exploration and discovery, which benefits society and future generations.
- (8) That this House encourages students, teachers and scientists to maintain their spirit of curiosity, which underpins all science.

Motion agreed to.

TRIBUTE TO DR JANE GOODALL

The Hon. EMMA HURST (10:12): I move:

- (1) That this House notes with great sadness the passing of Dr Jane Goodall, an internationally renowned primatologist, conservationist and lifelong advocate for animals.
- (2) That this House further notes that:
 - (a) Dr Goodall's groundbreaking research with chimpanzees in Gombe Stream National Park transformed our understanding of animal intelligence, social structures, and the emotional lives of animals;
 - (b) Dr Goodall's legacy includes the establishment of the Jane Goodall Institute and the Roots and Shoots program, which have empowered generations of young people across the globe to take action for animals, people and the environment;
 - (c) beyond her scientific contributions, Dr Goodall became one of the world's most influential voices for animal and environmental protection, as well as compassionate living;
 - (d) Dr Goodall publicly shared her decision to stop eating meat in the 1960s and later adopted a fully plant-based diet, recognising the suffering of animals in factory farms and industrial agribusiness, choosing to align her life with her values of kindness and respect for all living beings; and
 - (e) Dr Goodall's work inspired countless people worldwide to advocate for animals and the environment, and she will be greatly missed.
- (3) That this House expresses condolences to Dr Goodall's friends and family, and to all those who loved and admired her and her work.
- (4) Vale, Dr Jane Goodall. Rest in power.

Motion agreed to.

NEW ENGLAND NORTH WEST BUSINESS AWARDS

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (10:13): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) the 2025 New England North West Business Awards were held at the Armidale Ex Services Club on Friday 19 September 2025, drawing more than 250 attendees from across the region and recognising the "extraordinarily high calibre" of local businesses;

- (b) this year's awards attracted a record 91 businesses and 39 individuals, with winners in 19 categories earning the opportunity to represent the region at the upcoming NSW State Business Awards in Sydney on 29 October 2025;
 - (c) the awards showcased excellence across the region, with major winners including:
 - (i) Business of the Year, Sierra Tek Global;
 - (ii) Outstanding Business Leader (21 plus employees), Berdine Warne (Little Birdie Enterprises and The Alternate Root);
 - (iii) Outstanding Business Leader (20 employees and under), Michael Broekman (Namo Valley Bricks);
 - (iv) Outstanding Young Business Leader, Michael Broekman (Namo Valley Bricks);
 - (v) Outstanding Employee, Juliann Merrick (Many Fabrication);
 - (vi) Outstanding New Business, The Bolt Inn;
 - (vii) Excellence in Sustainability, The Alternate Root;
 - (viii) Excellence in Innovation, Sierra Tek Global;
 - (ix) Excellence in International Business, Sierra Tek Global;
 - (x) Excellence in Large Business, Tamworth Aboriginal Medical Service;
 - (xi) Excellence in Small Business, Focus on Function;
 - (xii) Excellence in Micro Business, Walcha Coffee;
 - (xiii) Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion, Costa Guyra Glasshouses;
 - (xiv) Employer of Choice (under 20 employees), Espire Occupational Therapy;
 - (xv) Employer of Choice (21 plus employees), Central Hospitality Group;
 - (xvi) Outstanding Community Organisation, Tamworth Meals on Wheels;
 - (xvii) Outstanding Visitor Experience, CH Boutique Hotel and Apartments; and
 - (xviii) Outstanding Local Chamber, Gunnedah and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
 - (d) highly commended recipients included:
 - (i) Ben's Falls Retreat (Outstanding Visitor Experience);
 - (ii) Slack Smith Partners (Employer of Choice, 21 plus employees); and
 - (iii) Jack Thomas of Nutrien Harcourt Tenterfield (Young Business Leader).
 - (e) Regional Director Dianne Gray praised the event as an "incredible night of nights" and highlighted the need to re-establish an Armidale Business Chamber, given the evident pride and momentum within the New England business community.
- (2) That this House congratulates all winners, finalists, and organisers of the 2025 New England North West Business Awards, recognises the leadership and innovation of regional businesses in driving jobs, sustainability, and community wellbeing, and extends best wishes to the region's representatives as they proceed to the NSW State Business Awards in October.

Motion agreed to.

NEWCASTLE AIRPORT

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (10:13): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) Newcastle Airport has officially opened its new arrivals and international terminal, delivered ahead of schedule, marking a transformational infrastructure milestone for the Hunter region and New South Wales;
 - (b) the terminal expansion more than doubles Newcastle's passenger capacity, enabling growth from about 1.2 million to over 2.5 million annual passengers, and includes swing-gate functionality to transition between domestic and international operations;
 - (c) key features include the airport's first aerobridge, upgraded arrivals hall with digital wayfinding, enhanced pick-up zones, improved connections from carpark to gate, runway upgrades to support wide-body aircraft, and sustainability credentials (including target of 5-Star Green Star and leveraging the airport's existing Level 4+ Airport Carbon Accreditation);
 - (d) the project was the result of four years of work involving over 2,000 workers and more than 314,000 construction hours, and is projected to generate around 4,400 long-term jobs and contribute approximately \$12.7 billion in economic activity for the Hunter region over 20 years;
 - (e) more than 300 guests attended the official launch, which included a Royal Australian Air Force fly-by, Welcome to Country, Smoking Ceremony by Worimi Elders and participation of community leaders; and
 - (f) in April 2022 the coalition Federal Government provided significant funding support of \$55 million towards the terminal development, underlining the national importance of this regional aviation expansion.

- (2) That this House congratulates Newcastle Airport, its team, contractors, regional partners, and all workers involved in delivering this major infrastructure project, acknowledges that the expanded terminal will strengthen the Hunter's connectivity, trade, tourism and economic resilience, and affirms its support for leveraging this facility to unlock further growth for the people of the region.

Motion agreed to.

7TH AUSTRALIAN DIVISION AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE ASSOCIATION

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

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) the 7th Australian Division Australian Imperial Force [AIF] Association will hold its sixty-second annual reunion and commemoration ceremony at Dick Payten Reserve, Bass Hill on Saturday 29 November 2025;
 - (b) the 7th Australian Division AIF Association continues its proud tradition of honouring the service and sacrifice of the men of the 7th Division of the Australian Imperial Force during the Second World War; and
 - (c) the event will be attended, health permitting, by Reg Chard of the 2/33rd Battalion who fought at Kokoda, members of the Chester Hill RSL, Bass Hill RSL, Ms Alice Kang, OAM, and many friends of the association from the local community.
- (2) That this House recognises and congratulates the 7th Australian Division AIF Association, its secretary, Ms Maha Dunne, its patron, Professor the Hon. Dame Marie Bashir, AD, CVO, and all members and supporters for their ongoing dedication to commemorating the service of the 7th Division AIF, and extends its best wishes for the success of the upcoming sixty-second annual reunion and commemoration ceremony.

Motion agreed to.

COMMONWEALTH FAIR WORK LEGISLATION

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (10:14): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) on Thursday 9 October 2025, the Australian Government introduced the Fair Work Amendment (Baby Priya's) Bill 2025 to Federal Parliament, which is named in honour of Baby Priya, who tragically passed away at just six weeks;
 - (b) following Baby Priya's passing, Priya's mother was faced with negotiating with her employer of 11 years, who cancelled her maternity leave and refused to grant paid parental leave for the six weeks during which Priya was alive;
 - (c) Priya's parents embarked on a public advocacy campaign to close a legal loophole in the Fair Work Act 2009 which currently fails to legally require employers to provide paid parental leave in the event of infant death or stillbirth, determined to ensure that future parents working in the private sector do not have to go through the same trauma;
 - (d) after receiving support from tens of thousands of Australians, unions, advocacy organisations and political parties including the Australian Greens, the Australian Labor Party and the Coalition, Priya's parents have become the catalyst for this reform which will finally bring employer-funded parental leave entitlements in line with government paid parental leave; and
 - (e) Priya's mother said at a press conference after Baby Priya's bill was introduced, "My heart aches with sadness, because more than anything I wish my daughter Priya was here with me. At the same time, I feel such immense pride and joy knowing that she's creating meaningful change for future working parents in Australia."
- (2) That this House recognises and commends Priya's parents for their courageous advocacy in Priya's legacy, which has driven an important reform and shone light on the ongoing barriers working women face in relation to securing and accessing fair and equitable entitlements.

Motion agreed to.

Documents

UNPROCLAIMED LEGISLATION

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: According to standing order, I table a list detailing all legislation unproclaimed 90 calendar days after assent as at 14 October 2025.

Committees

PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Reports

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: I table report No. 102 of the Privileges Committee entitled *Possible contempt arising from the inquiry into the proposal to develop Rosehill Racecourse – Part 1*, dated October 2025.

*Documents***PUBLIC SCHOOL SAFETY****Variation of Order**

The PRESIDENT: According to Standing Order 53, I inform the House that on Monday 13 October 2025 The Cabinet Office requested to vary the scope of the order for papers, and the request was agreed to by the member who moved the order, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell. I certified an agreement reached between the member and The Cabinet Office, which was published by the Clerk.

I table an agreement, certified on Wednesday 14 October 2025, that varied the scope of the order as follows:

That for documents in the possession, custody or control of the Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney, the Department of Education or NSW Police Force, paragraph (a) be read as:

- (a) summaries or reports of the reported incidents indicating the date, place, and description of the incident and the action or outcome (excluding papers concerning the administration of justice), including an extracted report from an external database of incidents held by the Department of Education,

The question is that the varied terms of the order be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES**Variation of Order**

The PRESIDENT: According to Standing Order 53, I table a request received on Monday 13 October 2025 from The Cabinet Office to vary the scope of the order for papers, together with a response from the member who moved the order, the Hon. Natalie Ward, not agreeing to the request. According to standing order, as no agreement was reached, the original order stands, with the original due date.

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

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

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

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I postpone business of the House notice of motion No. 3 until 21 October 2025.

*Documents***NSW CHILDREN'S GUARDIAN****Production of Documents: Order**

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (10:57): I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within seven days of the date of passing of this resolution the response provided by Mr Stephen Kinmond, OAM, relating to the Special Ministerial Inquiry into the Office of the Children's Guardian, conducted by Kate Eastman, AM, SC, in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion or the Department of Communities and Justice 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.

The Special Ministerial Inquiry into the Office of the Children's Guardian report was tabled by the Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion in the other place on 10 September. The report made a number of serious allegations, which have raised some concerns. This motion will ensure that the evidence provided by Mr Kinmond, in response to that report, is released. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (10:58): I speak on behalf of the Government concerning the call for papers under Standing Order 52 regarding the response of Mr Stephen Kinmond, OAM, to the Special Ministerial Inquiry into the Office of the Children's Guardian, and his subsequent removal as Children's Guardian. The Government will not oppose the call for papers. As members are aware, the Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion established the inquiry on 5 March 2025 under section 82 of the Government Sector Employment Act 2013. The inquiry was established to investigate a range of concerning allegations and complaints that the Minister received about the then Children's Guardian, including via the

parliamentary joint Committee on Children and Young People. During the inquiry, 97 submissions were received and 70 current and former staff were interviewed.

Inquiry commissioner Ms Kate Eastman, AM, SC, provided her report to the Minister on 5 August. The report found that Mr Kinmond had seriously breached expected standards as a regulator and as an independent statutory officer. The inquiry commissioner found that Mr Kinmond intervened in a Working with Children Check decision, against the advice of his Working with Children Check directorate and his legal team. Mr Kinmond overturned his staff's recommendation and granted the person a clearance but failed to declare a significant conflict of interest. That was evidenced in part by the 90 outbound calls and 357 text messages between the two people over a period of approximately 12 months. The inquiry commissioner found that conduct to be a significant transgression of appropriate and proper boundaries that risked the interests, reputation and integrity of the Office of the Children's Guardian. The report also found that Mr Kinmond had a close personal relationship with a senior consultant within the sector that he regulated, which amounted to an undeclared conflict of interest.

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

Announcements

HANSARD PUBLICATION

The PRESIDENT (11:01): I make a small statement about Hansard. Due to technical issues, Hansard has not been able to publish the Legislative Council transcript beyond 1.37 p.m. yesterday. The issue is currently under investigation, and Hansard will provide an update when publishing has resumed. Tuesday's transcript will be published prior to Hansard commencing the publication of today's transcript.

Questions Without Notice

HOME BUILDING COMPENSATION FUND

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (11:00): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport, representing the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government. A review conducted by the State Insurance Regulatory Authority of the Home Building Compensation Fund was due to report by 24 February 2025 to the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government. When did the Minister receive the report? Why has it not been released, nearly eight months after the reporting date?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:01): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. He is, of course, right to ask about those issues. He is asking me in my capacity representing the Minister in the other place, so I do not have those details immediately to hand. However, I am very happy to take the question on notice and secure some more details from the Minister. If I can provide details or context more immediately, of course I will be happy to do so.

HOUSING SUPPLY

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (11:02): 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 supercharging the State's housing supply with new and innovative methods?

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Are you embarrassed by that question?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (11:02): No, I am—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: You should be embarrassed by it.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister has the call.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I thank the member for the question. For the benefit of Hansard, I hope those technical issues are resolved soon. I acknowledge the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition asking whether I am embarrassed by that question. Far from it: I am so thrilled and excited to be here talking about some of the new and innovative methods that the Government is using to supercharge the delivery of housing in New South Wales. We are doing it the traditional way too. We are just taking money that the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance—

The PRESIDENT: Order! There are too many interjections.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: We are very grateful for them recognising the housing crisis and injecting capital into just building more desperately needed homes. We are getting on with that, but we are not just doing that. We have a \$100 million Homelessness Innovation Fund, and that is the new and innovative way we are

exploring how to deliver more housing. I update the House on two examples. One is in Swansea, where I was recently pleased to visit a facility that has sat dormant for a number of years. It used to be a retirement village and was empty.

The community was very anxious about the future of the vacant site, wanting to make sure that it was part of the housing solution and identifying it as an asset that was sitting there and could be used. The beautiful sisters, the nuns who owned the site, gave it to the St Vincent de Paul Society, which partnered with us through the Homelessness Innovation Fund to turn it into crisis and emergency accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence, and particularly older women and women with a disability. That is exactly the kind of innovative intervention that is delivering real results really quickly.

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

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The second example that I give to the House is Foster House, which is a Salvation Army facility in Surry Hills. Its third floor has been sitting vacant and derelict for many years—we are talking mould and broken windows. It was delivering none of the solutions that our housing crisis desperately calls for. A Homelessness Innovation Fund grant to the Salvation Army has transformed that space right in the heart of the city into 10 new crisis accommodation beds for people experiencing homelessness. Those sites were sitting empty, vacant and ignored for years under the previous Government. We now have a fund to quickly transform them into solutions to the housing crisis. There is more to come. There is \$100 million in the Homelessness Innovation Fund, and the Government is quickly identifying those opportunities. There is still a lot of work to do, but those are the practical solutions that the community has been calling for.

The PRESIDENT: Before I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I welcome students from Merrylands High School who are visiting Parliament today for Legislative Council question time. They are very welcome indeed.

TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:05): I also welcome the students in the gallery. My question is directed to the Minister for Agriculture. We are now halfway through the 10-week period of payments to impacted businesses to help them pay the wages of timber workers unable to work as a result of the Minister's secret ministerial directive to Forestry Corporation. What transition packages has the Minister finalised to commence from 17 November 2025, when those payments cease and those workers will no longer have any income?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:06): I thank the member for the question. It has been well canvassed that the Government has made a very significant announcement to deliver on an important election commitment to create a new national park to protect koalas in the north of New South Wales. As Government members have outlined in this place, in the period of transition as we create that park, we are working with businesses and people who are affected, particularly the workers who are impacted by the proposed boundaries.

I and the Ministers that I am working with—including the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for the North Coast, the Premier, the Treasurer and others across the Government—have indicated what the arrangements will look like. During this 10-week period, we are working closely with the six directly impacted mills in the region. People from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development are literally going door to door, working directly with those mills about what the financial amount needs to be to assist them as we negotiate either an exit or a continuation of their work in other forms. I do not accept part of the premise of the question, which is that people will be out of work at the end of the process.

Unfortunately, some people will be impacted by the decision. We will compensate those people and pay workers in accordance with their salaries but, broadly, the industry will continue in that part of New South Wales. I am not in a position to provide specific figures to the House whilst we are in this period of negotiations and work on the financial arrangements for those businesses, but there will be an appropriate time to do that when the work is completed. As Government members have said, we do not have specific details on every business, the cost of their staff and all of their business arrangements across the board. We spoke to those mills when the decision was announced, and we continue to speak to them about the specific financial arrangements that need to be in place to support them during this period.

That is why the information is not available now. We are working with individual businesses on the calculations for the support that we will provide to them to get through this period. More broadly, as I said at the start of this answer, it will be an important delivery of a commitment that Government members made to New South Wales to create the park. We are also committed to the continuation of the forestry industry, including on the North Coast of the State. There will continue to be work for people in the industry. Again, some people are

impacted, and it is very unfortunate that people are impacted by the decision, but we are working closely with them to make sure that they are financially supported and no-one is left behind. *[Time expired.]*

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:09): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for her answer. Will the Minister elucidate that part where she talked about how some workers will lose their jobs and there will need to be a transition period? Noting that the announcements were made on Father's Day and the temporary support payment package is due to run out just weeks before Christmas, when will the Minister be in a position to tell those workers what will happen to them after the temporary payments end and their jobs no longer exist? What will be the time frame for that announcement?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:09): I do not accept the premise of some parts of the question, but it is an important question broadly in relation to workers who are impacted by the decision. The Government is working with the six mills that are directly impacted and considering any flow-on effects. Just last week we announced \$5 million for businesses impacted by flow-on effects. I cannot provide an answer to the House in relation to the individual mills because the Government is working through the arrangements and financial cost with them now. Each of them has different circumstances. Some of them might not continue after this period. Some of them may well continue, and we are working through supply issues. Part of the \$5 million package we announced a week ago was to assist businesses that rely on supply from this region and some of those mills to source it from other places.

It is a very complex piece of work. There are complex arrangements in place, but the important message to the impacted businesses, workers and communities is that we are working through all of the issues carefully with those businesses and workers. There will be full transparency. I am not able to provide a figure now because we are working through the details and arrangements for costs with those businesses, and there is money put aside for those arrangements as we work through. As I said in my previous answer, the Government does not have the breakdown of individual arrangements for every business in New South Wales. Once we made the announcement, we worked with the businesses, and we continue to do that to assist them through this period. Some will continue; some might not. But we are working through with everybody impacted as we deliver this important park.

The PRESIDENT: Before I call Ms Sue Higginson, I have received a slightly unusual request from the Treasurer to which I am happy to accede. It is to give a particularly special shout-out from him to Merrylands High School students in the gallery, as it is his neighbourhood that they are frequenting as well. In case he does not get the opportunity to do it, he sends his very fine regards.

TIMBER INDUSTRY

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (11:12): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Agriculture. Sticking to theme, our precious public native forests are continuing to be logged across the State. Will the Minister update the House on the Forestry Industry Action Plan, including the work of the Independent Forestry Panel, and inform the House when and how that work and plan will be released?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:12): I thank the member for her question. There is a lot of interest in forestry at the moment. There is obviously interest from people who work in the industry, communities who rely on those people, businesses that rely on the industry and people who have an interest in it being a continuing industry but in line with our environmental credentials as a government. As I have indicated many times before, the Government is working on a Forestry Industry Action Plan for what the future of the forestry industry can look like in New South Wales. That work is underway. We have engaged a panel of experts chaired by Peter Duncan, who will be familiar to people in the industry. That panel has been working with the industry to advise government on what that industry can look like into the future.

That work is continuing, and Peter Duncan will work with the sector to provide advice to me and the rest of the Government in relation to what the industry can look like. That is really important. We are committed to a sustainable forestry industry into the future, but that does not mean it will be the same as it has been in the past. One of the most important things in the sector—which gets raised with me from every perspective, including workers, businesses, communities and people in the environmental space—is that we need certainty. People need to be able to plan within an industry that cannot just change on a dime. For the forestry industry to continue, 10-year, 20-year and 40-year plans need to be put in place. As I have said many times before—and it remains true—that work should have been done before now. It should have been done by previous governments because it takes decades to plan a successful future for this industry and a clear picture for the community of that future.

The skirmishes that have been going on for far too long are not in the interests of anybody, particularly workers who deal with those issues on a daily basis. The work of the Forestry Industry Action Plan panel

continues. We will have more to say about it when the details are ready to be provided to the public. It is an important but complex piece of work about what the future can look like, how we can deal with that industry in a more sustainable and environmentally friendly way, how we can keep jobs for very important workers in this space, and how we can support communities who rely on it into the future. I look forward to receiving advice from the panel. Part of the importance of the Great Koala National Park announcement is that it provides some certainty about what that will look like as we continue this work.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (11:15): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate that part of her answer relating to the development of the plan and the panel specifically? Has the panel been retained to undertake further work, or will the panel's work be complete at the end of that consultation period? If so, when will the panel's work be available, allowing us to understand what that work is?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:16): I thank the member for the supplementary question. It is an important question. I acknowledge that, particularly at the moment, there is significant interest in the forestry industry and, most importantly, the plans for that industry going forward. It is probably the only industry in New South Wales that does not have a clear plan in place, and that is not fair to anybody involved. In answer to the specific supplementary question, the work continues. When appropriate information has been provided and the Government has all of that information, there will be a conversation with the community about the Government's plans for the future of this industry, but the work continues.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:17): I ask a second supplementary question. In relation to the consultation on the Forestry Industry Action Plan, is the Minister able to advise which representatives from the timber industry have been part of those discussions?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:17): I thank the member for the second supplementary question. Again, I acknowledge the significant interest, particularly at the moment, in the forestry industry, in all things forestry and in what its future looks like. We are engaging with the industry about those discussions, just like we engaged with industry about the make-up of the Great Koala National Park. I regularly have discussions with industry about their current circumstances, as well as what the future can look like. I am not in a position right now to list, off the top of my head, businesses and stakeholders who have been consulted because it is a very broad and diverse industry that covers pretty much all of New South Wales outside of the city.

We will continue to consult with the forestry industry. We will continue to consult with workers and unions that represent their members in this workplace. I do that on a very regular basis. It is really important that we hear from stakeholders about what the industry can look like, because they are the ones who know better than anyone how to deal with forestry in a sustainable, successful way into the future. Of course, advice will be received from not just the businesses but also the workforce, who know what is needed into the future. I will continue to seek their advice, and we will continue to consult more broadly with the community as well.

WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (11:19): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Western New South Wales. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government is investing in western New South Wales?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:19): It is a pleasure to be the Minister for Western New South Wales in this Government. I update the House on another trip that I recently made to the region.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: We get Tara's diary too. Have you been to Dubbo again?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Yes, I have. I highlight some of the things the Government is doing to support communities in western New South Wales, particularly those in the Far West. Recently I was pleased to meet with the Western Division Councils in Cobar. It was a great opportunity to meet with representatives from the Balranald, Wentworth, Hay, Cobar, Bourke, Broken Hill, Carrathool and Walgett shire councils and hear directly from them about how the Government can continue to support Far West New South Wales. It was a great opportunity to meet with those councils collectively as well as individually about not just their interests in the region, but also their interests as individual communities. In some ways those interests align, and in some ways they are diverse.

Following those important meetings, I travelled to Broken Hill to announce a grant of \$5 million from the Regional Development Trust, which is this Government's new and better way of investing in regional communities—no pork-barrelling, but significant investment. That \$5 million goes to Broken Hill City Council

to upgrade the very important Broken Hill Airport. The council and the community have called for that upgrade for many years. They were failed by the previous Government. They have been calling for it for a long time. They are now at a very desperate point. We are providing \$5 million in support to assist them to upgrade the airport and to strengthen the runway. That will help economic development for not just Broken Hill but also the entire region across the west. Allowing bigger and more modern aircraft to land—and more of them—will support industry and people to get in and out from the Far West to the rest of New South Wales and the world. That was a direct request from Broken Hill City Council over a long time, and I am pleased to deliver it.

I was also pleased to announce a grant of \$800,000 from the trust to Royal Far West, which is hiring eight allied health assistants to support vulnerable young people in schools across the region. That is a very important support for young people across the community. The assistants will be located in schools in Broken Hill and Wilcannia. We will see how that works and if it is something we will expand. Central Darling Shire Council received \$1.24 million to upgrade infrastructure and enhance the experience at White Cliffs Caravan Park. That is really important for that town and community, and for economic development.

GREYHOUND RACING NSW INQUIRY

The Hon. EMMA HURST (11:22): My question is directed to the Special Minister of State. Will the Minister provide an update on when the New South Wales Government will release the Drake inquiry report into the greyhound racing industry, and give an explanation about the delay of its release?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:22): I thank the member for the question and her interest in the matter. I have some background to share on the report. The member has previously made comments about the Drake inquiry into Greyhound Racing NSW, led by the acting commissioner, the Hon. Lea Drake. The Drake inquiry examined governance, operations, financial management, track safety and animal welfare at Greyhound Racing NSW. As I previously advised the House, the Minister for Gaming and Racing, the Hon. David Harris, received the report from Acting Commissioner Drake on 31 July this year. I am advised that the Government is carefully considering the findings and recommendations of the Drake inquiry report.

As members can no doubt understand, it is a comprehensive report based on a substantial volume of information. To give the House some sense of that volume, the inquiry received more than 1,600 public submissions. It looked at more than 80,000 documents and considered material from 31 days of hearings. The transcripts of those hearings are published on the inquiry website, along with the submissions to the inquiry. That is why the inquiry was extended twice: in part to ensure procedural fairness for all parties, and to allow the inquiry more in-depth consideration of reform options and recommendations. The Government is currently considering the report and determining the appropriate next steps. The view of the Government is that such a detailed report needs to be carefully considered, particularly given the importance of greyhound racing, including as an economic contributor to New South Wales and regional New South Wales.

The Hon. EMMA HURST (11:24): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister provide more detail? He said that the recommendations of the Drake inquiry report are currently under consideration by the Government. Will the Minister provide more detail on what those considerations are, and a timeline for when any changes might be announced?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:24): It is a reasonable question. I cannot, for two reasons. Firstly, I am representing the Minister concerned in this place. Secondly, some of those matters may be the subject of Cabinet consideration. However, it is reasonable question. I am happy to take it on notice and ask the Minister to provide whatever information can be supplied to the House.

OPAL CARD

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (11:25): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Noting that paragraph 1.89 of the terms and conditions for the use of the Opal card plainly states that a reloadable Opal card will expire 13 years after issue, what is his justification for unilaterally changing those terms and conditions to enable him to steal travellers' money?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:25): I thank the shadow Minister for the question. By way of background for those members who may not have followed the detail, this morning the Government announced comprehensive regulation of e-bike share schemes across New South Wales.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I can tell that some members opposite have not read the newspaper, and that is a shame, but I am about to answer exactly that question. There will be comprehensive regulation of e-bike share schemes. In the course of that regulation—in the course of that bill—we are also asking Parliament for authorisation to access money that is on dormant Opal cards that have not been accessed for five years. Those cards are often from people who have travelled to our beautiful city and who have since left. The average balance is \$4, but \$4 over the course of a lot of years starts to add up—that is something the Treasurer learnt early on in his career.

Those are dormant Opal cards. No-one has accessed them for five years. They are not registered. We do not know who owns them. It is an average balance of \$4. We will approach the Parliament and ask for support to invest that money in the people who live here—people who want to use the e-bike share schemes—and to invest in parking so we can get the bikes off our footpaths, where they are lying around as a hazard to anyone pushing a pram or trying to walk. With a little investment, we can really get some progress.

There has been a regular call-out every year to say, "If you do have money on one of those cards—if you want your \$4 back—please feel free to apply." We will continue to do that. I think it is an excellent idea to use the money from people who have visited our beautiful State and happily gone home. They have had the best time of their lives—the greatest time of their lives. They have not used that card for five years. My suggestion is that we use the money for the person pushing a pram at the moment, who is tripping over a bike. That is a useful use of the money. In the end, if Opposition members want to block it, it is up to them. However, the view from councils and the public is that they want the bikes looked after.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: They want the problem solved.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: They want the problem solved—the Leader of the Opposition is spot-on. This will help us to do that. It will provide a one-off investment that will get on top of this problem, which those opposite left us. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (11:29): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for providing that information.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: It's called a class act in stealing.

The PRESIDENT: I think the Leader of the Opposition wants to take the supplementary question.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: No.

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Natalie Ward has the call.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I acknowledge the interjection about this being a class act in stealing. Will the Minister elaborate on the part of his answer where he spoke about the average balance on the so-called "dormant" Opal cards being \$4? Is the Minister aware that people require a minimum balance of \$4 on their Opal card to successfully tap on and travel? How does the Minister justify 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) (11:29): It is to the shadow Minister's credit that she is deep in the terms and conditions of the Opal card. We are being very up-front about this with the public. We are asking Parliament to authorise this measure. It is up to the Opposition if it wants to block it. It is in the bill, which is why I referred to the share bike schemes that we will invest the money in. We think it is a good use of that money. We think that \$70 million will get us more quickly down the path of getting these bikes cleaned up. Councils want the money and the support. This money is no use to the backpacker on the other side of the world who has not been in the country for five years and has four bucks on their Opal card. It is actually of no use to them. We want to invest it for the people.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Is that a principle you're going to apply across the board?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It is a principle we are going to put to the Parliament in relation to this specific—

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: We think this is a commonsense approach. I would prefer to invest this money for the citizens of New South Wales who want this urgent problem dealt with. This will be hugely useful for people who walk to their local train station and have to hop over 10 e-bikes, which will instead be neatly parked because we have rolled out a sticker. We have asked the e-bike companies to geocode the bikes so the trip does not finish until someone pulls into that area. They will be neatly stacked up near the rails. That is a solution,

but we need a little bit of money to roll it out. This is a practical suggestion that we want to take up. The members opposite want to object to this proposal and block it, which only adds to their years of inaction since these devices have been out. These are unregulated schemes. The Opposition had 12 years in government and did not regulate this one jot.

The PRESIDENT: I note two things before I call the Hon. Mark Buttigieg. First, I mildly chastise the Opposition.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Go harder.

The PRESIDENT: I will only be mild at this point, otherwise I will start to call members to order. Secondly, I welcome students from Oxley College in Burradoo to the Parliament today. They are engaged in the slightly ominously named rites of passage program and are here to observe questions without notice in the Legislative Council.

QUANTUM COMPUTING

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (11:32): My question without notice is addressed to the Treasurer. How is Australia, and New South Wales in particular, developing its quantum computing industry? How can this sector contribute to our economic prosperity?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:32): I thank the member for his question. I also take this opportunity to welcome the students from Oxley College who are going through their rite of passage.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Jacqui Munro to order for the first time.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: Observing questions without notice is clearly considered a rite of passage. I think it falls into the category of endurance. I also give a shout-out to the students from Merrylands High School in my neighbourhood and thank them for sticking around. Sherwood Road, represent! Australia is helping to lead the world in the next great technological revolution of quantum computing that New South Wales is right at the centre of. Just last month, I had the opportunity to visit Silicon Quantum Computing at UNSW, which was founded and is led by former Australian of the Year, Professor Michelle Simmons.

I know that quantum physics comes naturally to most members in this House, but I will explain it in the event that a member is not familiar with precisely what it is. In quantum physics, something can exist in two states at one time as both negative and positive. This is also another way to describe the Liberals' housing policy. Opposition members practise quantum physics every time they have to comment on housing. We do not know if they are for it or against it. What we do know is that quantum is the future, and New South Wales is right at the centre of it thanks to the intelligence of our people here. Silicon Quantum Computing is one of the most advanced companies of its kind in the world. This homegrown enterprise is already attracting global attention and working with leading international partners.

Precisely how Silicon Quantum Computing ended up at the University of New South Wales is an amazing story. A Commonwealth scholarship attracted one of the world's leading scientists to establish Silicon Quantum Computing at UNSW, and the university worked for many years to set it up for commercialisation. I give credit to the previous Government for backing this company in 2015. It provided the company with an equity injection, which means that the New South Wales Government is technically one of its shareholders. The previous Government showed an element of foresight in making that decision.

Many amazing universities are collaborating with the private sector. We want to see more of that. We are getting better at commercialising technology and keeping the benefits here in New South Wales and in Australia, which we have to support. Silicon Quantum Computing is not the only example of this in New South Wales. Firms like Diraq, Q-CTRL and Deteqt are also securing major international contracts. PsiQuantum in Queensland is also steaming ahead in this field. It is a good field of endeavour. New South Wales should be proud of these good stories.

ALAN JONES POLICE INVESTIGATION

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:35): My question is directed to the Minister for Agriculture, representing the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Will the Minister explain why the police taskforce investigating Alan Jones was the only one in New South Wales to report directly to the police commissioner? Given that Karen Webb was forced to leave her position early and the charges against Alan Jones have now been either massively downgraded or withdrawn, will the Government investigate the arrangement Karen Webb struck with the broadcaster Ray Hadley whereby, in return for more favourable coverage on his show, Karen Webb agreed to pursue Alan Jones and exaggerate the charges against him, thereby corrupting the New South Wales justice system?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:36): I thank the member for this question, which has been asked of me in my capacity representing the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. The detailed nature of the question seeks specifics about the investigations. I cannot provide an answer on those specific details, but I am happy to take the member's question on notice. I will seek information from the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism and come back to the member.

FERAL ANIMAL AERIAL SHOOTING

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (11:37): My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. Will the Minister confirm that several domestic horses were shot during an aerial pest cull at Thurloo Downs Station in north-west New South Wales, which is in the process of being converted into a national park. If so, how did this happen?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:37): I thank the member for his question. Yes, I can confirm that. This was not a good outcome of the work that is being done. For members who are not aware, Thurloo Downs is a very large property of almost 500,000 hectares in western New South Wales. The property was purchased and is in the process of being gazetted as a national park. As part of the work that is being undertaken there, we are dealing with a whole range of invasive species, including foxes, dogs, cats and horses. I am not sure if there are camels, but there might be.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service has been undertaking activity in the area. I am aware of the issue, but I will take on notice the details of exactly what happened. It was a very unfortunate incident. I understand that the neighbour's horses had joined a mob of wild horses on the property. There were issues relating to separating them out and with notification. I do not want to give too much detail, because I want to be accurate. On behalf of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, I apologise to the owner for the culling of his horses, which were with wild horses in Thurloo Downs. I will get to the bottom of all the details and come back to the member.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (11:39): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate how many horses have been shot on Thurloo Downs in the last couple of years, and what is the commercial value of the horses that were slaughtered?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:39): I am happy to take that on notice to confirm the total number of horses. I think the Hon. Scott Barrett also asked me for the number of domestic horses.

The Hon. Scott Barrett: Roughly.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Or just a number altogether. The commercial value might be a bit harder, but I am happy to try and work that through and come back to the member.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (11:39): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Climate Change. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is supporting local businesses and manufacturing jobs in renewables and the low-carbon economy?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:40): I thank the Hon. Cameron Murphy for his question. We have really good news. The State Government is supporting incredible businesses in New South Wales to grow significantly so that they can deliver new, ongoing high-quality jobs and become global leading manufacturers in renewables. It is a very exciting part of the work we are doing. The transition to a low-carbon economy presents our State's economy with huge opportunities and challenges. We talk a lot about the challenges, but the opportunities are there. New South Wales has the Net Zero Manufacturing Initiative. This program provides funding for local businesses to develop new low-emission technologies, build local manufacturing capacity for critical low-carbon products and increase the local manufacture of renewable energy components. Making sure our State is positioned as a leader in these new futures is fundamental to our future economic prosperity.

I have recently visited two businesses as we announced funding to support them. We are investing \$28 million in a family business called Sell & Parker Group that has been based in Western Sydney for the past 60 years. As a result of our support, they are establishing a new renewables manufacturing hub at Kings Park in Western Sydney. Sell & Parker will produce up to 46,000 tonnes of competitively priced Australian-made steel components every year. This includes turbine anchors for wind turbines and solar tracking parts. Each solar farm has around 40,000 parts and they are able to manufacture them onsite for use across New South Wales. They also manufacture transmission monopole sections. The local content requirements through the industry road map are

also helping to drive these results. The hub will create 143 direct full-time jobs, with even more jobs across the supply chain.

I also tell the story of Solidcast. Again, it is a family company. Two engineers spent the last 10 years in Dubai. They came back with their own patented concrete product to build housing. The product features 50 per cent recycled content, uses 40 per cent less cement, results in a 50 per cent reduction in carbon emissions and has a 2,200-year design life. It is bushfire-proof, flood-proof, termite-proof and energy efficient. The business is already building homes for Aboriginal housing organisations and they have orders for apartment buildings. The Government has invested \$2 billion in this extraordinary regional manufacturing facility in Wauchope. They are doubling the number of jobs; they will go from 25 to 50 people, creating another 25 excellent jobs. This program is working. *[Time expired.]*

ANTISEMITISM

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (11:43): My question without notice is directed to the Leader of the Government. On 18 March 2025 the Minister was asked a question by Ms Sue Higginson:

On or around 13 March Premier Chris Minns stated that there were 700 acts of antisemitism over the summer. Will the Minister confirm that there have been 700 incidents of antisemitism reported to the New South Wales police either over this summer or since October 2023?

The Minister replied in part, "If the Premier says there were 700, I believe him. He has been across the issue minute by minute." Given that on 26 June the Premier in the Legislative Assembly corrected the record and nearly halved the 700 number to 367 and, now that the number of 367 is facing formal review after budget estimates, does the Minister stand by her original answer or would she like to correct the record?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:44): I thank the Hon. Rod Roberts for his question. As indicated in the first answer, if the Premier has corrected the record, I stand by his corrected record.

SYDNEY WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (11:44): My question is directed to the Minister for Water. The 2025-26 budget allocated \$3.5 billion to Sydney Water for infrastructure projects including capitalised interest, which, of the projects for which funding was allocated, will be cut following the capping by IPART of Sydney Water's total capital expenditure for 2025-26 at \$2.76 billion, a reduction of 27.8 per cent. What impact will this have on housing targets?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (11:44): I thank the Hon. Scott Farlow for the question. I am pleased to assure him that the final IPART determination will have no impact on the Sydney Water's capacity to deliver the essential infrastructure we need for housing targets. We welcome IPART's final determination. Obviously it was a balancing act, and we were very up-front about that. It was a big job because of decades of underinvestment in essential water infrastructure by members opposite. There is a heavy lift and a lot of water infrastructure that we need to build over coming years, and Sydney Water is getting on with the job.

I once again place on record my apologies to the people of Wilton, who are still dealing with approved housing, rezoned land and no water infrastructure. This is clearly a failure of planning in years gone by. We are fixing that, but we need to be very conscious that we are in a cost-of-living crisis. The Premier wrote to IPART to make sure it was very clear in its independent determination that cost of living was an essential factor that he wanted them to consider. IPART has done that balancing act and come up with the final determination. I am sure the member knows this, but IPART does not provide specific project-by-project determinations or approvals; it provides an overall capital budget or envelope for Sydney Water. As it is prioritising projects within that envelope, delivery on the Government's housing priorities is essential, and Sydney Water recognises that. I have full confidence that it will prioritise the projects that underpin housing growth within that envelope.

To be clear, Sydney Water has a range of capital projects that speak to a range of different priorities. It has to make sure that within that envelope it is taking care of water security, water quality and growth. It is taking care of environmental standards and outcomes. I know that is important to the Minister for the Environment too. So Sydney Water has to meet a range of different priorities as part of its operating licence. But again, to reassure the member, as we finalise the program over the determination period, meeting the Government's housing targets is a top priority over the next five years. Sydney Water has been clear on that, and the final IPART determination will not have an impact on the Government's capacity to meet those housing targets.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (11:47): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for her answer. Given her discussion about the prioritisation that Sydney Water will now have to go through with respect to capital projects, what consideration has she given to recommending the suspension of dividends from Sydney

Water to enable it to carry out more of the vitally needed water infrastructure projects that cannot be funded within IPART's determined capital expenditure cap?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (11:48): I invite the Hon. Scott Farlow to direct questions about the dividend Sydney Water pays to the Government's shareholder Ministers, both of whom are in the Chamber.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: You are the water Minister.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Indeed, I am, and I am happy to keep talking. The way it works is that the dividends are finalised between Sydney Water and the shareholder Ministers as part of its annual statement of corporate intent. My engagement as the portfolio Minister is to ensure that the water portfolio priorities of the New South Wales Government are reflected in the arrangement. I have been very clear to Sydney Water that meeting our housing targets is a clear priority. As I have indicated in my previous answer, I have full confidence that Sydney Water is able to do that. To answer the member's question, we have had positive, constructive and at times robust conversations across government with Sydney Water through the price determination period to make sure that it understands how important our housing targets are, that they are a priority for the Government and, now that the IPART determination has been finalised, how important it is that the organisation works within that envelope to deliver on the commitments that it and the Government have made to deliver housing.

EXTERNAL CONSULTANTS

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINÉ (11:49): My question is addressed to the Minister for Finance, and Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement. Will the Minister update the House on the Minns Labor Government's ongoing efforts to reduce the Government's use of external contractors and consultants?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:49): I thank the honourable member for an important question about an ongoing program of work that our Government is continuing to deliver on: reducing the reliance on external consultants and contractors. That is something that both this Government and previous governments made election commitments about. The Auditor-General found that, despite making the cuts to budgets, the previous Government did not put in the appropriate policy changes to support them. As a result, the budgets were reduced, but the spending on consultants remained. We have taken a different approach. We have made some significant savings, and we have detailed those previously. We know what happened under the previous Government.

The report that I tabled last year in Parliament, *Building up NSW public service capability and driving down use of consultants*, found the previous Government engaged one consultant for every working hour for five years straight. That level of expenditure is completely unsustainable. It also erodes the ability of the public service to provide excellent advice to Government. The report showed that between 2017 and 2022, the previous Government engaged external consultants 10,006 times, and that 1,523 contractors were engaged for generalist work that totalled almost \$200 million. That included work like policy design that could have been done in-house. One of the ways that we can continue to monitor this closely is by making sure that we build up those skills. I spoke about the savings earlier. Last year's budget reduced the reliance on consultants by the public service by over \$530 million. In March this year we launched the Expert Advisory Network to allow agencies to look across government and say, "We have fantastic experts; let's use those instead"—before looking externally.

The latest development is that we have now released a core work policy. I give full credit to the Federal Labor Government; it has done similar work at a Federal level and quarantined work that should be done by public servants. This ensures that it is led by accountable and experienced public servants, not just handed off to consultants or private contractors. Under our core work policy, agencies will be expected to deliver their key functions internally, including the development of legislation and regulation, Cabinet submissions, policy analysis and grant administration. There is a role for external consultants and technical advice, but this is an important way that we are rebuilding the capacity of the public service.

BANKSTOWN TAFE

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (11:53): My question is directed to the Minister for Water, representing the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education. According to answers provided by Professor George Williams of Western Sydney University to questions taken on notice in the budget estimates hearing of 29 August 2025, received on 2 October 2025, the university confirmed that although the sublease of its tower at 74 Rickard Road, Bankstown, to TAFE NSW represents more than 25 per cent of the net lettable area, it has chosen to characterise this lease as being for university purposes in order to avoid paying commercial rent to

Canterbury-Bankstown Council, the owner of the land. Will the Minister confirm whether TAFE NSW is, in fact, a provider of any university services in New South Wales?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (11:53): I thank the honourable member for that very detailed question asked in my capacity representing the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education. I will take it on notice and endeavour to get a detailed response.

OPAL CARD

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (11:54): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Tourists who visit London every few years can use the same Oyster card on successive trips because they never expire, but those who visit Melbourne find money on their Myki is stolen regularly by the Victorian State Government because the card expires every four years. Which sort of city does the Minister want Sydney to be: tourist friendly, like London, or tourist unfriendly, like Melbourne?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:54): I say this—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Have you got an Oyster card?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I have a number of Oyster cards tucked away in the cupboard. I will never dig them out, that is the trouble. They are pretty bent by this point. They are bent and in the back of the cupboard. I thank the member for her question. I can assure her that those tourists will keep coming back—whether we take their \$4 five years on or not—after the beautiful time they have had here. I am concerned that Opposition members are winding themselves up in this area in which they did nothing for 12 years. They left bikes lying around. We are trying to do something, and they are trying to block it. They should just give us a go on this one.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. There are too many interjections from all sides of the Chamber, with the exception of the Hon. Rod Roberts. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: This is practical, commonsense policymaking here. We are trying to deal with a very real issue that the public is concerned about, and we have a good solution as to how we can do it a lot quicker, but we are coming to the Parliament to ask for help on this. We are going to ask the Opposition and the entire Parliament for their assistance. I hope there is a cooperative attitude, because the public wants this issue fixed. If someone is pushing a pram, it is difficult to move around those bikes. It is also difficult for older Australians walking along. We want to apply this money to clean up the parking and get those bikes in a row outside train stations.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Is there any other way of fixing it?

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Sarah Mitchell and the Hon. Damien Tudehope are interjecting far too much this question time. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The Leader of the Opposition, in a very unparliamentary way—in deference to you, Mr President—makes an excellent point: Is there any other way to do this? The truth is, yes, we could do this slowly, we could do this hopelessly, we could do it without this injection of funds. It would take too long. People are tired. They want this dealt with now. That is what we are coming to the Parliament to ask for. We want members' support for this good scheme to use this money—\$4 balances from people who mainly are not in the country and have not touched their card for five years. We have called out to them. We do not know who they are because they are not registered on the app. They have not said, "This is my card." Those cards are in the back of the drawer or cupboard in London, Tokyo or some far-flung part of the Nordic countries—that is where they will be. That is no use to anyone. We want to fix the issues for our citizens in New South Wales, and we are getting on with the job.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (11:58): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for his answer. I am curious about the part where he spoke about the geofencing and taxpayers having to pay for this new technology. Will he please explain why private companies are not being asked to pay for this technology that they can implement?

The PRESIDENT: That is a bit of a stretch in terms of a new question. Nonetheless, I will allow it. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:58): It is a good question and a misunderstanding of the legislation the Government is about to introduce. That is no slight on the member; this House has not seen that legislation. It would be inappropriate for taxpayers to subsidise this technology. The technology exists, but

because those opposite did not regulate these schemes, it stopped being applied in New South Wales. We will regulate the schemes, enforce standards and ask for the highest standards to be applied here in New South Wales, and that includes the geofencing for parking. In another city, an e-bike rider will pull up somewhere inappropriate and leave the e-bike where it might block a pensioner walking down the street; in New South Wales, the rider will leave the e-bike in a parking spot. In another city, people will be told their trip will not stop until they get to a parking spot. We will be putting decals on the ground near train stations, for example, to say, "Here is the parking area." That will lead to cleaning up this parking.

It is up to these companies to pay for the technology. The technology exists; they have paid for it. They are just not using it here because we never regulated it and those opposite, in 12 years, never asked them to do it. We are asking them. We are getting on top of it, but we can do it faster. We can roll out the stickers, we can get the parking organised, we can build more bike parking. We are getting on with this. There was an interjection earlier, "You're not doing anything." When we start doing something, those opposite want us to stop. They want us to stop already. They have only just interjected, telling us that we are not doing anything. I ask them to come on board and give us a hand with this one. Even with the power of compound interest, this \$4 is no use to someone who is on the other side of the planet; let us use it here.

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

FERAL ANIMAL AERIAL SHOOTING

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (12:00): In relation to the question asked by the Hon. Scott Barrett, I provide the following additional information. The Thurloo Downs property was purchased in 2023 by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. It has not yet transferred to the National Parks and Wildlife Service and there has been an ongoing handover process to deal with legacy issues on the site. Notifications were provided to the previous owner and neighbours two weeks in advance of the operation being carried out in line with the normal National Parks and Wildlife Service procedures for invasive animal control.

The horses were located within a designated shoot plan area, on public land; the National Parks and Wildlife Service was not aware that they were there at the time. Unfortunately, some horses were left in the area, and five domestic horses were unintentionally shot and killed during a broadscale feral animal control program. The National Parks and Wildlife Service has apologised for this very unfortunate accident, and it is conducting a further review into the matter to ensure that it does not happen again. The member asked for the total number of horses that have been shot on the property. I am unable to provide that figure at this time but, once I have it, I will provide it to the member.

Supplementary Questions for Written Answers

HOME BUILDING COMPENSATION FUND

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (12:02): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for Transport, representing the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government. Will the Minister provide a copy of the report by the State Insurance Regulatory Authority into the Home Building Compensation Fund or explain why he is not releasing the report, which he was due to receive on 24 February 2025?

Questions Without Notice: Take Note

TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I move:

That the House take note of answers to questions.

ANTISEMITISM

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (12:02): I take note of the answer given by the Leader of the Government to my question today. As the famous quote from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* goes:

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

From the outset of the discovery of the fated caravan in Dural, and the Premier's declaration that "there is only way of calling it out, and that is terrorism", a systemic pattern has emerged of the reckless approach this Government has adopted in response to any act it deems to be antisemitic. The Premier, and his representative in this place, the Leader of the Government, have waded around incorrect numbers of alleged incidents of antisemitism for nearly a year and, in doing so, have fanned the flames of fear in our communities. To their eternal

shame, they can only be judged by what they have done publicly because this Government refuses to let this House and its committees see what happens behind the velvet curtain of Cabinet and the Office of the Premier—meetings with no notes, refusals to attend hearings and the denigration of this House's inquiries as mere "kangaroo courts" and "Star Chambers". But like the characters in *The Wizard of Oz*, we have glimpsed behind the curtain and found, at the heart of so-called power, weakness masquerading behind an illusion.

The fear of terrorism in our city and incorrect numbers of hate attacks led to this House passing laws to limit speech and free movement. Numbers that initially started at a shocking 700 separate attacks, corrected five months later by the Premier and nearly halved to 367, have now shown to be false. They are currently being reviewed again as a result of answers provided at budget estimates hearings and to questions on notice and, it would seem, being reduced even further. We have no terrorist plot, inflated and incorrect numbers of hate attacks, and a Premier that ridicules our role in this place as a house of review. The House has attempted to shine a light of transparency on the Government's shadowy endeavours. If the Premier and his Cabinet have not been forthcoming on this matter of literal life and death, what other numbers are fudged? What other decisions and policies have been built on a house of cards? Something is definitely rotten in the State of New South Wales, and it is rotting from the head down.

OPAL CARD

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (12:05): Mr Assistant President—

The Hon. Mark Latham: What is with the audio feedback?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: It does appear that there is some audio feedback in the Chamber. I take note of answers given to questions today. I note the Opposition's concern about the apparent robbing of Peter to pay Paul, or robbing Mary to pay Margaret, using dormant Opal card balances. These are amounts that people paid in good faith, years ago under the existing terms and conditions, and it seems that the Government has taken a retrospective, unilateral position of "We're going to steal your money." People put money on an Opal card to catch a train or catch a bus. Admittedly, the trains do not turn up very often, so the likelihood of someone being able to use the balance on an Opal card is dicey. But if they do manage to catch a bus or to get on a train at some point—when the trains are not delayed by industrial action—the balance on their card is their money. They have paid it. There is no entitlement—

The Hon. Mark Latham: Point of order: I reluctantly interrupt, Mr Assistant President. The microphones in the Chamber are not working.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): The Clerk will stop the clock. I have taken advice. We will briefly pause proceedings. I shall leave the chair. The House will resume at 12.15 p.m.

[The Assistant President (The Hon. Peter Primrose) left the chair at 12:07. The House resumed at 12:15.]

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I am not sure how much time I have left, but in that time I make the point that people have paid this money in good faith to the Government to get from A to B, hopefully on time and on budget.

I seek an extension of one minute. All my time was run down with the microphones issue.

Leave granted.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: That money is paid in good faith, ahead of time, in advance of travel on a promise. In fact, it is a contractual arrangement where an offer is made to provide transport services. In response, a person pays and has the promise in the contract of the Opal card. To retrospectively change that and steal people's money is akin to Robin Hood stealing money. The Government wants to say it is for a good purpose, but it is not. If these bike-share companies are providing these littering opportunities, they should be cleaning them up and the council should be working with them.

The Coalition commends the Government doing anything in this space, but this certainly is not the right way to go about it. In the Coalition's view, it is a dangerous precedent because where does it stop? Does the Government then start taking money from superannuation funds, as we have seen Jim Chalmers do federally? Now Albo has woken up to that and has suddenly realised that is not so electorally popular. If people's superannuation and unrealised capital gains are stolen, the next thing the Government will be after are small bank accounts. If someone has \$10 in their bank account, can Minns and Mookhey come along and raid that as well? This Government will raid any money it can because it cannot manage its own budget.

WATER SECURITY

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (12:17): I acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of the Mayor of Lithgow, Cass Coleman. I take note of answers given today by the Minister for Water on 8 September 2023 relating to protecting town water and water security. Clean and drinkable water is something we generally take for granted, but from Thursday 9 October to Sunday 12 October, the city of Lithgow, in my duty electorate of Bathurst, experienced an unprecedented water outage. The causes are complex but, in short, on 9 October a 100-millimetre high-pressure line burst. The water bursting from the 100-millimetre line was of such force that it blasted a large hole through the concrete wall of the main trunk water line.

Council staff worked throughout the afternoon and evening to repair both water lines. However, in reducing the pressure for safe repair of the main trunk line, the treatment plant had been shut down. The whole of the main trunk line between the plant and the reservoir had been drained and water had ceased being provided to customers. Staff worked throughout Friday evening to get the water treatment plant operational and provide water to the network, but significant difficulties were experienced in bringing the plant back online and operational. As Saturday progressed, it became apparent that water supply in council's mains lines and reservoirs had been completely depleted, and about 60 per cent of households across Lithgow were without a water supply. The outages continued until the Sunday.

Lithgow City Council dealt very capably with the crisis, including by sourcing certified water suppliers to safely transport and pump drinking water back into the local lines; prioritising hospitals, nursing homes and dialysis patients for water supply; opening public shower facilities at council amenities; establishing public water collection points; activating a water outage hotline for residents who were unable to drive or collect water due to health or mobility issues; and coordinating with volunteers and local businesses to help to distribute water to those in need.

I note that Cass Coleman personally led the local doorknocking to check on vulnerable families and distribute bottled water to where it was so critically needed. She did this throughout the weekend, and immediately turned down an invitation to the Bathurst 1000 car race from Bathurst Regional Council so she could instead work on the ground to help. On the Saturday, Mayor Coleman and Deputy Mayor Steve Ring, along with all the council staff directors, went and personally doorknocked all the businesses on the main street to offer support options and explain what was happening, which is a great display of a council engaging with the community that it clearly cares so much about. The community also stepped up, with the local newspaper describing in great detail some of the rapid community-led responses. I commend the people of Lithgow for pulling together in a difficult time that they hopefully will not have to endure again. I thank the agencies, the volunteers, the staff, the contractors and the community groups who worked tirelessly to support the community during the event.

RAY WALSH HOUSE

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (12:20): I take note of the answer to a written question on notice that I asked of the Minister for Local Government—No. 4530, for those playing at home—regarding the mishandling of Ray Walsh House by Tamworth Regional Council. I specifically asked questions around whether the Office of Local Government [OLG] had received complaints or representations from members of public councils or community groups. The answer from the Minister's office included the fact that apparently:

... the OLG is not aware of any evidence that would indicate that Tamworth Regional Council has failed to comply with its statutory obligations in relation to the disposal of Ray Walsh House.

I say that that is misleading. I quote a councillor who wrote to the Minister and to the Office of Local Government. He said:

At a Councillor Workshop, the General Manager stated that prior to the internal demolition, Ray Walsh House had an estimated value of approximately \$17 million. Yet now, following the removal of internal infrastructure, the property is allegedly considered to have no value beyond land.

Worryingly, the current interested buyer (one of two that participated in a recent EOI process to "activate" the site) is a local real estate agent and developer with known associations with Council.

If that does not raise concerns around statutory obligations, particularly guidelines issued by ICAC about the disposal of assets, I do not know what does. I have probably another 30 pages of letters from concerned residents about the mishandling of the sale of Ray Walsh House by the council. I will seek leave to table those letters to assist the Minister. Being the benevolent member of the Legislative Council that I am, I will give him until the end of this sitting week to amend his answer to reflect the truth before I move a motion next week to highlight that his office has misled the House regarding the concerns of Ray Walsh House.

There is clear evidence that the information has been passed to not only his office but also the Office of Local Government and the Ombudsman, and that they have failed to act on the concerns of both residents and

seasoned councillors. The people in his office and the Office of Local Government should get off *solitaire*, read those emails with the attachments that step out quite clearly the mishandling of this sale and actually do something about it.

I seek leave to table the evidence of the issue.

Leave not granted.

FERAL ANIMAL AERIAL SHOOTING

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (12:23): I take note of the answer to my question about the five station horses that were killed at Thurloo Downs in the north-west of the State. First of all, I extend my sympathies to the family who lost their horses in such a tragic way. I have lost a couple of horses, and I know how upsetting it can be, especially because of the work and time that went into breeding, training and rearing those horses. What does it say about the management of the National Parks and Wildlife Service [NPWS] and the incompetence of those charged with doing the very important job of aerial culling? The matter needs to be fully investigated. There was an indication that an investigation would happen internally but perhaps there should be a fully independent investigation to find out how and why it happened so it will not happen again.

The story given about the horses having joined another mob does not correlate with what I am hearing on the ground. In fact, my report suggests that there are no other brumbies within 40 or 50 kilometres of where the horses were shot. That is a couple of properties away. Surely an aerial shooter would raise red flags when they see horses running in an area where they are not meant to be. I suspect anyone could quickly tell the difference between well-bred, well-maintained campdraft horses and wild brumbies. It feeds into a wider argument that NPWS is not fit to manage the millions of hectares that it has, let alone the additional hectares it is now buying up. It is not doing its job properly with the country that it has, yet it is seeking more. Why would anyone want to be a neighbour of a national park at the moment? NPWS cannot control its pigs or its weeds. Boxthorn and blackberry are spreading from national parks into neighbouring properties. On top of that, aerial shooters might shoot domesticated horses.

I am a big fan of our national parks. I love visiting them with my family and I support the intent of what NPWS is trying to do, but incidents like this do nothing to enhance its already poor reputation as a land manager. It is critical to understand that this is not a chip against aerial shooting, which is a key biosecurity control tool. But it needs to be done properly by people who can tell the difference between a horse and a pig. I call on the Government to conduct a full investigation into the incident and for full compensation for the owners—not just for the financial value of the horses, which could be over \$10,000, but also for the emotional stress that the incident would have caused them. We need to make sure that such an incident does not happen again. We also need to extend our deepest sympathies to the people who have lost their beloved horses.

OPAL CARD

TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (12:26): I take note of the question directed to the Minister for Transport regarding the Opal card. The position that has been adopted by Opposition members is utterly ridiculous. They are using totally inappropriate and emotive terms, such as theft. The Minister has indicated that he intends to bring the matter to the Parliament to be thoroughly debated. As I was walking along Macquarie Street a day or so ago, I saw \$70 million on the ground, stuck in some chewing gum. As I bent down to pick it up, I felt a tap on my shoulder. It was the Leader of the Opposition, who said, "You can't do that. You can't pick that up and use it for a public purpose. That would be theft." I said, "Who does it belong to?" He said, "I don't know." I said, "What should I do? Should I just leave it there?" His contention was that I should leave it there. "For how long?" I asked. He replied, "Forever." Some \$70 million is sitting there that could be used for a public purpose but the Opposition is saying we should leave it there because we do not know who it belongs to. It is not money that should be left; it should be put to a good use.

I also take note of the answer given by the Minister for Agriculture about the forestry issue. The Opposition does a disservice to the affected workers by prosecuting an argument to try to expedite the settling of arrangements of the transition packages. Obviously there is an initial proposition for a complex public policy initiative like this, where there is clearly a choice between conservation values and shifting the policy emphasis of the State. Once the proposition is adopted, the detailed work needs to be done. As the detailed work is done, the finer details of how the proposition will affect specific categories of individuals and businesses needs serious consideration. The Government needs time to do that work to get it right and make sure that any adverse impact on workers is minimised. That should be left to follow the appropriate course in the appropriate time and not be rushed such that the Opposition tries to force the Government to adopt a hardened position too early. That would be to the

detriment of workers. I do not think that is the intention of Opposition members, but that is the consequence of their efforts.

OPAL CARD

ANTISEMITISM

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (12:29): My understanding is that the \$70 million belongs to Minister Kamper, the richest man in the Parliament, who dropped it out the front. It is part of one of his registered business names, Big Boy Enterprises, which he ran with his business associate "The Falcon". Members should google "The Falcon" to see why \$70 million in cash was dropped out there. I urge the Hon. Anthony D'Adam to hand the money back to Minister Kamper as soon as possible.

On another issue raised by my colleague the Hon. Robert Roberts, I also take note of the answer on antisemitism given by the Leader of the Government. The Hon. Penny Sharpe echoed Bill Shorten by saying, "If the Premier said it, then it must be right, so that is what I say too." The problem is that, as part of a general spray on me in the other place, the Premier said there were 367 antisemitic incidents. This House now has the accurate information, rather than the bluster in the other place, that we are down to 14 incidents. It was not 700 or 367; it was 14 investigations of matters linked to some form of antisemitic ideology that would be regarded as serious attacks on people and property. I have asked questions on notice to try to strip that number down further: How many of the 14 have been prosecuted rather than just investigated? How many of the 14 are a product of foreign agents like Iran? How many of the 14 are a product of organised crime, like the Dural caravan incident, where you would not think that it is genuinely antisemitic ideology?

You have to wonder if Premier Chris Minns lives under a rock. Does he actually know Sydney well? Under false pretences, to try to justify his legislation, he has made a spray that Sydney is effectively a bigoted, prejudiced, antisemitic city where there have been over 350 antisemitic incidents in our metropolitan area. Does he know Sydney? There is no caravan of people trekking of a night from Lakemba to Dover Heights or Bondi Junction. That just does not happen. Sydney is, by and large, a fortunate, passive and some say successful multicultural city where people do not get worked up. We do not have riots on the streets or people getting active about issues of racial tension.

The Premier has disparaged the city in a way that is not only unfair but untrue. It was never 700 or 367 incidents; it is down to 14. I pay tribute to the New South Wales police for getting the truth out, whether it was in the Portfolio Committee No. 5 hearings or the Budget Estimates hearing that I attended. I think the number will come down to single digits, which is a long way from the fantasy world of the Premier and his representative in the Legislative Council, the Hon. Penny Sharpe. They will take and recycle any form of misinformation in their attack on Sydney and justification of a bill passed by the Parliament under false pretences. We hear a lot about misinformation and fake news, but it was the Minns-Sharpe factory that churned this out in a way that was completely false— [*Time expired.*]

SYDNEY WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (12:32): I take note of the answer from the Minister for Water in response to my colleague the Hon. Scott Farlow's question about the devastating 27.8 per cent slash to Sydney Water's capital expenditure. The 2025-26 budget promised \$3.5 billion for vital upgrades, new pipelines, wastewater plants and water networks to service booming areas like Austral, Wilton, Liverpool and greater Western Sydney. Yet the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's final determination in September 2025 gutted \$740 million in the first year alone, forcing Sydney Water to defer or axe projects essential for safe and reliable supply. That includes delays to the \$65 million water upgrades in Austral and Oran Park that could have unlocked 5,000 homes near the Western Sydney airport. A third of greenfield sites in Western Sydney lack sufficient water infrastructure, which will block more than 33,000 dwellings over five years, according to the Urban Development Institute of Australia's 2025 report.

The fallout is that families are being priced out of dwellings including housing and units. They are not building fast enough. The CEO of the Urban Development Institute of Australia New South Wales, Stuart Ayres, warned that that makes it impossible for New South Wales to build enough homes to meet our housing targets without massive public bailouts. Meanwhile greater Western Sydney's population surges to three million by 2036, absorbing two-thirds of Sydney's growth. But, without water, it is all hot air. My colleague the Hon. Scott Farlow, the shadow Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and the shadow Minister for Housing, and I have seen this firsthand.

We have seen vacant greenfields. Plots have been marked up, but nothing can be registered. The land sits idle and vacant. There is no water infrastructure, there is no capacity to build and there are no development approvals. An example in the media is that of a young couple who paid a deposit for their dream plot in a housing

development in the south-west of Sydney. Where the water and sewerage would be hooked up was not at the front of their minds. The land was supposed to be registered by 2023 but remained unregistered by 2025 and that date was stretching out to 2028. There was no time frame as to registration or water, so the young couple lost a \$5,000 housing deposit. New South Wales deserves better.

OPAL CARD

TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

The Hon. WES FANG (12:35): To quote the Hon. Cameron Murphy, I was not going to make a contribution until I was prompted by a contribution from the Hon. Anthony D'Adam. I refer to both parts of his contribution. Firstly, the analogy that \$70 million found on the footpath is money that the Government can somehow take and put into public good shows the attitude problem of the Labor Party in this State. Perhaps the \$70 million was found in an ALDI bag on the footpath, but for a member of the Labor Party to suggest that they can do whatever they want with it is offensive to the rest of New South Wales, because the money ultimately belongs to somebody. It is not the job of the Hon. Anthony D'Adam, the Premier or the Treasurer to determine what happens to that money. That money belongs to the people of New South Wales. The problem within the Labor Party in this State is that its members think they just can take whatever they find and do whatever they want with it. That is not the case.

The other part of the contribution that I found offensive was the idea that it was somehow detrimental to workers for Opposition members to fight for workers to understand what packages they will receive from the New South Wales Government after losing timber industry jobs due to the Great Koala National Park being forced upon the Mid North Coast. Not only is it not "detrimental to workers", as the Hon. Anthony D'Adam might describe it, for Opposition members to fight for workers so that they can understand and map out their future as we approach Christmas; it is exactly what those workers want.

You would think that the Hon. Anthony D'Adam would understand what those workers want, because he claims to be a member of the Labor Party that fights for workers. However, members have heard him claim that seeking to understand what the workers will receive is somehow detrimental to their cause. It is not detrimental to those workers; it is making sure that those workers understand—before we get to Christmas—what they will receive from the Government. At the moment, those workers have no idea. They and their families are going into Christmas wondering what they will do next year. When the Hon. Anthony D'Adam says that seeking that information is somehow detrimental to those workers, I suggest that he needs to speak to those workers to understand what the forestry sector seeks from the Government.

TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (12:38): I take note of the contribution that was just made regarding the argument over workers compensation. The tirade from the member opposite was totally and utterly unjustified. The Minister, the Hon. Tara Moriarty, has been working day and night to ensure that those workers get adequately compensated, and the Hon. Wes Fang has cheapened that effort. After having spoken to the Minister and her office, my understanding is that the compensation package is coming up to the mark. We are in active dialogue with the unions, and it is approaching the value of the Victorian package.

Members absolutely have the right to advocate for adequate workers compensation, but to try to score cheap political points and denude the Minister's efforts to get the best compensation package for those workers undermines the whole cause. Workers listening to the debate today would have seen right through that. It is a transparent attempt to score points. Members on this side of the House care about those workers compensation packages. There is no doubt that there have been victims of the fallout of that decision and they should be adequately compensated, at least to the standard of the Victorian package. The Minister has been working very hard to achieve that. If members attack the Minister for trying to do the right thing by workers, all that does is undermine her ability to do that. Members should think twice about that if they really want an outcome for the workers.

TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (12:41): Today was another fantastic question time. In relation to the last couple of contributions, Government members are dealing carefully and in a very considered way with the package of entitlements for workers who are impacted by the creation of the Great Koala National Park. We are working through that in a careful and methodical way, as I have outlined many times. We will continue working with unions, workers and businesses that are impacted by the immediate decision. More broadly, we will examine what the industry will look like and the benefits of the creation of the koala park. We will continue to

update the public and the House as we work through those issues. We are doing it in a very considered manner and will make sure that no worker is left behind in relation to compensation or support.

Regarding the answers that I gave today, I also highlight the work that we are doing in western New South Wales. It is often a forgotten part of New South Wales, but not by this Government. As I indicated, we are expanding a whole range of financial support for the Far West communities of New South Wales. That includes upgrading a number of airstrips, including White Cliffs and Bourke. That will be important for those communities from an economic perspective and a people perspective. As I outlined, we have provided financial support through the Regional Development Trust for the upgrade of Broken Hill Airport, for which the council and community have been calling for many years. It will be a real game changer for that community, and I am pleased to support them with that upgrade.

We are providing financial support to White Cliffs for the upgrade of its caravan park, which is a significant economic development piece for that community and will support more tourism. On my most recent visit to the west, I saw more caravans travelling around the place than I have ever seen before. People certainly have a lot of interest in visiting the region and having those facilities available. Support from the Government for the economic development of those communities will really matter. There is financial support for Royal Far West, which does incredible work across the region. It will be able to employ people to support vulnerable young people in communities across the region. I am pleased to support them out of the Regional Development Trust.

The Government has previously announced the Western NSW Workforce Activation Program, which I also recently announced an expansion of. It is about supporting child care. That helps people get back to work in those communities or move to those communities, where child care was an issue. In addition to Bourke, Broken Hill and Cobar, we have now expanded it to include Carrathool, the Warrumbungle region and Hay. That will provide the same sort of support for economic development in those communities. We will continue to work to support the Far West communities of New South Wales.

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

Motion agreed to.

Personal Explanation

OPAL CARD

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (12:44): By leave: I want to clarify my earlier remarks. Lidia Thorpe made a comment about burning down Parliament, and there is a tendency towards literal interpretations of what people say. I make it absolutely clear that the story I recounted about Macquarie Street was completely fictional. I did not actually find \$70 million, and the Leader of the Opposition did not put his hand on my shoulder and ask me those questions.

Written Answers to Supplementary Questions

WORKERS COMPENSATION LEGISLATION

In reply to **the Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE** (14 October 2025).

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

As I said in the House yesterday, I will not be publicly canvassing matters related to an individual's mental health.

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

SUDANESE CIVIL WAR

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (14:01): Several weeks ago I met with a delegation from the Sudanese and African community to discuss the impact of the Sudanese Civil War on their communities and the need for our Government to do more. Following the 2019 revolution that ousted the previous dictator, the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces [RSF] militia launched a coup to prevent a democratic transition. The cooperation between the two groups later broke down, leading to a power struggle that plunged Sudan into a brutal civil war. Since 2023 more than 150,000 people have been killed and over 12 million people displaced, and some 26 million people are suffering from or on the brink of famine. In the Darfur region, minority groups have been subjected to genocide and massacres at the hands of the RSF. Women and girls have also faced widespread systematic sexual violence and slavery.

The crisis has been worsened by the involvement of external state actors providing weapons to the warring parties, in breach of the United Nations [UN] arms embargo, and the participation of foreign mercenaries. Unfortunately, in many cases, refugees and their families seeking safe haven in Australia struggled to obtain visas. Sudanese nationals should be designated as a priority group in the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, and their visa applications should be expedited. Those who had visas rejected prior to the escalation of the conflict should be given the opportunity to reapply. We must do more to support the resettlement of refugees. They need survivor support, including health care, psychosocial services, legal assistance and expanded funding for gender-based violence programs.

The international response to the crisis has been inadequate. Australia has an important role to play as a middle power with a sizeable Sudanese population. We must support calls from countries such as the United States, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE to establish humanitarian corridors and work with them at the UN to put diplomatic pressure on the parties for ceasefire negotiations, protection of civilians and an end to arbitrary detention and summary executions. The international community must also strictly enforce the arms embargo and stop the flow of weapons, particularly the alleged supply and use of chemical weapons.

Australia must also join in imposing targeted sanctions against commanders involved in systemic sexual violence and other crimes, and support the International Criminal Court in its investigations. While Australia has committed \$50 million so far in humanitarian assistance, that is lower than comparable allies and not commensurate with the scale of the crisis. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade must substantially increase its support, particularly to local groups on the ground in Sudan, to ensure that aid goes to those who need it most.

BO OK

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (14:03): Recently the Opposition lost one of our most capable and loyal staffers. I pay tribute to Bo Ok and thank her for her years of service to both the former Government and the current Opposition. Bo worked for both the Government and Opposition Whips in this place, as well as for the Opposition Whip in the other place. She is endlessly hardworking, unwaveringly loyal and capable beyond her years. Those are traits that I have seen very few staff exhibit over the years. What separates Bo is that she can be all of those things while also being the most loved staffer in the building. We will not find a soul in this building who has a bad word to say about Bo, because there are simply no bad things to say. The Opposition is worse off for her departure. But one team's loss will be another's gain. I know that Bo will succeed in whatever she chooses to do next. She provided me and my office with invaluable support and assistance over the years, particularly during the transition to opposition. I will miss her. My office will miss her. The entire Opposition will miss her. I thank Bo. We were lucky to have her.

PLATYPUS PROTECTION

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (14:05): I call on this House to act decisively to protect one of our most iconic and vulnerable species: the platypus. Opera house traps are collapsible wire mesh funnel nets, once commonly used to catch yabbies and shrimp. They are named for their resemblance to the sails of the Sydney Opera House. Baited and submerged, they funnel animals into an enclosed chamber with no way out. They can be left for hours—even days—before being checked. For air-breathing species like the platypus, the result is a cruel and needless death by drowning, often within minutes.

The scale of the problem has long been known. The Australian Platypus Conservancy found that between 1980 and 2009, 41 per cent of reported platypus deaths were caused by those very traps. In recognition of that, New South Wales finally banned their use in April 2021. At the time, the Department of Primary Industries reminded fishers that open-top, environmentally friendly nets must be used instead. Those nets allow platypuses, turtles, water rats and even birds to escape if they swim in by mistake, while still letting people catch yabbies. South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory have all banned opera house traps too. Queensland attempted design restrictions, but they have been ineffective at preventing the drowning of non-target species. Yet four years since the ban in New South Wales, opera house traps are still being sold online and shipped across the country. They remain easy to buy, cheap to post and deadly in our rivers and creeks.

The tragic consequences speak for themselves. In 2022 four platypuses were killed in a single trap on the Mid North Coast. In 2024 Western Sydney University researchers reported regularly encountering the traps and discarded fishing line in local waterways, with dead platypuses inside. Just this week, two platypuses were found dead in opera house traps in Victoria. My office continues to hear reports from researchers who come across drowned animals in banned traps here in New South Wales. That is unacceptable. It undermines the intent of the ban and puts this highly vulnerable species at risk. The Government needs to enforce the ban and clamp down on retail outlets selling those death traps. Alternatives exist. Finally, the conservation status of the platypus needs to

be urgently assessed, because recent research shows that they are in significant decline. Our precious platypus deserves more attention, and we can start by ensuring that those traps cannot be bought or used.

WOMEN'S SPORT

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (14:08): The next major game for the Matildas is in 12 days. On 26 October, they will go head to head with Cymru, the Welsh national women's football team, in an international friendlies match. The two countries take their women's football very seriously. We will see 22 females pushing themselves to the very limit until the final whistle is blown. But just imagine if, on match day, Cymru ran onto the pitch with six females and five males who self-identified as female, to go up against our all-female Matildas team. Imagine the collective shouts of condemnation, blatant cheating, demands that Cymru be made to forfeit the match, concerns about potential serious injuries to Matildas players et cetera, coming from Australian politicians, women's organisations, past and current elite female sport competitors, football commentators, sports administrators and the countless men, women, boys and girls of all ages who play and enjoy the "beautiful game". They would be heard loudly, all the way to Cardiff City Stadium and right around the world.

Of course that fanciful, hypothetical scenario is just that. The truth of the matter is that the proud, uncompromising and fearless Welsh women's football team would never, under any circumstances, entertain such an unfair, dishonest and dangerous sporting stunt. But right here, right now, the very same behaviour I have outlined is a tragic reality in New South Wales. Once again in the Women's Premier League, which is part of North West Sydney Football, the Flying Bats Football Club—which is known to have fielded up to five males who self-identify as females in matches against all-female teams—won the grand final, defeating West Pennant Hills Cherrybrook Football Club 3-0. Where were the voices calling out that absurd farce? They were nowhere to be heard.

Why did those 11 proud, uncompromising and fearless female members of the West Pennant Hills Cherrybrook Football Club get thrown once again under the bus, when that would never be permitted to happen to the Matildas? The shocking double standard must be called out and stopped. It is cold comfort for the members of the West Pennant Hills Cherrybrook Football Club to know that it is they who should have their names inscribed on the Women's Premier League shield as the 2025 champions. Nevertheless, they can take some solace in knowing that the absurd farce of females being made to compete in sporting competitions—individual and team—against males who self-identify as females is slowly but surely collapsing, and that they played their part in bringing that about. I commend the members of the West Pennant Hills Cherrybrook Football Club for their bravery and determination to represent the interests of female sportswomen in the State.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (14:10): Today we recognise the International Day of Rural Women—a day to honour the women who sustain our communities, often without recognition. Across the world, rural women grow, harvest and prepare the food that feeds us all, yet many still face food insecurity, limited health care and the burden of unpaid care. The United Nations reminds us that while they ensure that others are nourished, they often go without. In Australia, the strength of rural women is embodied in one remarkable force: the Country Women's Association [CWA]. Formed in 1922, when women faced isolation and few services, the CWA became a lifeline. It built baby health centres, supported bush nurses and established maternity wards, schools and rest homes. Those women were not just helpers; they were founders, fighters and community builders.

Today the CWA remains the largest women's organisation in Australia. I say plainly that when the CWA speaks, governments should listen. Its advocacy is not nostalgic; it is urgent. Through the Annual Women's Survey, they are collecting the real concerns of women across New South Wales. The message is clear. Cost-of-living pressures are crippling households. There are healthcare deserts across regional New South Wales where finding a GP is harder than getting to a specialist in Sydney. There is job insecurity, especially for younger women and carers trying to re-enter the workforce. Housing shortages, education gaps and unreliable telecommunications are all barriers to opportunity.

Those are not statistics; it is the lived reality of the women who hold their towns together. They are running small businesses, caring for families, volunteering at shows, fighting fires and still turning up to feed a neighbour in need. Rural women do not ask for praise, but they deserve respect. They do not seek privilege, but they demand fairness. On this International Day of Rural Women, I honour every woman who has stood at a farm gate in drought; has held a family together while waiting nine hours in an emergency ward; has driven 400 kilometres for medical care; and, despite it all, has turned up at a CWA branch meeting to make things better for someone else. I honour them today, not with sentiment, but with respect and resolve.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (14:13): The earth has reached its first climate tipping point according to the latest *Global Tipping Points Report*, which was led by the University of Exeter. Once a tipping point is reached, the damage is irreversible and there is no turning back. Once a tipping point is reached, the planet loses its most critical ecosystems forever—it loses its heart and its lungs. The *Global Tipping Points Report* found that we have reached 1.2 degrees of heating compared with pre-industrial levels. That is enough to boil our oceans, destroy warm water coral reefs and risk the lives and livelihoods of thousands of people. The warm water coral reefs that have reached that tipping point sustain close to one billion people across the planet, a quarter of all marine life, and hundreds of thousands of jobs in Australia.

The report issued a very grim warning for the impacts of future global heating. We are dangerously close to further tipping points that will eradicate the Amazon rainforest, melt even more ice caps and disrupt ocean temperatures further. For us in Australia it means more climate-fuelled floods and fires, the widescale catastrophic destruction of nature, hundreds of thousands of job losses, and the demise of our agriculture and food security. In New South Wales the Minns Labor Government is still shipping coal out of the world's largest coal port like there is literally no tomorrow. It is hard to know which is worse: the Liberals, who deny and ignore the climate science, or the Labor Party, which acknowledges devastating climate impacts before it ignores the climate science anyway and continues to fuel global heating.

Both Labor and the Liberals take millions in political donations from the big polluters that have no regard for the people they harm. Both Labor and the Liberals allow one in two big polluting corporations to get away with paying no corporate tax. Both Labor and the Liberals are completely ignoring the science that shows that we will continue to reach tipping points if we approve any more climate-polluting coal and gas. While Labor Premier Chris Minns and his backers among the Liberals ignore the science and govern for the big polluters, the people are demanding a government that listens to the science and delivers for the community. It is up to the people to stop the climate-polluting coal, and that is exactly what the people are doing. It is that time again, folks! From 27 November until 2 December this year the People's Blockade of the world's largest coal port will be held once again in the Port of Newcastle. The people know that we cannot blow past those tipping points and that we must keep coal and gas in the ground.

ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (14:16): The Minns Labor Government is getting on with the job of fixing Sydney's busiest road corridors. After one of the wettest winters in two decades, there was a surge in repair work needed on the roads we use every day. In the last year alone, 10,900 potholes have been repaired across Greater Sydney. But we know there is always more to do. That is why the New South Wales Government is fast-tracking \$200 million to get the job done. In the past twelve months we filled 607 potholes in the Parramatta local government area, 518 in the Blacktown local government area, 306 in the Hills shire and 582 in Hawkesbury. Between August and September alone, 5,900 potholes were filled across Sydney.

The New South Wales Government is committed to making our roads safer and more reliable because we all deserve roads that we can depend on to get to work, school and home. In the past year, 1.57 million hours of maintenance work was completed across Sydney's roads, resulting in 10,879 potholes being repaired—the majority in Western Sydney. Nearly one million square metres of road was resurfaced, which is equivalent to more than 125 football fields, and 344,000 linear metres of new line marking was undertaken. Maintaining our roads is a job that never stops. I thank the road maintenance crews who work—rain, hail or shine—to keep our roads safe, and their unions. If people know of a pothole or a road that needs attention, they can contact their local council or Transport for NSW online or by phoning 131 700 to get it fixed.

SPARK FESTIVAL

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (14:18): I celebrate the work and success of a local startup and innovation festival—the Spark Festival. This year Spark runs from Monday 27 October to Sunday 2 November. I encourage members of Parliament in this House and the other place to check out the program and register for an event or four. Members who attend will join over 4,000 people who take part in the festival each year, from founders and academics to investors. There is something for every person with a policy mind interested in new ideas and real solutions, including a housing affordability panel, which my colleague the Hon. Chris Rath is on; a due diligence workshop; an I2N accelerator demo night at the University of Newcastle; and events like "The Social Enterprise Formula: How startups are combining profit and purpose" and "AI: Friend, Foe or Frenemy? A Western Sydney Community Conversation".

Importantly, every event across New South Wales, of which more than 100 are held during every festival, is free of charge. Spark Festival has been Australia's premier startup festival since 2016. It is run by local industry

stalwarts and advisers who volunteer inordinate hours to bring the show to life. They are supported by financial backers who sponsor the festival, including the City of Sydney, Decidr, Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer and Stone and Chalk. The New South Wales Government is noticeably absent. Spark Festival is a marvel of the entrepreneurial spirit we are lucky to have personified in New South Wales. Over 40,000 individuals comprise the active Spark Festival network, making it the largest tech sector network in Australia.

Founders and entrepreneurs usually run on the smell of an oily rag, yet the startup ecosystem collectively makes up just under 10 per cent of the New South Wales economy. According to Startup Genome, that is around \$70 billion of our approximately \$800 billion gross State product. However, there is a big connectivity and momentum risk facing the startup ecosystem. *Startup Daily* reported that according to Murray Hurps, the chair of Spark Festival, this year's festival coincides with an estimated decline in general startup activity of over 90 per cent. Murray Hurp said that this is "leaving government-backed spaces underutilised and founders struggling to find support". He has said that by the end of his time as CEO of Fishburners in 2017, the organisation had hosted 689 events in just one year.

The current state of play is dire in comparison. It is a threat to our State's economic growth. Spark Festival easily represents the largest contributor to new startup events this year, but there is a long way to go. I congratulate the founders and supporters who have filled the event line-up with ideas, expertise and enthusiasm. I give my heartfelt thanks to the Spark Festival team, including the festival leads Alexandra Hall, Calida Tang, Harry Godber, Kristy McSweeney, Lucinda Batey, Nicholas Chilton and Paul Wallbank. I also thank the board of directors: Murray Hurps, Anne-Marie Elias, Maria MacNamara and Maxine Sherrin.

GREYHOUND RACING INDUSTRY

The Hon. EMMA HURST (14:22): In the past year, 1,153 dogs died in the New South Wales greyhound racing industry. The Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission [GWIC] classified 440 of these deaths as being due to accidents, injuries or euthanasia due to injury. That means one dog is dying every 20 hours due to accidents or injuries. Those lives are lost not in isolation, but as part of an industry that treats these animals as disposable. The greyhound racing lobby wants the public to believe that deaths are rare, but we know from the data that that is simply not true.

I now respond to Greyhound Racing NSW, which claimed the figures in a recent Animal Justice Party social media post were misleading. The crux of the matter lies in definitions and transparency. The industry has attempted to confuse and downplay the number of deaths by shuffling some dead dogs into other categories. There is a category for the number of greyhounds that die on track. Another category includes the greyhounds that are taken off the track and die later, often due to injuries sustained in the race itself. In fact, there is a push within the industry to get dogs off the track even if they are fatally injured. This keeps the on-track death rates down because the dog then falls under the very broad category of "injuries and accidental deaths".

The greyhound racing industry then reports the on-track death statistics and hopes that people will be foolish enough not to realise the enormous number of dogs that have died from injuries. That number has skyrocketed dramatically, with a 79 per cent increase in six months according to GWIC's own figures. Moving the data around does not change the reality that hundreds of dogs are dying each year as a direct result of harm caused by the greyhound racing industry. Whether these deaths occurred when the dogs were training, kennelled or in transport or after races due to injury is irrelevant. They were killed by being forced into the greyhound racing industry. That is why the dogs died. They died because they were being used by this gambling industry. Hundreds of dogs die as a consequence of the industry's system.

How those dogs are being killed does not change the truth that this industry is built on death—dead dogs, dead dogs and more dead dogs. That is the grim legacy of greyhound racing and of every MP who continues to defend the continued killing of these dogs. The industry's selective use of statistics ignores the fundamental truth that the huge number of deaths we cited were reported by the regulator precisely because they are connected to the industry. The greyhound racing industry is responsible for the death of hundreds of dogs. Hundreds more dogs will die until this industry is outlawed.

Documents

NSW CHILDREN'S GUARDIAN

Production of Documents: Order

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:25): As I said earlier today, the Government does not oppose this Standing Order 52 motion. There has been an investigation into the Office of the Children's Guardian.

Recommendations have been made. We support the motion. There are two calls for papers on this matter, and we approved one of them during formal business today. I conclude my remarks by simply saying that the Government does not oppose the motion.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (14:26): The Government does not oppose this particular call for papers under Standing Order 52, which is private members' business item No. 2426 on the *Notice Paper*. This motion is, dare I say it, a welcome addition to my library. I am sure it is an interesting matter. The motion requests:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within seven days—

that is not the standard that I usually set. I usually give a bit more time as my default position. I used to give 21 or 28 days in the glory days. The call for papers relates to:

... the response provided by Mr Stephen Kinmond, OAM, relating to the Special Ministerial Inquiry into the Office of the Children's Guardian, conducted by Kate Eastman, AM, SC—

who has, of course, excluded me as a person who needs to return any documents under this order. This motion is persuasive, and I think the House should support it.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (14:27): I do not oppose the motion moved by the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones. I was previously a member of the Committee on Children and Young People, which has oversight of the statutory role to which this motion relates. It is important for me to provide on record my perspective on the sensitive matters in this Standing Order 52 motion. There is an existing, more extensive call for papers relating to this matter, which was moved by Ms Sue Higginson, but we are happy to cooperate with this further motion.

I put some matters on record relating to the report provided by Kate Eastman, AM, SC. The report found that Mr Kinmond had a close, personal relationship with a senior consultant within the sector that he regulated which amounted to an undeclared conflict of interest. With respect to complaints handling within the agency, the report found that Mr Kinmond failed to act consistently with the agency's code of ethics and conduct, failed to consider and apply relevant Office of the Children's Guardian policies and failed to meet the most basic standards of proper complaint handling.

The inquiry commissioner also found that Mr Kinmond failed to comply with public sector rules concerning the briefing of senior counsel with public funds. Following receipt of the report, the Minister formally advised Mr Kinmond that she considered these four aspects of his conduct to amount to misbehaviour under the Act. Mr Kinmond was provided a fair and reasonable opportunity to respond to the four specific findings and did so in a submission to the Minister.

The call for papers is seeking Mr Kinmond's submission in response to those findings. The Government has no issue whatsoever with providing Mr Kinmond's submission to members of the Legislative Council. As I said earlier, the Government has already supported a far more extensive Standing Order 52 motion moved by Ms Sue Higginson, which will likely see many more important documents that relate to this matter being provided. While the outcome of this process was regrettable, the process itself was fair, necessary and reasonable. The removal of a statutory officer is a serious matter, and it was not taken lightly. Finally, it is important to recognise the competent, capable and dedicated staff at the Office of the Children's Guardian who do critically important work protecting children and young people every day. We acknowledge it has been a difficult time for them, and we thank them for their ongoing commitment and work.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (14:30): In reply: I will not take up too much time because I note we are still on item No. 1 on private members' business day, and it is almost three o'clock in the afternoon. Government members have been filibustering pretty much most of the morning. I note that most of the comments that were made by Government members reiterated what the Minister said in the other House and could have been tabled to save time. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Motions

NSW HEALTH SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Dr AMANDA COHN (14:31): I seek leave to amend private members' business item No. 2370 by inserting at the end of paragraph (3):

, noting that discrimination based on protected attributes, including race, disability, age, sex, intersex status, gender identity and sexual orientation, is already prohibited by Commonwealth and New South Wales laws and the NSW Health Code of Conduct.

Leave granted.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Accordingly, I move:

- (1) That this House notes that NSW Health has recently released a final draft of the Using Social Media policy which includes a provision that staff must not "engage in any activity that may adversely affect ... public trust in their employing agency".
- (2) That this House reaffirms its support for the work of NSW Health employees who provide quality care in sometimes extraordinary and difficult circumstances.
- (3) That this House calls on the Government to ensure the finalised Using Social Media policy does not prohibit NSW Health employees from expressing personal views about social or political issues, including advocating for improved working conditions and better health services, noting that discrimination based on protected attributes, including race, disability, age, sex, intersex status, gender identity and sexual orientation, is already prohibited by Commonwealth and New South Wales laws and the NSW Health Code of Conduct.

NSW Health employees are busting their guts across the State every day to care for their communities. In many cases, they are doing so in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. These are staff who care deeply about their patients, and they work under sometimes extremely difficult circumstances. When they speak up about the health system, they should be respected and heard, not gagged. NSW Health has recently released a draft social media policy, which is attempting to provide the ministry with disproportionate oversight of NSW Health employees' private social media channels. The policy seems to be underpinned by the drive to manage the reputation of NSW Health and the Government, stating that healthcare workers play an important role in maintaining public trust and confidence in our public sector institutions and may not engage in any activity that may adversely impact their standing. Doctors representing the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation [ASMOF] have expressed concern that the policy would mean they will be silenced when speaking out on workplace issues, such as calling for better staffing levels. Dr Ian Korbel said:

The idea that advocacy for improvements in the system is a bad thing, but putting up with an inadequate service is a good thing, seems ill-informed.

Advocating on behalf of their patients is not just a right for healthcare workers but a duty. I took an oath of fellowship to the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners that included an extension of my commitments beyond individuals to the health and wellbeing of all people. As the Government continues to be responsible for mass resignations, ballooning emergency wait times and stagnating pay for nurses and midwives, it is more important than ever to support Health staff, not to silence them, or punish them for advocating for improvements in the health system. If NSW Health does not want to be criticised on social media, instead of intimidating and gagging staff, it must hear and act on their concerns when they are raised.

This is not just a theoretical risk. My regional community of Albury is astonished that well-respected general surgeon John Stuchbery is being prevented from continuing to provide breast cancer surgery in the public system at Albury hospital. The health service has provided no explanation for the termination of his contract, but John has been an outspoken advocate in the community and local media on countless matters, including criticising the planned redevelopment of Albury hospital. The policy encourages staff to raise concerns through internal departmental channels, channels that too many staff know do not effect change. Journalist Jon Stone put it best when he said:

One reason people insist that you use the proper channels to change things is because they have control of the proper channels, and they're confident it won't work.

Most egregiously, the draft advised employees to report concerns around another staff member's social media use to their manager, although I understand this is now being watered down thanks to advocacy by ASMOF and The Greens. The draft policy reveals an extraordinary hypocrisy from NSW Health, who expect healthcare workers to remain silent while also failing to protect their privacy. Confidential documents, including passports and medical credentials for more than 600 medical staff, were recently leaked by NSW Health in a failure to implement the most basic protections to safeguard personal data.

Finally, NSW Health staff continue to be policed for their advocacy against the genocide occurring in Gaza. In February 2024, after receiving an increase in vexatious complaints, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency revised its social media guidelines to clarify that doctors calling for peace in Gaza are unlikely to trigger investigation. This has been supported by the Australian Medical Association. Despite this, Professor Peter Macdonald, a renowned senior staff cardiologist at St Vincent's Hospital, is under pressure to be removed for remarks made at a public forum about a foreign government. Criticism of governments, domestic or foreign, is normal in a healthy democratic political discourse. The Greens call on the Government to ensure that the finalised NSW Health social media policy does not prohibit employees from expressing personal views about social or political issues, including advocating for improved working conditions and better health services.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (14:36): I lead for the Government on private members' business item No. 2370. I indicate that we will not support the motion, as amended. Indeed, we have a further amendment. I move:

That the question be amended by omitting in paragraph (3) "personal views about social or political issues, including advocating for improved working conditions and better health services." and inserting instead "their personal views about social and political issues, provided this is done respectfully and in a way that does not breach their existing obligations under the Code of Ethics and Conduct for NSW Government Sector Employees and the NSW Health Code of Conduct."

I thank the member for her interest in this matter, and I understand the office of the Minister for Health has been in contact with the member to discuss these concerns. As always, I thank the staff members of the Minister for Health for their incredible work in this and many other matters. The office of the Public Service Commission has developed a social media guidance, which was published online in March 2025 to provide advice for all New South Wales government agencies and government sector employees on the use of social media. In line with the Public Service Commission guideline, NSW Health is currently updating their existing social media guidance for staff, along with drafting and widely consulting with NSW Health staff, health agencies and unions on a new draft NSW Health social media policy. The draft policy is yet to be finalised and published. To clarify for the House, the Public Service Commission guide *Use of social media in a private capacity* holds ultimate authority over all government agencies and their employees in relation to government sector employees' use of private social media. The guide stipulates:

You are able to participate in public debate on political and social issues in a private capacity, including on social media. However, you must not act in a way that casts doubt on your ability, or the ability of your agency, to act impartially, apolitically and professionally in the course of your employment.

NSW Health is committed to fostering an environment of respect and inclusivity and supports the responsible and respectful use of social media. This includes the right of all individuals to express their views, support causes or engage in public discussions, including advocating in relation to their roles and health services. Staff must be mindful of their responsibilities and visibility as public sector employees when engaging on social media, both in their personal capacity or as employees of NSW Health, because what is said and shared on social media can influence the public's trust in our health services. Maintaining that trust is essential for everyone to feel welcome, respected and safe.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (14:39): I lead for the Opposition and thank the member for bringing this motion. Her credibility in this sphere is well known and understood. I respect it enormously; I want her to know that. We support the motion as amended. I note the Government's amendment, which we will also support. Our doctors, nurses and health staff do amazing work. They are there for us on the worst days, and they work under incredible pressure. All of us in this place know the record pressures that our health system faces. In the April to June quarter this year, there were 785,084 emergency department attendances and 515,245 patients admitted. That is the highest of any quarter ever. We know the Minns Government is asking our healthcare professionals to do more with less.

We saw that when it cut the health budget, in real terms, two years running. We saw that when the Government let psychiatrists resign en masse earlier this year, and when doctors were forced to strike for the first time this century. There is no greater demonstration of the pressures that those professionals are under than those examples. We are seeing the results of the Minns Government's mismanagement of the health system. The latest data shows that elective surgeries being performed on time fell by 10 per cent compared with last year, and 33.1 per cent of patients are leaving the emergency department within six hours, which is way behind the Government's target of 80 per cent. We recognise that there are many times when healthcare staff will speak up and share their stories and concerns about the health system in New South Wales.

They should not fear telling the truth. They should not feel any fear in telling the truth. But it is also true for any employee in 2025 that how you use social media is important. People do have private lives, and it is an important freedom that people can express their political and social views, but we have seen some cases of health staff who have not engaged on social media in respectful ways, which, in our view, risks bringing our health system into disrepute. For example, if a doctor or nurse was posting something on social media while wearing the NSW Health uniform, the public could mistakenly infer that that view is reflecting the view of NSW Health. Because our healthcare staff are highly trusted by the public, it is not surprising that when they speak, people listen.

Like any employee in this State, individuals are subject to the employee codes of conduct. At the same time, there have been countless incidents where the public may not have been made aware of just how bad things might be in the health system if professionals did not speak up. When you consider the mental health crisis in New South Wales, we saw so many psychiatrists in the State seek to share their stories of disappointment at the Government's handling of the mass resignation of psychiatrists.

I seek an extension of time.

Leave granted.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: This is important. The mental health crisis in New South Wales must be conveyed through psychiatrists sharing their stories of disappointment in the Government's handling of that mass resignation. The Government needs to consider the many healthcare staff in this State who do not feel that internal complaints mechanisms work for them. Many staff in those hospitals feel their only avenue is to raise a concern publicly. Work does need to be done to strengthen the process by which staff raise concerns at hospitals. We say that NSW Health should also consider whether positions like chairs or staff of medical councils should have certain exemptions from the proposed policy. They are elected by their colleagues, and at times they may need to publicly express their concerns if internal processes have failed.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (14:43): I make a brief contribution. I thank Dr Amanda Cohn for moving the motion, which I support. I question what sort of nation we are living in when a government agency tells its employees what they can and cannot do in their own private time. If it was a departmental-issued device—for example, a mobile phone that was given as part of work conditions—perhaps you could understand some involvement from the employer, but to tell you what you can and cannot do with your own device, in your own time, is quite draconian and authoritarian. It concerns me that government agencies would inflict this on their workers. I am just wondering where the unionists are here and what they have to say about what is happening to their workers. Dr Amanda Cohn has brought to light what is happening in NSW Health, but I can guarantee that this policy is across the board in all government departments.

If it were not for brave people coming forward and telling us about their concerns in various workplaces, we would not know. Everybody knows that I have had very close involvement with a number of whistleblowers in the New South Wales police in recent times. It has really helped shine some light on some serious management issues. You yourself, Deputy President Boyd, in your work at the moment on the Law and Justice committee looking into workers compensation, would have heard from Mr Chris McCann. I note the Treasurer is in the Chamber, and he knows him very well from our first round of dealing with Mr McCann, and the valuable insights we get because people are willing to tell us what takes place in their workplace. This policy is a way of shutting them down and that should not be allowed to happen. It just goes against the grain of democracy and freedom of speech that we all hold and cherish so dearly. For those reasons, I support the motion.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (14:45): I make a brief contribution to this debate. When I first came into this Chamber, there was a controversy in the public domain around the issue of Israel Folau and the comments that he made on his social media, and the question around whether his employer, the rugby union, should be able to terminate his contract because of comments that he had made in a private capacity, outside of his responsibilities as a player. At the time, the left of the political spectrum was vigorously against Israel Folau being retained, and it became a cause célèbre for my colleague the Hon. Mark Latham. It foreshadowed a problem that I believe our society has yet to grapple with: how do we balance the tension between the capacity of employees to do real damage to their employer versus the rights of individuals to have some free speech on a range of matters. The trend in the public sector and the private sector of increasingly asserting management oversight to curtail what people are able to say in a private capacity is dangerous for a democracy.

Unlike parliamentarians, the vast majority of people who work for employers or some kind of corporate body, whether in the State or private sector, do not enjoy parliamentary privilege. As a society, we cannot countenance the notion that because we need to earn a living, we must surrender our rights to be able to speak on matters that we think are appropriate. We need to take a step back and consider this very carefully. In a range of organisations there is a tendency to insist on a chain of command to deal with the internal goings-on, and often that is used to try to silence those who are raising genuine concerns about the operation of that organisation. If we want a system where people feel free to blow the whistle, then we need to be very careful about adopting approaches like this.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (14:48): I thank my colleague Dr Amanda Cohn for bringing this motion. She has brought a really important matter to the House, and I acknowledge the very diligent and hard work she has been doing on this matter behind the scenes to try to wind back some of the really grotesque proposed overreaches of this policy. The clear intent of the NSW Health social media policy, particularly as first drafted, was an attempt to stifle the voices of health professionals speaking up for safer conditions for staff and patients in NSW Health facilities.

It is no surprise that NSW Health has sought to crack down on its employees being able to raise the alarm over their working conditions, as the health system continues to groan under the weight of chronic staffing shortages and numerous contested industrial disputes on foot or only recently resolved. I have serious concerns that the proposed policy is not in keeping with the relevant industrial relations legislation in this State, which

makes clear that an employer must not victimise an employee because the person engages or proposes to engage in industrial organising activities; engages in or proposes to engage in a public or political activity, unless it interferes with the performance of the employee's duties; or who makes a complaint about a workplace matter that the person considers is not safe or a risk to health.

This is just another example of a government that is allergic to transparency and scrutiny. The Government may not like it when the truth of a matter comes out, but the Government's convenience and comfort cannot be the guiding principle that rules the day. It is not only a slippery slide towards the stifling of personal and political expression for government employees, and a restriction on the industrial rights of health workers, but it is also a dangerous move to obscure and hide from public scrutiny the true conditions of NSW Health facilities. The public deserves to know the truth. Unfortunately, with the Government being so secretive, we are left to rely on the voices of workers who continue to raise the alarm. I thank my colleague Dr Amanda Cohn for raising this important issue and for standing up for the rights of political expression and speech for public sector workers. I also thank the health unions, who are doing fantastic work supporting their members across this State, protecting their rights and interests, and building and protecting the health system we all deserve.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (14:50): Workers are not thought police slaves. Workers have a right to articulate their views in the workplace, particularly if they are in the public interest. I thank Dr Amanda Cohn for bringing this matter forward. The motion was left over from a previous Wednesday, but it is a critically important matter, and it coincides with the crisis in New South Wales public hospital emergency departments. It is no coincidence that this repression of staff views and speech coincides with the crisis we have in emergency departments. In some part it is a Federal issue arising from the lack of aged care and National Disability Insurance Scheme beds in our hospitals. But it is also a State issue, with some funding questions, some management questions and a drop in hospital standards. I know of a case where a hospital, having seen an elderly woman die because of mistreatment, took the attitude, "We don't go into repercussions; we just look forward to the future." That is an open slather for it to provide any old treatment and to accept any malpractice and problems.

We have a lot of issues in our hospitals, and a good way to solve them is to listen to the staff who know about them, to have their free speech articulate not only the nature of the problem but also the solutions that the State Government needs to follow. Putting the dead hand of censorship on our hospital staff and punishing them for their views on social media is one of the worst things the Government could do in terms of getting a solution. We should be listening to and respecting the views of the staff. It is a trend for employers to think that in the world of social media they can be the feudal lord over their employees. I was very glad to hear the Hon. Anthony D'Adam talk about the Israel Folau matter in his contribution; in many ways it was the origin of this issue in Australia, which has now become very widespread. Employers, particularly public sector employers, need to recognise that workers have rights. One of those rights is to articulate their point of view, and if that is clearly in the public interest they should not be punished. They should not be censured; they should be listened to for the solutions that they bring forward.

I have read the NSW Health social media policy; it is draconian. It is shocking that the State Government is doing this. Quite frankly, Ryan Park should reverse the policy and basically say, "If you've got a good staff suggestion for how we solve this crisis, we want to hear from you." The Government should be open, receptive and transparent. Ryan Park is not a public policy technician. He has no public policy ideas on how to solve the problems in our emergency departments. He thinks the answer is to close down the debate and use the Northern Beaches privatisation issue as a distraction. That is his political strategy, and it is typical of the Minns Government—so narrow, so failed, so hopeless, so against the public interest and, for a Labor government, so against the basic rights of workers. Respect government workers and allow them to speak.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (14:53): The Libertarian Party supports this motion because we believe in free speech. There is a big misconception about what the principle of free speech is. I would like to clear up that misconception. If someone blocks a person on social media, that is their voluntary decision to not hear from them further, and that is not a breach of free speech principles. If someone asks a person to leave their home because they do not like what that person is saying, that is freedom of association and also not a breach of free speech principles. If a private sector employer offers someone a private sector employment contract, and that contract prohibits an employee from speaking up about politics, that is also not a free speech issue, because that prospective employee can voluntarily agree to accept that term of the contract, or ask that it be amended, or they can decline the offer of employment.

The principle of free speech is narrowly concerned with one aspect of prohibiting what a citizen can say, and that is when it is the government and its endless cache of weapons trying to shut someone up. Governments and the bosses that run them are inherently insecure. They want to cling to power and the prestige of high office. That is why governments throughout the ages have lusted to curb speech. Libertarians see the government as nothing more than the most heavily armed gang out there. We look at the atrocities of history and see a common

denominator: big bossy government. We do not want to interfere with the rights of government workers expressing a political view. In fact, if anything, we want to encourage public criticism of the government, and government workers should not be inhibited in any way. The libertarian principles of freedom of association and voluntary contracting apply to free people in a free society, but they do not extend to the government, which is a totally different type of organisation.

Unlike all other people and organisations in our country, only the government has the supposed authority to use violence, coercion and theft to hurt, control and take from others. They obfuscate this reality with the use of polite and legalistic language and references to non-existent social contracts. But when you cut through all the semantic games, the fundamental difference between the government and the rest of society is that we have to deal with each other through consent and negotiation, while it can simply impose its preferences through force. That is why the usual rules of polite society do not apply to the Government. We cannot simply treat it as one more employer among many setting social media restrictions to prevent public criticism. The Government is not simply an employer; it has a massive power imbalance over the rest of society, and so we must jealously protect our right to criticise it. The only sustainable solution is to weaken the power of the Government in the long run. But until that is done, it is crucial that government workers are free to think and speak freely about politics and the state of their government department.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (14:56): I make a brief contribution to the debate on this motion regarding the NSW Health Using Social Media policy. While I respect the principle of free speech and the right of individuals, including NSW Health employees, to express personal views on social or political issues, I register some reservations about the implications of this motion. Free speech is a cornerstone of our democracy, allowing robust debate and advocacy for change such as to improve working conditions or health services. However, this freedom is not absolute; it must not cross into threats of violence, particularly from those entrusted with public care. This motion references NSW Health employees who provide "quality care" in challenging circumstances—a sentiment I wholeheartedly support. Our healthcare workers are vital, often working under immense pressure. We have heard in this House, on repeated occasions, about the healthcare crisis in public hospitals. The pressure and responsibility put on healthcare workers is enormous and cannot go unrecognised.

I remind members of previous discussions in this House about two former Bankstown hospital nurses, Ahmad Rashad Nadir and Sarah Abu Lebdeh, who allegedly made antisemitic remarks at work. According to reports, one of them bragged about refusing to treat Israeli patients and threatened to kill them. Mr Nadir allegedly referenced sending Israeli patients to hell, in Arabic language. Those statements, reportedly made during work hours on hospital premises, are deeply concerning. The healthcare worker role demands impartiality and trust; such rhetoric is unacceptable. Imagine being a Jewish patient under the care of those nurses, aware of such sentiments. Public confidence in our health system hinges on ensuring all patients are treated equally, without prejudice.

Antisemitism has no place in New South Wales hospitals. Threats of violence cross a clear line, undermining the trust that patients have in healthcare professionals. I support the right to free expression, but we draw a line, a firm boundary, at rhetoric that incites harm or discrimination such that these reports have detailed. I raised similar concerns in budget estimates hearings about Teachers for Palestine. Where political activism risks disrupting apolitical classrooms, the same principle applies. Public servants, whether they are teachers or nurses, must prioritise their duty to serve all community members without bias. I urge members to consider these concerns. While free speech is precious, it must not shield hate or violence. I support the amendment moved by the Hon. Emily Suvaal.

Dr AMANDA COHN (14:59): In reply: I thank members who contributed to the debate: the Hon. Emily Suvaal, the Hon. Natalie Ward, the Hon. Rod Roberts, the Hon. Anthony D'Adam, Ms Abigail Boyd, the Hon. Mark Latham, the Hon. John Ruddick and even the Hon. Rachel Merton who, it seems, went ahead with a pre-prepared speech that did not take into account that the motion was amended to make very clear that the right to express personal and political views must take into account existing State and Commonwealth laws about discrimination against people in relation to protected attributes.

I do not support the Government amendment. If the Government supports NSW Health employees being able to communicate their personal political views within existing public service codes of conduct, why is the Government introducing a new social media policy at NSW Health? It would seem from the Government's amendment that there is no need for this additional policy to be brought in. To be very clear, what is being proposed is very different to current policy with its extra focus on protecting the reputation of the Government and the organisation. This is what has caused so much distress among health workers and their representatives.

Trust in public health services really does matter. Community members need to feel safe and to know that they can get care at their local public health service. I note that during industrial action taken by the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation [ASMOF] earlier this year, it was the Government putting forward

misinformation. The Government was telling the community that people's chemotherapy appointments had been cancelled because of ASMOF's industrial action. That was incorrect. The public was relying on brave health workers, doctors, speaking directly to the Government through their union to correct the record—that chemotherapy appointments were not cancelled during industrial action and that it was safe for oncology patients to attend. Doctors had organised among themselves to ensure that essential care was provided during the industrial action. That is only one example of whistleblowing in the public interest.

The Hon. Natalie Ward referred to psychiatrists who, through their mass resignation, drew attention to really serious systemic issues in the mental health system. The public owes its thanks to the psychiatrists for raising that, not on their own behalf, but on behalf of everyone in New South Wales who needs mental health care and their families. There was some discussion around the need for NSW Health employees to have a pathway within NSW Health to have their voices heard. That is obviously critical. When I raised the issue with NSW Health during budget estimates hearings, in response to a question about the ability of chairs of medical councils attending board meetings to have their voices heard, Susan Pearce said:

All of them, whether you're a porter, a nurse, an allied health physio, occupational therapist, a doctor—everyone needs a mechanism to have their voice heard.

What I am hearing directly from NSW Health employees is that that is not currently the case. I urge the Government to ensure that concerns will be heard and acted on.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): Dr Amanda Cohn has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Emily Suvaal has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): The question now is that the motion as amended be agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

COMMUNITY PRESCHOOLS DAY OF ACTION

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (15:04): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that on Wednesday 15 October 2025 early childhood teachers, educators, parents and community members across New South Wales will take part in a Day of Action to call for fair pay and sustainable funding for community-based preschools.
- (2) That this House acknowledges that:
 - (a) community preschools across New South Wales are literally "pinked up" this week, with children, families and educators proudly showing their support for early childhood teachers;
 - (b) the week of action reflects the deep respect local communities have for their preschool directors, teachers and educators, who provide high-quality education for thousands of children, particularly in regional, rural and disadvantaged areas;
 - (c) these preschools consistently lead the nation, with around 75 per cent exceeding the National Quality Standard, and are recognised in Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority research as "flagship" models of early learning;
 - (d) despite this, teachers in community preschools are paid up to 30 per cent less than their colleagues in New South Wales schools, threatening workforce retention and the future of high-quality preschool education; and
 - (e) the Minns Labor Government has so far ignored the sector's urgent calls for reform.
- (3) That this House calls on the Government to:
 - (a) deliver fair pay for the early childhood teachers working in the State's community preschools; and
 - (b) commit to maintaining and strengthening the high-quality "flagship" model that has made New South Wales community preschools a leader in early childhood education.
- (4) That this House congratulates all those taking part in the Day of Action on standing up for fairness, quality and respect in early childhood education.

At the outset I say what an absolute delight it was to join many members of this Parliament, including Madam Deputy President, Ms Abigail Boyd; the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Damien Tudehope; the Leader of The Nationals, Dugald Saunders; and a number of my parliamentary colleagues, in Martin Place with more than 500 early childhood teachers and educators.

The Hon. Mark Latham: Point of order: No member of the Executive Government is present in the Chamber.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The Hon. Emily Suvaal is present.

The Hon. Mark Latham: There is no responsible Minister present to respond to the motion that has been moved.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could the clock be stopped?

The Hon. Mark Latham: Are you part of the Executive Government these days? Where's Minister Houssos?

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: I represent the Government during debate on the motion. The Hon. Mark Latham wants me to sit in the chair at the centre table.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): The Clerk will stop the clock. The advice from the Clerk is that there is no need for the Hon. Emily Suvaal to sit in the chair at the centre table. There is no point of order. One minute will be added to the clock for the Hon. Sarah Mitchell's contribution.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Let me start again. It is much better for my socials if I can get a run, so I thank the Hon. Mark Latham. I am pleased to move the motion and acknowledge many of my parliamentary colleagues who joined us in Martin Place today with more than 500 community preschool teachers, directors and educators rallying on behalf of the many families and children they support day in, day out, in this State. I acknowledge that it was disappointing that no-one from the Government attended and that the Government did not provide a statement or any type of response to the rally. It is very unusual for the community preschool sector to come together like they did today. They felt the need to come to Sydney and many of them travelled some distance. They wanted to send a clear message to the Government that they are crying out for support.

A show of hands from those attending the rally indicated it was their very first rally, and that was the overwhelming majority. That is really telling. The Government should not be ignoring this issue and none of us should be taking it lightly. A lot of the work of this House and the committee chaired by Madam Deputy President, of which I am a member, shows it has been a tough time for the early education and care sector over the past few months in this State. We have all been appalled by the many horror stories of the poor treatment of children in some childcare services, but the one consistent theme is that this is not happening in community preschools. Our community preschools offer some of the highest levels of quality and care in this State, but they have a very real and very significant funding problem.

The Government will say that it is not the primary employer of the staff and therefore it can wipe its hands of any responsibility. That is a real cop-out. It has been said in this House previously that the State Government is the primary source of funding for community preschools, which are not-for-profit and community-run. Quite often the local committee will be made up of parents or community members whose children attended community preschools in the past. They get their money for all their operational funding from the State Government and a small amount from parents' fees. They deliberately keep fees low, or free, so that children can access their services. The Government has a role to play in this.

One of the challenges in recent times has been the pay parity issue. I acknowledge that the issue is not new, but the pay gap has increased significantly. People working as teachers in community preschools with exactly the same qualification as a teacher working in local public schools and preschools are now paid up to 30 per cent less. The pay gap has widened and the ability for preschools to keep staff is becoming more and more challenging. When the teachers' pay deal was announced, I received a call from a community preschool director in my community. She did not at all begrudge the pay rise for classroom teachers, but said she now earns less as a director with almost 20 years experience than a first-year graduate teacher in a public school, despite having the same degree. It could easily be argued that, effectively, the director has the role of a principal of a school. Her duties are complex because there are many rules and regulations, staff to manage, parents to inform and duties to ensure that children get the education and care they need. That gap is a problem, so the Government really needs to find a way forward.

I acknowledge some crossbench members and also some Government members who have had private conversations with me and others, noting that they think it is a concern. I acknowledge Ms Trish Doyle, the member for Blue Mountains—I am sure she will not mind—who co-hosted a morning tea yesterday with some of the preschool directors and staff in attendance. This is a problem for which the Government has the levers to get the solution on the table. It announced a \$100 million fund for community preschools a few weeks ago, but that is not a fix to the current problem. Rather it is to try to get community preschools to change their operating model to be more like long day care, but that is not the part of the market that they service, and it is not what they want.

The Government should give that money to the preschools, so that they can top up their operational funding, so that they can provide more pay for their staff. It is not that hard. The Government will eventually have to come to the table on this. If there is a group that it does not want to annoy, it is the more than 500 community preschools and directors, and the parents who back them in. They came from all over the State to be here today,

supported by the parents—the mums, the dads and the carers—who were happy to see their local preschool close its doors in order to back in the teachers in solidarity. It is a big issue. The Government should be supporting this motion and it should come to the table to find a way forward so that those staff do not have to come to Martin Place again. The Government needs to get it sorted.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (15:10): I move:

That the question be amended by omitting paragraphs (2), (3) and (4) and inserting instead:

- (2) That this House notes the resolution of the House of 17 September 2025 regarding the community preschool funding model, which stated:
 - (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 to 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, due to varying industrial arrangements between State government employees and those covered under the Fair Work Act;
 - (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, due to varying industrial arrangements between State government employees and those covered under the Fair Work Act;
 - (e) the Commonwealth Government has funded 15 per cent pay increases for workers in long day care services;
 - (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;
 - (h) 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, which is a matter for consideration by the Fair Work Commission;
 - (i) funding for community preschools is partially 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;

I seek an extension of time of a further five minutes, as I have not yet finished reading the amendment.

Leave not granted.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: My understanding—and I am happy to seek confirmation from the Clerk—is that I have to read the amendment; I cannot just table it. If I can table it, I am happy to do so.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): The Hon. Emily Suvaal will resume her seat while I confer with the Clerk. I am advised that it is best to say that copies are available from the Clerks. Members are not required to read an amendment in full. Given that the initial time allocated for the member to speak was three minutes, an extra five minutes would be out of order, and she would still need to seek leave. I suggest to the Hon. Emily Suvaal that she inform members that copies are available from the Clerks, and that she seek leave for an extension of time.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: I thank the Deputy President for her clarification. Copies of the amendment are available from the Clerks, including the balance of the amendment:

- (j) 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;
 - (k) in July 2025, the Government sought to withdraw from the bargaining process, as the government is not the employer in the community preschool sector;
 - (l) 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;
 - (m) the average cash on hand of parties to the supported bargaining process has increased from approximately \$685,000 in the financial year 2022-2023 to approximately \$738,000 in 2023-2024, an increase of 7.72 per cent; and
 - (n) 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.
- (3) That this House encourages all parties to participate in negotiations in good faith.
- (4) That this House calls on the bargaining parties 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) paying workers fairly in community preschools;
 - (c) acknowledging the important programs in the 2025-2026 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 a 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 profession learning.

I seek an extension of time of a further one minute to complete my remarks.

Leave not granted.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (15:14): It is totally disrespectful to the mover of motion, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, and to the House that the Acting Minister for Education and Early Learning is not in the Chamber and that the Parliamentary Secretary for the unrelated areas of Trade and Small Business is reading out material written for her by staff. This is a crucial issue. I got on the train at Campbelltown this morning and five preschool workers—dedicated, loving, caring, professional people—had driven up from Wagga and stayed in Mittagong overnight. They came to the train station and took my reassurance that the train was the best way to get to the city, given that the M5 was a parking lot. They have given up days out of their schedules to be here for this protest and this day of action, and they deserve respect from the Minns Government. The Acting Minister for Education and Early Learning should be in the Chamber as the shadow Minister for Education and Early Learning moves this important motion.

The Hon. Bob Nanva: Point of order: It is not in order to be critical of a Minister who may or may not be in the Chamber when a member of the Executive, who has carriage of a matter, is here. I put on record that the Acting Minister is on a pair.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): I will seek advice from the Clerk on the point of order. There is no point of order. The member may continue.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I am reflecting on the disrespect. I understand that the Hon. Emily Suvaal gets shoehorned into these roles, but not from the Trade and Small Business perspective. Where is the Leader of the Government? She has always got a lot to say about things of importance. What about the preschool workers who have given up their time and effort today for a crucial issue for the future of our young children, the quality of care? Where is the Treasurer? Where is the Deputy Leader of the Government?

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: Point of order: I am in the Chamber as a representative of the Executive in my role as Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Small Business. My understanding is that there is nothing in the standing orders that would preclude me from leading on a motion on private members' business day. Further, my

child is in attendance at a community preschool today, so I think that well qualifies me to have a comment on the matter.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: We can all say that. I have been to more community preschools than you have had green apples, don't you worry about that.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): Order! There is no point of order. I remind members that all reflections and imputations of improper motives are disorderly. The Hon. Mark Latham will return to the substance of the motion.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Government members have eaten up my time. I will speak a second time to move an amendment, if I may. I say to the Government that if it took this issue seriously, it would have serious senior Ministers present in the Chamber. That is all.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): I advise the Hon. Mark Latham that he cannot speak a second time in order to move an amendment. To be clear, members must move an amendment within the time allocated.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (15:18): I attended the rally outside Parliament at lunchtime today. One thing that really struck me about that rally was that one of the organisers asked those in attendance, "How many of you have never, ever been to a demonstration before?" Of those people demonstrating in Martin Place at lunchtime, 90 per cent of them put up their hands to indicate that they had never, ever been to a demonstration before. That should tell members something. The viability of community preschools and childcare centres is a massive issue. If the Government has a stated aim of making those childcare centres and community childcare centres close, the best way to do it is to make sure they have no funds to staff them. That is the best way to make sure they no longer have the ability to survive.

Opportunities will then be available for private operators or whatever to fill that gap and charge fees. Effectively, the demand for government funding will disappear. If that is the stated intention of the Government, it ought to clearly say, "We don't want you." There are 700 of these centres, so maybe a lot of money is to be made by making sure they all close, thereby shifting the cost to the private sector so that consumers have to find that funding out of their own pocket. On the evidence that is available today, those centres are often attended by the most underprivileged and vulnerable people in our communities. Often they cannot afford to attend private centres and are given a helping hand and good start in life by community childcare centres.

It is an absolute abrogation of responsibility for the Government to say, "This is someone else's problem. We're not the employer." The funding for those centres comes from the Government. If the government funding is inadequate for proper pay rises to ensure that those centres are properly staffed, that is a failure of the Government. To walk away saying, "Someone else is the employer. Wait for the Fair Work Commission to make a decision," so that the employer will have to find that funding is effectively saying, "We don't want you in our community." That would be a disgrace.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (15:21): I support the motion moved by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell. I spoke on it at length last time, so I will keep my contribution brief so that all members get a chance to speak. I move:

That the question be amended by inserting at the end:

- (5) That this House acknowledges that the 2022 Matt Kean \$5 billion Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund to, in large part, finance new childcare centres and places was ill-advised public policy as it left the New South Wales Government funding a Commonwealth responsibility—the folly of reverse cost-shifting.
- (6) That this House accordingly calls on the Government to end its funding of this Commonwealth Government responsibility and redirect childcare funding to recurrent support of community preschools, thereby assisting those preschools in being able to afford significant pay increases for preschool staff as per the IEU claim before the Fair Work Commission.

Members have discussed at length how important community preschools are to society. They provide a valuable service to the community. Some of those children who attend them come from lower socioeconomic positions because their parents cannot afford the exorbitant childcare fees at privately run centres. We know about the quality of the staff that those facilities employ, and we have all looked at the pay scale graphs. If we do not retain those good preschool teachers, where will our kids go? I do not blame teachers for leaving this part of the industry and chasing better or more sufficient wages in other areas, but we cannot allow that to happen. We need to retain them in community preschools. It is a very important matter, and I thank the Hon. Sarah Mitchell for bringing the motion to the House.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (15:23): It is a very fine amendment. I thank my colleague the Hon. Rod Roberts for moving it. Its purpose is to come up with a solution. It is one thing to identify the problem, and both sides seem to be doing that in different ways, but it is a different thing to come up with a solution. Three years ago Matt Kean made a huge fiscal error. He decided to fund things that are the Commonwealth's responsibility.

In a desperate bid to win the election, his budget included funding for childcare centres, which are a Commonwealth responsibility. What sort of State Treasurer engages in reverse cost shifting, saying to the Commonwealth, "We will fund your responsibility so that you do not have to do as much."

I am sure Jim Chalmers welcomed that act of lunacy by the former Liberal Party Treasurer, who set up a \$5 billion fund that had zero impact on female workforce participation and has not solved the problem of so-called childcare deserts. That money should now become recurrent funding for the community preschools that we honour, respect and support so we can say, "Here is some money that is available for this legitimate purpose." It is a State Government funding purpose that would help community preschools to meet the Independent Education Union of Australia's pay demand in the Fair Work Commission. It is a legitimate demand to give those workers what they deserve for the tremendous work they do in early education. That is the solution.

I urged the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance to consider that solution some time ago, so it is a shame that they are not in the Chamber. To continue the Matt Kean approach of reverse cost-shifting to fund preschools for the Commonwealth that they would never help us with is fiscal vandalism and silly in the circumstance. Let us take what is left of the \$5 billion, put it into community preschool recurrent funding, and help those workers get their pay increase. That is the logical solution on their day of action.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (15:25): On behalf of The Greens, I wholeheartedly support the motion and thank the Hon. Sarah Mitchell for moving it. We had a great time standing at the top of Martin Place at lunchtime with the over 500 preschool teachers, directors and parents—and no doubt the children who supported them from home. The sector is full of incredibly dedicated, passionate people working in community preschools because they care. They do not view it as babysitting; it is about educating our youngest learners. In the early years of a child's life the brain produces a million neural connections every second. That is when a child is begging for as much information as they can possibly get to set them up for life.

Community preschools are quality centres, with 75 per cent of them rated as exceeding the national standard, as opposed to 25 per cent sector wide. Only 25 per cent of all of those privatised, corporatised, profit-seeking, cost-cutting long daycare centres exceed the national standard, whereas community preschools are at 75 per cent. The research shows an absolutely undoubted link between centres that exceed those standards and much better education and wellbeing outcomes, such as NAPLAN results and other indicators as children get older. Meeting the standard is not enough to achieve that; they need to be exceeded. This great subsector of the early childhood education sector is doing so well, but its workers are perversely paid less.

The current Government's response to everything that has been uncovered in early childhood education in the past year has been to look at how to punish people for wrongdoing after the event. I ask the Government to look at finding and nurturing the centres that are inherently safer and better quality, encouraging them and getting more of them. The only way to do that is by paying their staff well. That is so logical that it blows my mind that members are even debating it. If we want safe, quality early childhood in this country, we need to invest in the services that are already safer: the community-run preschools. We should support them, back them in and pay them a fair wage.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (15:28): The Libertarian Party opposes the motion moved by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell. The Libertarian Party does not believe that the Government has a role in babysitting our kids. I recently met with the organisers of today's protest and was impressed with them. I think they had a good case but were misguided. When my kids were preschool aged and we decided to send them to day care for one or two days a week, they initially went to a corporate day care. We absolutely hated it and so did the kids. It was expensive and there was just no atmosphere. The previous speaker said that was because it was profit driven, but those businesses are crony capitalism. They make money only because of government subsidies.

My kids then went to a community preschool and absolutely loved it. There was a terrific atmosphere, so I am sympathetic, but the problem is the increase in funding. We should end government funding for the childcare sector and cut taxes so people can flourish more. Under the current arrangement, as reflected in this motion, we will take away all the spirit from the community day care centres and they will all become corporatised under our crony capitalist model. Anyway, it is another day and another example of the New South Wales Opposition calling for bigger government.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: Not really.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK: You are calling for increased subsidies so, yes, you are calling for bigger government. This time Opposition members are complaining that taxpayers are not spending enough to babysit other people's kids. There is nothing wrong with people dropping their kids off at day care if that is their preferred way of coordinating their family situation—to each their own—but somebody needs to push back against the popular day care narrative with a couple of hard truths. First, while daycare is one legitimate choice, it is also

perfectly legitimate for parents to look after their own kids. The Government should stop meddling in family affairs by massively subsidising one choice while effectively punishing the other. If the Government wants to help parents, it can either cut their taxes or give them a voucher and then get out of their way.

The Hon. Cameron Murphy: Universal basic income.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK: Universal basic income—welcome to North Korea! Secondly, I know that this will be confronting for some people to hear, but we need to stop pretending that babysitting toddlers and young kids is the same as education. Babysitting can be very important and meaningful work, but referring to it as "early childhood education" is semantic inflation. That word trick is designed to emotionally manipulate people into supporting ever higher taxes being funnelled towards the babysitting industry. Responsible government requires more than emotional tricks and forever spending, which is why the Libertarians will oppose the motion and all the amendments.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (15:31): I thank my colleague for moving the motion. We should do everything we possibly can to support this wonderful sector. I cannot agree more with what the Hon. Sarah Mitchell said earlier, and I echo those statements. I recently visited a couple of those places, namely the Bourke and District Children's Services centre. It is a prime example of those centres doing good things, not just in child care but for the entire community. It has an innovative employment program and I was lucky enough to meet some of the trainees. It gives me the confidence that they and other people out there will take the sector forward. But it is not just about the childcare sector in Bourke; the centre is helping to build all sorts of employment opportunities, from groundskeepers to bus drivers. The team knows that making the wider community stronger helps everyone, including the centre.

I have also visited the Trundle Children's Centre, which takes on many roles in the community including preschool and long day care. It is a great facility run by great people in what is secretly one of my favourite towns. The childcare debate is not just about child care and we must not silo it. Childcare deserts and the lack of access to child care also cause problems in many other industries. A lot of towns cannot get nurses, police, doctors and all sorts of other essential workers for a number of reasons, including the fact that people cannot get child care in those communities. I visited a mine recently. Mines are struggling to attract people into town, regardless of what they pay or how much holiday leave they offer, because there is no child care to support that sector.

I commend the shadow Minister for moving the motion and I support it. We should do everything we can to deliver fair pay for early childhood teachers. It is quite an amazing thing to take people's most precious possessions—the most important things in the world to them—and drop them off at a preschool or a childcare centre for the day, trusting that they will be looked after. I cannot thank the people that we deal with enough. They do an amazing job, and they could get jobs in other areas. They could move into other sectors if they wanted—they would get more money and better conditions—but they are passionate about the industry they work in. I thank them as sincerely as I possibly can for playing their role in making regional New South Wales the greatest place to live, work and raise a family.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (15:34): In the 50 seconds left, I put on record my support for the motion. Without proper funding for child carers and the preschool sector, we will not have those child carers, that preschool sector or the children that we need. This planet faces a fertility crisis. People are choosing not to have children, and affordability of child care is one of the key reasons people are delaying having kids or not having kids at all. It is a key factor and a crisis that our society will have to address. It will take a unified approach. I agree with all of the members who say that we should pay the sector more, and look for opportunities to provide child care in those areas for the people who need it so that we do not have childcare deserts. I am happy to support this excellent motion.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (15:35): In reply: That was a nice lively debate, wasn't it? I thank all members for their contributions. Some things that were said I agree with and some I do not, but that is the spirit and the nature of debate in this Chamber. On behalf of the Opposition and as the mover of the motion, I do not support either of the amendments. The Government's amendment tries to gut what the motion is about in its recognition of today's day of action. That is not the way to go and I will not support that amendment. Regarding the amendment proposed by the Hon. Mark Latham and moved by the Hon. Rod Roberts, I will agree to disagree with them about the Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund.

Obviously I was a Government Minister at the time when we introduced it, and I think it is the right policy setting. I appreciate that the Hon. Mark Latham has other views, and that is fine. The part of his amendment that notes that part of the solution would be to use money from that fund to help better support those community preschools is right. I just do not agree with the way it is worded in the amendment, so I will not support it. There is money sitting in the childcare fund; there is \$400 million allocated in this financial year. The \$100 million that the Government has announced to support community preschools to change their operating model, which I spoke

about in my earlier contribution, came from that fund, so the Government could do that now. There is money available in the budget to support those teachers and give them the money that they need by increasing their pay. That should happen.

I am happy with the motion as drafted. There were more than 500 people at the day of action today, and 700 people at a rally in Lismore. There were also directors and staff from all over the State. I met people who had come from Old Bar on the Mid North Coast and from down near Albury. I had a great chat with Donna, who is the director of Wingham Preschool. It shut for the day and all 20 of the staff travelled down to send that message to the Government. They run a fantastic preschool service, and we were happy to support them with some capital funding to grow. Their waiting list is still a mile long, and that tells members everything that they need to know about what parents in a community like Wingham see when they have the option to support their community preschools. They do a bloody good job, and we need them to get the funding that they require to keep their doors open. I thank all members for their contributions to debate on the motion.

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Sarah Mitchell has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Emily Suvaal and the Hon. Rod Roberts have moved amendments. The question is that the amendment of the Hon. Emily Suvaal be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes17
Noes20
Majority.....3

AYES

Banasiak
Borsak
Buckingham
Buttigieg
D'Adam
Donnelly

Graham
Jackson
Kaine
Lawrence
Mookhey
Moriarty

Murphy (teller)
Nanva (teller)
Primrose
Sharpe
Suvaal

NOES

Barrett
Boyd
Carter
Cohn
Faehrmann
Fang (teller)
Farlow

Higginson
Hurst
Latham
MacDonald
Maclaren-Jones
Merton
Mitchell

Munro
Rath (teller)
Roberts
Ruddick
Tudehope
Ward

PAIRS

Houssos

Overall

Amendment of the Hon. Emily Suvaal negatived.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the amendment of the Hon. Rod Roberts be agreed to.

Amendment of the Hon. Rod Roberts negatived.

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

Motion agreed to.

Visitors

VISITORS

The PRESIDENT: I welcome to the gallery students from Blayney High School, who are participating in the Legal Studies and the Legislature program conducted by the Parliamentary Education team. They are very welcome in the Parliament of New South Wales.

*Committees***PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 1 - PREMIER AND FINANCE****Reference**

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (15:46): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) unsolved murders and long-term missing persons cases have a devastating and ongoing impact on the families and loved ones of victims and missing persons; and
 - (b) given these significant and long-lasting societal impacts, there is a need for an inquiry into unsolved murders and missing persons cases in New South Wales to be conducted.
- (2) That Portfolio Committee No. 1 – Premier and Finance inquire into and report on unsolved murders and long-term missing persons cases in New South Wales between 1965 and 2010, and in particular:
 - (a) current and emerging developments in policy, practice and technology in relation to such crimes;
 - (b) whether there existed impediments in the criminal justice system that impacted the delivery of justice to victims and their families, with reference to case studies of particular matters including but not limited to the murders of Christine Sharrock, Marianne Schmidt, Cheryl Grimmer, Kay Docherty, Toni Cavanagh, Michelle Pope, Stephen Lapthorne, Leanne Goodall, Amanda Robinson, Robyn Hickie, Joy Hodgins, Anni Tominac, Gillian Jamieson, Deborah Balken, Peter Letcher, Carmen Verheyden, Dianne Pennacchio and Gordana Kotevski;
 - (c) the clusters and possible links between unsolved murders and long-term missing persons cases in and around the following locations:
 - (i) the Southern Highlands;
 - (ii) inner Sydney;
 - (iii) Newcastle; and
 - (iv) the North Coast.
 - (d) the progress of police investigations into the unsolved murders and long-term missing persons cases including but not limited to Task Force Fenwick; and
 - (e) any other related matter.
- (3) That the committee report by 30 June 2026.

Unsolved murders and long-term missing persons cases have a devastating and ongoing impact on the families and loved ones of victims and missing persons. Given those significant and long-lasting societal impacts, it is clear that there is a call and an overdue need for a parliamentary inquiry into the egregious number of unsolved murders and missing persons cases in New South Wales. That inquiry should be conducted now. It is a nightmarish circumstance and the most difficult of topics but one that cannot and must not be ignored. As we saw with the gay hate crimes inquiries, these processes and truth tellings may lead to justice and better outcomes. It is an opportunity for families to put on record their experience, and possibly for those out there who know something to say something. It is an opportunity for us to learn from our mistakes and understand if there are processes and practices that may help us do better into the future.

There is no list of unsolved murdered or missing people from the 1960s, as that information is held in standalone databases and archived records. But most people know of the unsolved murders of Christine Sharrock and Marianne Schmidt at Wanda Beach in 1965, and little Cheryl Grimmer, aged three, who was abducted at Fairy Meadow Beach in 1970. In trying to solve the Belanglo backpacker murders, Task Force Air in 1993 reviewed nationwide unsolved cases of murdered and missing young people. The task force homicide detectives reviewed the cases of people aged between their late teens and late twenties who had been strangled, stabbed, shot or beaten to death, or who had disappeared while hitchhiking. The nationwide probe included people who had disappeared from every State and Territory of Australia. The list ran to 58 people, and included backpackers and travellers from the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Italy and New Zealand.

That list included Stephen Lapthorne, Michelle Pope and Leanne Goodall in 1978; Amanda Robinson, Toni Cavanagh, Kay Docherty and Robyn Hickie in 1979; Deborah Balken and Gillian Jamieson in 1980; Peter Letcher in 1987; and Dianne Pennacchio and Carmen Verheyden in 1991. Task Force Fenwick was established in approximately 1998 to investigate the disappearance of up to 20 young people from the greater Newcastle and North Sydney region over a 20-year period. That list included Joy Hodgins and Anni Tominac in 1978 and Gordana Kotevski in 1994. The inquiry will look into those murders and disappearances along with many others that share a disturbing similarity in terms of the vulnerability of the victims and the distinct possibility that some are linked.

A petition with over 10,000 signatures was lodged in the Legislative Assembly on 5 June 2025 by the member for Bathurst, the Hon. Paul Toole. I commend him for his work in this area as a former Minister and as a member of Parliament. The petition requested the House to immediately commence a parliamentary inquiry into missing persons investigations. There are approximately 450 unsolved murders or missing persons cases involving males in New South Wales between 1970 and 1995. There are approximately 50 unsolved murder or missing persons cases involving children from 1970 to 1990. We do not know most of their names. They are only identified by pseudonyms such as "child A".

There are more than 60 unsolved murder or unsolved missing persons cases from the North Coast between 1977 to 2010. There are more than 200 unsolved murder or missing persons cases between 1970 and 2015 in the Sydney, Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury areas that involve women. There are hundreds of unsolved murders and unsolved missing persons cases in New South Wales, or cases of people who were abducted, sexually assaulted and murdered and their bodies never found. Families have spent 40 or 50 or 60 years in torment, calling for justice, hoping for answers and demanding that the Government acts. The time for us to hear from them is now. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (15:51): I contribute to debate on the motion on behalf of the Government, and in my capacity representing the police Minister. The Government supports the motion moved by the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham, and the proposed inquiry. First, I take the opportunity to express my utmost sympathy for those affected by long-term unsolved cases as they continue to endure not knowing what really happened to their loved ones. The Government is very mindful of the enduring impact of those cases on the families and friends of the people involved. The NSW Police Force State Crime Command Unsolved Homicide Team and the Missing Persons Registry are two very experienced, skilled and dedicated teams that investigate those cases with great compassion, diligence and professionalism to help bring perpetrators to justice and provide closure to the families and friends of the victims.

The Missing Persons Registry handles a multitude of missing persons reports every week. Thankfully, the average number of days for someone to be "missing" continues to fall—from over six days in 2018 to just over 2.3 days in 2025—thanks to the dedication and skill of the team, and advances in technology. Additionally, the Unsolved Homicide Team has the challenging responsibility of monitoring, assessing, prioritising and reinvestigating cases of historical unsolved murders, suspicious deaths and disappearances. Whilst they are both extremely busy teams that do vitally important operational work for the New South Wales public, I know that they will be able to provide a wealth of information as the committee inquires into those matters, if the motion is agreed to.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (15:53): I oppose the motion. I want to make crystal clear to the members of the Government sitting opposite what it is they are agreeing to today, what it is they are declaring to the hardworking men and women of the NSW Police Force who investigate unsolved homicides and missing persons cases. By agreeing to this motion, they are making it publicly known to the people of this State and the members of the NSW Police Force that they have lost all confidence in their investigative abilities, that they doubt their resolve and that the members of the New South Wales Legislative Council and Portfolio Committee No. 1 must now step in to review the investigative work of the New South Wales police and finish a task that they believe the police have been incapable of achieving.

In short, the Government believes the NSW Police Force to be incompetent. That is not hyperbole. The motion before the House clearly instructs the committee to review evidence, identify clusters and patterns, establish links in offences, and scrutinise the status of all existing investigations. If that is not a statement by the Government about a loss of confidence in the NSW Police Force, I do not know what is. The police deal with facts and evidence. Why does the Government believe that 41 untrained, unskilled, inexperienced muppets of this House could achieve a better outcome than members of the unsolved homicide and missing persons unit? What facts or evidence has "Inspector Clouseau" Buckingham provided to the Government to agree to this motion?

The Hon. Wes Fang: He had a dream!

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: His facts to date regarding Ivan Milat came to him in a dream. His 10 News exclusive interview took place in front of his photo board, which included an image of Anita Cobby and Les Murphy. That is the extent of his investigative skills into missing people. It is hardly an unsolved murder or a missing persons case. How embarrassing! That is his propaganda to the public. To date, the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham has proved that he got his facts wrong regarding Ivan Milat. He was schooled on that by Deputy Commissioner Hudson.

In contrast, there are clear examples that show that the NSW Police Force never lets a cold case die. Just a couple of weeks ago the Moore Park Rapist was arrested for crimes committed more than 30 years ago. The

Government's position on the motion was decided by the Minister, which means that the police Minister agrees with the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham and the intent of his motion. That is nothing short of scandalous. No wonder we are currently facing a recruitment and, more importantly, a retention problem in the NSW Police Force. It is being caused by the Government. What is the Government saying to the police? The Government's position proclaims to the NSW Police Force that its very own Minister doubts the force's competency. Members opposite should hang their heads in shame.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (15:56): The Opposition also opposes the motion for many of the reasons just articulated by the Hon. Rod Roberts. To set up a committee of this House for the purpose of investigating so-called criminal activity—and asserting thereby that the powers of this House will in some way solve murders—gives an outrageously bad message to people who are already traumatised because their loved ones and family members are missing and those crimes are unsolved. The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham said, "The police do not have the ability to solve this problem. Somehow, we are going to give you more hope to do it."

More importantly, what on earth is the Government doing by supporting such a motion? Were the police consulted about the support for the motion, which absolutely undermines the work of the Police Force? I say to the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham that I was astonished when he deserted workers when voting on the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill. He voted with the Government to refuse to refer the bill to a committee. This motion is the reason why he did that. The Government has bought and sold the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham, saying, "We will support this inquiry on the basis that you back us in on other legislation."

This is a demonstration of a government in trouble. In circumstances where the Government does not have a majority, the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham's support in this place is guaranteed by virtue of the fact that the Government is prepared to back his motion today. We are being told that this member's vote is guaranteed for Government legislation because the Government will back him on this weird pursuit of so-called unsolved crimes about which he has some special insight in relation to how they have occurred. I cannot understand how a fair-thinking, reasonable member of the Government could think that undermining the expertise of our Police Force in this way is a worthwhile thing to do. The only justification is that the Government is so desperate for this member's vote that it will back this sort of inquiry. It is astonishing. We do not support this motion.

The Hon. WES FANG (15:59): This motion is cruel to so many people. The House needs to acknowledge that it is cruel to present the idea that this House can somehow be a positive, investigative body. How on earth will it be resourced? You would know better than anybody, Mr Deputy President, the amount of resourcing required for police to do their jobs appropriately and properly. It takes many hours of technical, investigatory work and crime scene work, and it also takes a lot of scientific resources. The House is simply not equipped to do that work. For the member to suggest that this House is somehow able to solve more than four dozen currently unsolved crimes is cruel to those families.

The worst part of this is that the Government supports the motion. Members must ask themselves why the Government would support a motion like this if not for the fact that it is trying to buy the vote of one member of this House. The Government has form in doing this. The families and loved ones of those who have gone missing are the collateral damage of the Government's attempt to buy a vote in this House. It is an absolute disgrace. The most mind-boggling thing about all of this is that it seems the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham has come to this conclusion through the dream that he is the only person able to solve these murders. I have not seen a charade like this during my time in this place or even before it when I enjoyed observing and understanding politics. For the Government to allow this motion to come before the House and then suggest it will support it shows how far the Minns Government has fallen.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (16:02): A lot has been said about this motion today. I have a couple of reflections on the debate. Several Parliaments ago, I was involved in the creation of the inquiry into gay hate crimes in New South Wales. This motion before the House is modelled on the structure of that inquiry. Members need to think about the history of establishing committee inquiries on these issues. These inquiries are not a reflection on the good work of the New South Wales police. They often come about as the result of community members and victims wanting more information than they have been able to get and wanting an opportunity to talk about it. I do not think there is anything wrong with that. Members who have sat and listened to victims of crime should have no problem with supporting this inquiry today. This is a very important issue.

Some members have spoken about parliamentary committees getting involved in police investigations. I have not had a chance to go through the list of inquiries that have been established during this Parliament by a variety of members of this House. These members have decided, despite what the police have asked for, to set up inquiries on active investigations. They are set up and decided in this House. Members who have pointed the finger and said that parliamentary inquiries are not the place to examine these issues should have a look in the

mirror, because that is not what they have said previously. Finally, I note that a motion that will be moved in the lower House tomorrow states:

That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that this week is National Missing Persons Week.
- (2) Acknowledges the thousands of missing persons in New South Wales and the heartbreak their families face every day.
- (3) Condemns the Government for not supporting a parliamentary inquiry into missing persons investigations currently carried out in New South Wales.

I thank the National Party member for Bathurst, Paul Toole, who has been calling on the Government to do this for months.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: He's a former police Minister.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: He is the former Minister for Police, and someone who actually knows all about it. I am sure he enjoyed the solidarity of some members of this House today. There is nothing to be afraid of in looking into these matters. There are things that we can learn. We should not be afraid of these things—not because we are trying to do any political appointing or because we do not have absolute confidence in the New South Wales police, but because there are families who want answers. There is new technology we can look at. There is nothing to be feared from an inquiry like this, which is why we are prepared to support it.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (16:06): I will not make any comments one way or another about the subject matter of the proposed inquiry. I take issue with the suggestion that supporting this inquiry is exercising a vote of no confidence in the investigative capacity of the Police Force. This House has a fine tradition of inquiring. An inquiry is a question from a member who says, "Here is a subject that I think we need to find out more about. We have to delve into it." An inquiry is not a definitive conclusion; it is the start of a questioning process. This House has done excellent work over a long period to back propositions put forward by individual members who think there is something worthy of inquiry. Today, the Hon. Mark Latham proposed an inquiry into the failure of the playing surface at Allianz Stadium. That is his prerogative. It is an issue that he thinks is worthy of being advanced through the inquiry process. The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham is taking a similar approach.

The Hon. Mark Latham: I'm not saying there are dead bodies under Allianz Stadium.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: He is raising questions about the process involving missing persons. That is a legitimate function for a member of this place to prosecute and delve into. Members may not agree and may think that it is a silly idea. Many of us have disagreed with a number of inquiries set up by this House and have been proven wrong when we discover that the inquiry process has, in fact, provided some useful information to support the governance of the people of New South Wales. I support members who want to delve further into a matter of public importance. This is clearly a matter of public importance, because there are people in the community who want this inquiry to proceed. It is a legitimate exercise of the functions of this House, and the Government is right to support this process.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (16:08): I support the creation of the inquiry proposed by the motion of the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham. I address comments made by the Leader of the Opposition, who said, "This Parliament is not a crime investigation unit." That is obvious. We all know that. This Parliament should not be investigating individual crimes here and there, but Ivan Milat has been prosecuted and found guilty for seven deaths. He is the third worst mass murderer in our history. It is an extraordinary situation to start with. It is not just one or two deaths; this is a guy who we know was the epitome of evil. He killed at least seven people and there has always been rumours that there may have been a lot more. You would know that, Mr Deputy President Roberts, after your career in the New South Wales police. There has always been rumours he killed a lot more people.

I will not say whether the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham is right with his hunches or not, but an inquiry will get to the bottom of it. People have said that we will emotionally upset the family members of these victims. But I am guessing a lot of them have been in contact with the office of the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham to encourage him. Maybe I am wrong—and he can correct me in his reply—but I am guessing that no-one has called him and told him to desist. These are crimes which generally took place half a century ago. Obviously, the victim's family members half died as well when these crimes happened. But it was half a century ago in many cases, so I do not see any harm in having fresh eyes look at this. Maybe nothing will come of it and there is no downside. But maybe something will come of it. If something comes of it—and there is a reasonable chance—maybe the inquiry should be upgraded to a royal commission.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (16:10): I have seen this movie before. I saw the rise and fall of Bill Heffernan, which was a sad moment in the history of the Liberal Party in Canberra. In this place I saw the rise and fall of Deirdre Grusovin, which ended what had been her legitimate ambitions to one day lead the NSW Labor

Party. I did not see the rise, but I was definitely aware of the fall, of Franca Arena. Anyone who does not understand these lessons is just walking into the folly of history. None of this ever ends well; legislators who think they are crime fighters and investigators, it never ends well, and this will be those processes on steroids. When the Hon. Anthony D'Adam was speaking, I mentioned the names Heffernan, Grusovin and Arena and said how dangerous it was. The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham said, "For me—dangerous for me." This is a proposition he has shopped around the Parliament and social media.

It explains the insanity of what we are talking about—that somehow he thinks I had some association with Ivan Milat. I never met Milat; never. And I am pretty certain my electorate office never dealt with any members of the Milat family. What is more, I am not some newbie to this. I had a former political life where I once ran as leader of the Labor Party for a pretty high office. I had Tony Abbott going through the minutes of Liverpool Council. I had the Abominable Snow Woman crawling up and down Harrison Street, Ashcroft, asking about my sister and what happened to her after our father died when she was 13. I had an associate of that woman at the Herald ring Janine's dancing teacher from when she was 15 in Perth. I had to deal with the rumour of a bucks' night video that did not exist.

I had more intrusions and invasions of privacy in a horrific, barbaric way than anyone in public life should ever have to endure. But the Buckingham proposition is, "They missed the big one." In all those inquiries prying into my business, media activity and Liberal Party determination to try to damage me, they missed the big one:—that I was involved with Milat.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: An associate.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: And that John Marsden and I were associates planning mass murders. Has there ever been a more insane moment in the history of the Legislative Council than this? And the imbeciles supporting it will need to look in the mirror one day to understand the folly they have unleashed. This never ends well. Every single nut bag in town gets to come in with their newspaper clippings and dossiers and hand them over under parliamentary privilege. What an abuse of this Chamber. From a government that talks about abuse of parliamentary privilege, this is it on steroids. There is no news story about me and Milat. Members are dealing with an absolute, certifiable lunatic and supporting his resolution. It is a day of shame for this Chamber.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (16:13): In reply: I thank all members for their contributions. I also thank Ministers Catley, Sharpe and Kemper and Premier Minns for their support for the inquiry. I also thank the scores of families of the murdered and missing who have encouraged me to move the motion and who are watching here today. They are the Dochertys, the Rowlands, the Kielys, the Kotevskis, the Grimmers and the Cunninghams, to name just a few, who have demanded answers to the questions that remain of what happened to their loved ones whose murders remain unsolved.

I thank the academics and community activists who maintain the registers of these unsolved murders and who have provided me with a plethora information about these matters that we could table under privilege and oath through an inquiry. I thank the journalists and authors—the fourth estate—who have continued to shine a light on these issues. I thank the New South Wales police, including current members and retired detectives who say that Ivan Milat was responsible for over 80 unsolved murders. The police who locked him up say he was responsible for over 80 unsolved murders—the worst serial killer in modern human history. Before he died, Paul Gordon said that Milat's brother Boris said Milat was responsible for 30 murders.

Stalin said, "One death is a tragedy, a million is a statistic." We can throw those numbers around, but they were the best of us, those young people, and they were killed by the worst of us. This inquiry is about finding out why we were not able to solve those murders. Can we assist the police? What do the police need to do better? The police solved these murders with the assistance of the community, and there are people out there who are terrified about telling the truth. They want to be able to do it confidentially and under oath with the protection of parliamentary privilege. That is what this inquiry will do. We saw it with the Bowraville inquiry.

I am not promising to solve these murders. I am promising to find out more about how this situation came about. In terms of Anita Cobby, I have never said that that is an unsolved homicide. The reason I have that photo on my wall is because I want to know what else Les Murphy got up to and who else he knew. That is why he is on my wall. Les Murphy is the worst scumbag this State has ever seen, and he should continue to rot in Lithgow to the day he dies. Then maybe we will have a coronial inquiry. Maybe we will open a special commission of inquiry. This is about finding the truth about what happened, why and to whom. I commend the motion to the House.

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

The House divided.

Ayes20
 Noes14
 Majority.....6

AYES

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

NOES

Barrett	MacDonald	Rath (teller)
Carter	Maclaren-Jones	Roberts
Fang (teller)	Merton	Tudehope
Farlow	Mitchell	Ward
Latham	Munro	

PAIRS

Houssos

Overall

Motion agreed to.

Bills

GAME AND FERAL ANIMAL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CONSERVATION HUNTING) BILL 2025

Second Reading Speech

Debate resumed from 28 May 2025.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK (16:24): I again commend the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025 to the House. I also thank the Hon. Emily Suvaal for chairing what was a very revealing inquiry into the bill. The hearing stripped away the rhetoric, exposed the contradictions and laid bare the double standards of those who oppose conservation hunting. This bill is straightforward in its aims. It seeks to recognise the cultural, social, economic and environmental importance of hunting in New South Wales. It establishes a new Conservation Hunting Authority with proper representation from New South Wales farmers, the Indigenous community and hunting organisations—people who actually do the work, know the land and understand the realities of feral animal control.

The bill provides guidance for conservation hunting, education, research and advocacy, and it moves forward to integrate the work of conservation hunters with the State's wider pest management programs on private and public lands. It is not a radical bill; it is a modest one. But it is an important one because it acknowledges reality and harnesses an existing community force rather than sidelining it. We do not have to go far to hear the critics. The Natural Resources Commission, in its submission, declared that recreational hunters play "no important role in invasive species control". That is a sweeping statement, and one that wilfully and woefully ignores reality, because in the very same inquiry its associate director, Dr Ben Russell, admitted bluntly, "We will never get rid of pigs in New South Wales. Never." Here we have the contradiction laid bare. Hunters are dismissed as irrelevant, yet the experts themselves concede that their own methods—helicopter gunships, poisons, baiting and trapping—cannot achieve eradication.

I repeat the words of the associate director of the Natural Resources Commission for those who may not have heard the member present at the inquiry, especially The Greens and the Animal Justice Party: "We're not going to remove feral pigs from New South Wales." Meanwhile, the "pest industry group specialists", as they style themselves, with the unfortunate but entirely appropriate—perhaps unintentionally—acronym PIGS, continue to line up to bury their snouts into the public trough. They pocket lucrative contracts, they issue glossy reports, they attend conferences, they pat each other on the back over a taxpayer-funded beer and they plan the next iteration of the Cooperative Research Centre [CRC]—now ironically called the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions.

For 26 years they and the former iterations of the CRC have boasted about tallies of kills from helicopters, but every farmer in the State knows the truth: The animals come back, and they come back fast. The simple truth is the CRC has failed at everything but its reinvention of the longest running employment scheme for bureaucrats, policy analysts and what otherwise would be unemployed researchers. The record on the ground for conservation hunters tells a very different story. It is time to acknowledge the inconvenient truth: A system already exists—recreational and conservation hunters on public and private land—and it is time to employ it to the full.

In 2024 alone, the Australian Pig Doggers and Hunters Association Great Australian Pig Hunt, backed by academics from Southern Queensland University who are assisting with data interpretation, recorded 1.69 million pigs taken by hunters across New South Wales and 5.3 million pigs nationwide. That is no typo; it is not a rounding error. That is a staggering contribution to biosecurity and environmental protection that has been verified. Every year conservation hunters in New South Wales remove hundreds of thousands of feral goats, foxes, cats, wild dogs and deer—often in places where contractors rarely, if ever, set foot or fly over in their taxpayer-funded helicopter gunships. This is not abstract theory; it is real, on-the-ground action by volunteers and communities. There are no helicopter gunships, no government cheques and no self-promoting public relations campaigns.

Unlike the fly-in fly-out contractors, conservation hunters return week after week, year after year. They build local knowledge and trust with landholders and provide continuity that no one-off yearly operation can ever match. Hunting is also a pillar of the rural and regional economy. Independent analysis prepared for the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development shows hunting delivers half a billion dollars a year to the economy of New South Wales. It sustains more than 4,000 jobs—overwhelmingly in regional communities—in food, fuel, accommodation, tourism, equipment, hospitality, guiding, taxidermy and local services. When combined with fishing, it is the fourth biggest primary industry in the State. The same report reveals that if this bill is passed the potential economic impact of hunting in New South Wales will be \$1.4 billion and 14,000 jobs. That is money for families in country towns. It is money that stays outside the big cities. Hunting is not just a pastime; it is a turbocharged V8 economic engine.

Critics sneer at conservation hunters. But when they do, they are sneering at the livelihoods of thousands of regional people: the small motel in Walcha where hunters stay on their way to or from Nundle State Forest; the local servo at Narrabri that sells the fuel hunters need to go hunting in the Pilliga Forest; the Tumbarumba Bakery that sells delicious bacon and egg sangers and great coffees to hunters on their way to or from Maragle South State Forest in the south of our State. Hunting means business, and business means jobs—country jobs. I must address one organisation directly. Representatives of the Invasive Species Council have been camped in The Greens offices during recent sittings of the House and prowling the corridors of Parliament House.

Let us be honest about the Invasive Species Council. It is not an independent conservation organisation. It is, and has always been, a propaganda machine for The Greens, led by its CEO, a past and current Greens staffer who refused to answer a simple question in the Standing Committee on State Development's inquiry into this bill. He is working with The Greens, for The Greens, and on behalf of The Greens. The Invasive Species Council's registered business address is in Melbourne's so-called "Green Building", which is the same premises occupied by the green cartel of the Australian Conservation Foundation, Environment Victoria, the Victorian National Parks Association and—would you believe—two Victorian Greens MPs.

The council's public "ambassador" is none other than Christine Milne, the former Federal Greens Senator and Tasmanian Greens leader. The Invasive Species Council's former CEO, Andy Cox, was a very special guest of Ms Sue Higginson during the first debate on this bill in this Chamber. The link could not be clearer, could it? These connections are not coincidences; they are by design. The Invasive Species Council shares not just an office but an agenda with The Greens. It masquerades as science but functions as politics. It is, in truth, the propaganda arm of The Greens, dressed up in a lab coat—a very transparent one—that taxpayers get to fund.

The double standard is breathtaking. Contractors trumpet their tallies of 131,000 pigs and deer shot from helicopters in a year. But these are outputs, not outcomes. Where is the evidence of biodiversity recovery? Where is the proof of economic benefit for farmers? None was presented to the inquiry, and that is simply because none exists. This is hypocrisy at its most obvious. In contrast, in 2024 licensed recreational hunters recorded that 14,000 animals were removed from State forests alone. The shabby critics say those numbers are small, but they represent thousands of days of volunteer effort, done safely at no cost to taxpayers, which has suppressed populations below the levels seen before hunting permits began in 2006.

I have hunted those forests for 20 years. No longer are mobs of goats crossing the roads. There is no evidence of pigrooting along forestry tracks or the rub marks on trees that were once common in all our State forests. The landscape has changed for the better and, much to the chagrin of the naysayers and doom merchants, the kangaroo and wallaby populations in those forests are thriving. That is the inconvenient truth that The Greens propagandists and their lackeys in the Invasive Species Council cannot bear to admit. Then there is Bondi State Forest, where the long-footed potoroo was recently discovered—another inconvenient truth for The Greens. It is

a working forest, with logging and pine plantations, where conservation hunting has been carried out under permit for two decades.

Could it be that the removal of foxes, wild dogs, feral cats, pigs and deer has contributed to the long-footed potoroo's survival there? That question was asked at the inquiry. The response from The Greens propaganda machine, the Invasive Species Council, was silence, evasion and denial. They simply cannot bring themselves to admit that broadscale, long-running and ongoing conservation hunting might, in fact—in any way, shape or form—help biodiversity. The Invasive Species Council is not science based; it is purely and simply ideologically driven and, as I said, a propaganda arm of The Greens political party.

Another inconvenient truth for those who oppose conservation hunting is that the safety record of hunting in State forests is impeccable. It has been going on for two decades without a single serious incident. That is not failure; that is a model of responsible management. Compare that to other activities in national parks and reserves in this State, which in a single year record over 100 fatalities or serious injuries—activities as benign, we are told, as bushwalking, mountain biking, climbing, swimming, canyoning and even camping. Where are the howls from The Greens and the Animal Justice Party calling for an end to the activities causing these deaths in parks and reserves in New South Wales? The silence is deafening.

The inconvenient truth is that hunting is not the danger. Hunting is, in fact, one of the safest activities undertaken on public land in New South Wales. Conservation hunters are trained, licensed and demonstrably responsible. Unlike some followers of The Greens and the Animal Justice Party, conservation hunters are law-abiding citizens. Hunters have demonstrated for 20 years now that they will follow strict regulations. They demonstrate that firearms can be used safely in conservation.

The inquiry heard many inconvenient truths. Some of them came from Mr Nathan Moran, CEO of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, who spoke strongly in support of conservation hunting. He recognised its role in managing feral animals on Aboriginal lands and adjoining public lands. The abject dismay and disbelief on the faces of the committee members from The Greens and the Animal Justice Party was palpable. They tried to undermine his credibility by asking whether he belonged to a political party. His answer was a simple, "No." Imagine their disappointment. But did they ask the same of Mr Gough, CEO of the Invasive Species Council and a former Greens staffer? Of course not. The double standard could not have been more clearly demonstrated.

Another important submission to the inquiry came from a witness in the hunting sector who tabled a report by Dr Samara McPhedran of Griffith University. Her systematic review, analysing over 130 studies, found no evidence linking recreational hunting with violence or antisocial behaviour—none whatsoever, in her peer reviewed paper. And yet some opponents of the bill stooped to the lowest tactic of all by invoking the families of Port Arthur victims. Once again, The Greens and the Animal Justice Party have demonstrated they are happy to dance on the graves of the Port Arthur victims and to scream their own false narrative. That was shameful. It was manipulative. It was offensive. It was hate speech equating licensed, law-abiding firearm owners and hunters in New South Wales with a mass murderer. No other group in this country would ever be subjected to that kind of disgusting smear, but it was directed to people like me. Members of The Greens and the Animal Justice Party should hang their heads in shame and apologise, but they never will.

It is clear that conservation hunting works. In New Zealand, hunters are integrated into government pest programs and in some cases, such as in the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation, the Kaimanawa Sika Foundation and the blue duck recovery predator control program, they take the lead. It works. Engaging hunters in conservation hunting works in other countries and it will work here. In New South Wales, hunters have been operating safely in State forests since 2006. It works. The Great Australian Pig Hunt shows that, when mobilised, hunters can deliver results at a scale that dwarfs the so-called professional killing. It works; professionals do not. Many decades of professional New Zealand government deercullers—we are talking about real professional hunters here—have proved that so-called professionalism is a failed paradigm. Many years ago the New Zealand Government abandoned this approach, recognising it for the waste of money and failure it was then and still remains today.

What does not work is the current model and failed paradigm. Millions and millions of taxpayers' dollars have been poured into helicopters and contractors, yet feral populations are bigger than ever. What does not work is excluding communities, ignoring volunteers and treating hunters as the enemy. The bill offers a better way. It will recognise hunters as partners in conservation. It will support thousands of regional jobs. It will inject over half a billion dollars into our economy and it will mobilise an extraordinary volunteer effort already taking place across the State. The choice before us is clear: continue the failed top-down model or embrace the genuine partnership with people on the ground that works. I commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (16:40): Following the inquiry and its report, on behalf of the Government I make a brief further contribution to debate on the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025. We have had a robust debate in this place about the bill, which has now been subject to that parliamentary inquiry and a significant amount of public discussion. Many different views have been put forward through those processes. I acknowledge that, throughout that process, a lot of people took time to have their say on the bill, hunting and pest management. I also acknowledge the concerns that have been put forward about access to firearms.

From the outset the Government has been clear that it does not support changes to firearms laws occurring through this bill. The Premier has been clear that the Government does not support any weakening or relaxing of firearms laws. Before we get further into this debate, I want to be absolutely clear on that point. The Government's position, as was said the first time the bill was debated, is that it supports lawful and safe hunting. It contributes economically. It is a legal activity. It is well regulated, with public safety as a key focus. Much of this bill focuses on exactly that—supporting lawful and safe hunting, and supporting opportunities for this industry to contribute to good biosecurity outcomes across our landscape.

To that extent, the Government continues to support certain aspects of the bill. However, the Government has been clear from the outset that it does not support this bill making changes to firearms or weapons legislation. We have tabled amendments to this effect to remove parts of the bill that seek to change the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998. We also heard through the parliamentary inquiry that many stakeholders have concerns about the parts of the bill that seek to create a "right" to hunt. The Government acknowledges those concerns.

The Government will not support such a right being created by this bill. In my previous contributions, I highlighted that this "right" was expressed in a way that was far from absolute. The Government will continue to make land management decisions. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development will continue to license hunters and manage the booking system that provides them with permission to hunt, and the NSW Firearms Registry will continue to administer New South Wales's strong firearms laws that treat firearm ownership as a privilege. The "right" to hunt this bill seeks to create would not affect any of those actions by government. However, during the parliamentary inquiry, witnesses raised concerns about this "right" to hunt, despite the significant caveats included in the bill. Those concerns included that it could cause legal confusion or complexity when making decisions about access to firearms, or simply that it sent the wrong message. In response to those concerns, the Government's view is that the bill should not articulate a "right" to hunt. With that in mind, the Government will be supporting amendments consistent with this view during the Committee stage.

I have spoken many times in this place about the serious challenges this State faces in terms of invasive species. This Government has committed significant funding to tackling those issues. Of course, there is no magic solution and recreational or conservation hunting is certainly not a solution on its own. But, as I have said previously, if we can make changes that will support recreational hunters to contribute to the delivery of good pest management outcomes within a regulatory framework that emphasises safety, that should be explored. The Government supports the bill progressing to the Committee stage and will have more to say about the bill as we work through the range of amendments that have been put forward.

The Hon. EMMA HURST (16:44): On behalf of the Animal Justice Party, I again express my strong opposition to the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025. The inquiry into the bill has only reaffirmed for me how truly dangerous and reckless this legislation is. It is shocking to me that such an ill-considered and harmful bill got this far and been allowed to take up so much of the time of this Parliament. The moment the bill was introduced by the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, common sense should have prevailed and this bill should have been unanimously rejected. But due to a dirty deal between the Minns Labor Government and the Shooters party on workers compensation reforms and general support for Government priorities, which include the aerial shooting of brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park and the continued use of 1080 poison—both matters the Shooters oddly flipped their vote on recently after making this deal—this bill has been given more airtime than it ever deserved.

That is politics at its worst—a government trading away public safety and animal welfare to cut compensation to injured workers and to shoot horses from the sky. While I am pleased that the Minns Labor Government has now walked back some of its support for this bill following the Animal Justice Party's public campaign and significant media and public pressure against this bill, the inquiry exposed the bill is flawed from start to finish. This is not a bill that can be amended into something passable. There are no aspects of the bill that are redeemable or that will not have significant adverse consequences for human and animal welfare. There is no other option for the Government and all other members but to oppose the bill in its entirety.

I now address the evidence and findings of the inquiry. The inquiry made one thing painfully obvious: The only people who support the bill are hunters. This fringe group of individuals are the only people who came to the

inquiry claiming that there was any merit in the bill, including one witness who was a member of the Hon. Robert Borsak's own staff. Other than that, the committee received overwhelming opposition from a broad and diverse range of stakeholders, including domestic violence organisations, gun safety groups, outdoor recreation associations, animal welfare advocates, bushwalkers and conservation groups. All of those organisations had different concerns about the bill, but they were in agreement on one thing: This bill will cause serious harm.

One thing stakeholders made clear is that the idea of so-called conservation hunting is a total fallacy. It is a fabricated term devised by recreational hunters to try to give their activities some legitimacy and to hide the cold, harsh reality that they are people who like to kill animals with guns for fun. As a Parliament, we should not be endorsing that fallacy. Witnesses such as the Natural Resources Commission made it very clear that there is no evidence that recreational hunting is an effective method of animal management or for improving biodiversity outcomes. The committee heard evidence about the high rates of animal wounding already associated with recreational hunting. We heard from animal welfare experts about the cruelty and suffering that animals experience, including missed shots maiming animals and leaving them to suffer slow, prolonged deaths, and dependant young being left behind.

The committee heard about inadequate shooter training for hunters and a lack of robust animal welfare standards. RSPCA NSW, which is one of the enforcement agencies for animal cruelty laws, raised particular concerns about the lack of oversight of recreational hunting and compliance issues. During the inquiry, RSPCA prosecutor Kathryn Jurd was asked to comment on the enforceability issue in the context of reassurances from pro-hunting groups that individuals doing the wrong thing will be prosecuted. In response, Ms Jurd cast doubt on those reassurances, saying that, based on 18 years experience prosecuting, "It's unlikely that participants report themselves to a regulator." Of course, Ms Jurd was pointing out that there is no oversight of hunting so there can be no assurances that animal welfare laws are being adhered to.

All those issues exist right now under our current hunting laws, but if this bill were to pass it will get much, much worse. More areas will be opened up for hunting, creating more opportunities for animal suffering and cruelty. The pro-hunting authority established under this bill will be using the \$7.9 million given to it by the New South Wales Minns Labor Government to promote and encourage more people to get involved in using guns, bringing more poorly trained individuals into this blood lust where they will in turn injure and kill more animals and risk human safety. The fact that the New South Wales Government was willing to allocate \$7.9 million in the budget to establish this authority in the first place, before this private member's bill was ever even voted on, is atrocious.

At the inquiry we heard evidence from departmental witnesses that they had never heard of this kind of budget allocation for a private member's bill happening before. We are in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. Every member in this place would be familiar with the Government's tired refrain that it has no money to spend and that there is nothing in the budget to support community organisations and programs we all care about. There is no money for domestic violence, no money for animal welfare and no money for regional and rural communities, but suddenly there is \$7.9 million for a gun lobby. The fact that the New South Wales Government would allocate precious budget funding towards a fringe group like hunters while failing to fund essential services and other election commitments that would have a positive impact on society is disgusting.

Of course, this government-funded authority will also, both directly and indirectly, encourage more people to possess and use more firearms in New South Wales. That is objectively a very dangerous move. As I think most members have realised now, this bill is a Trojan Horse for the pro-gun lobby and is part of the Shooters' broader agenda to push Australia towards a United States-style gun culture. Australia's gun control laws are the envy of the world. They keep our community safe, for the most part, and they save lives. Any efforts to roll back these laws must be rejected by Premier Minns.

It is a relief to know that the Premier has indicated that the Government will oppose the parts of the bill that would allow hunters access to prohibited weapons and silencers, and the parts of the bill that will establish a "right to hunt". That rejection of the right to hunt came after the Premier met with Walter Mikac and the Australian Gun Safety Alliance. I thank them both for their advocacy on the issue. I cannot imagine how difficult it must have been for Mr Mikac to have to revisit everything that has happened to him. I know that he has been doing that through Parliament and having conversations with MPs across this place simply because he does not want anybody else to experience what he went through.

Our inquiry exposed significant concerns about the implications of the right to hunt on a symbolic, legal and practical level. Enshrining a right to hunt in law when the majority of people in New South Wales do not hunt and do not support hunting is absurd. We live in a State with very few enshrined human rights. We heard in the inquiry that a right to hunt is not a type of right currently known to law and there was significant concern and confusion as to how it would be interpreted by the courts. Perhaps most concerning, we heard from experts from

organisations such as Gun Control Australia, who expressed concern that a right to hunt would undermine the principles of the National Firearms Agreement. A short excerpt from their submission outlines their concerns:

The National Firearms Agreement, signed in 1996 by the New South Wales (NSW) Government and constantly reaffirmed as the guiding principle on firearms, states that *gun ownership is a privilege, not a right*, and is conditional on the overriding principle of public safety.

...

Enshrining a 'right to hunt' in law would be directly contrary to these principles, and signal an intent by the NSW Government to depart from the national firearms safety framework that has reduced gun-related deaths and harm for decades.

Even with access to silencers and the right to hunt removed, this bill is still a slippery slope towards relaxing gun laws. The combination of the government-funded gun lobby, aka the Conservation Hunting Authority, to promote hunting and gun usage, combined with 50,000 more hectares of land to hunt in, is all part of the Shooters' plan to move New South Wales to a US-style model where the right to bear arms is the norm.

We only have to look at events in the US in recent times to realise that this is not a path we want to go down. The killing of US political figure Charlie Kirk—on the same day that there was a school shooting in Colorado—highlights the dangers of a society where gun ownership is rampant. Perhaps even more disturbingly, early information suggested that Charlie Kirk's shooter was an experienced hunter, with pictures on social media showing him posing with a dead deer. We see similar connections in the recent tragic killing of two Victoria police officers by Desmond Filby, who, according to media reports, was an experienced hunter, had a fascination with guns and had his firearms licence revoked various times and then returned. Awful cases like this on home soil make it very clear that we should be increasing restrictions around the use of guns in Australia and making them harder to access, not making it easier like this bill attempts to do.

Another key concern we heard was around the public safety implications of this bill. The community is rightfully concerned about having to coexist with hunters in shared public land, including the 50,000 hectares of public land allocated for hunting under this bill. Hunting is an inherently dangerous activity and no-one in the community wants to be dodging bullets when they are taking a bushwalk with their family, camping with their children or going on an outdoor rock-climbing activity as a school excursion. Opening up more shared public spaces will increase the chances someone will get shot.

There is no getting around that simple fact. Outdoors NSW & ACT gave compelling evidence about the fact that, even now, users of outdoor spaces struggle to coexist safely with hunters. Opening up more land just pushes other users of shared spaces out of even more areas if they wish to use those spaces safely without the risk of being killed or seriously injured by a shooter. It said that after 20 years of hunting in State forests, it has not been possible to safely coordinate the use of public space between hunters and other user groups such as bushwalkers, school groups, education programs and tourism operators. It asked the fair question:

After 20 years, if we can't get that right, how is this going to improve from this point forward?

At the moment these groups have to avoid these places altogether. The areas communities have to stay away from is the reason they are concerned about safety in those areas. Outdoors NSW & ACT guides 2.1 million people into these public spaces every year, including people using public lands overnight. It gave evidence that it is genuinely concerned that the \$4.3 billion coming into the economy through outdoor recreational activities in these places would decrease if more lands were opened up to hunting, with school groups being the first ones to pull out if there was any risk of hunting activity nearby.

Giving priority to hunters to shoot and kill animals 24/7 in public spaces over other recreational groups, as this bill does, is not appropriate and pushes other groups out of these spaces. The reality is that if hunters could be in the area, then other users of this land, including school groups, will need to cancel their activities for safety reasons. Why is the Minns Government giving priority to hunters to use public land over young children and school groups who we want to be out safely experiencing and learning about nature? We also heard directly from members of the public who were afraid about the impact this bill would have on their safety and who have already experienced fear from the activities of hunters in New South Wales. One submission read:

I have experience of fearing for my safety on public land near Temora NSW. I was undertaking geological field work in a nature reserve on a Sunday afternoon when I heard gun shots nearby. A second round of firing was closer and I decided that it was not safe to remain in the bush with someone firing a gun, unaware that I was there. This was public land — I shouldn't have had to leave because I was scared of being mistakenly shot.

That goes to the heart of the matter. The majority of community members should not be pushed out of public spaces due to fears caused by a fringe minority engaging in a violent activity. In response to those real, genuine concerns, we heard from shooting organisations that people should not be worried going near hunters who were firing deadly bullets because "getting out of bed in the morning" also has an element of risk. That is not exactly a comforting or compelling answer. I, for one, have never had to try to avoid being shot in the head getting out of

bed in the morning, and I hope none of us ever have to. The only way we can assure that is by not supporting this bill.

We also heard concerns about this bill from the perspective of domestic violence organisations. As I have said many times in this place, there is a strong link between violence against animals and violence against humans. As a former psychologist, I have seen the research which shows that any action that promotes individuals inflicting cruelty and death on animals is going to have broader consequences for human safety. At the inquiry, we heard from Lucy's Project, a peak body on the link between domestic violence and animal abuse, which, unlike the Conservation Hunting Authority, has been unable to secure ongoing funding from the Minns Labor Government due to budget constraints and is at risk of having to close its doors. Lucy's Project gave evidence that the use of guns for hunting increases the tendency of perpetrators to use guns to intimidate victim-survivors, and the higher rate of gun ownership in rural, regional and remote areas increases the risks women already face of being killed and being subjected to serious injury.

The Australasian Injury Prevention Network raised similar concerns that the bill increases the existing risk for vulnerable members of the community who are at risk of firearm-related suicide and domestic and family violence fatalities and injuries. The Minns Labor Government has repeatedly stated its commitment to reducing rates of domestic violence and supporting victims. To support the bill would fly in the face of such a commitment and put victim-survivors, largely women and children, at greater risk of death and harm. It is amazing that the report was able to capture such a broad range of concerns about the bill after such a short and rushed inquiry.

As I stated in my dissenting statement, I am concerned by the way the inquiry was rushed by the New South Wales Government. Despite receiving over 2,500 submissions, we had just one hearing date. The hearing occurred only days after submissions closed and at the end of a busy sitting week, which meant that most of the submissions from key witnesses attending the inquiry were not processed or circulated to members until the night before the hearing. That made it very difficult to give proper consideration to the written submissions of witnesses or other community feedback. There was no need to act in such a rush or to create that false time pressure. The reporting date for the inquiry was 10 October 2025. There was ample time to hold further hearings or to at least allow members time to properly review the submissions, yet the deliberative was rushed to be held on 8 September, almost a month prior to the reporting date.

The controversial bill has rightly received significant public and media attention. It has serious implications for public safety, gun control and animal welfare. The volume of submissions received shows the level of community interest in the bill. The inquiry should not have been rushed. I express my concern about the conduct of Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party members in relation to the inquiry. The Hon. Robert Borsak, MLC, who elected to be a participating member of the inquiry, behaved in a manner that clearly breached the procedural fairness resolution. That included posting a media release about a witness online, describing their evidence as "embarrassing", claiming they behaved like a "stunned mullet", criticising their credentials and casting aspersions on why they attended the inquiry. His colleague the Hon. Mark Banasiak shared an interview on his Facebook page in which he ridiculed an entire panel of inquiry witnesses and misused parliamentary footage.

I note that the committee resolved to ask the Hon. Mark Banasiak to apologise for his conduct, and I call on him to take the opportunity to do so during the debate. That is not the way we treat witnesses in this place. Our committee work cannot happen without the good faith cooperation of witnesses who take time out of their busy lives to provide evidence at our inquiries. Many of these witnesses take leave to attend inquiries or are unpaid volunteers. I am seriously concerned that, if it becomes the norm to attack or mock witnesses on social media after they give evidence, we will not be able to hold the kind of robust, well-informed inquiries that are a hallmark of the Legislative Council. That is why I feel compelled to call out that behaviour today.

I reiterate once again that the bill is dangerous, should not be supported by the Parliament and should not be allowed to proceed past a second reading. If members care about animals, public safety, victims of domestic violence, gun control, protecting access to outdoor spaces, stopping dirty political deals in this place or keeping New South Wales a safe place that everyone can enjoy, they must vote down the bill before it does irreparable damage to our State. Lastly, I mention some evidence given at the inquiry by the Gun Safety Alliance around action members can take to improve the bill and strengthen gun safety in New South Wales. The alliance recommended two specific amendments. The first is to reduce the total number of firearms for hunters to five, and the second is to get rid of the P650 forms that allow for unlicensed shooting.

The limiting of firearms to five has just taken place in Western Australia. It was supported by farmers groups there and should be supported in New South Wales. I know that in his meeting with Walter Mikac the New South Wales Premier indicated that he was very open to such an amendment, and I thank the Premier for considering that important amendment. The reality is that there are gun enthusiasts with hundreds of firearms right now. The more firearms there are in the community, the greater the risk to society. John Howard brought in important reforms to reduce and regulate the number of firearms in our country. Members can take it one step

further with strong laws in New South Wales. The other amendment suggested by the alliance—to get rid of the P650 forms—arose from part of the Coroner's report into the deaths of John, Jack and Jennifer Edwards, an absolutely horrific case of violence, which I will speak to further when I move amendments during the Committee stage of the bill. [*Time expired.*]

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (17:04): Since the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025 was last before the House, the Standing Committee on State Development has reported on its inquiry into the bill. That inquiry has confirmed what conservationists, scientists, land managers and communities have been saying from the beginning. The bill is not about conservation, effective invasive species control, land management or ecological science. It is about politics and power, and a deal that this Labor Government has struck with the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party to expand hunting, entrench a right to use firearms in public spaces and legitimise the gun lobby in New South Wales. The committee's report makes very clear that the evidence does not support the bill. The expert witnesses, including the Natural Resources Commission, the RSPCA and the Invasive Species Council, all said that the legislation is not justified and will make pest management harder, not easier.

The committee report also noted that Premier Chris Minns made a significant and public turn away from his initial support for this legislation. I would suggest that that was the result of having learned what was actually in the bill and its implications. Frankly, the bill remains one of the most reckless and ideologically driven proposals members have yet seen in Parliament. It revives a failed model of governance that collapsed in scandal and public outrage more than a decade ago. It creates a statutory propaganda body for the gun lobby and gives it access to taxpayer funds. It elevates recreational hunting to a legal right, undermining the principle of public safety that underpins all our gun laws. It opens up significant new areas of Crown land for armed recreation and it invites more guns into our communities at a time when Australians overwhelmingly support stronger gun control, not weaker.

The inquiry process has not changed the fundamental truth of what this bill represents. It is the product of a political trade-off between Premier Chris Minns and the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. It is a calculated exchange designed to secure votes in this Chamber by offering up public land, public money and public safety. The Government knows the risks, history and evidence, but has chosen to ignore all of it and continue down a path that has been travelled before. We have seen this model before. Game Council New South Wales was created in 2002 under a similar deal between the then Labor Government and the then Shooters Party. It was meant to regulate hunting and promote safety. Instead it became a lobby group operating within government, blurring the line between regulation and advocacy until there was no line left. It failed on governance, safety and integrity, and was then finally abolished in 2013 after a series of scandals that included criminal charges against senior officers for illegal hunting and firearms offences.

The Dunn review found the Game Council had no proper governance structure, that it operated in conflict with itself and that it lacked transparency and accountability. The public supported its abolition, because it was unsafe, unaccountable and out of control. Twelve years later, the Minns Government has chosen to bring it back. The so-called "Conservation" Hunting Authority created by the bill is Game Council 2.0. It has a similar structure, the same purpose and most of the same conflicts. It is designed not to regulate hunting but to promote it. It is mandated to "promote the benefits of hunting", to advise the Government on policy, to influence land-use planning and to distribute money from the Game and Pest Management Trust Fund. It will be stacked with representatives from the shooting community, but there is no guaranteed seat for independent scientists, conservation experts or environmental advocates. It is an organisation built to speak with one voice—the voice of the gun lobby. The inquiry confirmed this.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development admitted that the authority will promote hunting—that is its statutory purpose. The department also confirmed that the Government had already allocated \$7.9 million in the budget to establish the authority before the bill had even been debated, let alone passed. That is not a normal parliamentary process. It is clear evidence of a deal struck in advance, which treats this Parliament as a mere formality rather than the seat of democratic scrutiny. I say shame on Government members. The deal will go down in history as a genuine indication of how they think business gets done, and they are absolutely wrong.

The Natural Resources Commission told the committee that the proposal was not justified and that funding should be directed to programs with a demonstrable environmental benefit. The RSPCA and the Invasive Species Council gave evidence that recreational hunting is ineffective for pest management. They pointed to scientific studies and decades of experience showing that ad hoc, uncoordinated hunting does not reduce invasive species populations and can even make problems worse by dispersing animals and interrupting professional control programs. Those are not marginal opinions; they are the consistent findings of those who actually manage invasive species, have expertise and protect biodiversity in this State.

The inquiry heard that recreational hunting removes a negligible number of animals compared with coordinated control programs. The Government's own figures show that the over a million hectares of State forest open to licensed hunters yields minimal reductions in pest numbers each year. In contrast, professional aerial and ground control programs conducted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development remove tens of thousands of animals efficiently and humanely. Recreational hunting is not an alternative to those programs; it is an obstacle to them.

Despite all of that, the Government has doubled down. It has accepted the Shooters party language of "conservation hunting", a term that has no scientific meaning and no place in serious policy. It rebrands a pastime as environmental work and expects the public to believe that shooting animals for sport is somehow an act of ecological care and management. The RSPCA described that rebranding as misleading and dangerous, yet the Government has accepted that fiction and agreed to write it into law. The bill also creates a statutory right to hunt, a concept that has never existed in New South Wales law and that directly contradicts the principles of the National Firearms Agreement. In Australia, gun ownership and use are privileges regulated in the public interest; they are not rights. The entire framework of firearms law since Port Arthur is built on that important, fundamental and foundational distinction.

The right to hunt undermines that and reframes an activity that must be controlled for safety as an entitlement that the Government must facilitate. On that point, for the first time in my life, I found agreement with former Prime Minister John Howard. He made some of the most sensible but concerning statements about this bill. I do not think he was dragged out because he wanted to be dragged out. He pulled himself out of whatever he was already engaged in and raised the alarm to the Government and to Premier Chris Minns: "This is a dangerous trajectory. Do not do it. Step into my shoes and go back to what I had to deal with as the then Prime Minister dealing with the Port Arthur massacre, looking at other democracies—particularly the United States—and making a fundamental cultural and legal decision that we would head in our own unique direction and do so for all of the right reasons." I thank former Prime Minister John Howard for that, and I will always thank him for coming out at the pivotal time that he did.

The bill goes further than just the right to hunt. It requires land managers, including local councils and Crown land managers, to consider the so-called right to hunt when making management decisions. That means that every time a plan of management is prepared for Crown land, a heritage site or a recreation area, decision-makers will have to ask whether they are giving proper consideration to the right to hunt. It does not require them to prioritise safety, biodiversity, community use or recreation—all those young people who are trying to access Crown lands for their wellbeing and mental health. It requires them to consider hunting as a priority. This bureaucratic Trojan Horse will embed the gun lobby's priorities into every level of land management. It would be almost comical if we were not debating a private member's bill in the Legislative Council in 2025 that should literally be in the bottom drawer or the trash can.

Local government will bear the cost and councils will be forced to commission new assessments, update plans and defend decisions against pressure from gun groups. It will consume resources that should be spent on community services and environmental protection. Councils across regional New South Wales already struggle to manage Crown land under existing frameworks and continual cost-shifting by the State Government. The bill adds a new and entirely unnecessary burden—another unfunded mandate dressed up in the language of rights. The Minister will be empowered, by order, to amend or substitute the list of lands open to hunting, without parliamentary approval or public consultation. That means vast tracts of Crown land could be opened up to hunting with the stroke of a pen.

The public may not even know until it happens, and that is not how public land should be managed. Those lands belong to all of us and decisions about their use should be transparent, evidence based and accountable. The bill removes all three of those important principles. The expansion of hunting into Crown lands poses direct risks to public safety. Those areas are used by farmers moving stock, by bushwalkers, by community groups and by children on school excursions. Outdoors NSW and ACT, the peak body that represents outdoor education providers, told the inquiry that the bill will drive schools and families away from public lands. It said that the mere presence of hunting will make it impossible to guarantee safety.

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation warned that the coexistence of hunting and public recreation is incompatible with child safety. The evidence from its representatives could not have been clearer: If the bill passes, public land will become less safe. Their evidence was profound, compelling and built on the passion of the pain that they have endured in their lived experience of the Port Arthur massacre. I thank them for giving evidence to assist this Parliament in understanding the catastrophic, wrong and ridiculous direction in which the bill will take New South Wales.

The bill also opens the door to the use of prohibited weapons under the guise of conservation. Holders of the new licences will be eligible to apply for permits for silencers or suppressors, night-vision scopes and other

restricted devices. They are not tools of conservation; they are tools designed to conceal and enhance lethal capacity. The idea that recreational hunters should be granted access to such equipment is unbelievable and appalling. It undermines the very purpose of the Weapons Prohibition Act and flies in the face of decades of gun control. It indicates how emboldened the member and his merry men felt when they drafted the legislation and made a handshake deal with the Premier. Being emboldened to make such radical, drastic reforms speaks absolute volumes about how perverse the bill is.

Every gun safety expert who appeared before the committee warned of the dangers. Gun Control Australia, the Alannah and Madeline Foundation and the Australasian Injury Prevention Network all said that more guns will mean more risk, more suicides, more domestic violence deaths and more accidents. That is the actual evidence. That is what the data shows, and yet this Government is expanding access, normalising gun use and doing so for political gain. Frankly, I cannot believe that the Minister still speaks of the merit of this bill, even with amendments. I find that profoundly disturbing. The bill cannot be separated from the deal that produced it. The Shooters party demanded this legislation as the price of their support in the upper House, and the Premier agreed.

The evidence before the committee confirmed that the bill was developed in consultation with the Shooters party—not with environmental agencies, not with scientific experts, and not with the community. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water was not consulted. The Natural Resources Commission was not consulted. The experts were excluded, and the lobbyists were invited in. That is how the bill was written. Representatives from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development could not explain to the committee why millions of dollars had already been allocated to an authority that does not yet exist. They could not explain why the Government was proceeding against scientific advice or why the inquiry's evidence overwhelmingly opposed the bill. The only explanation is the politics and the handshake.

The bill is not about pest management. If it were, it would strengthen professional control programs, increase funding for Local Land Services and expand coordinated biosecurity operations. It would not create a statutory right to hunt, or funnel public money into a lobby body, or arm recreational shooters with prohibited weapons, and it would not expose councils and communities to whole new risks. Everything in the bill moves us further from effective pest management, not closer. The Government claims the bill recognises cultural hunting. That is a cynical distortion. Genuine cultural hunting is already recognised and protected under law. The bill would weaken that recognition and, in fact, exploit it. It uses the language of culture to justify the expansion of recreational shooting by groups that are predominantly not First Nations and conflates heritage with hobby. That is offensive and misleading and should be rejected.

What the Government is allowing with this bill is dangerous. It is undermining the foundations of gun safety that Australians have relied on for nearly 30 years by undoing the lessons of Port Arthur and blurring the lines between public service and private influence. It is a waste of public money on a few ideological gun zealots and it betrays the public trust. The Greens have opposed the bill from the beginning, and the inquiry has only strengthened our resolve. The evidence is overwhelming that the bill will make pest management less effective, our public lands less safe and government less accountable. It will increase the number of guns in our community and hand the gun lobby a permanent foothold inside government.

The Premier has now tried to distance himself from this legislation, claiming that Labor does not support any relaxation of gun laws. He cannot say that while the Government is doing a deal that creates a right to hunt, expands shooting on public lands and funds a new authority to promote firearms use. The words and actions do not match, and the Premier cannot have it both ways. The people of New South Wales deserve a government that upholds science, integrity and safety. They do not deserve a government that trades those values away for political convenience. We shut down the Game Council once because it failed the test of public confidence. It failed on safety, governance and integrity, and we must not let this Government resurrect it under another name.

This Parliament must reject the bill outright. It is a step backwards for conservation, for public safety and for democracy. It is a product of a political deal. It is not a product of policy, evidence or public good. It will put more guns in our community, more risk in our parks and more power in the hands of lobbyists. The Greens oppose the bill in its entirety. We will continue to expose this Government's deal with the Shooters party and its consequences for the people of this State. We will continue to defend the principles of public safety, ecological integrity and democratic accountability, and this Parliament must do the same. The bill is a return to a failed and dangerous model. It does not deserve to pass. The Premier has said that he will give no more Government time to debating the bill in this Chamber. He must stick to his word. We will be holding him to it. We will not allow the Government to give more time to debate on the bill without holding the Premier accountable.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (17:24): I speak against the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025. My colleague Ms Sue Higginson spoke very eloquently in debate on the bill. I echo all of her fine words, in particular, that The Greens will not support any more time being given to debate

on the bill in this place. The words "conservation hunting" are included in the title of the bill, but in fact it is a bill for the gun lobby, very much designed, as Ms Sue Higginson said, around trying to build political power. It is absurd that we are debating whether the bill will do anything in terms of conservation hunting.

The Hon. Robert Borsak, who introduced the bill, seems to have an obsession with The Greens and the way they appear to be infiltrating many living rooms across this State. Many ordinary people phoned talkback radio programs to express strong opposition to the bill. Others phoned the Premier's office and thousands upon thousands emailed MPs. We did not speak to them. Many other organisations did. The member cannot stand that The Greens are standing with the vast majority of people in this State who find the bill absolutely abhorrent and recognise it for what it is: a grubby power play.

Debate adjourned.

Motions

ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (17:27): I move:

- (1) That this House solemnly recognises the second anniversary of the 7 October 2023 attacks on Israel, and the abduction of over 250 innocent hostages by the terrorist organisation Hamas.
- (2) That this House condemns the actions of Hamas since 7 October 2023, including its genocidal intentions to wipe out the State of Israel and its inhabitants.
- (3) That this House:
 - (a) praises the actions of United States President Donald Trump, the State of Israel, and a range of Arab and Muslim countries for bringing a definitive ceasefire to the conflict, including the release of the 20 remaining living hostages; and
 - (b) acknowledges that, as a terrorist organisation, Hamas has no role to play in a viable two-state solution. To reflect on the brutal massacre that took place on 7 October two years ago is to reflect on an unimaginable level of human suffering beyond the physical and mental pain experienced by those 250 innocent hostages taken by the evil terrorist group Hamas. Beyond those killed in cold blood at the Nova music festival, thousands of Jewish Australians living in New South Wales were grieving the loss of relatives or uncertain of their fate. But casting the net wider than those with a direct connection to the suffering uncovers a sense of lingering trauma in the Jewish community. Jemima Montag, a descendant of Holocaust survivors and an Olympic medallist, felt that she had to hide her Jewish ancestry in the lead up to the 2024 Olympic Games, describing that she "did not feel safe for the world to know". Student Noa Gomberg felt that she could not participate in the pride march in Sydney because "as a Zionist, I was unwanted in this community". Look no further for evidence of the confronting nature of the connection than with the account of one Jewish Australian woman who, in a contribution to the book *Ruptured*, wrote:

My body was in Sydney, but my mind was in the shtetls. I saw the trucks rolling in, saw the trains, the piles of bodies, heard my kids screaming for help.

With the rise in antisemitism has come a realisation that, for Jews in this country, equality in treatment is not yet a reality. That extends to those with Palestinian relatives, and the many Australians shocked at the horror of a war unfolding before them on social media. There is nothing edifying about the deaths of civilians, even as tragic collateral in the ineluctable conflict. But now, finally, almost two years to the date, hope exists for all sides of that war. The 20-point peace plan for Gaza is now underway. The remaining living hostages have been released by Hamas. Medical supplies that are difficult to transport have flooded into war zones. It is important to uplift optimism in the ability of the international community to come together—facilitated strongly by President Trump, the State of Israel and a variety of Arab and Muslim nations—for the good of the thousands of Australians with a connection to the distress of that conflict.

This House should also recognise that, in the event of a peace deal, Hamas cannot be an actor. An apparatus of the state that hides behind its own civilians, steals aid from peacekeepers and commits terrorist atrocities has no place in the global community. Worse still, Hamas has already started to renege on the first stage of a generous peace agreement by failing to return all deceased hostages. We must continue to condemn Hamas and its leaders and ensure that a strong democratic presence is established in Gaza. That is the only way to secure lasting peace in the region.

Of course, there is no moral equivalency between Israel and Hamas. I thought about it today. I considered the types of hostages that were exchanged for the 2,000 Hamas members and other fighters, murderers and terrorists who will be itching for the chance to attack and kill Israelis in the future. Israel asked for the 20 hostages—innocent men, women and children—to be returned home to Israel and their loved ones. When compared with the 2,000 fighters, murderers and terrorists that Hamas asked for as prisoners to be returned in exchange, the contrast is stark. It shows that, indeed, there is no moral equivalency between Israel and Hamas.

Some of the people requested to be returned were suicide bombers and people who had planned and organised some of the most evil terrorist attacks that we have seen. But there is great cause for optimism based on what we have seen over the past few days in the Middle East. Today—and the coming years, I hope—is a time for unity. It is a time for the global community to rally behind a workable, practical peace deal, not just for the good of those in the Middle East, but also for each and every Jewish and Palestinian Australian.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (17:32): I contribute to debate on the motion. The Hon. Mark Buttigieg will lead for the Government, but I speak now to move the Government's amendment. It is important, so close to the anniversary of the Israel genocide of the Palestinian people, that we recognise the enormous loss of the civilian Palestinian population, and that we recognise their suffering as part of the motion. I condemn all violence perpetrated by Hamas, but I also condemn the indiscriminate killing of civilians—particularly unarmed women and children—perpetrated by Israel. The killing of journalists and humanitarian and healthcare workers as part of the genocide has been staggering. Some 986 medical workers, 800 teachers, 150 civilian defence workers, 412 relief workers and more than 250 journalists have been killed as part of the conflict. I welcome the hope that the conflict is at an end. All life is important and valuable. I move:

That the question be amended by:

- (1) In paragraph (1) omitting all words after "attacks on Israel," and inserting instead "where 1,200 Israelis were killed and 250 taken hostage by Hamas, the largest loss of Jewish life on any single day since the Holocaust."
- (2) In paragraph (2) omitting all words after "condemns the actions of" and inserting instead "terrorist group Hamas on and since 7 October 2023, including its violent opposition to a two-state solution."
- (3) Inserting after paragraph (2):
 - (3) That this House affirms the group can have no role in the future governance of Palestine.
 - (4) That this House acknowledges the Federal Government's support for the 20-point peace plan, and shares in its immense relief and optimism that the remaining living hostages have been released and the assumption of a ceasefire.
 - (5) That this House mourns the death of all innocent civilians in Israel and Palestine, recognising the number of Palestinian civilians killed and the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza.
 - (6) That this House affirms to protect the social cohesion we all value and treasure, which is a bedrock of the success story that is multicultural Australia."
- (4) Inserting before paragraph (3) (a):
 - (a) commits to remembering the horrors of 7 October 2023 and the lives lost on that terrible day,".
- (5) Omitting paragraph (3) (b) and inserting instead:
 - (c) mourns every single civilian life lost in Israel and Palestine on 7 October 2023 and each day thereafter.

Dr AMANDA COHN (17:36): It is important to recognise the very solemn anniversary of 7 October and the events since. However, I indicate that The Greens cannot support the motion as moved. We will support the Government's amendment. I also move an additional amendment. I move:

That the question be amended by inserting after paragraph (2):

- (3) That this House acknowledges that:
 - (a) the Netanyahu Government, as confirmed by the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry, has for the past two years been committing a genocide on the Palestinian people in Gaza that has seen over 70,000 Palestinian men, women and children killed, hundreds of thousands injured and millions displaced, and that the world, including Australia, has a legal and moral obligation to bring those who directed and materially supported this genocide to justice; and
 - (b) the world's failure to act to stop the genocide over two years of horror has made the world more dangerous, where hospitals, schools and ambulances are targets of war, where starvation is used as a weapon of war and compliance with core international humanitarian law is optional.

Without the amendment from The Greens, the motion, even as amended by the Government, does not even count Palestinians—just like the Australian media, which repeatedly refers to Israelis captured by Hamas as "hostages", but Palestinians captured by Israel as "prisoners". What has happened over the past two years is not a war; it is a genocide. That has been confirmed by the United Nations Independent Commission of Inquiry, and it is what numerous genocide scholars and human rights organisations have been saying for a very long time. The Greens cannot support a motion that continues to perpetuate the erasure of two years of genocide. We simply cannot continue to refer to this as a "war". Further to that, I move an additional amendment. I move:

That the question be amended by omitting in paragraph (3) (b) "the actions of United States President Donald Trump, the State of Israel, and a range of Arab and Muslim countries for" and inserting instead "all those involved in".

It is quite astonishing to see a willingness to praise Donald Trump from the Labor Party; I am less surprised by the Liberal Party. That is a United States President who has removed the Department of Education, who is undermining evidence-based health care, who is trying to designate all trans people as terrorists, who is taking reproductive rights backwards, who has withdrawn from climate accords, who has deported student protesters and who has sent Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents into the houses of ordinary American families. The Federal Labor Party won the election on the Australian community's rejection of Trumpian rhetoric and policies. Shame on Labor for supporting an amended motion that praises Donald Trump. It is not something The Greens can support.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (17:39): I speak in support of the original motion. I make no comment about the amendments, because I am frankly overwhelmed by the size and scope of them. I also do not have the amendments in front of me, so I am unable to get across the detail. I thank the Hon. Chris Rath for bringing this motion before the House. Anniversaries are really important for us to remember, take stock and consider what has happened. I had the opportunity to visit the site of the Nova music festival. It is ringed with gum trees, which makes it a particularly poignant site for Australians to remember in. It is a foreign country that looks and smells so much like our own country.

I saw so many signs of the destruction of life. Young people were taken simply because they were at a dance party and they happened to be Israeli. It was for no other reason. There has been talk of genocide, and what worries me about that word is not the enormity of death in the past two years. I worry about the misapplication of that word, because it belongs to the systematic destruction of people because of their race. On 7 October we saw an attempt to initiate a genocide, and the whole world needs to call that out.

The other point of anniversaries is to take stock. The idea is not to talk about Janus, but rather to recognise that we are binocular. We can look back with one eye to the past while hopefully looking forward. The wonderful thing about this anniversary is that we can look forward in hope. Even six months ago, the idea that all of the hostages who were still alive would be free and back in the arms of those who love them is something we could only hope for. It is wonderful that the living hostages are home. It gives us hope that there can be true peace. It gives us hope that all of the countries in that region will find a way to work together that is based on respect for every life, on the recognition of the loss of every life that has been taken and on the recognition that people in Israel, Palestine and Gaza have a right to live in that country. They should be able to make their homes there together in peace and security.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (17:42): I lead for the Government in debate on this motion. I understand that the Opposition agree with our amendment. The original motion presented to the House was quite asymmetrical. In other words, it simply recognised deaths on the Israeli side. The amendment moved by the Hon. Cameron Murphy gives a more accurate and balanced perspective on what has happened. I address the amendments articulated by The Greens, which we do not support. Our amendment will insert the word "vast" into the motion to recognise the disproportionate amount of Palestinians who were murdered after the tragedy of 7 October.

I now turn to the reference to Trump. My personal view, which I think is also the view of the Government, is that the articulation of what Trump has done in the areas of social policy, domestic American policy and foreign policy should not necessarily discount the fact that this is a significant step forward from a conservative Republican President who has actually made a difference. That is the reality. I am somewhat sceptical about this peace holding. If the ceasefire sticks and Netanyahu does not go back in once the hostages are returned, that will be a very positive thing not only for the Palestinian people but also for the Jewish people. As a progressive person on the left side of politics, I have to say that successive Democratic administrations talked a big game for years but never actually did anything.

I do not have an issue with congratulating someone who has made a huge leap forward in what hitherto has been an intractable problem. Our amendment gives balance to what was essentially a wedging motion from the members opposite. The Opposition has tried time and again to bait the Government into taking a particular side, but we will not fall for it. Our amendment balances the ledger and articulates what has really happened. There was a horrific attack on 7 October when thousands of lives were lost. What has happened subsequent to that has been a disproportionate response and a human tragedy. With this intervention, we can hopefully see a way forward for peace in that area. I commend the Government's amended motion to the House.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (17:45): I speak briefly on The Greens amendments that seek to remove the reference to United States President Donald Trump. Members need to remember that Trump has literally touted the United States weapon supply to Israel in just the last couple of days. In his speech to Israel's Parliament he said, "We've got the best weapons. Netanyahu asked for weapons I had never even heard of, and we supplied them all." I ask members to genuinely and honestly reflect on what is happening right now. Trump has jumped in and done what he has done. He has given what is essentially an oppressive, coercive and unilateral ultimatum.

Members can dress it up as some kind of peace framework, but it is absolutely nothing of the sort. It is one giant, enormous and oppressive power that is weaponed to the hilt and that has been complicit in this genocide. It is now standing up there gloating at what it has done in committing and perpetrating this genocide. I ask members to be real and honest for just a moment. Of course we all breathe a sigh about the potential relief here. Not seeing Israel's absurd, barbaric and over-weaponised genocide taking place in real time gives us all some pause for reflection. But to stand in this Chamber and make a Messiah of fricking Donald Trump—you can all rot!

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (17:47): This motion epitomises the one-sided rhetorical treatment of what has happened in Gaza since 7 October. Palestinians were erased from the original motion. They did not even rate a mention despite the horror we have seen. Official figures say 67,000 Palestinian lives have been lost, and many more are buried under the rubble. Gaza has been absolutely devastated. None of that rates a mention in the motion moved by the Hon. Chris Rath. I agree with the comments about Donald Trump and the peace process. Everyone is relieved that the shooting has ended, although I am sceptical that it is going to last.

This is a classic example of the Trump mode, which is to bring peace in the favour of the aggressive, dominant side. It is similar to the proposal we have seen in Ukraine. His idea of how to achieve peace is to have the weaker side surrender, and that is what has happened here. The terms of the peace deal are utter surrender for the Palestinian people, a situation where the ongoing subjugation of Palestinians under Israeli domination will be perpetuated. That is not worth celebrating. Regarding the rhetoric around terrorism, holding an entire civilian population captive for two years, denying them food, water and medicine, bombing civilian infrastructure, driving people from their homes and telling people to go into safe zones—is that not terrorism? Is it not the same? Is it not equally as brutal and deserving of condemnation? But none of that appears in the motion moved by the Hon. Chris Rath. He is happy just to erase those inconvenient facts from the history. When people look back at his contributions to debates on this issue, they will judge him to be someone who has been complicit and, quite frankly, evil.

The Hon. Chris Rath: Point of order: I ask that the Hon. Anthony D'Adam withdraw the imputation that he just made against me. That would be appropriate.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): I take it that the Hon. Chris Rath is offended by the Hon. Anthony D'Adam referring to him as evil. The Hon. Anthony D'Adam may address the concerns. The Clerk will stop the clock.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: To the point of order: I am entitled to make a judgement about the contributions that that member has made. My view is that his position is indefensible. He has played a role in trying to minimise and defend the conduct of a genocidal regime. In my view, it is evil, and I do not resile from that.

The Hon. Chris Rath: Further to the point of order: If the Hon. Anthony D'Adam will not withdraw, he is also evil for being a Hamas sympathiser.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): We will move on.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (17:52): I make a contribution to the debate. We have been in this position a number of times. My colleague mentioned the fact that, unfortunately, it appears that some of the motivation for moving these motions is to provoke some kind of response that can then be waved at the Government or members of the Government, or possibly to wedge members of the Government to reveal differences on the Government's side. News flash: The differences within the Labor Party on the situation in Israel and Palestine have been well ventilated within our party. We are all well aware of where we all stand on this issue, and we are not concerned about being asked to restate our beliefs, concerns or positions. That is why a number of us have expressed deep concern at the motion that was originally moved.

But I am concerned about some of the remaining language. I accept that my colleague the Hon. Mark Buttigieg has said that he is prepared to recognise the motion with our amendment. But I cannot accept that. I will not go on record saying that I agree with that. I will—as we do—abide by how we undertake divisions in this place. But I will not have on record that I "praise the actions of the State of Israel." I do not, and I will not have that recorded. We have been lectured about needing to take a moment to reflect on the lives that were lost on 7 October. That is undoubtably a tragedy. But we need to stop and reflect on the thousands upon thousands of lives that have been lost every single day since. I agree we should reflect on those Israelis who lost their lives; it is awful, unfair and terrible. But every day we come to this place I want to hear members of the Opposition also reflect on and say how sorry they are about the innocent lives that have been lost by the actions of Israel.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (17:55): I support the motion moved by the Hon. Chris Rath, and I note the comments of members opposite with respect to the motivations for this motion before the House. When I read the motion, I do not feel in any way, shape or form that it is seen as a wedge for the Government or for any

members in this place. We should be able to unequivocally mourn the loss of human life—the 1,200 lives that were taken on 7 October and also the 250 hostages. We should be able to congratulate those who have hopefully brought about the end of the war and the conflict between Israel and those in Gaza. I am terribly mournful for the loss of those lives that occurred on 7 October, as I am terribly mournful for the loss of the lives that have occurred in Gaza during that period.

Sadly, those lives would not have been lost if it was not for the actions of Hamas on 7 October and that despicable terrorist attack, which resulted in the greatest loss of Jewish life since the Holocaust: 1,200 lives lost and the 250 hostages taken. There have been many junctures throughout that period when the conflict could have been ended. The hostages could have been returned and hopefully we would have seen the resolution of the conflict. But that has not occurred until today. I congratulate President Trump on his role in bringing about that ceasefire and an end to hostilities. I hope the ceasefire holds. I hope that lives will be preserved in both Gaza and in Israel and that there will be the ability to rebuild Gaza and create a future for the Palestinian people within that area.

I hope that there will be a two-state solution. That is something that I think we have all largely supported. It has been Australian foreign policy to see a two-state solution arise. However, I would not have wanted to see the hostilities and tragic loss of life of October 7 lead to the recognition of a Palestinian state without any checks and balances, and without a caveat that Hamas was not involved in any such state. We must remember that when it comes to a Palestinian state, it is not just Gaza but it is the West Bank as well. But I commend the Hon. Chris Rath for this motion and I, of course, condemn the loss of life on all sides.

The Hon. BOB NANVA (17:58): I want to say a range of things in the very limited time available. A lot has been left unsaid in this debate, starting with the self-evident observation that Palestinians have suffered immensely, with 67,183 reported killed and 169,841 reported injured. The inhumanity and destruction triggered by Hamas is shocking, but the indiscriminate and inhumane destruction in response has been unconscionable.

I seek an extension of time.

Leave not granted.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (17:59): In reply: Of course we would not offer an extension of time to the Government after the way it has handled this debate—after our negotiations with Minister Kamper's office and the Parliamentary Secretary to put forward an amendment they knew we supported and would not oppose, in an effort to achieve bipartisan support on an important motion marking the two-year anniversary of 7 October. The Minister's office knew that; the Parliamentary Secretary knew that. I mentioned in my speech the loss of Palestinian lives, only to be completely slandered by the Hon. Anthony D'Adam. Given the way Government members have conducted themselves throughout this debate, it is obvious we would not grant them an extension of time.

We do support the amendments from the Labor Party. We do not support the amendments from The Greens. But to the members opposite who stand in this Chamber time and time again saying they oppose Labor Party policy and the words of motions that they end up voting for, I make the point that what actually matters in this place is how you vote. Those members opposite have voted for every single pro-Israel motion since 7 October. The Hon. Anthony D'Adam, the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine—all of those members opposite have voted time and time again for every pro-Israel motion. It does not matter what they say in their speeches. This place runs by the way that you vote, not by the words that you say in your speech. That is what actually matters.

The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine: You have been shown bare, Rath. Shown bare!

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Thank you, the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine, for your outburst.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): Order! Members will direct their comments through the Chair.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: In terms of the point on Trump, I do not particularly like Trump either. I gave a speech last night that pointed out that I do not think Trump's style of politics is particularly helpful and should not be replicated here in Australia. But we also have to acknowledge his role in this process of getting to peace in the Middle East. I think the words from the Parliamentary Secretary were correct: "He is not right on everything, I do not love him on everything, but he is right on this one particular thing and should be given some credit for that."

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): Order! I have received advice from the Clerk in relation to how to best move ahead, given multiple amendments have been moved. The question on the amendments will be put as follows. We will be breaking down the Government amendment moved by the Hon. Cameron Murphy. We will deal with paragraph (1) of the Hon. Cameron Murphy's amendment, then

paragraph (2) and then paragraph (3). Then we will go to paragraph (1) of Dr Amanda Cohn's amendment, then move to paragraph (4) of the Hon. Cameron Murphy's amendment, then paragraph (2) of Dr Amanda Cohn's amendment, and then paragraph (5) of the Hon. Cameron Murphy's amendment.

The Hon. Chris Rath has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Cameron Murphy and Dr Amanda Cohn have moved amendments. The question is that paragraph (1) of the amendment of the Hon. Cameron Murphy be agreed to.

Paragraph (1) of the amendment of the Hon. Cameron Murphy agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): I will now put the question on Government amendment No. 2.

The Hon. Cameron Murphy: Point of order: Just to clear up some confusion, there is only one Government amendment, so are we talking about the paragraphs in that amendment?

The Hon. Chris Rath: I think it is being put in seriatim.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): Yes, based on advice from the Clerk. I called it "amendment No. 2", but we are talking about paragraph (2), just to be absolutely clear.

The question is that paragraph (2) of the amendment of the Hon. Cameron Murphy be agreed to.

Paragraph (2) of the amendment of the Hon. Cameron Murphy agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): The question is that paragraph (3) of the amendment of the Hon. Cameron Murphy be agreed to.

Paragraph (3) of the amendment of the Hon. Cameron Murphy agreed to.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that paragraph (1) of the amendment of Dr Amanda Cohn be agreed to.

The House divided.

[In division]

The Hon. Chris Rath: Point of order: I noted that in the contribution from the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine she said she supported this particular amendment, not opposed it, but I see that she is now voting on the opposing side of the Chamber. I ask that you instruct her to please go to the other side of the Chamber so that her vote can be recorded in the affirmative, which is her intention as outlined in the debate.

The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine: To the point of order: That is an incorrect recollection. I said that I found it difficult to support the amendment that we were putting forward, with the words that we praise the State of Israel, not that I supported this particular amendment.

The PRESIDENT: Either way, the issue is about how members vote with their voice. Members must vote according to how they voted with their voice, not the speech they made. There is no point of order.

Ayes4
Noes27
Majority.....23

AYES

Boyd
Cohn (teller)

Faehrmann

Higginson (teller)

NOES

Barrett
Buttigieg
Carter
D'Adam
Donnelly
Fang
Farlow
Jackson
Kaine

Latham
Lawrence
MacDonald
Maclaren-Jones
Merton
Mitchell
Mookhey
Moriarty
Munro

Murphy
Nanva (teller)
Primrose
Rath (teller)
Roberts
Sharpe
Suvaal
Tudehope
Ward

Paragraph (1) of the amendment of Dr Amanda Cohn negatived.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that paragraph (4) of the amendment of the Hon. Cameron Murphy be agreed to.

Paragraph (4) of the amendment of the Hon. Cameron Murphy agreed to.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that paragraph (2) of the amendment of Dr Amanda Cohn be agreed to. Is leave granted to ring the bells for one minute?

Leave granted.

The House divided.

Ayes4
Noes27
Majority.....23

AYES

Boyd (teller)
Cohn (teller)

Faehrmann

Higginson

NOES

Barrett
Buttigieg
Carter
D'Adam
Donnelly
Fang
Farlow
Jackson
Kaine

Latham
Lawrence
MacDonald
Maclaren-Jones
Merton
Mitchell
Mookhey
Moriarty
Munro

Murphy
Nanva (teller)
Primrose
Rath (teller)
Roberts
Sharpe
Suvaal
Tudehope
Ward

Paragraph (2) of the amendment of Dr Amanda Cohn negatived.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that paragraph (5) of the amendment of the Hon. Cameron Murphy be agreed to.

Paragraph (5) of the amendment of the Hon. Cameron Murphy agreed to.

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

Leave granted.

The House divided.

Ayes27
Noes4
Majority.....23

AYES

Barrett
Buttigieg
Carter
D'Adam
Donnelly
Fang
Farlow
Jackson
Kaine

Latham
Lawrence
MacDonald
Maclaren-Jones
Merton
Mitchell
Mookhey
Moriarty
Munro

Murphy
Nanva (teller)
Primrose
Rath (teller)
Roberts
Sharpe
Suvaal
Tudehope
Ward

NOES
Boyd
Cohn (teller)

Fachrmann (teller)

Higginson

Motion as amended agreed to.

ANTI-IMMIGRATION PROTESTS

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (18:18): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on 31 August 2025, self-described "March for Australia" protests occurred in cities across Australia, including here in New South Wales;
 - (b) these protests were promoted and attended by far right and white supremacist groups including neo-Nazi organisation National Socialist Network; and
 - (c) the Federal Government and Government voiced their strong support for our migrant and diverse communities ahead of the protests, condemning any attempts to pit Australian against Australian.
- (2) That this House condemns:
 - (a) the racist language used across the weekend's protests;
 - (b) the sowing of division and targeting of our migrant communities, most notably our Indian community; and
 - (c) the presence and activities of far right, white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups.
- (3) That this House recognises Australia is an incredibly diverse and multicultural nation and that:
 - (a) promoting division, racism and hate is utterly incompatible with our values;
 - (b) New South Wales is one of the world's greatest multicultural success stories, which embraces people and cultures from around the globe;
 - (c) migrant communities have helped make New South Wales the vibrant, welcoming and dynamic State that it is today;
 - (d) the Minns Labor Government will continue to stand against divisive and hateful forces within our society and instead promote harmony and inclusivity; and
 - (e) in New South Wales and Australia, all sides of politics should value and promote multiculturalism and embrace all people and cultures globally. The motion recognises that a march that took place a few weeks ago was a deliberate attempt by the organisers to try to divide Australians based on the idea of what it means to be Australian. This goes to the heart of the motion and the heart of the issue: There is a view amongst a minority of people in Australia that being Australian means a certain type of thing, whether that is the colour of someone's skin or the language they speak or the culture they adopt. The multiculturalism that we support in New South Wales and Australia, and foster and talk about regularly in this House, is a concept of what it means to be Australian that is vastly different from what it meant 30, 40, 50, or 60 years ago. It is fundamentally different because we have fostered it and allowed it to flourish in this State and this country. When we embrace other cultures, languages and perspectives, we change the concept of who we are as Australians as a result of those interactions.

The March for Australia a few weeks ago represents a certain perspective that does not agree with our view of multiculturalism. The organisers of that march maintain a belief that to be Australian, someone has to look a certain way, adopt a certain way of thinking and speak a certain language, and all those who are "extra-Australia"—in other words, do not belong here—are not really Australian. That is why their view is so abhorrent. The racism that was directed, in particular, to the Indian community, which was called out by the Premier and this Government at the time, is unacceptable. I do not think such marches are a huge threat because the vast majority of Australians accept the concept of multiculturalism that I articulated. The problem is that a minority view can sometimes take hold when people are not doing well with, for example, the cost of living or the housing crisis, so they try to attribute those issues to excessive migration. If such views and those marches are not called out for what they are, then those ideas can take hold.

This has happened in other countries and other jurisdictions, particularly the United States and northern European countries, where those ideas of xenophobia and isolationism have taken hold because governments and political leaders have not been vigilant enough. It would be a tragedy if the great project of multiculturalism in New South Wales and Australia were to be terminated because those ideas took hold. This motion attempts to call out those gatherings for what they are: an attempt to divide Australians and foster dislike for people who they perceive to be different to them. It is not what we are about in Australia.

The reason we are such a great country and have done so well is because we have embraced other cultures. As a result, it has changed who we are. We are no longer the Australians of the 1950s because those other cultures have rubbed off on us and given us a different perspective, a different way of looking at life and a different view

of how the country should progress and of values that it holds. The motion is about calling out those marches for what they are. People have a right to freedom of association and they can protest on whatever they want; it is their views that the Government does not support. We will continue to support multiculturalism and call out racism wherever it occurs, particularly when it is directed at our great Indian community, which has contributed so much.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (18:23): New South Wales is home to one of the most successful and vibrant multicultural societies anywhere in the world. With over 310 nationalities represented and more than 283 languages spoken across our schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods, New South Wales is one of the most diverse places on the planet. In New South Wales our diversity is one of our greatest strengths. Migrants have helped build every part of our national life. From our universities to our hospitals, from our small businesses to our major industries and in culture, science, sport and the arts, our State thrives because of the skills, talents and dedication of migrants.

Our State's strong economic growth is inseparable from the hard work and enterprise of generations of migrants. They have added skills, investment and international connections that keep New South Wales competitive in a global economy. On a people-to-people level, the food we enjoy, the festivals we celebrate and the art and music we cherish are all testaments to the creativity and resilience of migrant communities across our State. Festivals like Holi, Diwali—which we are celebrating at the moment—Harmony Week and so many others remind us of the joy and richness that cultural diversity brings. They remind us that our success as a State comes not from excluding others but from welcoming them.

Multiculturalism in New South Wales is anchored in our shared values of mutual respect, fairness and a belief in the dignity of every person. Those values ensure that no matter where someone was born, what language they speak or what faith they practice, they can belong, contribute and thrive here in the great State of New South Wales. That is not about mere tolerance; it is about genuine inclusion. At a time when parts of the world are struggling with division, intolerance and conflict, Australia must remain a beacon of unity, inclusiveness and respect. That means rejecting rhetoric that seeks to divide us and reaffirming the values that bind us together as Australians. Discrimination weakens us but diversity strengthens us. New South Wales flourishes when everyone is valued and treated with fairness and respect. If rhetoric or behaviour attempt to drive a wedge between us, our answer must be solidarity. When intolerance tries to quiet voices, we must champion inclusion even more firmly. No-one should ever feel that their culture, their heritage or their place in our State is questioned or diminished.

The New South Wales Coalition deeply values and respects in particular the Australian Indian community, and we reject any attempt to politicise migration or publicly single out communities based on perceived voting patterns. As the Leader of the Opposition stated publicly, the New South Wales Coalition apologises for any distress caused by recent remarks and actions. We stand in solidarity with the Australian Indian community and affirm our equal belonging—all of us—safety and opportunity here in New South Wales. In recent weeks the leaders and deputy leaders of the NSW Liberals and the NSW Nationals hosted a round table with 40 Australian Indian community leaders in our Parliament. It was an important forum that discussed how we should build stronger links with multicultural communities and protect places of worship, and how we can strengthen reporting pathways for instances of hate and racism, which we worked on as a Coalition Government. The NSW Liberals and NSW Nationals parliamentary team is committed to regular dialogue with our State's diverse communities.

The Hon. BOB NANVA (18:26): I recently spoke in this place about the self-described March for Australia and how it represents a milestone moment for the racist hard right in its search for a mainstream audience for its doctrine of hate. We all know that the rallies are organised by people with clear connections to the neo-Nazi movement. In fact, uniformed Nazis have not only spoken at the rallies but also led the marches through city streets. It is a deliberate strategy by the organisers to present the rallies as a response to mainstream political debates over migration, housing, infrastructure and services. But those issues are just a facade being used as an entry point into the real cause being pursued by the organisers: the promotion of white supremacist ideology. That ideology jars with the experience of most migrant families who have come to this country, including mine. My family found that, regardless of birthplace, ancestry, skin colour or religion, what mattered in Australia was character. My family found that if people are prepared to open their arms to Australia, Australia will open its arms to them. Now I am watching my own children grow up as part of a generation for whom differences in religion, race and sexuality are completely and utterly unexceptional.

But this foundational principle of modern Australia—the idea that we can all be in Australia regardless of skin colour—is no accident. It is an idea that has been protected by a virtuous, bipartisan consensus for decades. For sure, there have been moments of dog whistling and moments where leaders have flirted with intolerance but, ultimately, leaders from all sides have had the courage to put the long-term national interest ahead of short-term political opportunism and to stand up when needed to defend our multicultural society. Motions like this one are important as they allow us, as leaders and as representatives of our communities, to call out the dangerous siren

song of white nationalists and to, once again, assert that racism and white supremacy have absolutely no place in Australia and certainly no place in New South Wales. I commend the motion to the House.

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

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (20:00): This motion is an attempt to sideline, insult and dismiss the real concerns of millions of Australians who are rightly worried about Australia's immigration policies. Firstly—and this should not need to be said—we cannot honestly dismiss the concerns of protesters because of a fraction of 1 per cent in their midst who are radicals. Protests attract all sorts of people. People who want to shut down debate and protest often attempt to do so by focusing on the fringe element. That is a dishonest tactic used to avoid an honest discussion. That focus-on-the-fringe straw man is an attempt to shut down debate via the primitive tactic of guilt by association.

Many members of the Labor Party and The Greens marched across the Harbour Bridge for peace in Gaza. But, amongst that huge crowd of ordinary Australians, the media found a random picture of the Ayatollah and conflated the march with support for extremism. The guilt by association principle means that all those who marched for peace in Gaza are for the Ayatollah, Hamas and Hezbollah. That is obviously absurd, but that same absurdity underpins this motion. Australia desperately needs a frank discussion about immigration because our current approach is not working. Our record levels of immigration are being used to prop up our broken university system and hide our economic stagnation, but ordinary people are feeling the effects, including higher house prices, overburdened infrastructure and shrinking social capital. Migration can be a good thing but, at some time over the past few decades, things started to go wrong. We need to pause and rethink our approach.

We are told that it is a fringe element, but let us go through the recent public polling. In March this year the Lowy Institute, which is hardly a right-wing mouthpiece, said 53 per cent think immigration into Australia is too high. In September the hard-right Guardian Essential poll also found that 53 per cent think immigration is too high. I thought it was only a hard-right fringe! Immigration concern is mainstream. On 15 September the extreme right-wing *Sydney Morning Herald* poll had more detail, including that 49 per cent say immigration is too high, 27 per cent say it is about right, 5 per cent say it is too low—those 5 per cent are the nutters who want to wreck the joint—and 18 per cent said they did not know. Those 18 per cent had an opinion; they were just too shy to admit it. So about 60 per cent of Australians are telling the pollsters that we have too much immigration.

We will not be cowed by disingenuous guilt by association, and we will not be silenced by the fake outrage of the elites who want to shut down democratic debate. This country needs a five-year immigration pause, a five-year debate about the optimal immigration program, and a national plebiscite on what immigration policy is best going forward. I pay tribute to Bec Freedom and other organisers around the nation for their courage in championing the concerns of a majority of Australians. I urge them to dismiss with ridicule motions like this, which I suspect 99 per cent of the Government's political class will, within the two minutes, vote to endorse. That is why we need a new political class.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (20:04): I thank the Parliamentary Secretary for bringing this most important motion to the House. I spoke about this issue in an adjournment debate speech on 17 September this year, and I urge everyone to have a look at what I had to say about it then. In relation to the Hon. John Ruddick's comments, I am sure there are genuine people who feel strongly about issues, whether they be immigration or something else, who turn up to these events, but this one is different. What is different about it is that, without any doubt in the world, those rallies were organised by neo-Nazis, and they platformed neo-Nazis.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): Order! The Hon. John Ruddick will cease interjecting.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: As I said, that is clear from the organiser Bec Walker, otherwise known as Bec Freedom. She identified herself as the organiser of the march, and she held a two-hour live stream on X, during which she said it was about protecting Australia's heritage and that the next step was to protect white heritage. It all means the same thing. If people turn up to a march organised by neo-Nazis, platformed by neo-Nazis and with people yelling neo-Nazi slogans, then they are going to associate themselves with that march. That is different to the example given about someone at the back end of a march waving a banner or flag that we may not agree with. What is different about it is that it was organised by those groups. I am sure there were unwitting participants who had a gripe and wanted to go along and express themselves, but when they turned up at a Nazi march and they could see it was a Nazi march, if they stayed there and participated, they were associating themselves with the Nazis organising that march.

Let us not sanitise this. It is fascism dressed up as patriotism, with people walking around and draping themselves in flags. There was no better example than an Indigenous Australian who cared about immigration

and turned up at the march in Melbourne proudly displaying an Aboriginal flag. He was threatened and kicked, and so were his kids. Further to that, we saw neo-Nazis from that march in Melbourne go to Camp Sovereignty the very next day and violently attack Indigenous women at that sacred site. Neo-Nazis, shameful and full of hate, organised that thing, and people should not associate themselves with such disgusting events. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. WES FANG (20:07): I make a short contribution to this debate. It is ironic that I am speaking after the Hon. Cameron Murphy, because I was not going to speak; however, here I am. I genuinely was not going to speak until I heard his contribution. I was at the rally with childcare workers today. That does not necessarily mean that I associate myself with the union movement, but I certainly associate myself with those workers and their message, which is that this Government is doing a bad job in relation to their pay. However, I slightly digress.

To insinuate that someone turning up to a rally because they are concerned about an issue can be considered a Nazi is a bridge too far. Not only in this place but in society generally, that is the sort of language and attitude that means we are always at the extremes on any issue. That is plain wrong. I am a beneficiary of immigration to this country, and I know that a number of members of this House are either immigrants or descendants of immigrants. By and large, I think almost everyone in this place is a descendant of an immigrant at one point or another, whether it be two centuries ago, or one or two decades ago.

If someone has a concern about the price and availability of housing and the ability of the services and infrastructure in this country to meet the demands of the people that are already here, let alone the influx of people coming here, and makes their position known by attending a rally, that does not make them a Nazi. I appreciate that there were unsavoury aspects of the march. I certainly concede that there were people involved who some of the attendees did not want to associate themselves with. We need to separate the issues from some of the behaviour. The Hon. Cameron Murphy suggested that we perhaps go down the path of some of the other protests that we see every week in the Sydney CBD. Members would have a different opinion if they associated with everybody who attended those protests.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (20:10): Fascism is on the march across the globe. When I talk about fascism, I want to be very clear. We know a fascist by the issues that they champion and the tactics that they deploy. The go-to for fascism is the politics of hate and division, placing one group of people against another. That is a key defining feature of fascism. When we see people deploying those tactics, we can be assured that fascism is on its way. The fascists are coming. We are not immune in Australia. This is a global phenomenon of the far right using immigration as a key point of leverage to build political power. It is happening across the globe. It is happening in the western world. It is going to happen here.

The question is: How are we to respond? And the real question is actually for those on the conservative side of politics, because they face the temptation to embrace the politics of division and to draw political capital from dancing with the politics of anti-immigration. The tension is evident in the manoeuvring of the Federal Liberal Party. We have seen what happens when these politics take hold: In the United Kingdom the conservative side of politics has been totally eviscerated and replaced by proto-fascist Nigel Farage. That is what awaits conservatives here if we do not stop the fascists in their tracks. The real question for the conservatives in this Parliament and this country is whether they will choose the progressive side of politics that values a multicultural and diverse society built on immigration, or try and reap the dividends of going down the path of division and hate.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (20:13): I speak tentatively on this issue. It is not a pool that I normally swim in. My view has been swayed by debates that I have heard in this House. There were a lot of good people at these rallies, people who were at their wits' end, frustrated with the level of immigration and the lack of housing. I have spoken to people fed up with the renewables rollout, with genuine gripes that they want to raise, who have tried to get involved in these things. I am concerned with the tone of this and other debates that suggests it is okay to encourage protests "as long as the protests are about something that I believe in".

Most concerning is the nutbag element who seem to have hijacked some of these marches. They are getting the bulk of the attention. They are using the opportunity, alongside people who have genuine gripes, to promote their cheap and toxic causes. I feel for the people who attended and had their genuine concerns hijacked in this way. I am also angry about the fact that the acceptance of being patriotic about this country has been taken away. There is talk of people running around with Australian flags. I should be able to proudly raise an Australian flag without being labelled a bigot. It makes me particularly angry that the actions of some have caused that to be taken away.

A few years ago I was working on developing a school in Kenya. As Kenya is in the Southern Hemisphere, we could see the Southern Cross, which we can also see here. There was a suggestion that we call the school the Southern Cross Academy but, at the time, someone said we could not do that because it represents the Cronulla

riots. That was so upsetting to me and is so offensive to people who want to be proud of this country, and should be proud of this country. On some issues, we have some black marks against us but, as a whole, Australians should be proud to raise our flag, to raise the boxing kangaroo or, if they cannot think of anything better—and I hope they do—and they want to say, "Aussie, Aussie, Aussie! Oi, oi, oi!" they should do it. It does not mean they are a racist or a bigot. I am angry at the people who have hijacked this symbolism for their own toxic causes. I condemn the people who have tried to take over these marches for their terrible causes. I feel for the people who have genuine gripes. We must do better, be better people and be kinder to each other.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (20:16): In reply: I thank all of the members who contributed to this debate, including the Hon. Scott Farlow, the Hon. Bob Nanva, the Hon. John Ruddick, the Hon. Cameron Murphy, the Hon. Wes Fang, the Hon. Anthony D'Adam and the Hon. Scott Barrett. The very fact that we are talking about immigration in the context of a march that happened a few weeks ago says a lot. I commend the Liberal Party, and particularly the Hon. Scott Farlow, for concurring with the Government position that we have had a bipartisan pact in this country for many years. We came from the position of the White Australia policy—which my party advocated back in the day—where immigrants were selected from certain parts of Northern Europe, to the exclusion of everyone else, based on the colour of their skin.

We then had a policy of postwar assimilation because there was an economic need for cheap labour. That was the reality. Immigrants were expected to conform to the cultural and linguistic norms of the country, to act Australian and speak Australian. Then, of course, we matured, thanks to the efforts of the Whitlam Government and Minister Grassby. This was then perpetuated by the subsequent Fraser Government, which ran on a unity ticket of multiculturalism and said, "Hey, it may actually be a good idea if we live and let live and embrace other people's cultures," because it makes us better as human beings and gives us other perspectives and cultural interfaces. That is where we are today.

To equate immigration with the ills of lack of housing and cost of living is to simply not understand the economic facts. Do members realise that one of the main drivers of productivity and economic growth is immigration? It welds capital to labour and technology so that output goes up. It is a basic economic factor. Even if we accept the argument that there is a zero-sum game between the quantum of immigration and the stock of housing, net immigration levels are returning to trend after the historic low during COVID. The levels peaked after COVID in a catch-up flood of everyone coming back in, and they are now returning to trend. The point of this motion on the marches is not to suppress free speech or the expression of patriotism and proud nationalism. It is about the fact that there are nutters running them. Unhinged Nazis helped organise the marches. There were a lot of good people who deserved to march and show their patriotic beliefs, but not to the detriment of our Indian community and other multicultural communities. This motion decries that behaviour.

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

Motion agreed to.

Documents

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Return to Order

The CLERK: According to the resolution of the House of Wednesday 17 September 2025, I table:

- (a) a return received on Wednesday 15 October 2025 from The Cabinet Office, together with an indexed list of documents;
- (b) a return received on Wednesday 15 October 2025 from The Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of privilege; and
- (c) a return received on Wednesday 15 October 2025 from The Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of personal information.

PUBLIC SCHOOL SAFETY

Return to Order

The CLERK: According to the resolution of the House of Wednesday 17 September 2025, as varied on Wednesday 15 October 2025, I table:

- (a) a return received on Wednesday 15 October 2025 from The Cabinet Office, together with an indexed list of documents;
- (b) a return received on Wednesday 15 October 2025 from The Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of privilege; and
- (c) a return received on Wednesday 15 October 2025 from The Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of personal information.

*Committees***PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND WORKS COMMITTEE****Reference Amended**

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (20:20): I move:

That the resolution of the House of 5 June 2025 referring the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 to the Public Accountability and Works Committee for inquiry and report, as amended on 9 September 2025 to refer the provisions of the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment (Reform and Modernisation) Bill 2025 to the existing inquiry, be amended by:

- (1) Omitting paragraph (2).
- (2) Inserting after paragraph (5):
 - (6) That the committee report by 7 November 2025.

It has been about 132 days since this House referred the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill to the Public Accountability and Works Committee.

The Hon. Mark Latham: Four months.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Yes, almost four and a half months. The committee received 217 written submissions and, over three hearings in June, July and October, heard from around 80 expert and lay witnesses from all major stakeholders—the Treasurer, government agencies, clinicians, injured workers, unions, insurers, the legal profession, academics and advocacy groups. I place on record my thanks to the committee members, including the chair, Ms Abigail Boyd; the deputy chair, the Hon. Damien Tudehope; the Hon. Bob Nanva, the Hon. Mark Latham and the Hon. Susan Carter. I believe these members attended all hearings. Other members contributed as well, but those particular members contributed by rigorously questioning the witnesses and extracting a large amount of evidence, so I want to make sure that is on record.

After four months, I think the issues have now been well and truly ventilated and there is no realistic prospect of new or materially different evidence being brought forward. When my office rang the committee secretariat on Monday, we were told that there would be no more hearings. It is for this reason that I have moved this motion. When I originally agreed to an inquiry, it was on the proviso that it would be a relatively short inquiry. Initially there was a date for August. Then I accepted that that was not a sufficient amount of time for the committee, and I was told informally that it would come back around September or October. I accepted that and I have been watching and listening to the hearings and reading the transcripts. As I said, I think the committee's members have done an outstanding job. The Treasurer has been very frank about the state of the scheme. In the hearing on 17 June, he stated:

... icare has advised me that the scheme deficit is expected to rise from \$4.9 billion at 31 December 2024 to nearly \$6 billion in the absence of reform by 1 July. The Nominal Insurer is likely to hold 78¢ in assets for every dollar of future liability, meaning it is plunging further into insolvency at a faster rate. Or, to put it even more simply, the scheme is no longer going backwards by \$5 million per day; it is going backwards by more than \$6 million every day.

I do not think that I heard anything, particularly in that hearing, that was at odds with that information. Some stakeholders suggested that they would have liked to have seen more modelling to make their own assessment, but when the Hon. Bob Nanva asked the Auditor-General on 29 July, the Auditor-General agreed that the Treasurer's figures were correct. A significant focus of the inquiry has been on psychological injury claims. We heard from various different consultants and the plethora of detail has been extraordinary. Again, I thank the committee members for it because it has given me a great amount of insight into what might need to be amended in the legislation in debate on the floor of this Parliament. I think the debate will be relatively lengthy.

I thought some things were great. In particular, I acknowledge the Hon. Damien Tudehope for the questioning that he undertook of the State Insurance Regulatory Authority chief executive and the icare chief actuary, who were withholding scenario modelling and costings relating to proposed changes to whole person impairment under the guise of Cabinet in confidence. The matter was thoroughly pursued by the Hon. Damien Tudehope in the committee, and he subsequently moved a motion in the House, which I supported, requiring the Government to produce documents under a Standing Order 52 call for papers.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Still waiting.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I have waited for a lot of documents in my time that did not come forward. In any event, SIRA and icare were unwilling to provide the modelling. In their written submissions, they confirmed that the scheme faces a \$6 billion deficit, with the Nominal Insurer again holding only 78¢ in assets for every dollar of future liability. That is a very real problem, which I would like to have debated as soon as possible. The committee has had sufficient time and should make its report available on 7 November. I have been given assurances from the Hon. Damien Tudehope that there is a deliberative committee tomorrow and a date will be

set for a return of 3 November. I trust that will be confirmed in this House. Again, I thank the committee members for their work. It is important that we get the bill back before this House.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (20:25): I thank Mr Assistant President and members for allowing me to speak in this debate, as chair of the committee. I thank the Hon. Tania Mihailuk for her interest in the committee's deliberations. As she has pointed out, it has been incredibly useful. We have had so many incredible submissions from experts. We have systematically unpicked all of the misinformation that the Government has used to support the bill. We continue to see misinformation coming out. I would love to chat with the member about why the information continues to be incorrect.

Turning to the issue at hand, I thank the committee secretariat for the amazing work that they have done. We have been flooded with people saying to us that they had put their submissions in but their submissions had not yet been put up on the website. The committee secretariat have taken submissions from injured workers who have had really horrible experiences and have undertaken a process of triaging them. They have taken each submission, called the person, assessed them for suicide risk and made sure that they have support and that they are happy with what they are saying to be put on public record.

It has been a really arduous task for them, which has taken a huge amount of time. Then they are posting submissions on the website. There has been a hand-holding process that they have had to go through with those injured workers. That has been at the core of this work. The last hearing, held on 7 October, was dedicated to those injured workers. That has only just occurred. We have supplementary questions. I think the answers from that hearing are being returned by 30 October. Unfortunately, we still do not have all of those submissions up because of the process the committee secretariat is undertaking.

We never said that we wanted to hold this indefinitely. I was always very clear that I wanted this bill to come back to this House so that we could debate it once we had all of the information. That is what we have done. That is why this week we have sent out papers for the meeting we are having tomorrow morning. We did not have a chance to speak about this before with the Hon. Tania Mihailuk, when I could have informed her that there is now a willingness by the committee to report. We are suggesting the week starting 3 November, but it is incredibly difficult for the committee secretariat, so we are in active conversations with them about how we will make that work in a way that respects all of the work that the injured workers have put in. It is incredibly important that we respect that because we are talking about people's lives. The people who will be impacted by this bill are the most vulnerable in the system, and that is why it has taken so long. I thank the member for her interest. I cannot support the motion because we have it in hand.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (20:28): We need to urge a little bit of patience upon the House. In 13 hours from now, after a little bit of shut-eye, there will be a deliberative of the committee to sort out its schedule. I am sure that the intent of committee members is to have this legislation before the House before the end of the year to get it sorted by the end of 2025. It has been a very good committee, as has been pointed out. As a good committee, it should be allowed to determine its own schedule and sort it out tomorrow morning at 9.30 a.m.

But it has also been a very educational committee. I have learned a lot, and it has shifted my views about the best model. We need to restrict entry as much as possible with commonsense, practical definitions. If members are worried about premiums, they need to overturn the very expensive Greenwich amendments, so-called in the other place. No-one can figure out why they were allowed through, but they will drive up premiums if they remain in the bill. At the end of it, we need to make Labor maintain its election promise of permanently injured workers receiving permanent income support. There is no doubt that the Treasurer has made a promise, solely to be broken.

How do we understand the Treasurer's character in that? Chris McCann gave us some insights into what sort of Treasurer we are dealing with and how easily he betrayed not only the whistleblower but his own promise to the people of New South Wales. These are very important committee deliberations. We have found out a lot about the bill, and about this Treasurer. That is the role of the upper House: to review, to improve, to educate and to bring back something that will be best practice in public policy, so that we are not doing another patch-up job in this vexed area three or four years from now. We should allow the committee to do its work.

We should allow the committee to reflect on all the material that has been presented and put forward a model—an improvement on what was sent to us in the first place. It has been a very useful process. It has been the upper House at its best, and why we are in this place: to review and improve where we can. I am sure that is the intent of the committee. In almost exactly 13 hours from now, we will be determining what to do, and I am sure we will get the bill back to this House as quickly as possible. It is nice to have assistance around the Chamber, but the committee does not need that assistance. We are going okay. Just trust in us.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (20:31): I support the motion of the Hon. Tania Mihailuk. This inquiry needs to be wrapped up. It should have never started. It was a political stunt. I am flabbergasted that we are in this

situation. Before I came to this place, I had no idea what the work environment would be like. I thought it could be anything. But I did not expect that the Australian Labor Party—the party of workers and of the trade union movement—would be mugged by reality and say, "You know what? We do have to wind back the abuse of the workers compensation system." That is a good thing. The people of New South Wales should be thinking, "We don't have a Dan Andrews-style Labor government." Labor is being backed in this reform by the small business community.

The Liberals have teamed up with The Greens and the Hon. Mark Latham, who is my favourite colleague. He was a member of the Labor Party, but the Leader of the Opposition has teamed up with The Greens against the interests of the small business community. These are modest reforms, but they are clearly a step in the right direction. This is not an error; it is a Liberal Party cardinal sin. I wrote a book in 2018 called *Make the Liberal Party Great Again*. It had a sexy title, but it was actually quite a serious academic look at the history of political parties in Britain, the United States and Canada over the past 300 years. There was an unmistakable trend of democratic reform so that the party membership aligns with the parliamentary team. The Liberal Party membership supports the Treasurer and not the Leader of the Opposition on this issue.

I know the Liberal Party membership very well. They support the Treasurer on this issue of workers compensation. It is well known that Sussan Ley is in the polling abyss because she does not believe—let's go through the polling of the Liberal Party around the country. Queensland is its best State; Mr Crisafulli is doing a good job with 40 per cent primary vote. Victoria is at 35 per cent. After 24 years of pure communism, you would think that there would be a bit more than 35 per cent. New South Wales has 33 per cent. I saw a poll recently that said the Leader of the Opposition might end up with 22 seats after the next State election. Why would that be? Tasmania has 29 per cent, Western Australia has 28 per cent and South Australia has 21 per cent—the mighty Liberal Party is down to 21 per cent in some parts of this country. The Liberal Party has a choice. It can either rediscover its founding principles and vote for the Hon. Tania Mihailuk's commonsense motion or, like the United Kingdom Tories and the Mitt Romney Republicans, be put into the dustbin of history.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (20:34): The Government supports the Hon. Tania Mihailuk's motion, and we thank her for moving it. Parliament has a job to do. It is fair enough that the House resolved to send the bill to a committee, but Parliament needs to resume its work, and it needs to debate the issues. Lots of members have very different views, as we have just heard. I imagine that debate on the bill will be pretty passionate and pretty long. A lot of the evidence that has been adduced in this committee, but also in the inquiry that was undertaken by the Hon. Greg Donnelly, will be contested. We will all have an opportunity to express our respective views. That is what we should do. We should do it in a timely manner. It matters a great deal whether or not we can resume our work as a Parliament and as a House.

I am sure members realise we have work to do in the upper House but, should this bill be amended, the lower House needs to consider it too. That is just the natural way in which the parliamentary process works—for any bill. Members in the other place also need to understand the result of our deliberations. Regardless of whether members like the bill, hate the bill, think it should be amended, think it goes too far, think it does not go far enough, prefer restricting coverage or prefer expanding coverage—all of which are legitimate issues to debate—practical work has to happen to administer a workers compensation system. Injured workers need to know the rules. Some 86,000 people use the system every year. There are a whole bunch of specialist insurers, self-insurers, the Nominal Insurer and the Treasury Managed Fund—all of which need to know what the rules are in a timely manner.

Anyone who has been paying attention to the debate knows there is a great degree of anxiety. Even waiting until this point has created further delay and more administrative complexity, raising levels of anxiety amongst many of the organisations that are doing their business plan for next year. Small businesses need to know what to budget for, but so too do a huge number of not-for-profits, disability organisations and child protection agencies. They have the same issue because that is the way in which their budget cycles work. Knowing what the rules are, what their premiums are, and being able to budget for them is vital practical knowledge. I well and truly respect the fact that this Parliament will hold me and the Government to account, but we can do our job in a way that is timely. We support the motion. The bill should have been debated back in June. The fact that it has been delayed into this financial year will have consequences; that was not made up. We should get on with doing our job.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (20:37): I make a few remarks in support of my colleague the Treasurer, the Government and the motion. There are many times, as a member of the Legislative Council, that recall to me my reading of Kafka's classic *The Trial*. This is one of those, because Parliament is to consider reform of the workers compensation scheme, which literally everyone seems to agree needs reforming. But that cannot happen until the proper process has been followed. So Joseph asks, "What is the proper process?" "It must

be considered by committee." Joseph says, "Right, a committee. When is the committee to report?" He is told, "There is a date, but you cannot know it."

So here we are with what Lamb Chop's might have described—in another one of my favourites, the 1980s Lamb Chop's singalong—as the committee that never ends. It just goes on and on, my friends. We are assured that, tomorrow, the date that is unknown, that we cannot know, will be known. If that is the case, then just amend the Hon. Tania Mihailuk's motion now with that date. I have not spoken to the Treasurer about this, and I do not want to verbal him, but I suspect, if that was indeed the intention—that there will be a date, and we can know the date—the date could just be moved now. Our job in this place is to review, to inquire, to send important matters to committees, and also to make decisions.

Like many in this place, I am occasionally forced to defend that against what, presumably, we would all consider to be unfair cheap shots, like that we are a bit of a talkfest, that we cannot get on with stuff, and that we always say no. But if we set up committees with no end date that just drift into the future until someone says, "Okay, it was a good process. I got a lot out of it. Let's wrap it up", it is just preposterous to then say, "We will do that, but not today. We must do it tomorrow." As the Treasurer said, members are well and truly entitled to have a go at the way that he thinks we should reform the workers compensation scheme—and it is not just him; it is the position of the entire Government. Members are entitled to have that discussion in debate in this place, and to move amendments that reflect their point of view. That is a core part of our job. It has come to the point where we have to be able to sensibly say we will consider this legislation and if it does not pass, it does not pass. At least let us do the job that we were elected to do, which is not just to talk but also to vote and to legislate.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (20:40): On 5 June this year I moved to refer the bill to the Public Accountability and Works Committee for an inquiry, to report by 15 August 2025. I said:

It has been the position of the Coalition to fundamentally support changes to the Workers Compensation Act to reform workers compensation to make it a more affordable scheme. The Treasurer and I would be on a unity ticket on that. However, we differ in that, in the view of the Coalition and many others, the manner in which the Government has sought to achieve this reform to the Act has been at the potential expense of the most vulnerable workers.

The Opposition maintains that view. Two separate amendments were moved to my motion: the first by the Hon. John Ruddick, who proposed a reporting date of 23 June; and the second by the Hon. Mark Latham, who proposed that the committee determine its own reporting date. In responding to those two amendments, the Treasurer said:

In relation to the amendments, I reiterate the argument that I made on the substantive motion. But, should the House decide it wishes to embrace the amendments, I note that the amendments of the Hon. John Ruddick and the Hon. Mark Latham are an improvement on the motion moved by the shadow Treasurer.

The Hon. Mark Latham's amendment was that the committee set its own reporting date. The Treasurer embraced that. He preferred a reporting date somewhere in the future to a fixed reporting date, which I had moved as 15 August in my original motion. The inquiry has now, as others have said, had many hearing dates. I respond to the observations made by the Treasurer. I understand that businesses need certainty. It was open to the Treasurer to have the inquiry before he brought this bill to the House. If the inquiry had happened before the bill was introduced, we would not be in this position today. I never thought that a Labor Treasurer would betray the workers of this State in the manner this man has by trying to ram through an ideological obsession he says will save the workers compensation scheme. He could have held the inquiry first. The Hon. John Ruddick has not read the transcripts. He has not read the amendments. If he had, he could not possibly hold the views he expressed.

The Hon. WES FANG (20:43): I make a couple of observations about some of the contributions to debate on the motion. First, just for context, in the previous term of Parliament we held an inquiry into issues around icare. I was the chair of that inquiry. The now Treasurer was a substantive member of that committee. We did some digging to understand the issues around icare. The deeper we dug, the more we found. There is no question that icare is better because of the work of that committee. But what was supposed to be a statutory review around the dust diseases scheme effectively became a pseudo inquiry into the way that icare operated.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Not dust diseases. It was the statutory review of the other one—the actual statutory review.

The Hon. WES FANG: Yes, but we did a lot of that in that inquiry as well. Anyway, I do not wish to debate the Treasurer across the table. Certainly, when we looked into the dust diseases scheme, we found a lot of issues with icare, which we then subsequently worked through in relation to the workers compensation scheme. Both matters looked at icare—but I digress. The deeper we dug, the more we found. I make these observations. One, the inquiries of this place, particularly into matters around workers compensation, can be very powerful. Two, the now Treasurer was at that time very happy to seek information from sources around icare on both matters to better understand the way that the system worked. Three, those inquiries ultimately led to, I would say, a better

system. Anybody who heard the evidence given to the inquiry by Mr Chris McCann at last week's hearing would have been extremely moved by his pleas in relation to workers who have impairment. If this inquiry needs more time to look at those matters, then that is entirely appropriate, and the Treasurer, of all people, should understand Mr McCann's views on that.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (20:46): I speak in support of the Hon. Tania Mihailuk's motion, as my colleagues have, and I thank her for bringing it to the House. It restores to this House some integrity around the process. The bill has been held hostage in a committee for some months now. It is important to note that the bill has already been the subject of one inquiry, and there have now been months of further consultation. The bill should not be buried in this open-ended process. The workers compensation system in New South Wales is currently losing \$6 million a day; that is \$42 million every week. That money should be supporting injured workers and keeping premiums affordable for small business, as the Hon. John Ruddick pointed out.

The Opposition's position on the bill is not just reckless; it is costly. It has found a single-handed way to waste hundreds of millions of dollars without implementing a single law or policy. The Legislative Council is a house of review, not the House of indefinite delay. Holding a bill hostage in an inquiry without a reporting date is an abuse of procedure. It denies members of this place, and in the other place, who are waiting for it to come back, the right to vote, and it denies the people of New South Wales their right to have a functioning and solvent workers compensation system. The same members who claim to want more scrutiny of the bill have already scrutinised it in detail, up hill and down dale. The same arguments have been aired and heard time and again, and they have been addressed. What we are not witnessing in this place is oversight.

I echo the remarks of my colleague Minister Rose Jackson, who made her analogy very eloquently. I will not even try to replicate them. It is the continuous kicking of the can down the road: We will just wait a bit longer and a bit longer. But, no, this is a bill that must come back to this place. I again commend the Hon. Tania Mihailuk for moving the motion. If members truly believe that their arguments are sound, test them in debate in this place. If members truly believe in democracy, let them vote in this place. The Hon. Tania Mihailuk's motion gives the House that opportunity. I move:

That the question be amended by omitting "report by 7 November 2025" and inserting instead "report by 3 November 2025".

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (20:49): In relation to the Hon. Emily Suvaal's amendment, I did not have the opportunity to say this in debate on the substantive motion but, as other members have said, there is a deliberative meeting tomorrow. The Hon. Rose Jackson takes the view that we could make the decision here, in this Chamber, tonight. I have to say that that observation is hugely disrespectful to the secretariat who do the work of finalising the report. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (20:50): In reply: I thank all members who contributed to the debate: Ms Abigail Boyd, the Hon. Mark Latham, the Hon. John Ruddick, the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, the Hon. Rose Jackson, the Hon. Damien Tudehope, the Hon. Wes Fang and the Hon. Emily Suvaal. I make a couple of observations. Firstly, I make the point that the motion moved by the Hon. Mark Latham, which was agreed to—and I do not even need to ask the Treasurer why he agreed to it—provided the Treasurer with an opportunity to assist the committee. It was obvious to me why the Treasurer agreed to it. That provided great assistance to the committee. I think the committee members, including the chair and the deputy chair, would have to concede that.

I want to be very clear that when my senior long-term staffer checked with the committee secretariat in a lengthy conversation on Monday, the committee secretariat confirmed there was no deliberative meeting set and no further hearings are set. That was Monday; it is now Wednesday. I am delighted to think that perhaps it was this motion that triggered the Hon. Damien Tudehope a little bit—and he does not have to concede it today—to consider that perhaps a deliberative committee meeting should immediately be set to ensure that the committee has an end date. I gladly support the amendment moved by the Hon. Emily Suvaal to change the reporting date to 3 November. Having said that, I hold the Hon. Damien Tudehope to account on this, because he has put on record that the committee will have a meeting tomorrow.

I am not sure whether Ms Abigail Boyd was convinced of that date, due to her earlier comments as to her concerns about submission dates and responses being due on 30 October. But I put to the Hon. Damien Tudehope that he is leading the charge. I trusted him when he moved the amendment to have this inquiry that the date would be set for tomorrow morning, should the amended motion not be passed tonight. I think the best way forward is to allow Parliament to make its final decision. The whole point of the inquiry process is to inform Parliament. It should never be a vehicle for indefinite delay. The evidence is already there on the table. It is all on the committee's website. A lot of submissions are available, although I notice a lot of those making submissions do not want theirs to be public. I thank the House. I ask all members to support the motion. [*Time expired.*]

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

The House divided.

Ayes16
 Noes17
 Majority.....1

AYES

Banasiak
 Buckingham
 Buttigieg
 D'Adam
 Donnelly
 Jackson

Kaine (teller)
 Lawrence
 Mihailuk
 Mookhey
 Moriarty

Murphy (teller)
 Primrose
 Ruddick
 Sharpe
 Suvaal

NOES

Barrett
 Boyd
 Carter
 Cohn
 Faehrmann
 Fang (teller)

Farlow
 Higginson
 Hurst
 Latham
 MacDonald
 Maclaren-Jones

Merton
 Munro
 Rath (teller)
 Roberts
 Tudehope

PAIRS

Graham
 Houssos
 Nanva

Mitchell
 Overall
 Ward

Amendment negatived.

The PRESIDENT: The question now is that the motion be agreed to. Is leave granted for a short bell?

Leave granted.**The House divided.**

Ayes16
 Noes17
 Majority.....1

AYES

Banasiak
 Buckingham
 Buttigieg
 D'Adam
 Donnelly
 Jackson

Kaine (teller)
 Lawrence
 Mihailuk
 Mookhey
 Moriarty

Murphy (teller)
 Primrose
 Ruddick
 Sharpe
 Suvaal

NOES

Barrett
 Boyd
 Carter
 Cohn
 Faehrmann
 Fang (teller)

Farlow
 Higginson
 Hurst
 Latham
 MacDonald
 Maclaren-Jones

Merton
 Munro
 Rath (teller)
 Roberts
 Tudehope

PAIRS

Graham
 Houssos

Mitchell
 Overall

PAIRS

Nanva

Ward

Motion negatived.*Bills***VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING AMENDMENT (RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES) BILL 2025****First Reading****Bill introduced, read a first time and ordered to be published on motion by the Hon. Susan Carter.****Second Reading Speech****The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (21:06):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This is a bill born of conversations. Some were formal, set-piece conversations with leaders of aged-care facilities and with faith leaders. Some were less formal, with those who work in faith-based aged-care facilities. Some were conversations with colleagues. Most importantly, some were conversations with residents of faith-based aged-care facilities and their families. This is a bill that seeks to honour those residents and allow them to end their days in peace and comfort, supported by those who share their ethos and their faith-based approach to life. It is a bill that seeks to recognise the excellent work done by those who care for our aged in faith-based facilities and supports their right to work in accordance with their consciences. It is a bill that is designed to recognise that faith-based aged-care facilities, for whom care is a primary value, should be able to provide that care to members of their families, consistent with their values.

Despite its name—the Voluntary Assisted Dying Amendment (Residential Facilities) Bill 2025—this is not a bill designed to limit access to voluntary assisted dying [VAD] and it is not a handbrake on accessing euthanasia. VAD availability remains unchanged but the place where it is administered may alter. The bill ensures that faith-based aged-care facilities are treated no differently from faith-based hospitals. It would extend to residential facilities the same rights that our legislation currently confers on hospitals to decline to facilitate VAD on their premises. It would not impede the access of individual residents to VAD. The obligation to make reasonable alternative arrangements, which also exists for hospitals, remains.

The fact that this bill would align aged-care facilities with hospitals should give everyone voting for this bill comfort. We now have lived experience of the VAD legislation, and no apparent issues have arisen for patients about the ability of faith-based hospitals to decline to offer VAD on their premises. It has not been the subject of comment in either the interim or the annual report of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board. There have been no reports of patients in faith-based hospitals encountering difficulties with accessing VAD, should that be their wish. It is an amendment that protects the animating ethos of faith-based aged care facilities but does not compromise the existing rights of any residents.

This is not a bill which means that residents of any faith-based facility will be caught by surprise at the policies of that residence. There are already strong notice provisions in section 98 of the principal Act, and these are strengthened by the current bill. I understand that faith-based facilities already speak clearly about their values to intending residents, including their beliefs about life and their consequent discomfort with facilitating VAD on their premises. In fact, it is this clear articulation of a consistent value system that is often an attraction for residents considering where they would choose to end their days. It is a big decision to leave the family home, not just because it means you will not be hosting Christmas anymore but because it means that you are also often relinquishing some agency and sense of control over who enters your home and under what circumstances. To move into aged care, while often necessary and in some cases a welcome relief from the burdens of house and garden, can be a challenging transition. That transition is often smoothed by the opportunity to choose to live as a part of a community of shared values and beliefs.

We tend to think of freedom of association in terms of forming trade unions, cricket clubs or political parties but, of course, it is an important consideration in aged care. For a person considering aged care, being with others of a shared ethnic or language background, shared faith perspective or shared value system can be a major comfort. If residents have chosen to associate with others in a faith-based facility in a faith community that does not welcome hastened death, this bill will respect this important freedom. I recognise that not everyone enters a faith-based aged-care facility because they share that faith. In some regional areas there is no or little choice as there are few options in aged care. This has been advanced by some as a reason this bill should be opposed. However, this bill will not stand in the way of any person who wishes to access VAD. They will be presented

with information and options and, in some faith-based facilities, they will also be able to have the VAD substance administered to them, because some faith-based aged-care facilities have indicated that they wish to walk with their residents and evangelise them to the point of death.

This bill will not compel any aged-care facilities to decline to facilitate VAD on their premises, but it will give them that freedom and that choice that they do not have at present. It will give them that respect for their ethos of valuing life, which is missing now. For residents who may or may not share that ethos, it will retain their freedom to access VAD. It will simply mean that they will be transferred to some other location, typically a hospital, for the last stage of their life. This transfer close to death is not unusual. Commonly, residents of an aged-care facility who are close to death will be transferred to a hospital for their dying days. This situation will be no different, but it will be important. It will be important, for example, if they have a shared room in that aged-care facility and they share it with a person whose belief system will be shaken by the administration of euthanasia to their roommate.

This question of administration is important. Unlike Victoria, where overwhelmingly those seeking euthanasia self-administer, in New South Wales we now know that about 80 per cent of VAD is administered by an authorised health professional. For the roommate in the aged-care facility, this looks like the doctor coming into the shared room bringing death, not healing. This would be challenging at the best of times, but even more challenging if the roommate has chosen to live in a faith-based facility and shares those faith values. It will be important for not just roommates but also other residents of the facility. One of the great strengths of our community in New South Wales is our multiculturalism. We have residents who now make their home here from all parts of the world and with a variety of different experiences. For some, this means lived experience of forced euthanasia and forced death in other circumstances. These are hard memories as they approach the end of their lives, and for those struggling with dementia, these are sometimes, cruelly, the freshest memories they have.

These residents often experience these difficulties because of their membership of a particular faith, and they are ending their days in an aged-care facility run by that same faith community. It is these residents who feel it most keenly when a healthcare worker arrives to administer euthanasia in their aged-care home, or there is the fear that, at a time of their life when they should be able to feel secure and at peace and cared for, forced euthanasia is, for some, an active possibility. Of course, our VAD law ensures that it is unforced and that any euthanasia is freely sought and often gratefully received. But for some residents, because of their life experiences, the actuality or the possibility of VAD can be very threatening. These are some of the conversations that I have had, some of the fears I have heard expressed, and some of the anxiety that I hope will be relieved by this legislation—anxieties held by not just residents but also their families.

Families want good care for their loved ones, and care that will support them spiritually and emotionally as well as physically. For those families who, together with their ageing parent or grandparent, chose an environment based on faith that deeply respects the value of life, they want to know that the idea of the hastened death of their loved one is not part of the culture. This bill will assuage that anxiety and allow faith-based aged-care facilities to fulfil their unique mission. I acknowledge the argument that in some country towns there may be only a faith-based aged facility, and the previously expressed fears that this legislation may limit the choices of some residents.

I think it is important to consider why there may be only one choice of care in some of our regional towns: Generally, it is because, decades ago, a faith organisation, driven by its ethos, made the decision to provide that care in that town, and it has provided that service ever since. Why is its care monopoly unchallenged? It is generally because there is absolutely no commercial advantage in offering care in that town. Should the freedom of conscience of faith-based organisations be compromised simply because they have offered care for decades in circumstances where only an ethos of respect for others drives the provision of that care? If that were the case, that would be a perverse outcome indeed.

Happily, our shared experience of the VAD legislation indicates that there is no problem for country residents in any facility seeking euthanasia. The only difference that this bill would make is that, like many other residents, they will be transferred to a hospital or some other agreed place as they near death. We have had two reports from the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board, and we will continue to receive them annually. We have a yardstick. We know the rates of requests in the regions and in the cities. In the unlikely event that any change in access emerges as a consequence of this legislation, this Parliament has the tools to address that issue. With respect to rates of request of VAD, I draw the attention of the House to the disparity between the city and the regions. We are seeing two-thirds of requests for voluntary assisted dying come from the regions, where only one-third of our population lives. I am deeply concerned about this.

If these figures show a different disposition between country and city, and demonstrate an exercise of free will, it is not problematic. But if, as I fear, they indicate greater problems with accessing primary care and palliative care in the regions than in the cities, then this is a matter that should concern all of us deeply. The values

driving the proponents of the original VAD legislation were respect for freedoms of choice and of conscience. These same freedoms are supported by this bill, and I encourage members to support it. I thank those who have already agreed to be co-sponsors of this bill: the Hon. Damien Tudehope, the Hon. Rod Roberts, the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, the Hon. Anthony Roberts, the Hon. John Ruddick, the Hon. Rachel Merton, the Hon. Aileen MacDonald, the Hon. Tania Mihailuk, the Hon. Chris Rath, the Hon. Robert Borsak, the Hon. Mark Banasiak and the Hon. Mark Latham. I invite any other interested members to join as co-sponsors of this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

LOCAL COURT AND BAIL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2025

First Reading

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

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

Statement of public interest tabled.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: 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. ROSE JACKSON: I move:

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

Motion agreed to.

Committees

SELECT COMMITTEE INTO THE FAILURE OF THE PLAYING SURFACE AT ALLIANZ STADIUM

Establishment and Membership

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (21:21): I move:

- (1) That a select committee be established to inquire into and report on the failure of the playing surface at Allianz Stadium, and in particular:
 - (a) the need to undertake major turf repairs and reschedule sporting events due to the playing surface and drainage failures at Allianz Stadium;
 - (b) the 2025 turf procurement process undertaken by Venues NSW, including possible conflicts of interest and other alleged improprieties;
 - (c) the general procurement policies and decisions of Venues NSW;
 - (d) the role of the Minister for Sport, the Hon. Stephen Kamper, MP, in Venues NSW tendering and contracts;
 - (e) the operations of Evergreen Turf Australia as the major sporting turf supplier in New South Wales;
 - (f) other problems of mismanagement and conflicts of interest at Venues NSW; and
 - (g) any other related matters.
- (2) That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the standing orders, the committee consist of five members comprising:
 - (a) two Government members;
 - (b) one Opposition member; and
 - (c) two crossbench members, being the Hon. Mark Latham and the Hon. John Ruddick.
- (3) That the committee elect a chair and deputy chair at its first meeting.
- (4) That, unless the committee decides otherwise:
 - (a) all inquiries are to be advertised via social media, stakeholder emails and a media release distributed to all media outlets in New South Wales;
 - (b) submissions to inquiries are to be published, subject to the committee clerk checking for confidentiality and adverse mention and, where those issues arise, bringing them to the attention of the committee for consideration;
 - (c) attachments to submissions are to remain confidential;

- (d) the chair's proposed witness list is to be circulated to provide members with an opportunity to amend the list, with the witness list agreed to by email, unless a member requests the chair to convene a meeting to resolve any disagreement;
- (e) the sequence of questions to be asked at hearings alternate between Opposition, crossbench and Government members, in that order, with equal time allocated to each;
- (f) transcripts of evidence taken at public hearings are to be published;
- (g) supplementary questions are to be lodged with the committee clerk within two business days following the receipt of the hearing transcript, with witnesses requested to return answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions within 21 calendar days of the date on which questions are forwarded to the witness;
- (h) answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions are to be published, subject to the committee clerk checking for confidentiality and adverse mention and, where those issues arise, bringing them to the attention of the committee for consideration; and
- (i) media statements on behalf of the committee are to be made only by the chair.

Anyone interested in good public governance would be concerned about two obvious problems. The first is that, under the former Government, a \$900 million stadium was built and opened three years ago that today is a pit of nothingness. The turf, the drainage and all the facilities had to be dug up and completely replaced. Evidence at budget estimates showed that Venues NSW knew about the drainage problem very early, from the opening of the facility, but nothing was done. There was a patch-up job of replacing the turf through the preferred turf supplier, time after time, instead of a recognition that that turf supplier had been subject to flooding in the Hawkesbury and had a silted product. The silt got into the drainage lines and that was never going to be solved. Venues NSW is culpable in knowing about the problem but not taking it seriously from the very beginning and, most importantly, never sacking the turf supplier that gave them the faulty product in the first place. That is the first issue justifying this committee of inquiry.

The second issue is the curious answer about the current tender. Evergreen, the same turf supplier that has done all of this turf supply for Venues NSW, is the hot favourite to get the work again. Two of the Venues NSW staff, Johnny Naofal and Adam Lewis, one the ground manager and the other the curator at the Sydney Cricket Ground and Allianz Stadium, are on the tender evaluation panel. There is nothing unusual about that, but it is unusual that they are referees for Evergreen, the favoured tenderer. I raised that with the Treasurer, representing Minister Kamper, the Minister for Sport. This answer came back to the supplementary question:

All project team members, including Johnny Naofal and Adam Lewis, have signed Conflict of Interest declarations following a review and signing of the Procurement Code of Conduct ... Both Mr Naofal and Mr Lewis have had direct dealings with both tenderers ...

Naofal declared that, but not Lewis. He has submitted a blank declaration of interest—the Minister was not aware of that—and then the problem gets worse. According to Minister Kamper, neither Mr Naofal nor Mr Lewis provided referee declarations that they were identified by Evergreen in its generic capability statement. But the capability statement is referred to directly as an appendix in the main tender, so that is wrong as well. The Minister's answer went on to state:

In the Tender documentation, where three "referees" were required, Evergreen identified persons other than Mr Naofal and Mr Lewis as its referees.

No, they did not. They identified three case studies, not referees, so the Minister is getting faulty advice or does not know what he is talking about. If there was any integrity here, the whole tender process for those hundreds of millions of dollars of turf supplies would be abandoned and started again with proper probity standards. There are massive problems here, which the hapless sports Minister is unaware of or receiving faulty advice about. Because of the hour and the fact that other members have important business to transact, I will not take up any more of the House's time. But I assure members that the select committee is very much justified. It is an important issue of not only wasted public money and a wasted facility but also a tender process that needs to be recommenced on probity grounds. The committee has important work to do because Minister Kamper is not doing it.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (21:25): I lead for the Government and indicate at the outset that the Government opposes the motion. Both Venues NSW and the Government have been clear from the start that the quality of the turf in recent times has not been up to standard. The quality of the surface has not been up to standard. As members may be aware, the Government undertook an independent review that has identified the issue of the composition of the clay and sand in the sand drainage layer being out of whack. It has begun work to rectify the matter. It is a fascinating topic. The Government has also provided information on the matter to the public in a timely manner.

In terms of the details from the independent review, as the member rightly pointed out, Allianz Stadium has not drained as intended over the past 12 months. That has included three high-profile broadcast matches of Super Rugby, NRL and the Women's State of Origin. Following the most recent incident, Venues NSW engaged multiple independent contractors for a root-and-branch review of the field of play, the drainage system, the

groundwater conditions, the maintenance regime and many other factors. The review was headed by a global leader in turf consulting, design and management of surfaces, which has produced a comprehensive peer review of the independent consultant's work. The review findings include:

The sand drainage layer below the turf is contaminated with up to 9 per cent of clay and fine silt.

The clay and fine silt should be a maximum of 2 per cent of the drainage layer.

The clay and silt had mixed with coarser sand to severely reduce drainage rates to 40mm per hour.

This is unacceptable for a sand-based sporting field, which should drain at 300mm-600mm per hour.

The contaminated sand was installed at the time of the stadium's construction. Effectively, due to the higher concentration of clay, moisture has congealed over time as it has gone through the surface. Those layers are preventing further drainage. It is an interesting conflation of "suboptimal" with "failing" or "unsafe", and, indeed, "infiltration" with "draining rates". As the member also rightly pointed out in his remarks, a tender process is currently underway. Venues NSW is undertaking a tender process for the provision of turf to its network of stadia. Therefore, it is not appropriate to comment on those details while the process is ongoing. Importantly, it is being managed in accordance with the Government's procurement frameworks. To be clear, Venues NSW has current commercial relationships with two turf providers, Evergreen and HG Turf, which are not mentioned in the motion. The ready-to-play surfaces that they provide to the stadiums are world leading and safe. Venues NSW has been proud to work with both organisations to deliver world-class pitches for the sporting codes that use them and for the millions of fans who watch those matches.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (21:28): In reply: I thank the Hon. Emily Suvaal, who did not contradict anything I had to say, so the recommendation for the committee inquiry stands. As for the procurement guidelines, I had a read of them. They are as complex as anything I have ever seen from a government body. They are a series of dot points and cross-references. They make Barry Jones's noodle nation look like *The Cat in the Hat*. They are incomprehensible, a thick maze of bewildering provisions. But I know that Lewis has not provided the right conflict of interest statement and that two people who sit on the tender evaluation panel should not be referees for the mob that has been getting all the work from Venues NSW for turf supplies and has provided the silted turf as a product of those floods in the Hawkesbury three or four years ago. The silt goes straight into the drainage lines and blocks them, and the ground now has to be dug up and replaced. That is a major scandal in the sporting world. The committee will get to the reasons it has not been as prominent as it should be. I thank the House for its support, and we should move on.

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

The House divided.

Ayes 18

Noes 12

Majority.....6

AYES

Barrett
Boyd
Carter
Cohn
Faehrmann
Fang (teller)

Farlow
Higginson
Hurst
Latham
MacDonald
Maclaren-Jones

Merton
Munro
Rath (teller)
Roberts
Ruddick
Tudehope

NOES

Buttigieg
D'Adam
Donnelly
Jackson

Kaine
Lawrence
Mookhey
Moriarty

Murphy (teller)
Primrose
Sharpe (teller)
Suvaal

PAIRS

Mitchell
Overall
Ward

Houssos
Nanva
Graham

Motion agreed to.

Bills

GAMING MACHINES AMENDMENT (MANDATORY SHUTDOWN PERIOD) BILL 2025

First Reading

Bill introduced, read a first time and ordered to be published on motion by Ms Cate Faehrmann.

Second Reading Speech

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (21:38): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

As The Greens gambling harm reduction spokesperson, I am proud to introduce the Gaming Machines Amendment (Mandatory Shutdown Period) Bill 2025. It is a straightforward but deeply significant reform that will help to reduce gambling harm across the State. The bill seeks to do two things. First, it will extend the mandatory shutdown period for all poker machines in New South Wales from six hours—currently 4.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m.—to 10 hours, from midnight to 10.00 a.m. every day. Secondly, it will remove the outdated and exploitative exemption system that allows hundreds of clubs and pubs to keep their machines operating late into the night under so-called tourism, early-opener or hardship variations. Those two changes—a uniform, extended shutdown period and the repeal of all variations—will ensure that every venue in New South Wales gives its patrons and communities a guaranteed break from poker machines during the hours when gambling harm is most severe.

New South Wales is home to almost 88,000 poker machines. That is more than any other State or Territory in Australia. We also suffer the greatest losses. In 2024 alone the people of New South Wales lost a record \$8.6 billion on poker machines. That figure rose again in the first quarter of 2025, up 5.7 per cent on the same period the previous year. Some \$2.3 billion was lost on New South Wales poker machines in the three months to June 2025. That figure is up 8.8 per cent on the same period last year. Those numbers come directly from the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority's public portal. They represent not just statistics but also families torn apart by financial ruin and communities hollowed out by a business model built on addiction.

Poker machines are by far the most harmful form of gambling in our State, and many reviews have confirmed that. The New South Wales Auditor-General inquired into this issue and released a report in August this year. It noted that pokies account for the majority of gambling losses and cause disproportionate harm to people on low incomes, young men and those already in financial stress. It also criticised the lack of strategic oversight of harm minimisation measures and the fragmented nature of the regulatory system, calling for stronger leadership from the Government to reduce poker machine harm.

Last year Liquor and Gaming NSW undertook a report entitled *Review Of Gaming Machine Shutdown Hours Framework*, which was published in February this year. It found that 674 venues currently do not shut down their machines between 4.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m., which is the time specified in the Gaming Machines Act. That is one in five venues. The Government received that report in August last year and it is yet to respond. The Minns Government is also yet to respond to the Independent Panel on Gaming Reform's road map and recommendations. It is against that backdrop of a lack of action by the Minns Government that this bill is introduced.

Let us go through the problem that this simple bill will fix. Under division 2 of part 4 of the Gaming Machines Act 2001, there is a requirement that poker machines in pubs and clubs be switched off for a minimum of six hours a day between 4.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m. The purpose of that shutdown, when it was introduced more than 20 years ago, was simple. It was to give pokies users a break and to ensure that venues were not running machines continuously for 24 hours a day. Over time, the integrity of that harm-minimisation measure has been completely undermined. The Act contains three key variation provisions that allow venues to apply to the regulator—the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority—for permission to operate outside those hours.

First, tourism and entertainment variations under section 40 of the Act allow a reduced three-hour shutdown between 6.00 a.m. and 9.00 a.m. on weekends and public holidays, supposedly to support tourism or entertainment precincts; secondly, early opener variations under section 41 allow venues that were trading before 10.00 a.m. prior to 1997 to apply for different shutdown periods, often opening as early as 9.00 a.m.; and thirdly, financial hardship variations introduced in 2003 under section 40A allow a venue to claim that a full six-hour shutdown would cause it financial distress. Taken together, those three exemptions have made the shutdown regime almost meaningless when it comes to reducing the harm poker machines cause. They have also made it unfair for smaller venues who do shut their pokies down from 4.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m.

The Independent Panel on Gaming Reform's *Roadmap for Gaming Reform* confirmed that non-standard shutdown periods undermine the policy intent of the shutdown itself and "may allow at-risk gamblers to move between venues to continue gambling". Perhaps that is the whole reason that some pubs and clubs stay open. It also found that the policy rationale for two of the variation categories—tourism and hardship—is either absent or no longer valid and that the third category of early opener is open to misuse. The Liquor and Gaming NSW review found that variations were not actively reviewed and not formally recorded on venue licences—I dare say even reviewed—and that venues holding variations may no longer meet the criteria. That is not responsible regulation. It is policy captured by an industry that has been allowed to write its own rules and create its own loopholes. That industry still controls the reins of this Government and this Premier.

Meanwhile, the Auditor-General has said that the system remains fragmented, reactive and poorly coordinated. In other words, the very system that is meant to protect people is now doing nothing but protecting profits. There is now overwhelming evidence that after midnight and into the early hours of the morning is when the greatest gambling harm occurs. In 2023 the NSW Responsible Gambling Fund commissioned a study called *Impact of electronic gaming machine (EGM) late night play on EGM player behaviours*. It found that while only around 12 per cent of poker machine users gamble after midnight, they are disproportionately at risk, with 50 per cent identified as at-risk between midnight and 2.00 a.m., and 65 per cent as at-risk between 2.00 a.m. and 8.00 a.m.

Those people are often gambling alone and often in crisis. They are not tourists on a weekend away. They are often local people feeding their wages, pensions and savings into machines designed to keep them there until they have lost everything. It is hardly surprising that poker machines are deliberately designed to be addictive. The particular sounds, flashing lights and messages actually teach the brain to associate certain cues with winning and, therefore, with pleasure. Poker machines are a massive dopamine hit. Gambling policy researcher Charles Livingstone, from Monash University, describes it like this:

Usually, you might get a dopamine response once every day at the most ... In the poker machine room, you get a response every two to three seconds. That is clearly a mechanism for addiction.

That is why people need a break, at the very least. That break needs to be at least six hours, ideally longer, and that is what this bill does. The Productivity Commission has consistently found that shutdown periods of less than six hours are ineffective at reducing gambling harm and that shutdowns are most effective when they start no later than 2.00 a.m. and last at least six hours. The commission also found that longer shutdowns of eight or 10 hours do not significantly affect the overall turnover of clubs and hotels but do have a measurable impact on the prevalence of problem gambling. In fact, in the 674 venues in New South Wales with a variation to the standard shutdown hours, 97 per cent of their turnover is generated outside the standard shutdown hours, and only 3 per cent is generated during their varied hours.

Venues with exemptions are disproportionately located in medium- and high-risk gambling areas. Three of the 10 most profitable clubs in New South Wales are operating with extended trading hours after gaining a so-called "hardship exemption" to mandatory shutdown periods for poker machines. If a club ranked in the top 10 for gaming profit in the State is claiming financial hardship to keep its poker machines operating at 5.00 a.m., something has gone badly wrong with our laws. That is why I urge all members to support this bill. Frankly, that would be a popular move.

In late 2024 the Wesley Mission's Community Attitudes to Gambling Reform survey found that 82 per cent of respondents supported a mandatory shutdown period from midnight to 10.00 a.m. every day of the week. That is not a marginal view; it is an overwhelming mandate for action. Wesley Mission's campaign to power down the pokies is gaining momentum, with its key asks being for the New South Wales Government to extend the shutdown hours and eliminate exemptions. Many organisations are jumping on board, including the NSW Council of Social Service, Uniting Church Australia, St Vincent de Paul Society, Alliance for Gambling Reform and the Australian Christian Lobby.

The unions are also unhappy with this Government's lack of action. On 12 June this year the secretary of Unions NSW, Mark Morey, said that the Minns Government's efforts to reduce poker machine numbers was "woefully inadequate". Woefully inadequate is, in fact, an understatement considering that an analysis by Wesley Mission showed that 141 new poker machines have been switched on across New South Wales since March this year. In other words, poker machine numbers have increased since the Minns Government came to power. On 13 July 2023, the Premier established the Independent Panel on Gaming Reform, and any hope of action on poker machines disappeared into the long grass.

In November 2024 the panel released the *Roadmap for Gaming Reform*. One its recommendations clearly says that the Government should repeal all variations and retain the six-hour mandatory shutdown period. Some panel members said this should be stronger. Professor Sally Gainsbury, an expert in gambling psychology at the

University of Sydney, stated that the shutdown period should be from at least 2.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. and that there were "substantial harm-minimisation benefits in extending shutdowns from midnight to 10.00 a.m.". The Responsible Gambling Fund trust argued strongly that all existing variations should be repealed and that a universal and consistent mandatory shutdown commencing at 2.00 a.m. was the minimum acceptable standard.

The Wesley Mission called for a shutdown from midnight to 10.00 a.m. and described the current arrangements as a betrayal of community expectations. The NSW Council of Social Service said it was shocking that the panel had not recommended a shutdown beginning at midnight given the overwhelming evidence that those early-morning hours are the most dangerous for people experiencing gambling harm. However, the Minns Government has taken no action, and New South Wales continues to be an outlier on this issue. Every other State and Territory has tighter or more consistent shutdown periods for poker machines. The Australian Capital Territory has extended its shutdown from a 4.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m. period to a 2.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. period following an agreement between The Greens and Labor.

Tasmania also enforces strong daily shutdowns and is moving toward a card-based cashless system with binding limits. Victoria mandates shutdowns from 4.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. with strict enforcement and none of the New South Wales exemptions that undermine their effect. Only Queensland still permits similar variation schemes, which are also under review. This bill will bring New South Wales in line with best practice. It also goes further by introducing the first uniform 10-hour daily shutdown for poker machines in Australia. This bill will require every poker machine in pubs, clubs and all venues in New South Wales to be switched off from midnight until 10.00 a.m. with no exceptions. This bill will end the system of "mini casinos", which *The Sydney Morning Herald* exposed in August this year, and suburban clubs and pubs that have exploited the hardship loophole to operate virtually around the clock. Importantly, the bill includes a one-year transition period to allow venues time to adjust their staffing and operations. No other conditions of operation will be changed.

I now address the arguments we will no doubt hear from ClubsNSW, the Australian Hotels Association and other organisations opposed to this reform. The first claim will be that this bill will hurt business and that extending the shutdown by a few hours will destroy local clubs and hospitality jobs. When shutdown periods were introduced in 2003 under the Carr Labor Government, former Minister Grant McBride told the other place:

ClubsNSW and the Australian Hotels Association have reported that some members are experiencing financial difficulties as a result of the shutdown.

The Government undertook a review and stated in its second reading speech:

A very preliminary examination of available data has been undertaken by the Department of Gaming and Racing, and indicates that a few 24-hour trading clubs appear to have experienced a decline in gaming machine profits since the commencement of the three-hour shutdown.

Let me be clear: A decline in gaming machine profits does not mean these pubs and clubs are experiencing financial hardship. Many clubs in this State are making a hell of a lot of money from pokies. In his second reading speech in 2003, the Minister stated:

While the proposal to allow exemptions on hardship grounds may mean that a small number of clubs and hotels will be permitted to continue to close down their gaming machine operations for only three hours per day, seven days a week, for the vast majority of clubs and hotels the full six-hour shutdown will apply ...

That is clearly not the case, as 674 venues, including some of our wealthiest clubs, are operating during the legislated shutdown period due to the exemption they were granted. The Productivity Commission found that shutdown periods of six hours or more do not impact venue turnover in any significant way. A Liquor and Gaming review reached the same conclusion that there is "little evidence to suggest that extended shutdowns materially affect club or hotel revenue". Extended shutdowns reduce what people lose to poker machines and therefore help people who are experiencing addiction to pokies. It gives them a break. Is that not why the Carr Government legislated a six-hour shutdown in the first place? The second claim is that late night gambling is a matter of personal responsibility. Gambling addiction is not a question of willpower. Poker machines are deliberately engineered to keep people playing through features like near misses, losses disguised as wins and rapid continuous play.

The Productivity Commission described poker machines as "a potent source of addiction for some users that is similar in its effects to drugs". A person sitting alone in front of a machine at 3.00 a.m. and feeding it their pay or their pension is not happily exercising their free choice. They are trapped in a system designed to exploit them. Another argument is that shutdowns will inconvenience tourists. But again, the data tells a different story. Liquor and Gaming found that most tourism exemptions were held not by venues in Bondi or the Hunter Valley, but in local government areas such as Canterbury-Bankstown, Fairfield, Blacktown and Cumberland. These are areas with some of the highest rates of gambling harm in the State.

Finally, the claim that hardship exemptions are needed to protect struggling clubs and the communities they fund is laughable. Several of the State's wealthiest clubs hold hardship exemptions, including three of the top 10 for poker-machine profit. This State has clubs that are planning 150-room hotels. Their wealth has been created as a result of people pouring money into poker machines. I really do not think that a mandated shutdown is going to harm those clubs, but it is going to do a hell of a lot of good for vulnerable people.

I regularly hear from people whose lives have been shattered by poker machines. I heard from a woman whose son lost his home from years of pouring his money into the pokies in the early hours at his local clubs. I also heard from a young woman who told me she would finish her hospitality shift at midnight and then go straight to the machines until dawn because it was the only place she felt she could escape her anxiety. She did that until she had nothing left. These are not isolated stories. Late night gambling in particular is correlated with loss of control, dissociation and binge play. Research summarised in an electronic gaming machine [EGM] study on late-night play showed that after midnight, gamblers are more likely to increase their stakes, chase losses, and report feelings of guilt and despair. In 2023 the Responsible Gambling Fund produced research into late night pokies which made two key findings:

Venue closures would limit access and reduce harm for late-night EGM gamblers, and gamblers at risk of problem gambling, particularly for those experiencing problem gambling, through having a break, allowing them to reassess their spending and time gambling on EGMs.

The second key finding is also relevant:

There is a group of EGM gamblers who from a gambling behavioural and participation viewpoint are more intense EGM gamblers. That is, they gamble at more types of venues, gamble on EGMs more frequently, spend more money in a session, gamble more days of the week, are members of loyalty schemes across two or three venue types, and are more likely to gamble alone, and consequently, have significantly higher levels of problem gambling risk. This group of EGM gamblers would benefit most from venue closures.

It is pretty simple, really. This puts a measure in place to reduce the harm to those who have a significantly higher risk of gambling addiction. The people of New South Wales are miles ahead of the Minns Government on this issue. They know that allowing poker machines to operate all night serves no legitimate community purpose. They know that a State which claims to care about harm minimisation cannot continue to allow venues to profit from addiction in the early hours of the morning when people are at their most vulnerable. They know that the influence of the powerful gambling lobby has dictated government policy in this area for too long, literally at the expense of peoples' lives.

Enough is enough. When the Minns Government came to power, it knew it needed to at least look like it was serious about action on pokies. It set up the Independent Panel on Gaming Reform, but more than a year later there has been nothing. The *Roadmap for Gaming Reform* was meant to be a blueprint, but it is gathering dust instead. Meanwhile, the New South Wales budget shows revenue from gambling taxes increasing from \$2.47 billion this financial year to \$2.91 billion in 2027-28. We cannot just sit by while the Government keeps commissioning reviews and taking no action while people are losing their homes and lives to gambling addiction.

They know that a State which claims to care about harm minimisation cannot continue to allow venues to profit from addiction in the early hours of the morning, when people are at their most vulnerable. They know that the influence of the powerful gambling lobby has dictated Government policy for too long, literally at the expense of people's lives. Well, enough is enough. When the Minns Government came to power, it knew it needed to at least look like it was serious about action on pokies. It set up the Independent Panel on Gaming Reform. More than a year later—nothing. The *Roadmap for Gaming Reform* was meant to be a blueprint; instead, it is gathering dust. Meanwhile, the New South Wales budget has revenue from gambling taxes increasing from \$2.47 billion this financial year to \$2.91 billion in 2027-28. We cannot just sit by while the Government keeps commissioning reviews and taking no action while people are losing their homes and lives to gambling addiction.

I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

For too long, this Parliament has let the gambling industry dictate the rules.

The result is a patchwork of exemptions, a regulatory system riddled with loopholes, and an industry that is profiting off the misery of extremely vulnerable people.

It is up to this Parliament to stand up for the people of New South Wales to reduce the significant harm caused by poker machines in this State and support this simple reform.

Every day we delay more New South Wales families are being pushed to the brink.

Extending the shutdown period will give people time to pause, to go home, to sleep, to reconnect and break the cycle that these addictive machines are designed to sustain.

I have introduced this bill because I genuinely believe this reform will make a difference to people's lives.

I genuinely believe this is reform that the majority of members can support.

And I have already started having conversations with all sides to get the support necessary for this bill to pass.

I want to give a shout-out to some of the people and organisations who have not let up when it comes to ending the pokies scourge.

Reverend Stu Cameron from Wesley Mission, and Kate da Costa, who works behind the scenes.

Reverend Tim Costello from the Alliance for Gambling Reform.

Ben Hamilton from Kickin' the Punt.

Whistleblower and pokies reform advocate Troy Stoltz.

And to everyone who has reached out to me over the years to tell me their deeply personal stories, either about themselves or their loved ones, whose lives have been so profoundly impacted by pokies addiction.

Thank you for your courage and your commitment to see change.

We have the power in this place to make the change that so many people in this State want to see when it comes to the rotten scourge of pokies in New South Wales.

I remind the Minns Government that it does not have a majority in either House.

And I say to the Premier: If you do not act soon and announce your plan to reduce pokies harm, then this Parliament will.

I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

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.

REDBANK POWER STATION

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (22:01): I express my disappointment at the recent decision of the Independent Planning Commission [IPC] to reject the proposed restart and conversion of Redbank Power Station in the Hunter Valley. The IPC's decision was very surprising given that the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure—the very agency responsible—recommended approval of the project a few months ago. At a time when New South Wales is busy grappling with an unholy blend of energy shortfalls, volatile electricity prices and political pressure to cut emissions, it is baffling that a project offering reliable, carbon-neutral and cost-effective energy generation like Redbank has been denied.

Redbank was set to generate one million megawatt hours of electricity per year using sustainably sourced biomass. That is enough electricity to power 200,000 homes. It is not intermittent power dependent on the sun or the wind. It is base load power, available every single hour of every single day, which is precisely the type of power our State needs. Government members know this, especially the Minister for Energy, who had to activate the Government Energy Action Response protocol in December 2023 and November 2024 because of fears that not enough electricity had been generated to meet demand. The Premier was forced to issue a public plea asking households and businesses not to use everyday appliances in order to "help the grid". Attempting to avoid blackouts in such a way because not enough electricity has been generated is frankly unacceptable in a modern and developed economy. And, as our population grows, so will our demand for reliable energy. To that end, the case for an on-demand power station like Redbank, which can supply electricity whenever it is needed, should have been a no-brainer.

Beyond enhancing our energy security, Redbank also offered an innovative and remarkably carbon-neutral model of power generation. By using up to 500,000 tonnes of sustainably sourced biomass initially before moving onto purpose-grown energy crops, the power station would have operated on an innovative closed-loop system where carbon released during combustion is absorbed by regrowth. That is why biomass is recognised by leading climate bodies, like the International Energy Agency and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, as a vital component of global decarbonisation efforts.

Unlike other renewable technologies, biomass can provide power 24/7 whilst also supporting our net zero commitments. In fact, with carbon capture and storage, biomass even has the potential to achieve negative emissions, which is something wind and solar cannot deliver. With these factors in mind, and Australia unlikely to reach the Federal Government's 2030 renewable energy targets, it makes little sense to have rejected a project like Redbank that provides immediate, scalable and carbon-neutral power. Also repurposing a dormant asset like Redbank Power Station, which is already connected to the State's electricity grid, would have eliminated the need

for new supporting infrastructure and transmission lines, both of which are incredibly expensive and often major causes of community disruption.

With its efficient use of existing infrastructure, Redbank would have ensured faster delivery of electricity and much lower disturbance compared to entirely new energy projects. Of course, the benefits extend beyond electricity alone. The project promised up to 1,000 direct and indirect jobs in the Hunter Valley and \$1 billion in economic stimulus for New South Wales. That means regional development, jobs for local workers and contractors and real money flowing through small businesses and communities. To deny this is to deny opportunity to the people who need it. Clearly, the IPC's rejection of Redbank is difficult to reconcile. It ignores the endorsement given earlier this year by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, disregards the project's capacity to deliver reliable, carbon-neutral power at scale and denies regional New South Wales a major source of jobs and investment.

At a time when public confidence in our energy system is being tested, New South Wales cannot afford to turn its back on solutions like Redbank. This project should never have been rejected. It should have been embraced as a model of innovation, pragmatism and energy security that our State so urgently requires. I urge the Government to work with the proponents of the Redbank project to see it come to fruition.

MODERN SLAVERY

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (22:05): The expansion of sugar production across the world and its shift from a luxury product to a relatively cheap consumer good was fuelled by mass slavery of Black Africans with all the horrors of capture, imprisonment, transportation and hard labour. In Voltaire's 1759 satirical novel *Candide*, a crippled African slave explains:

When we work at the sugar-canes, and the mill snatches hold of a finger, they cut off the hand; and when we attempt to run away, they cut off the leg; both cases have happened to me. This is the price at which you eat sugar in Europe.

One of the key tactics of the abolitionist movement in late eighteenth century Britain was a sugar boycott. Over 300,000 people—mainly women—refused to buy sugar for their tea, which resulted in a dramatic drop in sales. Slavery was eventually abolished throughout the British Empire and later elsewhere in the western world. As well as sugar, other crops like tobacco and cotton were also produced and sold cheaply due to the use of slave labour. Following abolition, sugar and cotton continued to be produced as markets found new ways of production without the use of forced labour. The United States Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking publishes a comprehensive list of goods produced by child or forced labour. The 2024 list includes electrolytic copper products and lithium ion batteries made in the People's Republic of China using copper and cobalt ore mined by child labour in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 25 June 2025 the Minister for Transport made light of the connection between child slavery, forced labour and the mining of cobalt when he said:

Anyone who wants to fire up their electric toothbrush should shake in fear as the Leader of the Opposition approaches the dispatch box. I give that warning to the free-traders on the other side of the House.

The Minister seemed to be channelling Lord Nelson, who, while best known for his heroic naval career against Napoleon, was always ready to warn against Wilberforce's anti-slavery campaign. He said:

I was bred as you know in the Good old school and taught to appreciate the value of our West India possessions, and neither in the field or the Senate shall their just rights be infringed whilst I have an arm to fight in their defence or a tongue to launch my voice against the damnable cruel doctrine of Wilberforce and his hypocritical allies.

We will never address the real challenge of modern slavery if the Minister for Transport continues to trivialise it. We need to follow the Anti-slavery Commissioner's guidance on reasonable steps and avoid procurement from sources identified by credible organisations as carrying a high risk of child slavery or forced labour. Where significant parts of supply chains for particular products—such as lithium ion batteries—carry a high risk of child slavery and forced labour, we need to work with all people of good will to identify and support ethical sources of supply, even if at a somewhat higher cost. The prospect of driving an electric car or using lithium products when they are being sourced from companies that exploit child labour or forced labour is not worth the price.

MENTAL HEALTH AND BAIL LAWS

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (22:09): I talk tonight about a lady who was for a long time homeless and lived on the main street of Dubbo. I will not name her, but many residents of Dubbo will know who I am talking about. She is an Aboriginal lady who has had a hard life and is severely mentally ill. In more recent times she has received support and now requires psychiatric care and support in the community, at the intense level of 24/7 and one-to-one, person-to-person support for all of her personal, medical and domestic needs. I had not seen her for a while and I was wondering the other day where she was and if she was still around. The lady in question is sometimes involved in anti-social behaviour and has scrapes with the law.

Indeed, as it transpires, the law is the reason I have not seen her for a while. This week I got an email from a business owner in the CBD. She told me that the lady has been locked up since April on a shoplifting charge. The shopkeeper is very concerned and asked if I could help secure her release. I must say I was very moved by the concern of this business owner, who told me:

My staff and I have always made time to chat with her and assist her when we can and have had a mutual respect that has developed over years of our relationship, despite our differences.

I do not minimise at all the dramas that homeless people and the mentally ill can cause for business owners in Dubbo; indeed, they make this business owner's humanity all the more moving. I looked into the case, because six months seems a long time for a mentally ill person to be in custody on a minor shoplifting charge. What I discovered really concerned me. In short, the lady has been reported to be unfit to plead. In a more serious matter, this would have activated a scheme where she had a hearing and could be dealt with under statutory provisions that provide for a clear, just and transparent process. Those provisions do not apply in the Local Court in summary matters, though it has been previously recommended that they should. The lady's lawyers applied to have the matter dealt with under section 14 of the mental health legislation. The Local Court magistrate in Dubbo, Magistrate Shields, took the view that someone who might not be fit to plead could not at the same time ask to be dealt with under section 14. His Honour adjourned the matter and continued to refuse bail in the interim.

The end result is that a seriously mentally ill person, not fit to plead, on a minor stealing charge, has been languishing in custody for six months. If she was fit to plead and pleaded guilty back in April, the worst she might have received would be a small fine, or maybe a bond. But she is incarcerated by a process that she has no capacity of understanding. This is a systemic failure that does not reflect well on us as a society. This lady would, in my view, be released immediately on a section 14 order or a bail order if a court dealing with her had properly exercised its jurisdiction. That would not have solved her problems, nor the problems her problems cause others, but it would be a measure of justice that all citizens are entitled to.

There may well be a need for law reform to create a statutory process for dealing with unfit-to-plead people in the Local Court, and to create clarity on their ability to access diversionary orders under section 14 of the Mental Health and Cognitive Impairment Forensic Provisions Act 2020. I conclude by giving a shout-out to all the homelessness and mental health services in Dubbo, which do such amazing work in the community, supporting the vulnerable. I also give a shout-out to all of the kind community members, like the woman who emailed me, who support people like this lady in the most difficult of circumstances.

AUSTRALIAN SCREEN INDUSTRY

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (22:14): There's a new series of *Mystery Road* on TV. While I have not had the chance to watch it, I am hoping I soon get the chance to pick up the story of Jay Swan once more. *Royal Flying Doctor Service* is back, so that is also exciting. Australian television, when done well, is fantastic. We have a history of doing it really well. I am sure, as I say that, others have their favourite show come to mind, be it of recent times or back to the golden age of Australian television. These shows do not just entertain us; they do so much more than that. A big part of their role is telling our stories—stories we can relate to, stories about our history, and stories that give us insights into the lives of others: exposure, understanding and perspective we might not otherwise get.

Of course, a lot of the stories we see on TV have a regional focus. They are based in fictional regional towns—Gungellan, Mount Thomas, Emu Springs, Wandin Valley—and while sometimes slightly over-dramatised, they give some people their greatest or only exposure to life in regional communities. Then, from a financial perspective, if we are filming a show in our regions, that brings dollars into towns—for motels, catering, local shops and contractors. Beyond the completion of filming, they also create fantastic tourism opportunities. Plenty of travellers go to Broken Hill and Silverton because of their association with *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* and *Mad Max*. One movie can set up a regional area for decades of tourism and mark it on the map in Australian cultural history. Australian TV shows, when done well, deliver so many positive outcomes, including for regional New South Wales.

But, unfortunately, the number of these shows is waning, and we need to reverse this trend. One of the issues we have is the way we consume our television and screens. When I was a kid, it meant being able to sit up late on Monday and Tuesday nights to watch *A Country Practice*. I would race out as soon as I started to hear the theme song, on one of two free-to-air stations we had at the time. Today, of course, it is much different—it is on demand, it is in our pockets and it is behind subscription walls. So industry and regulation need to move as quickly as consumption habits have. We need the Federal Government to deliver on the promised local content laws, to see these rules apply not just to free-to-air TV but to streaming services as well. From a State perspective, we need Government to dig deep into its tool bag to find ways it can help. That could be regulatory frameworks, clearing red tape, or incentives to attract projects to New South Wales.

We currently have the majority of the businesses in this sector, but we need to be working hard on maintaining and extending that share, because we are seeing New South Wales miss out on projects. Western Australia, in particular, I am told, is very attractive at the moment with the incentives on offer there, so we need to lift our game on that front. Unlike other States such as Queensland and Victoria, we do not have an independent screen agency here in New South Wales that can look and plan longer term without bureaucratic and political interference. Longer term, some projects can take two, six, 10, 15 or 20 years to go from birth through to completion. I know the Minister for the Arts is receptive to this issue, but we need to see some outcomes before it is too late. We need more Australian stories on TV. We need more Australian characters on TV—people like Jay Swan, Dash McKinley, Adam Cooper, Bandit Heeler, Russell Coight, Cleaver Greene, Gabrielle Jaeger, Claire McLeod, Amber Wheeler, Major Dr Rowdy Lawson, Dan and Sean Moody, Bob Hatfield and Cookie Locke.

When we talk about great Australian characters, I need to mention one of my favourites: Captain Flanagan from that great miniseries, *ANZACs*. He was a fantastic character who represented so much of our Australian ideals, as did others in that show like Sister Kate Baker, Pat Cleary and Martin Barrington. Flanagan was played by the brilliant Jon Blake, whose career was tragically cut short in a car accident in 1986 that left him with severe brain injuries. Though he survived, he remained in a vegetative state until his passing in 2011—a heartbreaking end to a life and career full of potential. We need to tell these Australian stories, and we need to see these stories. They might be humorous or over-dramatised, but they give a glimpse into us—the us we know, and the us we need to know.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (22:19): I raise an issue that involves the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, paedophiles, the NSW Police Force and the Reverend Fred Nile. On 14 July 1975, the ABC aired a radio program called *Lateline*—not the later television show, but the original Radio National program. The name of this episode was "Pederasty". Three self-confessed pederasts were platformed to openly discuss and advocate for their sexual relationships with teenage boys and children, some as young as three. One of those boys was even invited to participate in the broadcast. This episode was a diabolical celebration of heinous criminal behaviour. The unnamed guests described the way they groomed children, befriended children and hung around children's families or lurked around playgrounds. The 45-minute program was a primer in evil.

The ABC hierarchy at the time knew exactly what the broadcast was. It permitted it, it defended it and the taxpayer paid for it. Then chairman of the ABC, Richard Downing, appointed by the Whitlam Government two years before the infamous episode, told *The Sydney Morning Herald* that "in general, men will sleep with young boys", and on 19 July 1975 he wrote a letter to *The Sydney Morning Herald* urging Australians to understand pederasts. Shockingly, no-one at the ABC reported these self-confessed offenders to police and no-one offered to support the victims. Instead, that righteous duty fell upon Reverend Fred Nile, who provided a copy of the interview to then Police Commissioner Fred Hanson, who said New South Wales police would "study the situation, to see if the Vice Squad should be involved". After that, there was radio silence. Nothing more was ever heard about it. I recently wrote to the police Minister inquiring what came of Reverend Nile's query. I am awaiting a response.

In 2016 and 2018, Senator Eric Abetz raised this issue during a question on notice via the Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communication. The ABC denied the existence of the interview at a budget estimates hearing. I understand it has been denying it for decades. The ABC misled Parliament. It has recently been forced to acknowledge the error, but without an apology or explanation of the prior disinformation. But a couple of years ago, John Adams simply emailed ABC archives, and they gave him the tape. Mr Adams has now released the entire tape on social media—though, like my maiden speech, YouTube has, at least temporarily, banned it. Rather than show contrition for its past misdeeds, the ABC has since attempted to bully Mr Adams with take-down orders and legal threats. The ABC showed no duty of care for the victims, only ideological blindness.

The victims, now in their sixties, were left unacknowledged and unassisted by the very institution that gave their sick abusers a platform. There cannot be one rule for the taxpayer-funded elite and another for everyone else. The ABC must acknowledge its role in giving a platform to pederasty and paedophiles, acknowledge its failure to report these disturbed guests to police, apologise to the survivors of child sex abuse and stop harassing whistleblower John Adams.

ABORIGINAL DEATHS IN CUSTODY

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (22:22): I speak tonight about the record Aboriginal deaths in custody following the grim revelation from the New South Wales Coroner, Teresa O'Sullivan, contained in an open letter she released today. As reported by *The Guardian* and the ABC, New South Wales has had a record number of deaths of Aboriginal people in custody in 2025. Twelve First Nations people have died in custody and an

additional four were killed in police operations so far this year. There are still two months of 2025 remaining, and I fear that these numbers could rise. Words fail to express how unacceptable this is, and to quantify the negative impact on families and communities. It should be a point of shame for this State and our justice system. Each life lost carries with it a family left without answers, a community in mourning and a system that has again betrayed its duty of care. As the Coroner said, "these are not mere statistics ... they demand independent scrutiny, respect and accountability".

The mass incarceration of Aboriginal people is a driving factor of increased Aboriginal deaths in custody. Over the past five years, Aboriginal incarceration has increased by 20 per cent, even as general incarceration levels have declined in some jurisdictions. Aboriginal adults comprise over one-third of the New South Wales prison population, despite making up only 3 per cent of the general population. The statistics in youth justice are even more stark. In 2024, Aboriginal young people made up 61.5 per cent of the youth detention population in New South Wales. This is part of a long history of over-policing, over-sentencing and racism towards this marginalised group. Aboriginal people, particularly young people, are significantly more likely to be approached by police. For example, last year, a report on the controversial Suspect Targeted Management Plan operated by the NSW Police Force revealed it was used overwhelmingly against Aboriginal people.

First Nations people are also far more likely to experience violence as a result of these police interactions. Between 2018 and 2022 there were 28,826 reports of use of force by police in Australia. Aboriginal people were the subject of 45 per cent of those incidents. Again, this group makes up approximately 3 per cent of the population. First Nations people are also more likely to receive custodial sentences or to be refused bail. Shockingly, nearly 46 per cent of Aboriginal adults in custody are held on remand. That is, almost half of the First Nations people in custody, often for long periods, have not been convicted of a crime. First Nations children are jailed at 20 times the rate of other children in the State. These systemic injustices give rise to a state of affairs in which First Nations people, especially children and young people, are at seriously elevated risk of experiencing violence or dying while in custody or otherwise under the care of the police.

It is only a matter of time before we have another case like that of TJ Hickey, an Aboriginal young man who died after being impaled on a fence in Waterloo in 2004 after being pursued by police. We have a responsibility to take urgent action on this issue. Members of an enormously disadvantaged group are dying from preventable deaths on our watch and under our care. No-one should face a premature and unnecessary death while in the custody of the State or its officers. Our justice system and our laws should not put First Nations people in a position of such increased risk of violence and death through over-policing and a heavy-handed approach to sentencing and incarceration. Our governments—all governments—must do better than this dreadful result.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (22:27): I point out to the House the gravity of the reforms that the Minister for Industrial Relations has instituted surrounding the use of health and safety representatives [HSRs] in the workplace. There has been a bit of an evolution in work health and safety over the past 15 years. Originally the concept was to have compulsory workplace health and safety committees. These were a good thing, but they were basically a forum for discussion of work health and safety matters in the workplace and did not really have any teeth. Then we had the advent of HSRs in the workplace. It was a great concept, having people in the workplace living and breathing their day-to-day work calling out safety issues.

The problem was that the law did not really back it in. With the recent changes that Minister Cotsis has made to the Industrial Relations Act, we now have a dedicated work health and safety regime prosecutable in the Industrial Relations Commission, which was previously only pursuable in the District Court, where it was very difficult to run a case and prosecute it because of the non-specialist skill sets in that court circuit and the backlog. The fact that there is now a dedicated regime and a proactive regulator in SafeWork NSW linking in with the HSRs means that we should get much better work health and safety outcomes as a result of those HSRs. They are now able to directly take a case to the Industrial Relations Commission under the new workplace bullying and harassment regime.

Furthermore, bullying and harassment has now been specifically defined as opposed to previously just being a requirement to prove victimisation and damage. Some of these things can sound a little bit dry when they come through the House, but it is a very significant reform. The concept of having people in the workplace looking out for their colleagues' safety, and then giving them the teeth of a regime where they can get legal recourse, is very significant. Personally, I think we should be taking it to the next level and mandating HSRs in the workplace because it is the culture and the people in a workplace which is going to lift its safety standards. It is a great reform. I give a shout-out to Minister Cotsis for doing it right.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The House now stands adjourned.

The House adjourned at 22:30 until Thursday 16 October 2025 at 10:00.