

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Tuesday 21 October 2025

The PRESIDENT (The Hon. Benjamin Cameron Franklin) took the chair at 12:30.

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.

Documents

LAW ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT COMMISSION

Reports

The PRESIDENT: According to the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act 2016, I table a report of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission entitled *Review of NSW Police Force responses to failed prosecutions that include adverse comments made by judicial officers*, dated October 2025, received out of session and made public on 17 October 2025.

Business of the House

SITTING CALENDAR 2026

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I move:

- (1) That, unless otherwise ordered, the days of meeting of the House in 2026 be as follows:
Budget sittings
February 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12
March 17, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26
May 5, 6, 7, 26, 27, 28
June 2, 3, 4, 23, 24, 25
Spring sittings
August 4, 5, 6
September 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 24
October 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22
November 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, (reserve days 24, 25, 26)
- (2) That, further to the resolution of the House of 26 June 2025, referring budget estimates 2025-2026 to the portfolio committees for inquiry and report, unless otherwise ordered, additional hearings be scheduled from 24 February to 27 February 2026, 2 March to 6 March 2026, and 9 March to 11 March 2026.
- (3) That, unless otherwise ordered, for the purposes of the budget estimates inquiry 2026-2027:
 - (a) initial hearings be scheduled from 18 August to 21 August 2026, 24 August to 28 August 2026, and 31 August to 2 September 2026; and
 - (b) supplementary hearings be scheduled from 26 October to 30 October 2026.
- (4) That, unless otherwise ordered, or a committee resolves that a committee activity is urgent, no committee activity may be undertaken on the following dates:
 - (a) 5 January to 9 January 2026, and 12 January to 16 January 2026;
 - (b) 23 February 2026;
 - (c) 12 March to 13 March 2026;
 - (d) 7 April to 10 April 2026;
 - (e) 6 July to 10 July 2026;
 - (f) 17 August 2026;
 - (g) 3 September to 4 September 2026, and 28 September to 30 September 2026;
 - (h) 1 October to 2 October 2026; and
 - (i) 21 December to 24 December 2026.

Motion agreed to.

*Motions***BANGLADESH MONSOON REVOLUTION**

The Hon. EMMA HURST (12:33): On behalf of Ms Abigail Boyd: I move:

- (1) That this House recognises that Tuesday 5 August 2025 marked the first anniversary of the fall of Bangladesh's 17-year authoritarian regime following a mass uprising, which is now known as the Monsoon Revolution.
- (2) That this House notes that:
 - (a) many in Bangladesh and across the world have referred to the Monsoon Revolution as Bangladesh's "second liberation" after its independence from Pakistan in 1971;
 - (b) this week Bangladesh's interim leader Professor Muhammad Yunus has unveiled a road map of democratic reforms as the nation marks this historic anniversary, pledging to write to the Chief Election Commissioner requesting the national election be arranged in February 2026, before the start of Ramadan;
 - (c) in his address, Professor Yunus affirmed that the three core responsibilities of the interim government are reform, justice and the conduct of a national election, asserting that "we will step into the final and most important phase after delivering this speech to you, and that is the transfer of power to an elected government. On behalf of the government, we will extend all necessary support to ensure that the election is free, peaceful and celebratory in spirit";
 - (d) Professor Yunus also formally read out the July Declaration, a 28-point document that seeks to give constitutional recognition to the student-led uprising, and confirmed that trials for those responsible for the July killings of 2024 are progressing swiftly;
 - (e) democracy cannot be rebuilt on compromised foundations, and it is critical that the interim government's electoral road map is accompanied by urgent action to carry out widespread reform across Bangladesh's systems;
 - (f) since 5 August 2024, the transitional period has exposed deep structural and institutional failures, and while the interim administration led by Professor Yunus has expressed reformist intentions, many of the institutions that enabled authoritarian control remain untouched;
 - (g) the Rapid Action Battalion [RAB] continues operating with impunity despite decades of allegations involving extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances; and
 - (h) Bangladesh's judiciary remains politicised, law enforcement lacks accountability, and victims of violence and their families have expressed fear of their prospects for seeking justice.
- (3) That this House reaffirms its commitment to democracy and human rights, and expresses solidarity with the people of Bangladesh in their pursuit of justice, national sovereignty, political stability and lasting peace.
- (4) That this House calls on the Australian Government to:
 - (a) advocate for justice and accountability for the victims of the Monsoon Revolution and their affected communities;
 - (b) stand in solidarity with the people of Bangladesh in calling on the interim government to ensure the recently announced electoral road map includes:
 - (i) free, fair and internationally monitored elections;
 - (ii) the creation of an independent election commission with robust anti-fraud mechanisms; and
 - (iii) equal access to political participation for all parties.
 - (c) advocate for the disbanding of the RAB, prosecution of those involved in human rights violations, and the establishment of a restructured and rights-respecting law enforcement system;
 - (d) support judicial reform in Bangladesh that aligns with international human rights obligations and norms; and
 - (e) encourage systemic anti-corruption measures including transparent long-term institutional reform to rebuild public trust in governance.

Motion agreed to.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY SUICIDE RATES

The Hon. EMMA HURST (12:33): On behalf of Ms Abigail Boyd: I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) despite improvements over past years, the construction industry still has amongst the highest suicide rates of any industry in Australia;
 - (b) construction workers are nine times more likely to die by suicide than through a workplace accident;
 - (c) male construction workers are nearly twice as likely to take their own lives as other employed Australian men of the same age;

- (d) MATES in Construction is an industry-based but workplace-focused independent charity supporting workers and workplaces in the construction, mining, energy and manufacturing industries across Australia and New Zealand, creating networks of suicide safety across Australian workplaces by training and supporting workers to look after each other and offer help;
 - (e) each year thousands of Australian workers are supported through a tough time by their workmates using skills learnt in MATES training or through MATES field officers, case managers and a 24/7 helpline;
 - (f) Beyond Blue has noted there is often a stigma in male-dominated industries, especially construction, that discourages vulnerability, while also noting the unique pressures of the industry that play a major role undermining workers' mental health, including long working hours, unsociable working hours, physical demands of the job, job insecurity and financial stress; and
 - (g) apprentices are at even greater risk of suicide, partly because they experience bullying at higher rates, particularly in the very hierarchical cultures of the construction industry.
- (2) That this House further notes that:
- (a) Wednesday 10 September 2025 was World Suicide Prevention Day;
 - (b) Fly the Flag Week is an initiative led by MATES in Construction, running this year from 8 to 12 September 2025, helping to normalise seeking help and reducing stigma around workplace mental health and suicide in the construction sectors; and
 - (c) it is the workplace, not the workers, that causes mental harm, high rates of suicide and mental ill health driven by poor workplace cultures and lack of support.
- (3) That this House:
- (a) congratulates MATES in Construction for its "Fly the Flag" initiative and encourages workers across Australia to participate and to take a moment to check in with each other;
 - (b) welcomes the Minister for Work Health and Safety's decision to convene a round table with building industry trade unions including the CFMEU, industry bodies, FoundoBlue House and MATES in Construction and other experts with respect to psychosocial harms in the workplace, to address the increase in psychosocial risk in construction for construction workers; and
 - (c) recognises the vital importance of providing ongoing support to prevent workplace mental ill health and suicide, enforcement of compliance with workplace safety laws and prosecution of those employers who do the wrong thing, and of delivering adequate levels of compensation and assistance to those who suffer a psychological injury in the workplace to assist injured workers to recover safely.

Motion agreed to.

AFGHANISTAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The Hon. EMMA HURST (12:34): On behalf of Ms Abigail Boyd: I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) August 2025 marked four years since the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in August 2021, which has since seen dozens of directives issued by the de facto authorities stripping women and girls of their rights, including extrajudicial killings, bans on education and employment, restricted access to health care and widening inequalities in safety and public decision-making;
 - (b) after seizing power in 2021, the Taliban's deterioration of the human rights of women and girls has been widely reported and globally denounced, including violations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
 - (c) UN Women has reported that, with each new restriction enforced by the Taliban regime, women are being erased in a human rights crisis affecting 21 million women in Afghanistan;
 - (d) UN Women has also reported that, despite unimaginable barriers, Afghan women are bravely documenting human rights abuses on the ground and figuring out ways to build community and maintain daily acts of resilience, courage and resistance;
 - (e) for many years, ethnic groups such as the Hazaras have faced a history of repression, violence and structural discrimination by governments and ruling parties in Afghanistan, and since the Taliban seized power in 2021 there has been a return to impunity for those committing atrocities against Hazaras including displacement, executions and the suppression of basic rights of women;
 - (f) United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk has this week told the sixtieth session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva that Afghanistan faces a severe rollback of fundamental rights, with women's access to health care and other freedoms sharply restricted and maternal mortality among the world's highest; and
 - (g) the High Commissioner warned that international humanitarian and human rights law are being "shredded" across the world, criticising governments for disregarding, disrespecting and disengaging from international law and urging states to halt arms transfers facilitating war crimes and recommit to multilateral cooperation.
- (2) That this House calls on the Australian Government to uphold its moral responsibility to act in response to continuing human rights violations in Afghanistan, including by increasing aid funding for humanitarian pathways, ensuring women's rights are foundational to aid and development responses, and backing international efforts to investigate human rights abuses and deliver accountability for international crimes.

Motion agreed to.**KYOKUSHIN INTERNATIONAL KARATE ORGANISATION SPARRING TOURNAMENT****The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (12:34):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that on Sunday 2 November 2025 Mr Doug Turnbull will host the eighth annual KIKO Adult Full Contact, Juniors Padded Contact and Free Style Sparring Tournament at the Robyn Webster Sports Centre in Tempe Reserve in Sydney, with athletes and officials participating from many different organisations and martial art styles.
- (2) That this House acknowledges the exceptional life, service and contribution to martial arts in New South Wales of Mr Doug Turnbull, known respectfully as Kancho Turnbull, the founder and President of the Kyokushin International Karate Organisation [KIKO] and a lifelong martial artist, competitor, teacher and international referee.
- (3) That this House recognises Kancho Turnbull's martial arts credentials including:
 - (a) seventh Dan Black Belt in Kyokushin Karate, awarded in 2017 with the support of Sosui Soeno Yoshiji of the World Karate Organisation, the Shidokan;
 - (b) seventh Dan in Okinawa Oburyu Kobudo (weapons) Kobukai Black Belt, awarded in 2022 by Kancho Johaness Wong, the Wongs Dojo Hombu; and
 - (c) seventh Dan Black Belt in Naha-Te Okinawan Karate, awarded in 2024 by Kancho Johaness Wong, the Wongs Dojo Hombu.
- (4) That this House further notes that:
 - (a) Mr Turnbull has an extensive history of training since 1966, making him one of the longest serving martial artists and a respected figure in Australian martial arts; and
 - (b) Mr Turnbull's early start in judo in 1966, followed by his transition to Kyokushin Karate in 1970 under the late Hanshi John Taylor, and his consistent rise through the ranks of Kyokushin, attaining Shodan, his first dan, in 1975 and subsequently achieving higher dan grades through years of dedication and international recognition.
- (5) That this House commends Mr Turnbull's martial arts administrative and competitive achievements including:
 - (a) former Australian karate champion in both kumite and kata;
 - (b) former President and Chief Referee of the International Federation of Karate Kyokushin Australia, IFKKA;
 - (c) long-time Chairman of AMAC, the Australian Martial Arts Championships, and Vice President of WMAC, the World Martial Arts Championships, overseeing international tournaments across Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the United States of America;
 - (d) his service as an international class A referee and judge, officiating at world karate championship events in Moscow, London and Greece; and
 - (e) the founding of his first dojo in Marrickville in 1982, which later relocated to Tempe Public School, where he continues to teach to this day, having instructed hundreds of students, promoted discipline and fostered community through martial arts.
- (6) That this House notes Mr Turnbull grew up in Ryde, New South Wales, moving to Auburn, New South Wales when first married, then in 1982 moved to Marrickville, New South Wales, where he now resides, and has been fortunate to have two children, a boy and a girl, and four grandchildren, who he cherishes and who have supported him on his martial arts journey.
- (7) That this House acknowledges and commends Kancho Doug Turnbull for six decades of practice and service to martial arts in New South Wales, his mentorship to countless students, his role in the growth of Kyokushin Karate in Australia, and his enduring contribution to promoting peace, discipline and international friendship through the martial arts—Gassho and Osu!

Motion agreed to.**TRIBUTE TO JAMES "JIM" O'MALLEY****The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (12:35):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes with great sadness that:
 - (a) James "Jim" O'Malley, a long-time and respected member, official and executive member of the United Services Union, passed away on 24 May 2025; and
 - (b) during the most recent United Services Union conference, the north-western branch of the United Services Union nominated Jim O'Malley posthumously for life membership of the United Services Union.
- (2) That this House remembers that:
 - (a) Jim was a staunch trade unionist who became a workplace delegate at both Coolah and Warrumbungle shire councils in the north-western branch;
 - (b) Jim joined the north-western branch committee of management in March 2010 representing Warrumbungle council; and
 - (c) Jim always put the members of the union first, representing members as an alternate conference delegate, conference delegate and executive member, constantly advocating for better work-life balance for all members.

- (3) Vale, James "Jim" O'Malley.

Motion agreed to.

BAULKHAM HILLS SHIRE NETBALL ASSOCIATION

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (12:35): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) Baulkham Hills Shire Netball Association celebrated its fiftieth anniversary at a gala dinner held on Saturday 19 July 2025,
 - (b) Special guests in attendance included:
 - (i) Dr Michelle Byrne, Mayor of the Hills Shire Council;
 - (ii) Councillor Frank De Masi, Deputy Mayor of the Hills Shire Council;
 - (iii) Councillor Vincent De Luca, OAM, Northern Beaches councillor and volunteer director, Netball NSW;
 - (iv) Mrs Sallyanne Faulkner, volunteer chair, Netball NSW;
 - (v) Mrs Carol Murphy, OAM, volunteer director and life member, Netball NSW and life member and former president of Baulkham Hills Shire Netball Association;
 - (vi) Mrs Julie Fitzgerald, AM, elite coach; and
 - (vii) Ms Natalie Avalino, former Australian Diamonds representative.
 - (c) in 1972, the Baulkham Hills Sporting Club, still playing under the Blacktown Netball Association, sought to create a local association in the then Baulkham Hills shire;
 - (d) committees were formed and representatives gathered from Castle Hill, Glenorie, North Rocks, Winston Hills and Baulkham Hills, each bringing a shared dream to create an association that would represent locals, players, families and the growing community;
 - (e) in 1974, perseverance bore fruit and the first executive was elected, with Pam Noble taking the helm as president and Lorraine Everitt, inaugural umpires' convenor, a woman who helped set the tone for integrity and excellence on Baulkham Hills shire's courts from the very beginning;
 - (f) with just seven courts at Ted Horwood Reserve and 28 eager teams, the Baulkham Hills Shire Netball Association held its first competition, and by the very next year 56 teams had registered;
 - (g) through persistence of its founding members, by late 1975 Netball NSW formally recognised Baulkham Hills Shire Netball Association as an association in its own right;
 - (h) over the decades since 1975, numerous members have contributed significant voluntary service and been awarded life membership:
 - (i) 1982, Margaret Elder;
 - (ii) 1984, Jan Fontana;
 - (iii) 1988, Annette Rowe;
 - (iv) 1990, Leanne Perigo;
 - (v) 1992, Cathy Aird;
 - (vi) 1992, Judy Dunbar (deceased);
 - (vii) 1992, Bronwyn Williams;
 - (viii) 1994, Helen Cane;
 - (ix) 1995, Laurel Cunico;
 - (x) 1995, Margaret Govett (deceased);
 - (xi) 1996, Betty O'Keefe;
 - (xii) 1997, Maria Henry;
 - (xiii) 1997, Ted Newton;
 - (xiv) 2001, Lorraine Everitt;
 - (xv) 2001, Leanne Spears;
 - (xvi) 2002, Carol Murphy, OAM;
 - (xvii) 2004, Kylie Cane;
 - (xviii) 2004, Jenny Pike;
 - (xix) 2007, Julie Poole (deceased);

- (xx) 2007, Colleen Rennie (deceased);
- (xxi) 2008, Barbara Cocks;
- (xxii) 2009, Hayley Gaze;
- (xxiii) 2012, Amanda Hughes;
- (xxiv) 2013, Gail Baker;
- (xxv) 2016, Marie Lahey;
- (xxvi) 2018, Monica O'Callaghan;
- (xxvii) 2019, Michelle Bullock;
- (xxviii) 2019, Alison Tortell;
- (xxix) 2019, Kylie Tzavaras;
- (xxx) 2021, Claudette Noble; and
- (xxxi) 2023, Lynne Robertson (deceased).
- (i) the current executive committee includes president Kylie Tzavaras, secretary Cassandra Johnson, treasurer Claudette Noble, Monica O'Callaghan, Leanne Spears, Katey Bryers, Andrea Curr, Kelly Heys, Monique O'Callaghan, Rhiannon Latham, Georgia Chong and Jess Scrivener.
- (2) That this House:
 - (a) commends and congratulates Baulkham Hills Shire Netball Association on its fiftieth anniversary; and
 - (b) commends and acknowledges Baulkham Hills Shire Netball Association's executive committee and life members on their outstanding service over the decades to ensure the success of the sport in the Hills Shire local government area.

Motion agreed to.

MANLY WARRINGAH NETBALL ASSOCIATION

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (12:36): I seek leave to amend private members' business item No. 2534 by omitting "seventieth anniversary" and inserting instead "sixtieth anniversary", wherever occurring.

Leave granted.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Accordingly, I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on Friday 8 August 2025 Manly Warringah Netball Association, previously Manly Warringah Women's Basketball Association, celebrated its sixtieth anniversary as an affiliated association to Netball NSW having previously been a group from 1955;
 - (b) Special guests included:
 - (i) Roslyn De Luca, OAM, nee Smith, foundation and life member Manly Warringah Netball Association and captain of the first ever Open Representative Team in 1966 together with members of that original team Janet Beeby, nee Thomas and Anka Cveticanin, nee Janjic, who cut the anniversary cake with current president, Nicole Carter;
 - (ii) Michael Regan, member for Wakehurst; Sue Heins, Mayor of Northern Beaches Council; Councillor Ruth Robins, Deputy Mayor; Councillor Vincent De Luca, OAM, Volunteer Director Netball NSW; and Councillor Jody Williams;
 - (iii) Carol Murphy, OAM, volunteer director and life member Netball NSW; and
 - (iv) Maureen Boyle, OAM, life member Manly Warringah Netball Association, Netball NSW, Netball Australia and World Netball and former Australian Team umpire and official at numerous Commonwealth Games, world championships, tests series, national championships and other elite competitions.
 - (c) in 1954, Pam Hall and Iris Gracie, realising the popularity of women's basketball, sent a letter to local businesses, department stores, swimming clubs and other organisations enquiring whether there was any interest in forming a local Manly Warringah competition;
 - (d) in 1955 the Manly Warringah Women's Basketball Group was founded and life member of New South Wales Women's Basketball Association and experienced administrator Mrs Marie Devlin was elected its first president to oversee this new group of dedicated women and the first ever local competition was held in 1955 while, at the same time, the West Dee Why club still entered their elite teams in the city competition;

- (e) by 1965 the group had become so large and successful that moves were made for the group to become a fully-fledged association affiliated with then NSW Women's Basketball Association and at a meeting of the Manly Warringah Women's Basketball Group held at the Dispensary Hall, Manly on 18 August 1965 it was moved that Manly Warringah Women's Basketball Group become a fully affiliated association of NSW Women's Basketball Association;
 - (f) on 22 November 1965, in honour of the outstanding service of Marie Devlin, she was made the first life member of Manly Warringah Women's Basketball Association;
 - (g) the first general meeting of the association was conducted on 14 February 1966 at the Civic Centre Hall, Manly Vale, and it was resolved that Mrs (later Lady) Molly Askin become the association's patron and Les Wiltshire ,OAM, the association's auditor, the first president of the association was Joy Lister, secretary Beryl Foder (McDougall), treasurer Jan Watts, assistant secretary Iris Gracie, umpires' convenor Gwen Petherbridge, publicity officer S. Johnstone, social convenor Janet Thomas (Beeby), minute secretary Margaret Hindmarsh and junior secretaries Pam Hall and Mrs Jean Gee, OAM;
 - (h) the association's first grading committee consisted of: Evelyn Langbein, Roslyn Smith (De Luca, OAM), Myrtle Loudon, Jean Gee, OAM, P. Smith, Jan Watts, Gwen Petherbridge, Jeanette Melville, Mrs Hubbard, Mrs Naylor, Miss Joy, Margaret Hindmarsh, Miss McDonald, Norma Ward, Mrs Reid, Mrs Ramsay, Mrs Harper, Mrs Spence, Mrs S Johnstone and Sue Thomas (Jenkins);
 - (i) the fixtures committee consisted of: Pam Hall, S Johnston, Mrs Hubbard, Mrs Ramsay, Beryl Foder (McDougall), Miss Main, Miss Joy, Margaret Hindmarsh, Jan Thomas (Beeby), Miss Griffen, Miss Garner, Miss Lister, Jeanette Melville, Miss Corkhill, Miss Witten, Miss Addison, Beryl Gartner, Mrs V. Johnstone, Mrs Spade, Jean Gee, OAM, and Mrs Weldon;
 - (j) the officials committee consisted of: Vera Wiltshire, OAM, Mrs Plimmer, Jeanette Melville, Norma Ward, Mrs Johnston, Robyn Friend, Mrs Gerry, Janet Thomas (Beeby), Iris Gracie, Joan Alderson, Sue Thomas (Jenkins), Miss Corkhill, R. McPherson, Mrs Harper, Mrs Clist, Mrs Wagg, Jean Gee, OAM, and Ms Masspeight;
 - (k) the coach of the first ever open representative team in 1966 was Jeanette Melville and players selected were: Roslyn Smith (De Luca, OAM), Captain, West Dee Why Club; Robyn Corki, Vice Captain, Seagulls Club; Janet Thomas (Beeby), Cascades Club; Janine Howell, Pittwater Club; Anka Janjic (Cveticanin), Pittwater Club; Jan Coyle (Egger), West Dee Why Club; Gail Fidler, Queenscliff Club; Margaret Hindmarsh, Thistles Club; Jillian Fredericks, Newport Club; and Helen Gammie (nee Allen), West Dee Why Club;
 - (l) since 1965, the following hardworking and dedicated members have been accorded life membership of Manly Warringah Netball Association in honour of their outstanding services to netball: Marie Dundon (Devlin), Joy Lister (deceased), Jean Gee, OAM, (deceased), Pam Hall (deceased), Beryl Foder (McDougall) (deceased), Joan Alderson (deceased), Evelyn Langbein, OAM, (deceased), Betty Hayes (Bushnell) (deceased), Margorie Simmonds (deceased), Vera Wiltshire, OAM, (deceased), Anne Sargeant OAM, Mrs Clare Loughland (deceased), Gwen Winsor ,OAM, (deceased), Nancy Etherington, Roslyn De Luca, OAM, Coralie Newman, OAM, Carissa Dalwood (Tombs), OAM, Margaret Cliff, OAM, Maureen Boyle, OAM, Pat Wallace (deceased), Mrs Noni Greentree (deceased), Helen Dean (deceased), Colette Longley, Denise Booth, Karan Smith, Aileen Brodigan, Beverley Dew, OAM, Maureen Stephenson OAM, Mary Jane Hauser, Jean Williams (deceased), Debbie Philipson, Laurel Fisher, Linda Frizzell, Jeanie Ashley (deceased), Joan Evans (deceased), Margaret Findlay, Margaret Whiteman, Cathy Hurditch and Lesley Pagett;
 - (m) Australian representatives include: Terese Kennedy (Delaney), Anne Sargeant, OAM, (Simmonds), Maureen Boyle, OAM (O'Connor), Karan Smith (Bulloch), Wendy Etherington (Glassman), Carissa Dalwood, OAM, (Tombs) and Mo'onia Gerrard, OAM; and
 - (n) the 2025 Manly Warringah Netball Association's executive committee includes: president Nicole Carter, secretary Cathy Hurditch, treasurer Tracy O'Shanassy, Karen Hayes, Robyn Armsworth Brack, Natalie Harrison, Anne Marie Ward (part) and Samantha O'Shanassy (part).
- (2) That this House:
- (a) commends and congratulates the Manly Warringah Netball Association on its sixtieth anniversary; and
 - (b) acknowledges and commends Manly Warringah Netball Association's executive committee and life members for their outstanding service to netball in the northern beaches local government area.

Motion agreed to.

INTERNATIONAL CEPHALOPOD AWARENESS WEEK

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (12:37): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) International Cephalopod Awareness Week was marked between 8 October and 12 October 2025 to teach the world about cephalopods, a diverse and highly intelligent class of molluscs that includes octopuses, squids, cuttlefish and nautilus;
 - (b) cephalopods are exclusively marine animals characterised by bilateral body symmetry, a prominent head with a distributed brain, highly articulate arms and tentacles and the absence of a backbone;
 - (c) cephalopods are often referred to as the chameleons of the sea because of their rapid colour changing abilities and fast movement;

- (d) cephalopods possess a complex nervous system and well documented intelligence, with emerging research over the last decade finding more evidence of their sentience, including a 2021 United Kingdom government-commissioned report from London School of Economics and Political Science which found strong scientific evidence cephalopods and decapods are sentient beings and resulted in the United Kingdom Government passing legislation to legally recognise the sentience of cephalopods and decapods in animal welfare and protection law;
 - (e) in Australia, cephalopods are not included within the legal definition of an animal in New South Wales, Victoria, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, meaning they miss out on the legal protections in existing animal welfare legislation in these jurisdictions;
 - (f) Wednesday 8 October 2025 was World Octopus Day, which celebrates the octopus, one of the most distinctive marine creatures on the planet;
 - (g) Thursday 9 October 2025 was Nautilus Night, which raises awareness about the nautilus, a fascinating spiral-shelled mollusc, and other lesser-known cephalopods like the allonautilus perforatus, which migrate from deep waters to shallower areas to hunt at night;
 - (h) Friday 10 October 2025 was International Squid and Cuttlefish Day, also known as Squittleday, which recognises squid, which have a flexible, feather-shaped structure inside their bodies called the pen, and cuttlefish, which have a broader internal shell called the cuttlebone; and
 - (i) Saturday 11 October 2025 was World Kraken Day, which recognises all the fantastical and mythical cephalopods across myth, film, video games, comics, literature and legend.
- (2) That this House recognises International Cephalopod Awareness Week and encourages everyone to learn more about these fascinating and highly intelligent creatures.

Motion agreed to.

Committees

DELEGATED LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Reports

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I table report No. 13 of the Delegated Legislation Committee entitled *Delegated Legislation Monitor No. 13 of 2025*, dated 21 October 2025.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Reports

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: I table a report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled *Legislation Review Digest No. 37/58*, dated 21 October 2025.

SELECTION OF BILLS COMMITTEE

Reports

The Hon. BOB NANVA: I table report No. 40 of the Selection of Bills Committee, dated 21 October 2025. According to standing order, I move:

That the following bills not be referred to a standing committee for inquiry and report, this day:

- (a) 24-Hour Economy Legislation Amendment (Vibrancy Reforms) Bill 2025;
- (b) Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment (Standard of Proof) Bill 2025;
- (c) Crimes Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences) Bill 2025;
- (d) Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2025;
- (e) Gaming Machines Amendment (Mandatory Shutdown Period) Bill 2025;
- (f) Local Government and Other Legislation Amendment (Councillor Conduct) Bill 2025;
- (g) Retail Leases Amendment (Review) Bill 2025;
- (h) Road Transport and Other Legislation Amendment (Micromobility Vehicles and Smartcards) Bill 2025;
- (i) Roads Legislation Amendment (NSW Motorways) Bill 2025; and
- (j) Voluntary Assisted Dying Amendment (Residential Facilities) Bill 2025

Motion agreed to.

*Documents***INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS OFFICER****Reports**

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: According to the resolution of continuing effect regarding the Independent Complaints Officer, I table the report of the Independent Complaints Officer of the New South Wales Parliament to the Legislative Council Privileges Committee and Legislative Assembly Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics Committee, for the period 1 July 2025 to 30 September 2025.

TABLING OF PAPERS

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

- (1) State Owned Corporations Act 1989—Ministerial direction from the Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales, under section 20N of the State Owned Corporations Act 1989, concerning Great Koala National Park koala hubs, dated 21 October 2025.
- (2) Forestry Act 2012—Notification under section 15 of the Forestry Act 2012 of proposed revocation of a dedication of part of Pilliga East State Forest No. 266, Cumbil State Forest No. 812, Euligal State Forest No. 810, Baradine State Forest No. 672 and Extension Nos 3, 4 and 10, and Merriwindi State Forest No. 839 and Extension Nos 1, 4, and 5.

AUDITOR-GENERAL**Reports**

The CLERK: According to the Government Sector Audit Act 1983, I announce receipt of the Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled *Rail rolling stock procurement*, dated 21 October 2025, received out of session and published this day.

*Committees***STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES****Reports**

The CLERK: According to standing order, I announce receipt of report No. 66 of the Standing Committee on Social Issues entitled *Impacts of harmful pornography on mental, emotional, and physical health*, dated October 2025, together with transcripts of evidence, tabled documents, submissions, correspondence, responses and summary report to the online questionnaire, and questions and answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions, received out of session and published on 17 October 2025.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (12:41): I move:

That the House take note of the report.

Debate adjourned.

*Documents***TRANSPORT ASSETS AND WORKFORCE****Variation of Order**

The PRESIDENT: According to Standing Order 53, I table a request received on Friday 17 October 2025 from The Cabinet Office to vary the scope of an 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. 5 until the next sitting day.

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

*Questions Without Notice***POLITICAL LOBBYING**

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (13:30): My question is directed to the Special Minister of State. In his most recent response to a series of correspondence from the Independent Commission Against Corruption—

sent to the Premier and him on 30 October 2023, 21 January 2025, 29 May 2025 and 7 July 2025—urging an overhaul of lobbying rules, the Minister stated that reforming the lobbying framework in New South Wales is a high priority and the Government is aiming to implement reforms as soon as possible. Will the Minister introduce legislation to give effect to the ICAC's recommendations before the end of the year? If not, why not?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (13:31): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. It certainly has been the subject of correspondence between the ICAC and the Government, and there was a regular backwards and forwards in relation to that correspondence. I do not object to the Leader of the Opposition's characterisation of the Government's position in that correspondence. We have acted in the area with integrity, and we intend to act in the further regulation of lobbying reforms.

The Premier and I answered questions about it yesterday. The Premier updated the other place this morning, indicating that it would be a priority for the Government, sooner rather than later—towards the end of this year or early 2026. We should be doing things in this area. I made it clear yesterday that the Premier has already done things. For example, when it comes to the disclosure of meetings of Ministers—which those on the other side never disclosed—for party fundraisers, those items not disclosed—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Point of order: This is a regular habit of this Minister. This is not an answer to the question that I asked, which did not relate to what we did. It is regarding the introduction of legislation to address the issues that the ICAC has written to the Minister about on four occasions.

The PRESIDENT: The Minister was being directly relevant for most of his answer. He was starting to stray from the leave of the question. The Minister has the call if he has anything further to add.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I was merely making the point that this is something this Government—but more importantly this Premier—has asked us to do as Ministers. It is a standard that is being applied, and anyone in the public can look at those diary disclosures. That is a good thing. That lobbyist register was implemented in 2010. I remember its implementation well. It is a step forward in New South Wales, but it has to be applied appropriately. The Premier and the Premier's office have directed something like that as an increased standard. We could still make improvements, some of which have been drawn to the attention of the Government by the ICAC. We will respond fully to those. We will make the Government's position clear, but we also need to get this right.

The other matter that the ICAC has taken some interest in, which the Government has acted on, is the members of Parliament disclosures. We will bring that through after multiple consultations with the privileges committees of both Houses. Those disclosures are important, including the disclosures of trusts for members of Parliament. Those are matters that the Government has before the Privileges Committee. We intend to act on those sooner rather than later. This is an active agenda for the Government, but there is a lot to do here. We have taken multiple steps to improve integrity in the Parliament. There will be further reforms in this area.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (13:35): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for his answer. Given his reference to improving the legislation in relation to diary disclosures, trusts and the like, will the legislation address the situation where a registered lobbyist holds a meeting with the Premier or other Ministers and the meetings are not disclosed or are disclosed as catch-ups or similar terms that do not take into account the person's status and interests as a registered lobbyist?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (13:35): The Government will act in this area. I have been very clear about that. In assessing that, we look at any of the suggestions that have been made in public, including by the members opposite. They are welcome to make any of those suggestions and they will be taken seriously by the Government. We will look seriously at recommendations from the State's integrity agencies as well. But we will also look carefully at the actions of lobbyists in the time of the former Government.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Wes Fang will cease interjecting.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: That is one of the reasons why these reforms have moved slowly. I developed real concerns in the last term of Parliament about the actions of lobbyists involved in the political party activities of the Liberal Party. I will be frank with the House about that. When we act in this area, we will act in a way that not only acts on the ICAC's recommendations but also regulates an area that started to become exposed in the last term of Parliament. The reason we will do that is to make sure that those activities do not happen again to any political party down the track. The worry is that businesses and lobbyists sometimes do target the parties of government. Those cultures develop over time. But I have real concerns about some of what was going on in the previous term. I assure the Leader of the Opposition that we will act in a way that deals with some

of those concerns. That is one of the key reasons why the Government is moving through these issues carefully. We have been greatly assisted by the ICAC and its suggestions, but there is more work to do.

NORTHERN BEACHES HOSPITAL

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (13:37): My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on negotiations to transition the Northern Beaches Hospital into public hands?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (13:37): I thank the member for his question, but also for his leadership on this matter. All of us who were in the Parliament before last will know that the Hon. Greg Donnelly led an inquiry into the proposed privatisation of five hospitals, one of which included the Northern Beaches Hospital. If any member in this House is entitled to say "I told you so" on this one, it is the Hon. Greg Donnelly. I inform the House that we have reached an in-principle agreement with the receivers of Healthscope to return the Northern Beaches Hospital to public ownership—the full 400-plus beds that are coming in. This is a milestone in bringing to an end a sorry saga of privatisation which history should remember as one of the worst public policy disasters in New South Wales history. Private equity should never have been allowed to run public emergency.

We have had a very complex negotiation. The outcome of that negotiation is that we will pay \$190 million. In essence, this will return the money that Healthscope put in to build the physical buildings, and particularly the private wing. This includes their transfer costs. Importantly, we are not offering one cent for future profits or past profits. Had we had to follow the contract signed up to by the Liberal Party, we would have been on the hook for up to a billion dollars. That is the outcome we were signed up to when those opposite launched an ideological experiment in public health.

The Hon. Susan Carter: So you broke the contract. That creates sovereign risk, doesn't it?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I hear the member talking about sovereign risk. This is a negotiated outcome; there is no sovereign risk. But it is a big step forward for public health. If those opposite are of the view that we should not have made this agreement, they should say so. If those opposite think this is a bad deal, they should say so. Tell that to the Massa family. Tell that to all the families on the northern beaches who simply want the same access to health services as every other community in this State.

That is what we have done. We have provided the people of the northern beaches with the same access, the same care and the same standards that everybody should be entitled to: the right to go to an acute emergency department that is run for the public, by the public. That is what we have achieved. What we have not heard from those opposite today is anything that resembles an apology. We would love to hear them say, "We got this wrong and we are not going to do it again." That is what we think we should be hearing from those opposite. But for those who have been campaigning for a very long time against this privatisation, we hope today's agreement provides a measure of justice. It is an important milestone in making sure that public health is run by the public.

SCHOOLS AND CHILD PROTECTION

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (13:41): My question without notice is directed to the Acting Minister for Education and Early Learning. On what date did the Department of Education first become aware that convicted child sex offender Joshua Kenneth Mangan had been working as a labourer at 30 schools? On what date was the Minister first briefed, and what steps has the Minister taken to address this matter of grave concern with parents and the community?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (13:41): I thank the member for an important question on a really concerning issue that has been well covered in the media, and it is appropriate that I answer questions about it in this place as well. In relation to when the department first became aware, I would have to take that part of the question on notice. In relation to when I was first briefed, that was on Friday. In relation to the issue overall, I would say that the Government takes the safety of our children incredibly seriously. We have ordered a review of the current process that is in place in relation to Working with Children Checks, and that includes the way that they operate in our school gates.

This system was set up under the previous Government. Exactly the same system remains in place. It makes a distinction between those who work directly with children and those whose work may not involve unsupervised interaction with children. Teachers and support staff in schools are required to have a Working with Children Check, as they should be. If a contractor is working in a school that is being constructed and that does not have children in it, they are not required to have a Working with Children Check. It has long been the practice that in construction contracts, including maintenance contracts, slightly different arrangements are in place. As I said, those arrangements were put in place by the former Government. Those arrangements mean that, at the moment,

maintenance contracts are required to have in place a national criminal check or a statutory declaration to that effect.

In this particular case, that had not occurred. That contractor has been suspended, as is appropriate. School Infrastructure is meeting today with all maintenance contractors to ensure that the provisions of their contracts are being followed, to ensure the safety of children. As I said, a review is being conducted. We will look at that review closely, consider any recommendations that are made and make sure that they make common sense. It is true that those contractors may have incidental interactions with children. I also make this point: This person was a convicted child sex offender. There are no allegations in place in relation to that contractor's activities. I assure the community that the Government is taking this issue seriously and will take further action, if that is required.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (13:44): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for her answer. Would the Minister please elaborate on the part of her answer where she said that the Government has ordered a review into what happened in this circumstance? Will the Minister advise who is conducting the review and when it will be finalised?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (13:44): I do not have those details in front of me at the moment—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members will not interject. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: As I was saying, I do not have those details in front of me at the moment, but I will endeavour to get them back to the House before the end of question time.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND DATA CENTRES

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (13:45): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Climate Change. Data centres in Sydney currently consume 2.6 terawatt hours of electricity per annum, which is around 4 per cent of New South Wales's grid-supplied electricity. That is expected to nearly triple to 11 per cent by 2030 and reach 18 per cent by 2050, which is as much as an extra two Tomago aluminium smelters worth of energy demand on the network. Data centres are enormously energy intensive, consume massive amounts of water and have increasingly expanding footprints, consuming and displacing available land. Increasingly, hyperscale data centres such as the ones proposed to be built around Sydney will be directly transmission connected, avoiding cost recovery contributions under the road map. What is the Minister doing to ensure that data centre proposals and their resource demands do not jeopardise the renewable energy road map, delay new housing developments or drive up consumer power bills while benefiting from favourable Government policy settings?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (13:46): It is a very good question, because there are real challenges here, and the Government is looking at all of them. As the member knows, replacing our ageing energy grid and the energy generation that we get currently from coal-fired power stations is the central tenet and requirement of the energy road map. Data centres are also essential infrastructure for the digital economy, but they come with significant energy and water challenges. They use a large amount of energy and electricity, as the member has indicated, and sometimes—although there are differing designs—they have issues around water.

The member might be interested to know that, as of June 2025, there are an estimated 195 data centres in Australia, 92 of which are in New South Wales. Most of those data centres are in metropolitan Sydney. As of July this year there are 14 data centres going through the planning process, and a further nine are preparing environmental impact statements. Most current projects will not require an environment protection licence from the Environment Protection Authority. But I think the point of the question the member asked is this: How does the Government think that is going in relation to its road map? How do we want to attract the investment that also comes with data centres? That is something we are actively working on.

There are a lot of conversations across government. The member could ask the Treasurer about this as well, because he is right into it. We are really trying to come to grips with the question that the member is asking about how we can do both: how we can make sure that we have the amount of renewable energy that we need, how we can make sure that we are at the forefront in relation to data centre development, and how we can balance the needs of that in terms of water and energy use. I do not have a magic answer for the member today, except to say that it is something the Government is actively considering. It factors into all of the projections and modelling that we are doing in relation to the road map.

A lot of work is occurring with data centres and data centre proponents who are looking to invest in their own renewable energy generation that can be used for data centres and can also be put into the grid more generally. I think that model is increasingly going to be used because of the issues the member has raised. Data centres are

a massive opportunity for New South Wales. They do not come without challenges. In the energy space, nothing comes for free. We have to work through all of those issues, but we are doing that. When we are not disturbed by those opposite who are questioning net zero, we are actually doing pretty well. New South Wales had a really great plan in the energy road map. We are not only looking at data centres but also dealing with increased demand generally. It is not just driven by data centres. All of that factors into our modelling which we adjust on the way through.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (13:49): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for her answer. There was a lot to cover in that question, and she has done well to answer it. I ask the Minister to elucidate on one part of her answer. Given that the centres will be directly transmission connected, is the Minister contemplating doing anything to ensure that they contribute to cost recovery contributions under the road map?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (13:49): It is a good question. I will take the question on notice because it is very specific. How this fits with the road map is separate to our broader planning across the network. I will take the question on notice and come back to the member with an answer.

BUS MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

The Hon. BOB NANVA (13:50): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Transport. How will the proposed bus manufacturing facility in Nowra support local jobs, strengthen regional manufacturing and contribute to New South Wales transitioning to a cleaner bus fleet?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (13:50): I thank the member for his interest in local bus manufacturing. The good news is that right now in Nowra, workers are installing seats, wiring CCTV and Opal card readers. There are 15 full-time employees and two part-time employees, with more on the way.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: They are partnering with local South Coast businesses: John K Engineering, L Sandstrom Installations and Nowra Signs. These are real businesses employing real people and doing real work. This small, temporary facility is just the start.

The PRESIDENT: The Leader of the Opposition knows my view about interjecting.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The company running the facility is Foton Mobility Distribution, which has big plans to build a much bigger, permanent facility that will employ more than 100 people. That is 100 local jobs—secure, skilled, regional jobs. There is just one problem. Shoalhaven City Council has still not approved the development application [DA]. Foton Mobility Distribution lodged the application on 11 November last year and said the council told it in August that the biodiversity team was looking at the impact of the 6,000-square-metre site which sits in an industrial zone. That was in August. We are now pushing closer to the 12-month mark, and there is still no clarity from the local council on whether it will approve this facility. It would be helpful if the leadership team at the council had some experience in transport. As it turns out, the CEO has quite a lot of experience in transport. Members might know him. His name is Andrew Constance.

Our message to the newly minted CEO of Shoalhaven City Council is that the Foton Mobility Distribution DA should be number one on his to-do list, and local jobs should be number one on his agenda. The DA has been with council for over 11 months—it is about to have its first birthday. That means 100 jobs for local contractors are in limbo. We hope that the CEO's stance on local jobs has changed since his impressive reincarnation. As the former Minister for Transport and Roads, Andrew Constance sent thousands of manufacturing jobs overseas. The former Government bought ferries from China and Indonesia, buses from Malaysia, trains from South Korea and China, metro carriages from India, and light rail vehicles from France and Spain.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I will not be critical of how Andrew Constance got the job, but I will be critical if he does not do the job. The number one task on his desk should be to get this DA through and get these jobs moving. That is what the locals want, and that is what we are calling for.

WOMEN'S SPORT

Dr AMANDA COHN (13:53): My question is directed to the Treasurer, representing the Minister for Sport. The Level the Playing Field program aimed to improve equitable access to sport for women and girls through building or upgrading sporting facilities, including by improving change rooms and lighting. This funding has now ceased despite only 30 of 212 applicants being funded in the last round. Considering the huge, unmet demand from clubs and sporting organisations, will the Government fund additional rounds of the Level the

Playing Field program or provide any other support for sporting infrastructure upgrades that support gender equity?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (13:54): I thank the member for her question. This Government recognises that investment in local sporting infrastructure is about much more than facilities; it is about participation, inclusion and fairness. We want every community, regardless of postcode, gender or background, to have access to the spaces and opportunities that make sport a part of everyday life. That is why we delivered the \$30 million Level the Playing Field program alongside the \$10 million Football Legacy Fund. Both initiatives were designed to meet the surging demand for community sport facilities, especially after the Matildas inspired a new generation of young girls to take up the game.

Level the Playing Field is about fixing longstanding inequities in community sport. Dr Amanda Cohn has rightly said, in this place and elsewhere, that women and girls have had to train and compete in facilities that were not built for them for too long. The program is funding new and upgraded amenities, including lighting, change rooms and playing surfaces, so that women and girls can play sport safely, comfortably and with dignity. It is helping local councils and community clubs across the State modernise facilities and create spaces that are genuinely inclusive. I note that there is more to do.

The member asked about other programs. I am advised that another one of our programs is the Organisational Support Program [OSP], which is an election commitment made by this Government. Funding for the program has increased from \$2.4 million in 2022-23 to up to \$10 million in 2024-25. The OSP provides flexible, long-term support to peak sporting organisations, such as Football NSW, to build capacity, strengthen governance, grow participation and deliver programs for under-represented groups.

The most recent OSP reporting for 2024-25 shows strong progress. Sixty-five per cent of State Sporting Organisations and State Sporting Organisations for People with Disability now have over 40 per cent female board members, which is up from 58 per cent last year. A further 25 per cent of organisations are within reach of that target. The member asked whether the Government is considering any further funding rounds for Level the Playing Field. I will take that part of the question on notice and refer it to the Minister, but my understanding is that the program is still being rolled out for the applications we have received.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Wouldn't you want more girls playing sport?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I am sure that the shadow Treasurer can ask a question of me if he cares about this matter. I am sure the member who has asked the question would like to know that we are in the process of rolling that program out. I will come back to the member with more details on if we are going to open the program up for another round and, if so, when.

The PRESIDENT: Is the Leader of the Opposition seeking the call?

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: No.

RAIL, TRAM AND BUS UNION INDUSTRIAL ACTION

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (13:56): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. The Rail, Tram and Bus Union is now actively sticking union material to metro trains and stations. Who is responsible for the cost of removing these stickers at the end of the campaign, and what will that cost be? Does the notified, protected industrial action allowing union members to provide information about their campaign in any form and by any method to members of the public include the right to use a public address system at stations and on trains?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (13:57): Here we go again. The Opposition is desperately hoping that this runs off the rails. We are working through these issues and are at the very start of our discussions, and the rail unions are putting their case to Metro Trains Sydney. It is a discussion and negotiation with the metro operator. The mild actions which have been notified so far—which happened many times under members opposite—are rolling out. The Opposition is once again asking questions and hoping this goes badly. That is the status of the matter as we are in Parliament today. I expect those members will provide information to the public, which is not unusual. It is a part of industrial discussion. Stickers have previously been used in notified action under members opposite. I do not see that as motivation for an Opposition scare campaign.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: Point of order: I take two points of order. Should the Minister wish to cast reflections on the Opposition, he should do so by way of substantive motion. More importantly, my second point of order relates to relevance. The question was specifically in relation to the cost to be borne of removing the stickers and the public address systems at stations and on trains. I have listened carefully. Mr President, I ask that you draw the Minister back to those important questions. They were very specific, and did not relate to what the previous Government did or what the motivations of the Opposition are.

The PRESIDENT: In relation to the first point of order, a substantive motion must be moved in relation to individual members, not in relation to the Opposition in its entirety. Therefore, I do not uphold that point of order. As to the second point of order, the member knows very well that I cannot instruct the Minister to answer in any particular way, only that he be directly relevant, which he was, with the exception of the last three words. The member could have taken a point of order on relevance in relation to that issue. The Minister will not stray into Opposition territory, but he has been directly relevant on all the other issues. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Mr President, I thank you for that ruling. I make it clear that I am not contesting the question of the Opposition. The Hon. Natalie Ward is entitled to ask that question. However, given the nitpicking on minor industrial matters, I think the Opposition should get a grip on the context. Of all the issues that are rolling in New South Wales at the moment, this would not be at the top of my list. It is not at the top of the public list. The Opposition is entitled to ask about anything, but that would not have been at the top of my list of public affairs to ask about in this Chamber. However, to answer the detail, I simply say that we have made no change to the arrangements that existed when stickers were put up and actions were taken under the previous Government, including any arrangements as to who bore the costs of them under any previous dispute.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (14:01): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for his answer. I ask him to provide a bit more information on the usual arrangements. Given that the Rail, Tram and Bus Union has written to Metro Trains Sydney to specify that it is able to provide, in any form and by any method, information concerning the views of employees about any aspect of the bargaining campaign to any members of the public, including the media, will that include the public address systems at stations and on trains?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (14:01): The union is entitled to nominate particular forms of industrial action within the industrial relations framework. The Government will not challenge that if it is legal and if they are entitled to nominate those forms. Those are the same arrangements that were in place under the former Government. Nothing has changed there. The public has had to bear some significant costs over time, including when the rail system stopped altogether under the former Government, with almost no notice. That Government woke up to discover that the rail system had stopped. The public has also borne significant disruption under this Government, which we on this side have taken responsibility for. But we were trying to fix it. I recall that, at that time, the Opposition was cheering it on, hoping it would get worse. The Opposition should take into account the public and their interests; that is what the Government will be doing.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND STATE ECONOMY

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (14:02): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Climate Change, and Minister for Energy. Will the Minister update the House on the cost to the New South Wales economy of not taking action on climate change?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:03): I thank the member for his question. I was reminded of the issue last week when former Vice-President Al Gore was in town.

[Opposition members interjected.]

Is that a bit triggering for members opposite? Sorry. Calm down, everyone. He has done decades of work in having the hard conversations about the inconvenient truth of climate change, but he has also built the consensus that we rely on for climate action. I thought most of those opposite agreed with that, but apparently not. It is good to know where they really stand on this issue. Former Vice-President Gore was in fine form at the twentieth anniversary conference of the Investor Group on Climate Change. Members opposite should have come along. They might have learnt something; it would have been good for them. The point is that if they think doing nothing on climate change is a no-cost option, they are selling the people of New South Wales and our economy down the river.

The science is clear. The impacts are being felt, and it is costing our economy. One stark and obvious example in New South Wales is the cost of disasters and recovery. In the past six years, disaster relief and recovery across this State has cost \$9.5 billion, a more than 1,000 per cent increase compared with the previous six years. That is money we would rather spend on schools, hospitals and communities or on decarbonisation and building resilience. Instead we are spending it supporting communities and cleaning up after floods, fires and storms. Every dollar spent reacting to a disaster is a dollar not spent preventing it. The costs are only growing. NSW Treasury modelling shows that climate-related costs could reach up to \$17.2 billion per year by 2060. Those costs are not just financial; they represent lost opportunities, disrupted communities and lives changed forever. The public knows that. They feel it, and they are increasingly experiencing it. Most people accept that climate change action

is needed. They do not always want to talk about it every day, but they do expect the Government to get on with the job, take decisive action and get it done.

That is why this Government has set up the architecture for certainty and accountability through legislated targets and the Net Zero Commission. It is why we are delivering our energy plan—the road map—to deliver reliable, cheaper and cleaner energy for New South Wales. It is why the Environment Protection Authority has proposed climate change requirements for existing licensees with high emissions that will capture about 45 per cent of the State's emissions. It is why the Government is updating the Net Zero Plan to guide all sectors of the economy to net zero. Climate change is not a burden; it is an economic opportunity. It is also a necessity. It is our chance to build a better future. We must bring people with us. We have to show that climate action is not just possible but also beneficial, and we must keep going even when it is hard. It is not climate action versus the economy; it is climate action for the economy. Our future depends on it.

WATER SHARING PLANS

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (14:06): My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. In a webinar held on 15 September by the Water Group of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water on proposed revised access rules for four of the seven water sharing plans that lapsed in July, it was stated there would be no changes to the draft Barwon-Darling water sharing plan. Given that the Minister did not give concurrence for the making of the now lapsed plans, is it the Minister's position that the plans meet the principles of the Water Management Act and protect the water source and its dependent ecosystems?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:06): I thank the member for her question. The short answer is no, it is not my view. She is asking me for an opinion. Secondly, the Government is working through the process in relation to water sharing plans, which is appropriate. We are hoping to finalise the replacement plans as soon as possible. I cannot speak to what happened at that webinar, but the issues are currently the subject of consultation. The Minister for Water and I have met with environment groups, farmers and a range of different organisations. The remaking of the plans is important. As we know, they will last for 10 years, and it is important that we get them right. To the member's question, I understand what she is asking. I am not in a position to tell her what I will or will not do. I have to wait for the information to be before me. I will continue to work closely with the Minister for Water and listen to both farmers and environment groups in relation to the water sharing plans. They are for 10 years, and we want to get them right.

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (14:08): My question is directed to the Special Minister of State. On 29 May 2024, the Minister approved a grant promised by Sophie Cotsis, as the Labor candidate for Canterbury, of \$25,000 to the Arrahman Benevolent Society Ltd. According to the brief the Minister signed, the grant was for capital works at the Arrahman mosque expected to result in an increased number of worshippers attending the mosque. In September 2024 the Arrahman mosque hosted a three-day commemoration of Hezbollah commander Hassan Nasrallah, continuing its strong links with Hezbollah. Why did the Minister approve that grant?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (14:08): First, I make clear that the Government's top priority is social cohesion. The Government and especially the Premier have been very clear and have led the way on this, given the couple of years we have been through. We have debated that many times in many ways, and I thank my colleagues for the stance they have taken. There are serious challenges involved in running this beautiful multicultural society and keeping people together, given the stresses on the other side of the world.

The Premier in particular has stood up and spoken out for those values, which is crucial in a city like Sydney and in a State like New South Wales. I place that on record. In relation to the question, the member can see for himself why the grant was approved: The paperwork has been released. I approved it on the basis of the recommendation made to me. I am happy to answer about any other details. I have been requested to appear at a committee of the House where the member will be entitled to ask me for more details if he wants.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (14:10): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer in reference to the brief he mentioned relating to this grant, noting that the Arrahman Benevolent Society Limited is a company limited by shares and such companies are clearly stated to be ineligible for Local Small Commitments Allocation grants in the guidelines he established on 31 July 2023, by explaining whether he explicitly authorised an exemption for this rule? If so, why?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (14:10): The paperwork is available and public. The

member can check for himself, as he has done when he looked at the list. There are 600 grants. I do not instantly recall the details of each of them, but I would happily take that on notice and return to the House with an answer in due course. However, the member may find it quicker to ask this question in the next couple of days when I appear before the committee, and I will happily take him through the details then.

CRITICAL MINERALS MINING

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (14:11): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Natural Resources. Will the Minister update the House on how the mining sector is supporting jobs and economic development in New South Wales and any new opportunities that she is aware of?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (14:11): I thank the Hon. Emily Suvaal for a really important question and acknowledge the advocacy with the mining sector and her ongoing engagement with it. This morning the Premier and I had the pleasure of addressing the International Mining and Resources Conference [IMARC] to speak about the great opportunities in critical minerals that we want to realise for jobs and economic development in New South Wales. This came just a few hours after the momentous meeting between the Prime Minister and President Trump and the announcement of a historic A\$13 billion investment and a financial agreement in critical minerals and rare earth elements.

The outcome underscores the priority status of critical minerals on the global stage. The message is clear: Identify key projects quickly, facilitate their development and build secure and reliable supply chains as much as we can in Australia. Together, these initiatives underscore the priority that Labor governments in New South Wales and federally are placing on the exploration, production and processing of critical minerals. This is the third IMARC conference I have had the opportunity to attend as Minister and to welcome almost 11,000 delegates from all around the world who are here expressing their interest in our critical minerals industry and looking for opportunities to invest. Already this week, as part of the New South Wales Government's Critical Minerals Investment Showcase, I have had the opportunity to showcase some of the key opportunities, which include the Australian Strategic Materials' rare earth elements project in Dubbo. Yesterday there was an exciting announcement that the project has full planning approval.

We know that decisions are made at a global level. The competition is fierce. These are important jobs, opportunities and investments for our State. This morning the Premier said that we often talk about being the lucky country, and we are pretty lucky in New South Wales. We have 21 out of the 31 nationally identified critical minerals and four out of the five strategic minerals. The Government wants more of that mining done in New South Wales where we have a robust regulatory system. There are opportunities elsewhere around the globe, but as the Premier, large sections of the New South Wales public service and I have been saying to investors, we want that investment here in New South Wales. We want those jobs here, particularly in regional New South Wales, where we are blessed with these nationally significant critical minerals. There is a global focus on it, but we are ready to work with our Federal counterparts to make sure that more of that money comes to New South Wales and those jobs and investments are realised.

KOALA PROTECTION

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (14:14): My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. Will the Minister update the House as to whether the five koalas out of the 13 koalas that have not been reported as being dead as part of the so-called South East Forest koala translocation project are, in fact, still alive?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:15): Yes. The most recent advice I have, which I will confirm because I do not wish to mislead Parliament, is that they are still alive. As Ms Sue Higginson is aware, there was a translocation project that moved 13 koalas down to the South East Forest. Unfortunately, eight of those koalas died in a range of different circumstances that are subsequently under review. I wish to say a couple of things about that. Firstly, obviously it is terrible for us to lose any koalas. Secondly, it is also devastating for those who were involved in the careful work of translocation.

Members have made a range of allegations around cruelty and the way in which the project operates. I place on record the very careful and diligent work that the National Parks and Wildlife Service staff and others do, particularly endangered species work and translocation work. The idea about translocations is that they have been successful in other places. Recently, I pointed to Yiraaldiya, which is in Western Sydney and where we translocated koalas. Victoria, South Australia and Queensland also do translocations. A lot of allegations have been made about whether people took advice or not. It is true to say there were differing views from different scientists on this issue.

But science is hard and is not always consensus based. Sometimes there are differing views. One of the things I really want members to understand is that all of those involved in that translocation are devastated by the loss of eight koalas and that there is a root-and-branch review being undertaken genuinely on how we work through all the decision-making involved. Other translocations are not occurring while the review is underway, which is absolutely appropriate. I place on record that any suggestion that there was animal abuse is wrong. Any suggestion that the staff, volunteers and others involved in that translocation somehow wanted to harm those koalas or were ignoring advice is not the case. They carefully worked through decision-making and that will inform the future of translocations in this State.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (14:18): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister confirm and elucidate that part of her answer that those koalas are still alive? Does that mean, to the Minister's knowledge, that saying that the koalas would be monitored under the program for four weeks only was not correct and that the koalas have been subject to continuous monitoring, or is it the Minister's understanding that they were alive at the four-week point?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:18): That is a good question. As I said, I do not want to mislead the Parliament. Let me take the question on notice and I will provide an answer—maybe before the end of question time but, if not, as soon as I can.

FERAL ANIMAL AERIAL SHOOTING

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (14:18): My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. Noting that the Minister's response to my supplementary question for written answer indicated five domestic horses at Thurloo Downs were the only horses removed—meaning shot—that day, does the Minister still maintain that the horses had joined a mob of wild horses and were with them when they were culled?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:19): No, of course I do not. I have been very—

The Hon. Wes Fang: So you misled us?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Do you want the answer or not?

The Hon. Wes Fang: You did. You misled us.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I want to be clear here: I have been very up-front about the issue. I have also made it clear to the House that what I knew at the time was preliminary information, which I have subsequently and accurately reported to this House. Any suggestion that I have misled the House is absolutely incorrect. If the Hon. Wes Fang actually read something occasionally, he might realise that I take the information that I provide to the House. The other thing I could do is take it on notice then not try to provide an answer. Ministers cannot win either way with those opposite. We try to answer the question. We try to be very up-front about the information that we have at the time and indicate that it may or may not be correct. We do that all the time. If those opposite do not like that, that is fine. I am happy to take questions on notice, let those opposite wait, and not try to answer the question. Unfortunately, I cannot help myself. I like to try to answer the question, because I think Ministers need to front up when things have gone wrong. In this case, things have gone terribly wrong.

What I can say is that invasive species control measures were being undertaken at Thurloo Downs Station, a large property of around 470,000 hectares that is going to become a national park. An incident occurred during that time where the workers who had been there for a couple of days shot five domestic horses that were owned by the next-door neighbours. The National Parks and Wildlife Service has been in constant contact with the owners. I can inform the House that it is talking about compensating the family for what occurred. There is nothing good about it—it is a terrible outcome—but it is wrong to suggest that the Government has tried to hide it. It is wrong to suggest that the National Parks and Wildlife Service and I as the Minister are not unhappy—furious, in fact—about what has happened. We need to work through that. I stand here and own up to it. I expect the National Parks and Wildlife Service to do the work. My advice is that it has been in constant contact with the family and is looking at how it can compensate them. There is a proper review underway. It is an unfortunate incident. It is being addressed as best it can be, given the terrible outcome.

MENTAL HEALTH PEER WORKFORCE

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (14:21): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Mental Health. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government is committed to growing, supporting and developing the peer workforce in the mental health sector?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (14:22): I will. I am a huge fan of the peer workforce in our mental health system. For those who are unfamiliar with what peer workers do and who they are, peer workers are individuals with a lived experience of a mental health challenge, either personally or as a carer. They take that lived experience, obtain important qualifications and then act as carers of others as qualified participants in the mental health sector. There has been a huge growth in the peer workforce in recent years. It has gone from around 70 in 2017 to over 200—241 to be exact—peer workers. That is an over 200 per cent increase in recent years. It is an important and growing part of the workforce. Every mental health consumer and family member that I talk to mentions how important peer workers are on their journey of recovery, because peer workers are able to take their own lived experiences and provide service navigation skills, recovery frameworks and, importantly, a message of hope to people who are in the midst of their own mental health crisis.

Last Thursday, on Global Peer Support Celebration Day, to formalise and support our peer workers the Government launched the New South Wales peer workforce framework in a document entitled *Elevating Lived Experience Expertise: A Framework for the NSW Health Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Peer (Lived Experience) Workforce*. It has been a long time in the making. I thank the advocates and peer workers who have worked with NSW Health for many years when having a peer workforce was not a priority, much less elevated and celebrated. Since I became the Minister, the Government has leant in to finalise this work. It was great to be with so many of those peer workers to celebrate how important the milestone was.

Peer support workers are one element of our mental health system that are not talked about or celebrated enough. The framework provides a platform to professionalise that workforce going forward. The reality is that previously they were seen as a little bit of a nice-to-have and a little bit of a footnote to mental health clinical care. The Government is changing that by bringing them right into the heart of that care. The framework will provide an opportunity for every local health district and speciality network to integrate peer support into care in emergency departments, acute wards, safe havens—where they play a critical role—Medicare Mental Health local centres and community-based care. I want to talk up peer support workers as an important part of the system who are often overlooked. They are a humble and unassuming part of the workforce but they are the real unsung heroes in mental health.

KOALA PROTECTION

The Hon. EMMA HURST (14:25): My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. Last year the Minister attended the release of orphaned koala Gage back into wild. Earlier this month Gage was killed by a car on the very stretch of Appin Road where wildlife groups have urged the New South Wales Government to implement additional koala safety measures. More than 50 koalas have been killed on Appin Road this year alone. Gage was first rescued by WIRES in 2023 after his mother was hit by a car. Now he has met the same tragic fate, leaving the rescue community devastated and desperate for change. What is the Minister's response to Gage's death? What actions is she taking with the Minister for Roads to prevent further wildlife deaths on deadly Appin Road?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:25): I thank the member for the question. She is probably not surprised to know that my reaction is that I am very upset about it. I met and worked closely with the carers of that koala, who had been orphaned as a result of a vehicle strike of his mother.

The Hon. Wes Fang: What does Al Gore say?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What did you say?

The Hon. Wes Fang: I said, "What does Al Gore say?"

The PRESIDENT: Order! There will be no interjections, and there will be no responding to them. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The point is that there is a bunch of stuff that needs to go. This Government has put a lot of money into trying to protect the koalas around Appin Road. The fact is some ongoing fencing issues need to be sorted out. Lendlease and Stockland also need to come to an agreement about the koala underpass being built. This Government put serious money into protecting koalas there. I know the wildlife carers in that neck of the woods very well and I know how distraught they are about caring for koalas that have been hit on the road. Members should know that, while their numbers are not huge, the koala population in the area is significant because it is one of the few disease-free populations. That is partly why the Government established the Warranmadhaa National Park—to protect those koalas—but the work to build the hard infrastructure to protect them is ongoing.

The Government wants it to happen faster. I have raised it with the Minister for Roads and the Minister for Transport. The Government is taking it very seriously. There are three other projects to be completed, as members would know. Issues have been raised about koala fencing, particularly in relation to Gage, because it looks like he got through a gap in one of the gates. The underpasses also need to be built as quickly as possible. It is a real challenge. We are extremely lucky to have beautiful koalas living on the edge of our city in a place that people can see, know about and love, but there are real challenges with the interface between the park and the urban environment. It is something that the Government is trying to address. After the sad death of Gage, it needs to be done faster.

The Hon. EMMA HURST (14:28): I ask a supplementary question. When the Minister mentioned fixing the fences and the gates, she also mentioned the building of the wildlife underpasses. Does the Government have a deadline or a timeline to fix those or to ensure those underpasses are built to stop further koalas being killed? If the Minister does have any information about that, I ask her to provide it to the House.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:28): It is a good question, but I will have to ask my colleagues the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Roads, because that is within their portfolio. I will take that on notice and respond to the member as soon as I can.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (14:29): I ask a second supplementary question. Will the Minister elaborate on her concern about the death of the koalas that were run over and explain why successive governments have approved one big, long housing estate from Rosemeadow to Appin along the expanses of Appin Road, increasing traffic volume and increasing the danger to everyone, including koalas? The Minister mentioned earlier that sometimes koala science gets it wrong. Is it wrong to think that a housing estate is the right sort of environment for those koalas to flourish in?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:29): We need to do both. We need to be able to protect koalas and also build housing in this State. That is exactly what previous governments have done. There is a whole lot of work being undertaken to build that. It is fine if members do not want anything built there; they should just be honest and say so.

The Hon. Mark Latham: I have.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is fine. But, to be clear, this is an important part of the delivery of housing in New South Wales, which members have asked a lot of questions about. That is what we are doing. There is also a very detailed plan about how we look after and manage koalas in south-west Sydney. That includes existing national parks, the creation of new national parks and the infrastructure to protect them in an urban environment. We are and will continue to be committed to doing both.

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

WATER SHARING PLANS

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:30): I have received some further information in relation to my answer about water sharing plans. Ms Cate Faehrmann asked me a question about the Barwon-Darling water sharing plans. To add to the answer that I gave, I place on record that we are working through the water sharing plans in the unregulated areas. It is also important to note that new protections in those water sharing plans deal with approximately 90 per cent of the Barwon-Darling water, which comes from its tributaries and are separate from some of the things under investigation. They all have new protections as part of those plans.

SCHOOLS AND CHILD PROTECTION

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (14:31): In relation to the question directed to me by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I am advised that the department found out about concerns about the contractor on Monday 13 October. The review will be led by the department's probity team with input from the general counsel. I expect to be provided with initial advice by the end of this month.

Supplementary Questions for Written Answers

SCHOOLS AND CHILD PROTECTION

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (14:32): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Acting Minister for Education and Early Learning in relation to the public school safety review that she mentioned. Will the Minister advise whether the advice to her and the final report will be made public?

CLIMATE CHANGE AND STATE ECONOMY

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (14:32): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for Climate Change, and Minister for the Environment in regard to her answer breaking down what she said were the costs of climate change, although they were the costs of natural disaster repair over a six-year period and an additional five-year period. Will she provide the cost of each of the individual natural disaster expenses for the 11-year period so that they can be compared in their totality, both bushfires and floods?

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (14:33): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Special Minister of State. In relation to the \$25,000 Local Small Commitments Allocation grants to the Arrahman Benevolent Society Ltd, why did he approve the grant despite the explicit provision in the Local Small Commitments Allocation guidelines clearly excluding grants to companies limited by shares?

Questions Without Notice: Take Note

TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I move:

That the House take note of answers to questions.

POLITICAL LOBBYING

BUS MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (14:33): I take note of two answers given by the Special Minister of State: firstly, his response about his proposed legislation to address the overhaul of lobbying rules urged by the Independent Commission Against Corruption, and secondly his answer about the new facility at Nowra, where buses are being put together IKEA-style. First of all, there is absolutely no doubt that members of an elected government never come to power saying, "We are going to be a corrupt government." They come to government saying, "We are going to be transparent and marked with integrity". In fact, our Premier made it a hallmark of his election campaign that integrity would be a verb under his Government. So something happens to governments over time. As an example, the Labor Government elected in 1995 did not come to power thinking, "We are going to be corrupt," but two Ministers ended up in jail. It starts somewhere.

There is a point in time when the way that governments work makes people think, "This is the start down the road to corruption." Over the weekend we saw very troubling signs about the manner in which lobbyists have had access to the Premier about projects or clients, and carry out their lobbying activities. That is where it starts. There was an opportunity for the Special Minister for State to answer the question by saying, "I take the matter seriously and will bring legislation before members by the end of the year." I say to the Special Minister of State that the opportunity was there. The indicators are there for absolutely everyone to see. In the future, it will be this point in time that we will be able to indicate as the point when this Government started down that track and took no action. [*Time expired.*]

NORTHERN BEACHES HOSPITAL

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (14:36): I take note of answers given today by the Treasurer about the Northern Beaches Hospital. At the outset I join him in recognising the advocacy in this space by my colleague the Hon. Greg Donnelly, and also the advocacy of Elouise and Danny Massa. They went through what no parent should have to, and I thank them for their advocacy. When I first started working at the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association, my first site visit was to the old Mona Vale Hospital. I remember it well. At the time, it had been decided and announced that Mona Vale and Manly hospitals would shut and the new Northern Beaches Hospital would open under a public-private partnership. I remember meeting with a number of staff, attending mass meetings of staff from all disciplines, and the level of staff concern in those meetings.

Those meetings were off the back of plans snuck through by the previous Government to privatise a further five hospitals in Wyong, Shellharbour, Bowral, Goulbourn and Maitland. Let us never forget that the previous Government planned to privatise a further five hospitals in our regional areas, snuck through under the guise of upgrades. We should never forget the failed experiment of privatising Port Macquarie Base Hospital, which we eventually had to buy back. Members in this and the other place will look back on the announcement today and the failed experiment at Northern Beaches Hospital as another example of why this Government will never privatise our essential assets.

The Opposition's obsession with privatisation is most foolish. One after another, there were backflips on the previous Government's announcements about privatised hospitals, which can be credited to former health Minister Hazzard when he inherited the Health portfolio. Unfortunately, it was too late in the case of Northern

Beaches Hospital. It was too far progressed and we have seen the legacy of that impact. We have seen what that decision and the failed experiment of privatisation meant for that community. I also place on record my thanks to the Health Services Union for its advocacy in this space. It has been relentless in its campaign against the privatisation of those hospitals and in holding the private hospital operator to account in the previous everyday running of the site. This has been a great day, with a good and long-anticipated decision, and I commend the Treasurer for his work.

WATER SHARING PLANS

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (14:39): I take note of the response from the Hon. Penny Sharpe to my question. Last week the Government released its Darling Baaka River Health Project report, which was a devastating read. The Darling/Baaka River is under stress. Modelling indicates that 95 per cent of the study area is graded between moderate and very poor condition, indicating a significant degree of hydrological stress in the lower Darling/Baaka River system. The key drivers of those conditions are significant changes to the frequency and duration of zero-flow events caused by upstream water extraction and river regulation. That echoes a growing body of research that proves that extractions in the northern basin have grown and continue to grow, despite New South Wales' 30-year official policy to limit irrigation to the levels occurring in 1994.

The 2012 Barwon-Darling Water Sharing Plan lapsed on 1 July 2025. It is due to be replaced by a 2025 plan. It must be agreed by both the water and environment Ministers, who must take all reasonable steps to promote the water management principles of the Water Management Act. Scientific experts all agree that the 2012 water sharing plan inflicted damage on the health of the Barwon-Darling over its duration. The Natural Resources Commission was scathing of that plan, describing the river as an ecosystem in crisis. Critically, it found the plan was not consistent with the water management principles. It largely ignores recommendations of the Natural Resources Commission and the Connectivity Expert Panel, findings from a growing body of western research and the longstanding cries from Aboriginal communities about the demise of the river. The 2025 remake was an opportunity to fix all that. Instead, it is worse, and it allows even more extractions from the river.

How has that happened? I see two possible causes. The first is that the corporate irrigator cartel has persuaded the water and environment Ministers to ignore their legal requirements, the various independent reviews, the scientific evidence and the cultural requirements of First Nations people. That is, it has favoured the interests of a wealthy, greedy few over everyone and everything else. The second possible cause is that the Ministers have taken and followed the legal and scientific advice and that everything they have done is consistent with the terms of the Water Management Act. Yet, despite the reports and recommendations, and the delays, the 2025 water sharing plan has not addressed the fundamental flaws of the 2012 water sharing plan. The Barwon-Darling River, a great inland river that used to carry ships full of wool to port, is now dying because of water mismanagement and greed in New South Wales. That begs the question: Is the Water Management Act failing our rivers?

SCHOOLS AND CHILD PROTECTION

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (14:43): I take note of the answers given by the Acting Minister for Education and Early Learning about the shocking issue made public over the past couple of days of a convicted child sex offender working at up to 30 school sites as a labourer. In the Minister's response, she talked about how the protocols for those individuals have been in place for some time, and that is true. The issue is that when it becomes apparent that someone has found a loophole in that system, something has to be done about it. That is why I asked the Minister about that today. It was a genuine question and I am very interested in what the Government intends to do about it. As the Minister said, the company did not follow the rules in terms of what it should have disclosed. But that individual also found themselves working on a school site. I appreciate that the Minister said that the person may not have been on a school site when children were there and may not have been there alone, but it has exposed a flaw in the system that has to be fixed.

All of us would agree that child safety should be above politics. I am interested to know exactly what the Government intends to do about that issue. I appreciate that the Minister said that there would be a review. When I asked who would be conducting the review and when it would be done, I was a little alarmed that the Minister could not immediately answer that. I would have thought that that would have been the first question asked. It is all well and good to do a review. I am pleased that at the end of question time, the Minister was able to articulate that it would be done within the department and that the Government expects initial advice by the end of this month. The Opposition will continue to ask where that is up to. It cannot be a set-and-forget issue.

The Minister is correct that Working with Children Checks are not currently a requirement for labourers, but maybe they should be. It is not hard for people who are doing the right thing to get a Working with Children Check, particularly if they use the volunteer form rather than the paid employee form. I have one and probably nearly all members do. When I visit school sites, previously as a Minister and now as a parent, they want to know

if I have a Working with Children Check. People who work in the canteen or help with a reading group are near or around children, and it is the same for people doing labouring jobs and maintenance work. The Minister and the Government should look at that and seek advice from the Office of the Children's Guardian. The bottom line is that something has to be done. A loophole has been exposed; it needs to be fixed and there needs to be a sense of urgency about it from the Government. The Opposition will watch that issue closely.

NORTHERN BEACHES HOSPITAL

RAIL, TRAM AND BUS UNION INDUSTRIAL ACTION

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (14:45): I reflect on a couple of contrasting questions. The first is the question that was asked of the Treasurer about the transfer into public hands of the Northern Beaches Hospital, which we have heard about today and which goes to the Opposition's position on privatisation. The Opposition also asked questions about stickers and the use of public-address [PA] systems in industrial action. It just goes to show where members opposite are. I call out the Health Services Union for the great campaign it ran for the transfer of Northern Beaches Hospital from private to public hands, which the Treasurer outlined today. If members opposite were committed to their ideological position of privatisation, one would think they would ask questions about that transfer. In the take-note debate, for example, one would think they would engage Government members in a debate about privatisation if they still thought there was virtue in it.

This Government came to power on a core promise of stopping privatisation, and that is exactly what it has done. Can members imagine a more core function of a New South Wales Labor government—or any government—than providing emergency service departments to the public of New South Wales? Members opposite outsourced that function to the private sector. The transfer is a good deal for the public. For the cost of some \$190 million—as opposed to the \$800 million that the private operators were seeking as a payout—it is back in public hands, as it should be.

Government members have been very clear about the fact that we will take responsibility for providing emergency services. Those opposite still have not re-litigated whether they believe in it or not, but they sold \$90 billion of the State's public assets, which were owned by all taxpayers. They are doubling down on the privatisation agenda after all the disasters that it has caused. I do not know where they stand on it because they never talk about it. Instead of having a debate with us about policy, they ask the Minister for Transport about who will clean up stickers on platforms. Is it true that the Rail, Tram and Bus Union—heaven forbid!—will use a PA system to talk about industrial action? Those are the affairs of state that members opposite want to debate, instead of backing in a privatisation agenda that they may not believe in anymore.

WOMEN'S SPORT

Dr AMANDA COHN (14:49): I take note of the answer from the Treasurer, representing the Minister for Sport. I asked about the considerable unmet need for funding for infrastructure projects that support gender equity in sport. In particular, the Level the Playing Field Program, which ran from 2019 to 2023, aimed to improve equitable access to sport for women and girls through building or upgrading sporting facilities—for example, by improving changing rooms or lighting. My understanding is that there were 83 applications under that program that met the criteria and scored well on key merit criteria. Those eligible programs were all unfunded except for one—the Minister for Sport used his discretionary power to award funding for Hockey Coffs Coast.

There is a significant unmet need for funding. In his answer, the Minister talked about the Organisation Support Program, which is excellent. It is really important for promoting gender equity in sport, but it does not fund infrastructure programs. I confirmed that with the Office of Sport at the budget estimates hearings about a month ago. At the moment there is no program that supports infrastructure projects for gender equity, and the Office of Sport is on record confirming that. When I asked the Minister—and I appreciate that he has taken that part of my question on notice—about the plans for future funding in that space, it was clear that the Government's current plans do not provide enough funding for that sort of infrastructure program.

It is important to understand the quantum I am talking about. Only \$30 million was spent on the Level the Playing Field Program. As I said, more than 80 eligible applications scored well on the merit criteria but were left unfunded. The Government spent \$309 million on the redevelopment of Penrith Stadium. One stadium got 10 times the amount of the Level the Playing Field funding for the entire State. This is not a huge amount of money. It will not break the bank to fund those local projects, which are typically run by local sporting clubs and local councils. It is for basic upgrades to lighting and changing rooms that make a difference for women and girls to play sport. The Organisation Support Program is important. It does things like improving gender equity on boards, which should happen, but it does not fund infrastructure. I urge the Minister for Sport either to extend the Level the Playing Field Program or to roll out an alternate funding scheme so that those very important small local projects can go ahead to build infrastructure that supports women and girls to play sport.

RAIL, TRAM AND BUS UNION INDUSTRIAL ACTION

BUS MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (14:51): I take note of answers given today. I begin with the Rail, Tram and Bus Union [RTBU] active sticker campaign to graffiti the metro and train stations that belong to the travelling public. They do not belong to the RTBU or the Labor Party; they belong to the public. It is legitimate to ask that if that graffiti is put all over those stations, who on earth will pay to clean it up? Where are the grown-ups in the room? If I put Liberal Party stickers all over the place, and the Nats put their yellow stickers on, and the Hon. Rachel Merton puts Australian flag stickers everywhere, and The Greens put their stickers on, why on earth would anyone tolerate that and say that it is perfectly fine? Why would they say that we can put our stickers wherever we like, and that is fine? It is telling that the Government members who spoke today chose to belittle and berate Opposition members for asking legitimate questions. When they have no answers to provide, we know that we are onto something. To say that our questions are—

The Hon. Mark Buttigieg: He answered it.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You're in government, mate. I have not heard Government members complaining about the \$118 billion of infrastructure the former Government left in the pipeline. They like to cut ribbons and laud the Maryung trains as theirs, and claim they had something to do with it. They are happy to get on a train that they had nothing to do with—that they actively opposed. They also opposed motorways, schools and two stadiums. The unions get in there and want to take control of the metro. Why? That is because they hate the metro because it is driverless—except that this Government put drivers on the driverless metro. Now they want stickers everywhere as well. The barbarians are at the gate, and Opposition members know it. We will keep asking questions.

Free speech does not equate to using the public announcement system. The poor travelling public is lucky just to get on a train under this Government—when the train actually does turn up. Usually it is under industrial action for days on end or just unreliable—the worst numbers in decades. When the public gets on a train, it is not for the Government's RTBU mates, to whom it is beholden, to then use the public-address systems to inundate those poor travelling commuters with information and messages. They can do that in the public domain. We will stand up for those people because no-one in this Government stands up for the travelling public, which pays its salary—the people who pay for the RTBU to have the luxury of taking protests. Taxpayers need the opportunity to catch trains without being impeded by the rubbish that the RTBU would like to put on there.

I love that Government members turn around and blame the Opposition for the industrial action. There is nothing this Government will not try to put on the Opposition. Guess what? They are in government. They get to run things. They won and we came second—no-one is debating that. But 2½ years in, all the Government can do is produce review after review and press release after press release. It delays and obfuscates on things the terms and conditions state that it will not actually deliver. The Nowra buses are a classic example. Government members blame Andrew Constance. He left them more infrastructure than any of them will ever deliver in their term—I guarantee it.

ISOLATED PATIENT TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE SCHEME

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (14:54): I take note of the answer to written question on notice No. 1323 from the Hon. Bronnie Taylor to the Minister for Finance, representing the Minister for Health, relating to the Isolated Patient Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme [IPTAAS]. Macquarie Home Stay in Dubbo is a registered charity that provides affordable, low-cost—but not low-quality—accommodation for patients and their partners or escorts before, during and after medical treatment. Most of its revenue comes from IPTAAS, which highlights the importance of that scheme and the Government's commitment to its continuation. It also highlights the importance of the role of the State and Federal governments in making capital investments in projects that enable access to health services in regional centres.

IPTAAS alone cannot guarantee the expansion and continuation at the required levels of places like Macquarie Home Stay. The reality is that those sorts of facilities, which exist across regional New South Wales, help health services run more effectively and efficiently. Macquarie Home Stay focuses on reducing the trauma, emotional stress and financial burden experienced by patients. Its facilities are a key piece in connecting patients to treatment and services, and building healthier, stronger, more robust and thriving regional communities.

On 26 September 2025 Macquarie Home Stay officially opened the CWA of NSW Guesthouse in Dubbo, which provides an additional 26 self-contained units, incorporating one-bed, two-bed and family units, as well as a spacious common room with kitchen, dining and living areas, guest laundry facilities and outdoor living spaces. Macquarie Home Stay provides a critical and affordable service in Dubbo for people from across the west and north-west of New South Wales. The Dubbo Health Service has grown. As a result, people from across more than

half the geographic area of New South Wales travel to Dubbo for specialist medical care, and they often choose to stay at Macquarie Home Stay. It provides culturally appropriate, safe and welcoming facilities that meet a specific need across the regional local health districts. Over 20 per cent of the guests are Aboriginal.

Macquarie Home Stay plays a very important role in ensuring that people from remote communities are able to access medical care in Dubbo. It exists because of not just IPTAAS but also incredible fundraising at the community level and the assistance of the New South Wales Government, including specific grant money. Macquarie Home Stay has expansion plans, and the question of grant money is significant. At peak times, it has turned away up to 16 booking requests a day. On average, it turns away more than three people each day in the financial year.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND DATA CENTRES

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (14:57): I take note of the answer given today by the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage. Data centres in Sydney currently consume 2.6 terawatt hours of electricity per annum, which is around 4 per cent of the State's grid-supplied electricity. By 2030 that is expected to nearly triple to 11 per cent, and to reach 18 per cent by 2050, by which time data centres in Sydney are expected to consume 17.2 terawatt hours of energy annually. That is as much as an extra two Tomago Aluminium smelters' worth of energy demand on the network.

The Australian Energy Market Operator has this year updated its electricity demand forecasting methodology to include explicit reference to the growing energy demands of data centres. Data centres are enormously energy intensive, consume massive amounts of water and have increasingly expanding footprints, consuming and displacing available land. Increasingly, hyperscale data centres, such as the ones proposed to be built around Sydney, will be directly transmission connected, avoiding cost recovery contributions under the renewables road map. In the United States, energy-hungry data centres are sending electricity bills skyrocketing. Bloomberg News analysis found that in the United States, wholesale electricity now costs as much as 267 per cent more for a single month than it did five years ago in areas located near significant data centre activity, with the costs being passed on to consumers.

In 2022 it was revealed that power companies had warned developers in London, in the boroughs of Hillingdon, Ealing and Hounslow, that the availability of electricity capacity would stall new homes, with electricity connections not available for their sites until 2027 to 2030. The City of London declared the lack of capacity was due to a rapid influx of data centres. Further analysis claimed there would not be capacity for new electricity connections in the boroughs until 2035. Earlier this year Tower Hamlets Council—also in London—admitted there was a severe risk that house building at scale is unable to proceed for potentially 10-plus years due to lack of available electricity capacity as a result of more than 20 data centres now operating on the Isle of Dogs, chosen for its proximity to Canary Wharf and access to water for use as a coolant. A 2023 study by the council found as much as 75 per cent of all electricity demand in the area was coming from data centres, versus 16 per cent for offices and 6 per cent for homes.

The increasingly clear social and environmentally harmful impacts of energy-intensive data centres will only get more pronounced. Governments around the world, including here in New South Wales, have fallen for the hype hook, line and sinker and are relying on a supposed productivity boom on an AI-powered Hail Mary. Billions of dollars of investment are going towards those products, which are increasingly used to drive advertising, deepfakes and misinformation—a far cry from the lofty goals their promoters claim. And if the best and most ambitious goals of those companies are achieved, it will result in mass job losses and profits siphoned offshore, never to be seen by domestic taxpayers, all while we cook the planet and displace socially productive development, including much-needed housing supply. We need real leadership at the moment, and I fear that is currently in short supply, with a Premier and Treasurer all in on an AI-supercharged boosterism that will leave us all paying the price.

FERAL ANIMAL AERIAL SHOOTING

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (15:00): I take note of the answer given about the horses that were shot in Thurloo Downs. The Minister for the Environment has been forthcoming with information, both inside and outside the Chamber, particularly when compared with some of her colleagues. However, the information that was given when we first asked about the matter, which was subsequently reported in the media and set up this issue in many parts of regional New South Wales, is different to the information we now have about what occurred. The distinction is important. Looking at the bigger issue, if horses got into somewhere they were not meant to be and were shot with a mob of brumbies, that is a very different prospect than five horses being shot within one kilometre of a homestead. We do not want to undermine the aerial culling of feral pests in New South Wales, particularly pigs. It is a critical biosecurity tool.

I believe the Minister understands the severity of the issue and I believe her when she says steps are being taken to make sure the incident does not happen again. But the question remains: Where did that initial information come from that the horses were with a mob of brumbies? Why and how was the incorrect information given to the Minister in the first place? I note that the Minister said that an inquiry is taking place. I thank her for that and look forward to the information that might come from that. I also understand what the Minister said about compensation, which is another good thing and we look forward to it. But it is important that we get this distinction right. Were the horses shot on their own, near a homestead, or were they shot with a mob of brumbies? Because we need confidence in our aerial culling programs and the management of our national parks. We need to know that those programs have been carried out properly so we can continue to build the reputation of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service as a good neighbour that protects environmentally and culturally significant areas in the State.

TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (15:03): I respond to a couple of the issues raised in the debate. Firstly, in relation to the shadow Minister's comments about transport, I ask the Opposition to be more careful with its facts. When Labor came to power, the budget for infrastructure simply was not \$116 billion; it was lower than that. In fact, it is higher than that now, under this Government. We have increased expenditure. On-time running at the moment is not the worst it has been in decades. Most recently, for September, it was at 89.2 per cent. The worst on-time running was in March 2022, under the former Government, at 71 per cent. So the facts given were simply not accurate, and I ask the Opposition to look at that. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned "IKEA-style" buses, apparently from Sweden; in fact, the allegation is that they are from China. There is one thing that would increase local manufacturing and get more jobs on the ground—something that is desperately needed on the South Coast—and that is to get this development application through. That is why the Government is calling on the council to do that.

In relation to lobbying, I place a couple of things on record. So far in this term the Government has legislated that grants must be effective, efficient, economical, ethical and value for money. We have strengthened the *Grants Administration Guide*. We have prohibited political donations from registered clubs with revenue from gaming. We have accepted and implemented anti-corruption recommendations from Operation Keppel. We have introduced a funding model for the integrity agencies, giving them greater independence and transparency, and have requested the Auditor-General regularly does a performance audit of emergency relief grants. As I said, right from the start of this Government the Premier asked Ministers to increase the standard of declarations. That is in operation. We will continue to act, though. I indicated we will act in the area of trusts. Members have provided feedback around that, and I know some members are uncomfortable. The Government will be taking a step forward in that area. When it comes to Operation Eclipse and the recommendations about lobbying generally, we will take action.

But, as I said to the House, I have concerns about some additional activities, and that is broadly in relation to the relationships between lobbyists and developers under the former Government. Essentially, concerns were raised about cash being washed through lobbying firms and ending up in internal party activities. The concerns related to local government preselections. At the centre of those concerns was the Liberal Local Government Oversight Committee, and at the centre of that committee was the Opposition Whip. The Government's concerns are relevant to how we regulate lobbying activity in New South Wales. We do not want those sorts of influences taking part in any political party in New South Wales, and that is one of the things on the mind of the Government.

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

Motion agreed to.

Written Answers to Supplementary Questions

FERAL ANIMAL AERIAL SHOOTING

In reply to **the Hon. SCOTT BARRETT** (16 October 2025).

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

The National Parks and Wildfire Service conducted a broadscale feral animal control program from 22 to 27 September 2025.

- Between 22 and 24 September, 240 wild horses were removed.
- On 26 September, five domestic horses were removed.
- On 27 September, a further three wild horses were removed.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 4.00 p.m.

Business of the House

POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I postpone business of the House notice of motion No. 6 until the next sitting day.

Sessional Orders

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (16:00): I move:

That the sessional order for supplementary questions be amended by omitting all words after "That" and inserting instead ", commencing 11 November 2025, during the current session and unless otherwise ordered, Standing Order 64 (5), (6) and (7) be varied to read:

- (5) The asking of each question must not exceed one minute and the answering of each question must not exceed two minutes. A Minister may seek leave to extend the time for an answer by one minute.
- (6) A Minister's answer to a question asked by a non-government member, and the question asked, may be immediately discussed as follows:
 - (a) the member who asked the question may speak for not more than one minute;
 - (b) the Minister may then speak for not more than one minute;
 - (c) another non-government member may then speak for not more than one minute, provided that member is from a different party to the asking member and not an Opposition member where the question was asked by the Opposition; and
 - (d) the Minister may then speak for not more than one minute.

The motion seeks to amend the standing orders of the House for the remainder of this session. I bring the motion to the House following many months of discussions between the Opposition and the crossbench. I believe that we should experiment with the way we conduct business in this place. We all know that the other place—where the Government has the majority—has no interest in trying any new ideas to enhance democracy, so it falls to us to think of new ways to do things.

This is not a monumental change, but I believe that it will improve question time immeasurably. What the Opposition is proposing is just a trial for the sitting fortnight at the end of the year. If it is a success, we can run it through next year. Maybe the lower House will even take notice and look to improve its question time. These are the details of the sessional order which the Opposition seeks to amend. In operation, it will essentially be a one-minute question followed by a two-minute answer. Then, at the discretion of the questioner, there will be a one-minute reply from the questioner and a further one-minute response from the Minister. This would replace the current supplementary question. There would then be the option for a non-government member from a different party to give a one-minute statement and for the Minister to give a one-minute reply. This would replace the current second supplementary question.

I believe this would create a more lively question time by allowing members to directly confront Ministers with a response and the facts. It would allow members' responses to Ministers to be unburdened by the confines of a supplementary question. I also believe that it would result in fewer points of order. This is not designed to be an attack on the Government. It is designed to be a way to hold Ministers more accountable in this place, that is all. Once again, it is just a trial. If it does not work, I will wear that and we will simply revert to the previous sessional order. But if it does improve our democracy, even just a little bit, it is worth a try. I commend the sessional order to the House.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (16:03): I move:

That the question be amended by:

- (1) Omitting "the sessional order for supplementary questions be amended" and inserting instead "the Procedure Committee inquire into and report on whether the sessional order for supplementary questions should be amended".
- (2) Omitting "commencing 11 November 2025".

I thank the Opposition for bringing the idea to the House. The Government is always open to ideas, especially about changing the rules of how the House operates, but all of the sessional orders for Parliament have come about following a Procedure Committee inquiry, and this change should be no different. I understand that what the Opposition is proposing reflects the Westminster tradition that, following the question asked, supplementary

questions can take the form of a speech of up to one minute. The Government does not have a formed view on that concept because the Procedure Committee has not been given the usual opportunity to explore the change and the implications it may have for members of the House. Without such an exploration, the Government is not in a position to support the proposal straightaway.

During the previous Parliament I recall substantial conversations about the fairness of how time is used during question time, to ensure that Opposition and crossbench members were able to participate fully. At the time, the Opposition was able to ask both supplementary questions and would usually do so. That ultimately meant the crossbench was able to ask fewer questions. As a result, during the review of the standing orders, consensus was reached that the second supplementary question should only be asked by a member of another party to allow for more crossbench questions during question time.

As the Government sees it, the amended sessional order would ultimately replicate the take-note debate during question time, in addition to the take-note debate. Instead of having short, sharp supplementary questions, question time would be full of speeches, which would inevitably reduce the amount of time for questions. The Government thinks the other members of the House, particularly the crossbench, should be allowed an opportunity to explore these issues and reach a consensus via the Procedure Committee before the amendment is passed, which is the normal way we try to do these things. I ask members to support the amendment to the motion. The Government genuinely has an open mind on this but thinks we need to keep the ties on it and have more of a conversation before the motion is brought to the House.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (16:05): I say at the outset that I have indicated my support to the Opposition, but I am not sure if this change is actually going to benefit the Opposition. I do not think the Opposition appreciates what it is asking for, because it will undoubtedly be upstaged by members of the crossbench. I have seen members of the Opposition constantly rely on notes. They need the written question before them before they can ask a supplementary question. It will be a terrible challenge for the Opposition to be able to meet this change.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: I am confident that I can do it.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I don't know if the Hon. Damien Tudehope should be that confident. Undoubtedly the Opposition will be upstaged. I agree with the Leader of the House that this will be a big mess. Good luck, Mr President, with managing this. My view is that there will be lots of speeches and there will certainly be lots of points of order.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (16:07): The points made by the Hon. Tania Mihailuk were fabulous. The Greens support the motion. We have long thought, in this term of Parliament, that question time is a bit broken. We do not get through enough questions. We have so many points of order on what counts as a supplementary question—although fewer lately. Members do not have to do a follow-up; it is only if they want to. If a member thinks the Minister has made a really good response and answered the question exactly as they wanted, they do not need to get up. They can just nod. The Greens support the motion. We want to give it a go.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (16:07): In reply: I thank honourable members for their contributions. I make this observation: The Procedure Committee is the place where good ideas go to die. Everyone in this place knows that if they want something not to happen, they should send it to the Procedure Committee. The best way to find out whether this will work is to do it.

The Hon. John Graham: Are you reading a note? Is that on the note?

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: It's not on the note. The Leader of the Government has a very short memory in relation to referring matters to the Procedure Committee. I remember coming into this place in 2019. At that time it was not a familiar place to me. The very first time I attended a meeting with the leadership of the Government as it was then—when the Hon. Don Harwin was the Leader of the Government—we were presented with changes to the sessional orders which included a hard adjournment, all-day private members' day, second supplementary questions, take-note debates and private members' statements. None of them had been to the Procedure Committee. As I recall, they were presented in circumstances where the Hon. Robert Borsak and former members the Hon. Adam Searle and Mr David Shoebridge were involved. It was presented as a *fait accompli*. The Government and the crossbench had the numbers; they were going to do it. These were the new standing orders. The Leader of the Government had no problem with amending them.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: You did not listen to what I said. I wish you would listen to what I said.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I know you said it was in this session that it had not happened. This was after consultation with the crossbench, with a view to trying to improve the performance of the Government, and, for that matter, as the Hon. Tania Mihailuk has pointed out, potentially improve the Opposition and our

ability to be able to speak on issues without notes and listen to the responses of the Government with a view to be able to speak in relation to those responses. I say to the Leader of the Government that, although it is a new and innovative idea, let's give it a go, because giving it a try potentially will make for more invigorated and interesting questions without notice.

I explained to our party room this morning that we were going to do this. The Legislative Assembly members said, "If only we could do something like that in our House!" The fact that we can actually do such a thing in this House is really a credit to the manner in which we have negotiated with the crossbench to give something a go. Let's make democracy live in a different sort of environment. I say to the Leader of the Government that she has nothing to fear from innovation. She should not be conservative about these things; she should embrace change.

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

The House divided.

Ayes16
Noes25
Majority.....9

AYES

Buckingham
Buttigieg
D'Adam
Donnelly
Graham
Houssos

Jackson
Kaine
Lawrence
Mookhey
Moriarty

Murphy (teller)
Nanva (teller)
Primrose
Sharpe
Suvaal

NOES

Banasiak
Barrett
Borsak
Boyd
Carter
Cohn
Faehrmann
Fang (teller)
Farlow

Higginson
Hurst
Latham
MacDonald
Maclaren-Jones
Martin
Merton
Mihailuk

Mitchell
Munro
Overall
Rath (teller)
Roberts
Ruddick
Tudehope
Ward

Amendment negatived.

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

Motion agreed to.

RULES FOR QUESTIONS

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (16:19): I move:

That, commencing 11 November 2025, during the current session and unless otherwise ordered, Standing Order 65 (4) for the rules for questions and the anticipation of discussion be suspended.

This motion deals with the rule on anticipation. It is hard to find the history of how this rule came into existence, but it is in the standing orders. The rule should be suspended for two reasons. The first is to allow the full, free-flowing question time that my earlier motion sought to create. It is unreasonable for members to be held back from discussing an issue of the day because it also happens to be an item on the business list. The second is that members of this House can walk and chew gum at the same time.

Votes on bills are standalone, and nothing a member asks during questions without notice can change the legal effect. When it comes to items of business on private members' day, members of this House should be able to ask questions on matters of importance to them as well as move motions. One side effect of the Government's earlier question times is that we are rarely through even the first item on private members' day before question time begins. If Ministers are ready to respond to notices given on the previous day, then they should be ready to answer questions relating to the same topic. 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) (16:20): I start by moving an amendment similar to the one I moved to the previous motion. I move:

That the question be amended by omitting all words after "That" and inserting instead:

the Procedure Committee inquire into and report on whether, during the current session and unless otherwise ordered, Standing Order 65 (4) for the rules for questions and the anticipation of discussion should be suspended.

I note that during his contribution to debate on the previous motion, the Leader of the Opposition said that the Procedure Committee is a place where ideas go to die. It is pretty unfortunate that the member thinks that. The long-established Procedure Committee gives us the opportunity to work through a whole range of issues. In this Parliament, we have given all members the opportunity to kick the tyres on the issue of notices of motion. That is clearly not the will of the House today. I think it is a bit unfortunate that the Procedure Committee will not get the opportunity to examine this issue.

We think it is important that the standard practice for accepting rule changes in the House is to give it to the Procedure Committee. This motion would remove anticipation from the current rules for questions without notice that prevent members and Ministers from asking questions or providing answers that anticipate debate on items on the business list for the day. If members want to know where the anticipation rule came from, it has been around for a long time in the Westminster tradition. According to Erskine May, its first appearance was in 1857 in the Charles Dickens novel *Little Dorrit*, although it may have been a part of parliamentary procedure even earlier than that. The purpose of the rule is to make sure the House debates matters in the most efficient way. If the House is going to be debating a bill that day, it is much more efficient to debate concerns or issues members have about that bill during debate on the bill rather than during question time.

Guidance from the Commonwealth Parliament suggests the anticipation rule helps support the right of the House to manage its business in an orderly way and to prevent wasting the time of the House. Every MLC whinges to me at least once a week about how precious and limited time is in the Legislative Council. In this environment, it seems to me that trying to deal with matters in the most efficient and orderly way possible is a good thing. The Government does not have a set view on the motion at this stage, but we are not keen on supporting it without examination by the Procedure Committee. However, I can count, so I can see where this motion is going.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (16:23): The Greens support this motion. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing it before the House. I agree that the Procedure Committee is a very good place to work out different ways to address problems which have been identified, particularly for very thorny issues, but this is such a clearly identified problem and it is having absurd results. Issues with some rules do not come up until they have been misused, and this is one of those rules. Maybe "misused" is the wrong word, because this rule has been used in ways that it was not used during the last parliamentary session. The Greens support this sensible change.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (16:24): I do not have a particularly strong view about the anticipation rule, but I do think the proposal of the Leader of the Government to refer this to the Procedure Committee has some merit. When I was first elected to this Chamber, a workers compensation bill was making its way through the House. I started to look at the origins of the workers compensation system by reading *Hansard* from the 1920s. The nature of the second reading debate was interesting, because it was quite common for individual members to raise questions about mechanical parts of the proposed bill and for the member leading debate for the Government to immediately respond to their question. The debate was actually quite fertile, and members got a better understanding of the mechanics of the bill.

When we see things that look redundant, we often want to dispose of them. If we refer this to the Procedure Committee, we can look at whether that mechanism can be reinstituted for second reading debates. I often sit on the backbench and think, "I have an issue with this particular element. I don't want to give a speech, but I do want an answer." I think that is a good way to legislate. The anticipation rule does serve a purpose. Under previous standing orders there was a place for those questions during the second reading debate but not necessarily during question time. We should keep those questions in the second reading debate. Questions that relate to the matters at hand and other business of the House should be reserved for that time.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (16:26): In reply: There is no rule against anticipation in the other place. In the other place, the process is often for a question to be asked during question time about the very subject matter of a bill which will be introduced later in the day. In relation to private members' day, for example, why should a member be curtailed from asking a question on the subject matter of a motion which is on the business list for later in the day? What is the problem with allowing mature members to ask questions about something they have an interest in? It is a good idea to allow people to frame questions about the issues they want to ask questions about and then have a motion about the same thing.

This standing order stands in the way of members exploring an issue they have an interest in, because of an archaic and unexplained rule relating to anticipation. I note that neither the Leader of the Government nor the Hon. Anthony D'Adam offered an explanation for why this is such a good idea. It is not a good idea. Let's give this a go and get rid of the rule for the time being to see if it works. If there is a fundamental flaw in this amendment to the standing orders which makes it unworkable, then we can walk away from it at the end of the session. This is an improvement on the standing orders.

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Damien Tudehope has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Penny Sharpe has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to. Is leave granted to ring the bells for one minute?

Leave not granted.

The House divided.

Ayes15
Noes26
Majority.....11

AYES

Buttigieg
D'Adam
Donnelly
Graham
Houssos

Jackson
Kaine
Lawrence
Mookhey
Moriarty

Murphy (teller)
Nanva (teller)
Primrose
Sharpe
Suvaal

NOES

Banasiak
Barrett
Borsak
Boyd
Buckingham
Carter
Cohn
Faehrmann
Fang (teller)

Farlow
Higginson
Hurst
Latham
MacDonald
Maclaren-Jones
Martin
Merton
Mihailuk

Mitchell
Munro
Overall
Rath (teller)
Roberts
Ruddick
Tudehope
Ward

Amendment negatived.

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

Motion agreed to.

Disallowance

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT (TERMINATION NOTICE FOR SIGNIFICANT RENOVATIONS OR REPAIRS) REGULATION 2025

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (16:35): I move:

That, under section 41 of the Interpretation Act 1987, this House disallows the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Termination Notice for Significant Renovations or Repairs) Regulation 2025, as published on the New South Wales legislation website on 20 June 2025.

This disallowance motion is about protecting renters from being thrown out of their homes under false pretences and about holding this Government to the commitments it made when it claimed to have ended unfair no-grounds evictions. When this Parliament passed the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024 in October last year, members did so on the clear understanding that a landlord who wanted to evict a tenant to carry out significant renovations or repairs would need to prove that the works were genuine. That was the deal. That was the safeguard that gave renters some confidence that landlords could not use renovations as a cover to kick someone out, hike the rent and re-list the property the next week. For a brief moment, that is exactly what the regulations ensured.

When the original regulation came into force on 19 May this year, it included strong evidence provisions. A landlord had to provide one of several forms of proof, such as a development consent, a quote or contract from a licensed builder, an owner-builder permit, or proof of materials purchased for the work. Those were modest,

reasonable protections. They did not stop legitimate repairs; they just stopped dodgy landlords from lying. But then, barely a month later, on 20 June, the Government quietly rewrote the rules. There was no consultation, no public announcement and no explanation. The amended regulation removed every single one of those evidence requirements. Now a landlord who wants to terminate a tenancy on the grounds of significant repairs or renovations only needs to provide a written statement—not even a statutory declaration—saying they intend to do the works. That is it.

When asked why, the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading told the other place that it was just a "minor change". But it is not minor. As the member for Newtown said in the other place, if you take a bucket and poke a small hole in it, you cannot keep it full. That is what this Government has done. It punctured the very reforms it celebrated just weeks earlier. When the reforms came into force in May, the Government threw a party for itself. The Minister declared that we were entering "a new era of renting". The Premier posted about it on Instagram. Ministers posed in Martin Place, talking about how they had created a fairer, more balanced rental market. But behind the scenes, within weeks someone decided those safeguards were too strong, and on 20 June the Government quietly reversed them. There was no media release this time. There was no press conference and no "new era of renting" posts on Instagram, just a quiet tweak to the regulation that handed power back to landlords and stripped renters of the very protections they were promised.

No evidence has been provided to justify the change. No stakeholder consultation has been cited. Tenant advocates and community housing providers, including the Tenants' Union, were not consulted. When asked directly in the other place what changed between May and June, the Minister could not explain. That is why this motion for disallowance is so important and so necessary for members of this House to support. The Tenants' Union of NSW—along with 32 other civil society organisations from housing, social justice and community legal centres—have issued a joint statement calling for the regulation to be disallowed. The signatories include organisations like Shelter NSW, Homelessness NSW, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, Community Legal Centres NSW and the NSW Council of Social Service. Together, they have made it crystal clear: Removing the evidence requirement opens the door to bad-faith evictions. It allows landlords to exploit a loophole that was supposed to be closed. It undermines renters' rights, and it creates significant risk of homelessness. They also note that no rationale has been provided by the Government, and that the change completely contradicts the intent of the legislation passed last year.

Let's be clear about what this means in the real world. It means a renter can now be evicted because their landlord claims they plan to renovate, with no proof required. It means that people can lose their homes so that an investor can slap on a coat of paint, raise the rent by \$200 a week, and call it significant repairs. It means that single parents, pensioners, students and low-income families—already in a brutal housing market—could be forced into homelessness or out of their communities because the Government decided to quietly undo its own promises to those very people. This is not a theoretical risk. Across Australia, we are already seeing "renovictions": landlords using the guise of renovations to kick out tenants. In Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, evidence requirements have been strengthened precisely to prevent such behaviour. New South Wales should be lifting standards, not going backwards. That is what the Government promised when the legislation was passed last year.

This regulation is the thin end of the wedge. It signals to every renter in New South Wales that the Government's promises of fairness and transparency were, at best, temporary and, at worst, misleading. I say to the Government: If this really was a minor change, then restore the evidence requirement. If there was a legitimate reason to amend the regulation, then table it or speak to that in this debate. This Parliament made a promise to renters when it ended no-grounds evictions. In fact, the Minns Labor Government made a promise to renters when it ended no-grounds evictions. We said, "You'll have greater security, and landlords will need genuine reasons to terminate a tenancy." This regulation breaks that promise. It is unfair, it is opaque, and it clearly undermines trust in the Minns Government—but I am not worried about that. It undermines trust in the ability of members of this Parliament to make good laws that stay in place after we make them.

Renters deserve better. They deserve a Parliament that keeps its word. Are we really going to let the Minns Government get away with doing this? We are increasingly being asked to trust this Government and pass legislation in this place with very little detail because we are told that the regulations made after the fact will reflect the Parliament's intent. I urge members to support the motion for disallowance to restore this extremely important element of the bill already passed, but also to restore people's faith in us: that we approach our role, as lawmakers, with integrity and determination; and that, when we pass laws to protect people from those holding power over them, we stand our ground when the inevitable whingeing and pressure come our way. That is clearly not what the Minns Government did this time, but I urge every other member in this place to do just that. 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) (16:44): The Government does not support this motion for disallowance. There is no denying the Minns Labor Government has delivered on its commitment to make renting fairer in New South Wales. This Government ended no-grounds evictions, giving renters security in their homes like never before. Those protections have not changed. A landlord still needs a valid reason to end a lease. We made it very clear at the beginning of the reform process that we would consider a range of views and feedback on the legislative changes we were making. I make it clear that evidence requirements have not been removed. A written statement, signed and dated by the landlord, must explain, one, why the renovations or repairs are significant; two, why the property must be vacant for the works to be carried out; and, three, the proposed commencement date of the works.

This adjustment to evidentiary requirements is a minor change. The Government has been clear it will continue to adapt to industry and renters' concerns as and when needed. The Government undertook stakeholder consultation during the drafting of the Residential Tenancies Amendment Regulation 2025, which came into effect on 19 May this year. Feedback was considered from both tenant advocates and industry stakeholders and informed the content of the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Termination Notice for Significant Renovations or Repairs) Regulation 2025. The Government has taken a balanced approach to evidence requirements when ending a lease. The Government has also invested \$8.4 million in the Rental Taskforce to monitor implementation of our rental reforms and to enforce the legislation. I reiterate to every member of this House and for anyone listening to this debate that the Minns Labor Government ended no-grounds evictions in New South Wales. We ushered in a new era of security and stability for renters.

Before May this year, landlords could end a lease without a reason. This left renters facing sudden and sometimes frequent moves. Without stability and security, it was hard for renters to assert their rights or raise concerns with their landlord out of fear that requesting a repair or addressing safety issues could result in an eviction. That is why the Government took decisive action. We ended no-grounds evictions for fixed-term and periodic leases. The Government embedded measures in the new laws to guard against the misuse of termination grounds. We introduced re-letting exclusion and evidence requirements. We introduced penalties of up to \$11,000 for individuals and \$71,500 for businesses who provide false or misleading documents or information when giving a termination notice. The Government's reforms are sensible and balanced. They will improve the lives of renters across New South Wales and provide clarity and certainty for landlords as well.

In the past two years, the Government has implemented a robust reform agenda to make renting fairer in New South Wales. In addition to ending no-grounds evictions, the following laws are now in force: one, tenants are able to apply to keep a pet in their rental home, with owners only able to refuse for specific reasons and with automatic approval if owners do not respond to pet applications within 21 days; two, owners and real estate agents must enable renters to pay their rent using certain fee-free rental payment methods, such as direct bank transfer, ensuring there are convenient and modern payment methods available without extra cost; three, rents can be raised only once per year across all lease types; and, four, tenants will not have to pay for their own background checks, clarifying that rental applicants cannot be charged extra fees before starting a lease.

The New South Wales Government is also developing the nation's first Portable Rental Bonds Scheme, which will save renters thousands of dollars when moving house, and we have a bill currently before the Legislative Assembly that will stop the unnecessary collection of extra personal information and help to reduce the risk of identity theft and data breaches for tenants, property technology platforms and agents. These reforms will address the excessive documentation and detail renters are currently being asked to provide when applying for a rental property. Renters should not be asked for personal photos, social media account details, relationship details or information about their children.

Recently, the House passed the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Domestic Violence Reform) Bill, which will give greater support to victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. It is obvious the Government has a proven track record of making renting fairer in New South Wales. We have made it clear we will continue to monitor the implementation of our historic rental laws to ensure they are working in practice. For the reasons I have outlined today, the Government does not support this motion for disallowance.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (16:48): I speak on behalf of the Opposition and the shadow Minister for Fair Trading in the other place on this disallowance motion, which goes to the very heart of integrity in lawmaking, consistency in regulation and the trust that renters place in this Parliament. Earlier this year the Government proudly declared that the era of no-grounds evictions was over. The Premier was boasting about his landmark rental reforms but, weeks after those laws commenced, we now know the Premier himself personally set about dismantling them without consultation, warning or explanation. To this day the Government has not explained that decision.

Let us be clear about what has occurred. The no-grounds eviction reform commenced on 19 May 2025. Under the original regulation—the Residential Tenancies Amendment Regulation 2025, published on 2 April—a landlord wishing to evict a tenant on the grounds of "significant renovations or repairs" was required to provide a written statement explaining why the works were significant and why the property must be vacant and supporting documentation such as a builder's quote, a contract, a permit or a development consent. In short, there was the need to provide clear, verifiable proof that the works were real and required the dwelling to be vacant. That safeguard lasted just 32 days.

On 20 June the Government gazetted an amendment—the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Termination Notice for Significant Renovations or Repairs) Regulation 2025—that stripped out the evidence requirement. Only the landlord's word is now needed. There is no need for evidence or verification, and there are no safeguards. With just a declaration on paper, the tenant is out the door. That is not a minor adjustment, as the Minister in the other place desperately claimed; it is a major backflip on a core plank of the Government's reforms.

We now know that was not the Minister's call. It was a captain's call from the Premier. The Premier intervened personally to weaken the Minister's reform, just as he did last year when, at the last minute, he watered down pet ownership rights in rentals. Twice now he has overridden his own Minister, blindsided stakeholders and undone months of careful consultation. Neither renters nor landlords asked for this change. The Rental Commissioner provided no advice requesting changes. Even the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales said it was not their doing. They said, "It wasn't us who convinced the Premier to change it."

Stakeholders were blindsided after being told the safeguards were essential and would be included. The incoherence is staggering. Evidence is still required for a termination on the grounds of a sale. Evidence is still required for a termination on the grounds of demolition. Yet, for renovations—the eviction ground perhaps most open to misuse—evidence is no longer required. It shows that the decision was the result not of careful consideration but of flawed, chaotic processes. It was a spur-of-the-moment call from the Premier. That is no way to do policy. Importantly, it directly contradicts the Minister's second reading speech, in which he promised:

Evidence will be required to guard against the misuse of termination grounds ... The requirement to provide evidence will deter landlords or agents from using a termination ground that is not genuine, and will provide renters with confidence that the termination provisions are being used appropriately.

That was the Government's promise. The regulations originally delivered on that, but now the Premier has shredded them. What does it say about this Government that the Premier, with a single stroke, overruled his own Minister, his department, the Rental Commissioner and every stakeholder who contributed to the 18,000-person consultation process? What does it say about the Government's process that a considered reform can be undone without notice or reason just to suit the Premier's personal whim? The truth is that the Premier substituted his own impulse for evidence, consultation and process. He promised renters protection and then delivered a loophole. Twenty-nine organisations including legal services, housing groups, charities and community centres have condemned the change, stating:

These types of changes made behind closed doors only undermine renters' trust and confidence that the NSW Government is committed to improving the fairness of the rental system.

The Tenants' Union has warned that this raises questions about the integrity of the entire reform package. Shelter NSW has pointed out the absurdity of undermining the law before it has even been tested or evaluated. Meanwhile, the Premier flails when asked to explain himself. When asked about this on radio he has ducked, dodged and weaved. He has even tried to suggest that the original regulation would have required inspectors to check every renovation. That is a nonsense claim which is false on its face. It is unclear that the Premier correctly understands how his policy operates, which makes the captain's call even more bizarre. The safeguard only required that evidence be provided, which is a basic standard that applies across tenancy law. His defence was unconvincing and embarrassing, and it revealed that he cannot articulate why he made that decision.

This is not about balance. It is about the Premier personally unravelling his reforms. He has now done it twice—once on pets and once on evictions—each time blindsiding his Minister and stakeholders, and each time undermining trust in the Government's word. It is a slap in the face to the 2.3 million renters in this State who were promised protection only to find that the Premier personally cut the heart out of those reforms. It is also a slap in the face to every landlord and property owner, who deserve consistent and stable laws, not a Premier making it up on the fly. I feel for Minister Chanthivong, left to defend this indefensible change, forced to argue against his considered position and left looking like he was rolled by his Premier. It is clear the Minister does not even know why this has happened. This is no way to run policy in New South Wales. It undermines confidence in the policy process, shatters trust in government, injects instability into an already overheated rental market and signals that reforms can be undone overnight on a whim.

The Premier promised renters protection and then personally ripped it away. The Premier has created uncertainty, inconsistency and instability for landlords, with a question of what is next? The Premier has shown the people of New South Wales that he cannot be trusted to honour his word. The Opposition supported an end to no-grounds evictions, but it also believes in a fair process where safeguards are respected, consultation is genuine and reforms are not undone by a captain's call. That is why the Opposition supports this disallowance: to restore integrity to these reforms, to stand up for fairness and to hold this Premier to account for his recklessness and his broken promise to the renters of New South Wales.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (16:55): I oppose this disallowance motion, and I am astounded at the words used by Liberal Party members in this debate. Liberal Party members have forgotten who they should be representing, and the idea that the Premier has somehow failed tenants or landlords is absurd. I am the last person who wants to defend the Premier, but he and the Government have done exactly what they promised to do at the last election, and that is to deliver great reform in the area of residential tenancies. There is no question that the legislation passed earlier in the year is absolutely geared towards supporting tenants.

The Hon. Scott Farlow's suggestion that the Premier somehow buckled and decided to support landlords is not right. The regulation put in by the Government was the right thing to do because what was suggested in the original bill was incredibly onerous. Asking a landlord or property owner to provide a written quote from a tradesperson and make that available to the tenant shows a lack of understanding for how tradespeople work. Tradespeople may give a quote that is not written. They might provide relevant information without seeing the property in its entirety. Any contractual arrangement that is set up between a landlord and a tradesperson should not just be handed over to any third party. That would not be done in any kind of contract. I ask members to think about whether they would hand over a personal contractual arrangement they had entered into to a third party. No, they would not.

In circumstances where the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal asks for that information to be furnished, it is different. There is some legal protection in place in those circumstances. It is completely understandable if the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal asks for a contract to be furnished in any type of proceedings, but the idea that we demand landlords and property owners provide a written contractual arrangement that they have in place with a tradesperson to be entirely handed over to a third-party tenant is absurd. The demonisation of landlords has to end. We need people who have the capacity to provide investment properties. We want a large supply of rental properties in this State. When the Liberal Party agrees with The Greens on this motion, they are suggesting that landlords are somehow demons who want to throw tenants out. They do not. The vast majority of landlords want to keep their tenants.

The way the bill reads and the parts that have been retained, separate from the regulation, show that there is a period of four weeks during which a landlord cannot re-let the property. It is not as if landlords are being rewarded. After giving a tenant 90 days notice, they cannot let their property out for another four weeks on top of that. It is clear that the provision simply allows landlords, in circumstances where a renovation is significant enough for property to be vacated, to provide the necessary notice. The regulation states specifically that landlords must provide written information, including the date that work will start and the precise work to be undertaken. Is there a suggestion that landlords' motives are improper when they want to remove a tenant, so much so that they need to provide the contract between themselves and the tradesperson?

On top of that, tradespeople are required to come to the property and give a written quotation. Most people know that tradespeople are increasingly charging people just for a quote, which itself is causing a whole plethora of issues, but now we demand a written quotation. To me, that is such a Greens, leftist position to take, because it shows such a lack of understanding. A lot of tradespeople undertake their work without written quotations. If The Greens do not understand that, they do not understand the type of people who are in trades in the first place. Quotes are often provided verbally. For us, as a Parliament, to then expect tradespeople to put that into a written quotation is absurd.

I commend the Premier for stepping in, because what the bureaucrats originally wrote in section 23D placed an absurd expectation on both the landlord and on tradespeople. The Premier was well within his rights—thank goodness common sense prevailed—to step in to rectify what was an obvious error. It was an onerous expectation that would have caused a great many issues. The idea that a tenant should be given a copy of a contract and that they would then contact the tradespeople directly is an absurd legal position. Tenants should not be contacting tradespeople directly. Contact with tradespeople should be done via the real estate agent or the property owner.

This regulatory change had to happen, because the issue needed cleaning up. It does not mean that a bunch of landlords will use it to remove tenants. Think about it. Why would a landlord do that? They are put in a position where they have to evict a tenant. They give 90 days notice. Often the tenant might leave in those circumstances and may not pay rent for the remainder of the lease. On top of that, the landlord cannot re-let the property for four

weeks. It is not as if the landlord is rewarded by this regulatory change if all it does is stop the current absurd situation, which makes it almost impossible for landlords to provide a home or an investment property. It is also absurd to require tradespeople to provide quotations and contracts, only to potentially be scrutinised by a third party or a tenant's advocate.

I understand where the Tenants' Union is coming from. It has had a great win, and its representatives should pat themselves on the back. They ended up getting the no-fault eviction reform that they have been campaigning for for several years. They got what they wanted, and they should be very proud of the work they have done. The idea that we are bashing the Government over this regulation is absurd. I am sad to see the Liberal Party reach a level where they are working with The Greens in an unholy alliance to hurt the very people that are probably more likely to support them: the mum-and-dad investors in East Hills, Penrith, Ryde, Epping and other communities who have worked their guts out their entire lives to afford a property that they can lease out. To have the Liberal Party working with the party of anarchy, The Greens, in supporting a disallowance motion like this is a real travesty and a very sad state of affairs.

I reiterate that I do not support this disallowance motion. I understand why The Greens are moving it—it completely fits what they would move—but it is disappointing that the Liberal Party has decided to support it. It does not matter that the change was made without informing every stakeholder. Sometimes the Government has to work to ensure that a disaster does not eventuate. I think the Government did the right thing by making sure that the legislation could be amended by regulation, because it was creating a set of circumstances that was absolutely obscene. Extra red tape should not be added, particularly at a time when the Opposition and some on the crossbench are demanding an increase in housing supply in New South Wales. I remind the Liberal Party that, by supporting this disallowance motion, it is supporting more unnecessary red tape.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (17:05): I support the disallowance motion. I note the Hon. Tania Mihailuk's reference to an "unholy alliance" between the Liberal Party and The Greens. It is a talking point that gets trotted out a lot but there is only one unholy alliance in Australian politics, and that is between Labor and the Coalition, who vote together on most things, most of the time. It is the voice of the crossbench that is working to try to hold both of them to account. It is true that occasionally on the crossbench we have certain things where we cross over with each other. Sometimes the principles or policy platforms of those on the right of the crossbench and those on the left of the crossbench overlap and lead to a moment when we agree. So too it is with The Greens and the Liberals. It is convenient to call it an unholy alliance rather than to look at the principles and the policy on which we are moving this disallowance motion.

I also note that the Hon. Tania Mihailuk called us the party of anarchy. I do not think she was talking about the actual economic system. I would love to explain in great detail what "anarchy" means in that context. I think the member was probably talking about some form of chaos. I note that The Greens is the only party in this place that has a set of policy principles agreed to by our members that we are obliged to stick to. It makes us the most predictable party here. If members want to know how we are going to vote on an issue, just look at the policies that are on our website. They do not change at every election and have been pretty much the same for years and years. As the party of consistency, we obviously support this disallowance motion, which would bring this legislation back in line with our policy platform of no-grounds evictions campaign that we have been running for over a decade.

I thank the member for Newtown, Jenny Leong, for her incredible work on advancing renters' rights in New South Wales. Unfortunately, this regulation waters down those reforms. That is what it does. No-grounds evictions ended when legislation was passed with multipartisan support in October 2024. Now the Government has done a backflip. That is all that it is. The reforms passed in October 2024 were passed on the understanding that certain evidence requirements would have to be met by landlords wishing to claim a specific ground for termination. That was our understanding. We took it on good faith, but we did not actually see those regulations until April of this year. However, based on The Greens' discussions with the Minister's office last year, we understood that landlords wanting to evict a tenant on the grounds of significant renovations or repairs to premises would need to supply evidence like a development consent or a quote or contract from a licensed contractor.

There are rules around tradespeople quoting for work before going ahead with it, but I will put that to one side. That understanding was reflected in the regulations that came into effect on 19 May this year. Section 23D required a landlord wanting to evict a tenant on the grounds of significant renovations or repairs to provide two things: one, a written statement stating the proposed start date of works and why the renovations or repairs are significant and require the property to be vacant; and two, a written quotation or contract from a qualified builder or tradesperson for the works or an owner-builder permit authorising the landlord to carry out those works themselves, proof of purchase of materials related to the works, a development consent, a written approval from the owners' corporation, strata committee or strata managing agent, or a development control order requiring the work to be carried out.

To sum that section up, it requires evidence that a landlord is genuinely doing something that would allow them to evict a tenant. The grounds for no-grounds evictions cannot simply be that the landlord wants to do so. That is the opposite of the purpose of the legislation that members thought we were voting in. In her second reading speech, the Minister for Housing, and Minister for Homelessness described the evidence requirements as a way to:

... deter landlords or agents from using a termination ground that is not genuine, and will provide renters with confidence that the termination provisions are being used appropriately.

That sounded very sensible. When the evidence requirements finally came into force on 19 May—nearly seven months after the legislation was passed—the Government made a big song and dance about it, as it loves to do. It held a press conference just around the corner from the Tenants' Union of NSW's own presser down in Martin Place. The then Acting Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Paul Scully, said:

The implementation of these reforms creates a fairer, more balanced rental market that gives tenants greater security while making sure owners have clear and transparent processes to follow.

We've listened to renters, owners, and industry experts to shape these changes, and have worked closely with stakeholders to ensure the transition is smooth and well understood.

The Premier took to Instagram, as he is wont to do, to boast of entering "a new era of renting". There was significantly less fanfare on 20 June when, just over a month after those regulations came into effect, the Government quietly removed the requirement for a second piece of evidence. Now a landlord who wants to evict a tenant on the grounds of repairs or renovations just needs to write a statement—not even sign a statutory declaration—claiming that they will undertake works, and that will be legally enough to evict someone from their home. That is the exact opposite of the legislation that members all voted through last year. What could possibly go wrong? The Greens do not consider a statement of that nature to be evidence. We consider it to be a statement of intent and nothing more.

I note that the evidence requirements for other grounds for eviction—like actual sale or demolition of premises—include documentation from a third party other than a landlord, such as a copy of agreement between a landlord and an agent for the sale of a premises, or a contract for the demolition works. Why should the evidence requirements for this ground be any different? It is completely unclear. Members are yet to be given any valid reason. From what The Greens can tell, the Minister did not consult with anyone, certainly not any of the stakeholders that The Greens speak to. The Greens, who helped shepherd the reform over many years, were certainly not consulted or told with any form of explanation as to why the change was suddenly required. I remind the House that it was a bill from The Greens, and an inquiry that a member of The Greens chaired, that led to the Government finally delivering the reform.

It also does not sound like the Opposition was consulted. The Tenants' Union of New South Wales was not consulted either. On 19 July it published a joint statement signed by 32 civil society organisations opposing the changes and calling on the New South Wales Government to:

1. Amend the Residential Tenancies Regulation to reinstate all the evidence requirements for landlords seeking to issue a notice of termination due to significant repairs or renovations
2. Monitor complaints and investigate any misuse of the significant repair or renovations termination grounds
3. Commit to following a transparent consultative process for any future changes to rental laws in NSW

Signatories to that statement included Homelessness NSW, Shelter NSW, the NSW Council of Social Service, Mission Australia, Vinnies and Unions NSW. If the New South Wales Labor Government was not consulting with those stakeholders and listening to their concerns in rolling out the change, who was it listening to? We are left to assume that Government members were lobbied by their mates in the real estate and property industries. Or was the plan always to wind back the evidence requirements as a concession to landlords once the dust had settled on banning no-grounds evictions and the media attention was elsewhere? It is virtually impossible for there to be an evidence base behind the changes. The 32 days between the original regulations coming into force and then being watered down was hardly enough time for a statistically significant number of evictions on the grounds of renovations or repairs, let alone to assess whether the two-part evidence requirements were unnecessarily onerous for landlords.

When members debated the legislation back in October last year, The Greens moved an amendment that would have established a legislative requirement for evidence to be provided with every termination notice, rather than leaving it to the regulations. At the time the Government did not support the amendment, saying that the requirement would appear in regulations. It appears that The Greens' faith in the Minister's intentions was completely misplaced. The exact scenario that The Greens were trying to safeguard against is now taking place. The Greens therefore find themselves in the bizarre political position of siding with the Opposition in an unholy alliance, as some would say, of people with a policy position based on sense and evidence.

The Greens will continue to be the only party in this place that consistently and unapologetically fights for renters, in line with its published policies, regardless of whether they are the hot topic of the month for the major parties or if it is politically inconvenient to do so. The Greens are incredibly disturbed by the way in which the Labor Party is cosying up to developers in this State. We will continue to call that out and to uncover evidence that so many of these things are done by captain's call after the Premier has had a chat with the good friend and suddenly decided how things will be. I commend the disallowance motion to the House.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (17:15): I oppose the disallowance motion. I give members a couple of truth bombs. Tenants should have a sense of gratitude towards their landlord. That is the bottom line. The landlord has built the property or bought it off somebody who has built it. The tenants need somewhere to live and the landlord has provided a home for them. There should be a sense of gratitude towards landlords. If members really care about the welfare and interests of tenants, they should love landlords. Members should make being a landlord attractive again. This Government has brought in a lot of anti-landlord rules, which are of course backfiring, but the change in evidence requirements is a small mercy. I agree that tenants are doing it tough. Sydney probably has the highest rent prices in the world behind Singapore. But that is because all these regulations make being a landlord unattractive. The great Ronald Reagan said that there is nothing more timid than a million bucks. If you had a million bucks to invest, you think about shares or residential property, but there is so much regulatory risk with a residential property. I oppose the disallowance motion.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (17:16): In reply: There were some extraordinary contributions to debate on the disallowance motion. Firstly, it was disappointing that the Government still did not give a reason or justification for backpedalling on evidence requirements for landlords. It is ridiculous to hear that landlords have to provide evidence for undertaking renovations in the form of a written statement and that is it. It does not sound like there is much requirement. Who checks the commencement date? There is no requirement for a statutory declaration or evidence.

I address a statement by the Hon. Tania Mihailuk about The Greens "hating all landlords", which she may have said in her contribution. That is absolutely ridiculous. I certainly did not say anything to that effect in my contribution. I know that my colleague in the other place and the member for Newtown, Jenny Leong, did not either, nor did Ms Abigail Boyd, who also contributed. In fact, there are many people out there who are lovely, good and wonderful, and happen to own houses as landlords. But this motion is about those people who take advantage of tenants. There are indeed quite a few landlords who do that. The Hon. John Ruddick's contribution that tenants should have a sense of gratitude, almost like tenants should be bowing to literally the land "lords"—

The Hon. John Ruddick: That's an exaggeration.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I acknowledge the member's interjection that that was an exaggeration. I do not believe that it came across like that. That may be worth reflecting upon, because his contribution was very much that tenants should have a sense of gratitude that landlords have given them somewhere to live. In fact, the reason that we need those regulations and laws is that 3½ million people live in properties that other people own because they cannot afford to pay \$1 million for a property in New South Wales. Many of them are lifetime renters and it is our responsibility in this place to make sure we have those laws in place. Mr Libertarian, the Hon. John Ruddick, does not want any laws. I want to see him and his mates being taken to an island together without those laws in place for two days—or even half an hour, to be honest—and see who is left.

Probably the vast majority of landlords are doing the right thing, but this motion is about recognising that the whole point of the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024 was to end evictions on unfair grounds. In places where there are no laws to protect tenants, landlords are able to just boot them out. That was the point of putting requirements into the legislation so that landlords had to be genuine when they said to their tenants, "I'm really sorry, but we're doing repairs or renovations on this place. Here is the notice; here is the evidence. I'm really sorry, but you guys have to move." They could not sit back, look at the market and think, "You know what? I reckon I can get another \$250 a week or something. Let's kick these guys out. I'll write a written statement and submit it—there you go." That is what we are back to.

A lot of people who heard the Government announcements and social media tiles and all of that probably still think that it ended unfair no-grounds evictions, but it has not. I thank the Coalition for its consideration of the motion. The member for Willoughby moved this motion in the other place, and I am glad that we could do it here. I see where it is going in terms of the numbers, which is a huge shame because we passed the law. As I said when I moved the motion, the fact that the Government then changed the intent by regulation should ring alarm bells for the regulations that are coming in the next 14 or 16 months. The Greens will look at those regulations very closely, and I urge all members to do so, because they suggest that we cannot trust the Minns Government.

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

The House divided.

Ayes18
 Noes23
 Majority.....5

AYES

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

NOES

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

Motion negatived.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Order! According to sessional order, it being 5.30 p.m., proceedings are interrupted to allow debate on committee reports and Government responses to take precedence.

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

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: I postpone committee reports and Government responses orders of the day Nos 1 and 2 until a later hour of the sitting.

*Committees***PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 1 - PREMIER AND FINANCE****Reports and Government Response****Debate resumed from 24 June 2025.**

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (17:32): I take note of report No. 66 of Portfolio Committee No. 1 – Premier and Finance entitled *Impact of the regulatory framework for cannabis in New South Wales: Final report*, tabled on 20 June 2025, and the Government response. I was a participating member of the inquiry, and I thank the other members of the committee for allowing my full participation throughout its course. The inquiry was the most comprehensive parliamentary investigation into cannabis law in the State's history. It laid bare what some members in this place already know: that our current laws on cannabis are outdated, unjust and causing more harm than good.

The committee heard from hundreds of individuals and organisations, including doctors, lawyers, health agencies, police, academics, patients and people with lived experience. Across the board, the evidence was overwhelming. The criminalisation of cannabis has failed. Criminalisation has not reduced use. It has not made our communities safer. The regulatory framework continues to clog up our courts and criminalise people for conduct that in much of the world is now recognised as a matter of personal choice and public health, not a criminal act.

The report makes seven recommendations and eight findings, which together set out a clear, staged pathway for sensible, evidence-based cannabis law reform in New South Wales. The committee found that the presence of cannabis in a person's system does not necessarily indicate that they are impaired. As members in this place are well aware, our laws currently criminalise medicinal cannabis patients—people lawfully prescribed a therapeutic product—simply for driving with traces of THC in their saliva or blood, even when they are

unimpaired. The committee heard that there is no scientific consensus on any measurable level of THC that correlates with impairment, unlike alcohol. Yet patients who use medicinal cannabis to manage chronic pain, anxiety or epilepsy face losing their licences and livelihoods for doing so.

The committee recommended that the Government urgently legislate a medicinal use defence, as exists in Tasmania, and review driving offences to ensure road safety laws are based on impairment, not detection. As members are also well aware, I have a bill before the Parliament to do just that. The committee also found that the current criminal regulation of cannabis is not achieving its purpose—and that is putting it mildly. It has not reduced cannabis use. Instead, it has driven people to the black market, enriched organised crime and caused lasting harm through criminal records, fines and stigma. Our police, courts and prisons bear the cost of enforcing laws that the evidence shows do not work.

Each year around 20,000 people in New South Wales are charged with cannabis possession. Around 90 per cent of those charges are for small quantities for personal use. The burden falls disproportionately on young people, Aboriginal people and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The committee recommended that the Government decriminalise the personal use and possession of cannabis and prioritise the debate and passage of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Amendment (Regulation of Personal Adult Use of Cannabis) Bill 2023, which is currently before the House. The committee also recommended a staged reform pathway, which is a very pragmatic approach. First, remove custodial sentences for personal possession; secondly, decriminalise; and thirdly, following evaluation, move toward a legal, regulated market that eliminates the illicit trade and ensures safety and accessibility.

The evidence from Canada, which the committee found offers the most useful model, shows that legalisation can be achieved in a way that does not increase cannabis-related harm but reduces the harms of criminalisation and organised crime. The committee's findings were unequivocal. Maintaining cannabis prohibition is irrational and out of step with community expectations. As the report states:

... it is absurd, draconian and antiquated that in New South Wales the maximum penalty for the possession of a small quantity of cannabis is two years imprisonment.

That is two years in jail for a plant that can now be lawfully prescribed by a doctor, that is used by one in three Australians in their lifetime, and that is legal for adult use in the Australian Capital Territory, Canada, Germany, Malta, Uruguay, and multiple States in the United States. The committee also considered the regulation of medicinal cannabis. It heard evidence from the Therapeutic Goods Administration, the Office of Drug Control, the Australian Medicinal Cannabis Association and many others. It found that Australian producers face a greater regulatory burden than importers, creating an uneven playing field that disadvantages local growers and manufacturers.

The committee recommended that the New South Wales Government advocate to the Commonwealth to prioritise locally produced medicinal cannabis and provide targeted industry support—through grants, streamlined licensing and access to clinical trial funding—to help build a sustainable domestic industry. The domestic medicinal cannabis industry is very impressive. I have been a judge for the past two years on the Cannabiz Awards, which is a very prestigious award in the Australian and New Zealand cannabis and hemp industry. The field in New South Wales is very competitive. I was impressed by the amount of fantastic innovation in that space in Australia. We are becoming world leaders.

It is extremely disappointing that we are not protecting our domestic market against the overwhelming inflow and importation of overseas medicinal cannabis products. I hope that will not be a missed opportunity. Both the State and Commonwealth governments need to pay more urgent attention to it. We heard that decriminalisation would deliver significant savings to the criminal justice system, reduce prison overcrowding and support the goals of Closing the Gap by reducing the number of First Nations people in prison. The Cannabis Cautioning Scheme—which has been in place for quite a few years now—still sees so many people being sent to court and prison on cannabis charges, which is discriminatory, unfair, unjust and urgently needs attention.

I hear that the Government is close to doing something in relation to the Drug Summit and that an announcement may be in store before the end of October. We know that the Government responded to this report, and on recommendations 3 to 6 of the final report, which recommended the varying approaches to decriminalise or legalise cannabis in New South Wales, it stated:

The NSW Government's policy position, which has been made clear to the community in previous public statements by the Government, is that it has no intention to decriminalise or legalise cannabis or to take steps to do so.

This runs contrary, one would think, to another part of the Government response, where it stated:

The Report on the 2024 NSW Drug Summit and its recommendations will guide the Government's consideration of any drug policy reform in NSW. The Government will respond to the report's recommendations in due course.

While I was not a voting member of the inquiry, I appreciate the work that committee members did—and I particularly thank the chair, the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham, and the Hon. Stephen Lawrence for his work—to get to a point of consensus and to genuinely put something before the Government. I urge the Government: Do not just rule it out. Have a look and treat it as something alongside the Drug Summit recommendations.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (17:42): I make some comments about the report entitled *Impact of the regulatory framework for cannabis in New South Wales: Final report*, which was a landmark report of this Parliament. I think it will be looked back upon as a key step on the pathway to decriminalisation and legalisation of cannabis in New South Wales. Both of those things are inevitable. I say that it is a landmark report for a few reasons. It unequivocally found that the State should commence on a pathway to decriminalisation and ultimately legalisation. Importantly, it did so with tripartisan support. One of the notable things about the inquiry is that it included Liberal members; quite a few Labor members; the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party members, including the Hon. Robert Borsak, the leader of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party; and the chair, the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham, who all voted in support of the key findings and recommendations.

The Greens are not members of Portfolio Committee No. 1, but Ms Cate Faehrmann has just spoken to the report. If The Greens were there, they surely would have also voted in support of it. It is really something for the Parliament and community to ponder—that when given a free vote, MPs in this place are voting overwhelmingly for a pathway to decriminalisation and legalisation of cannabis. That is quite contrary, to be frank, to the position of the major parties on the question of drug policy and cannabis legalisation.

That really invites us to think about the political and policy process and ask exactly why—when there is very widespread community support for decriminalisation and legalisation—when MPs of major and minor parties are given a free vote that they vote in support of it. Yet there is a stasis in the policy process, where none of the major parties are effectively willing to take steps to move towards it and ultimately take it to an election. We should ponder that question because the findings of the report, which are tripartisan, are very clear. Many jurisdictions around the world, including ones that are comparable to Australia and New South Wales, have decriminalised and legalised cannabis. It has happened in Canada, in the majority of states in the United States of America and across a raft of other countries, including in East Asia, Europe, Latin America and all sorts of places.

Cannabis decriminalisation and legalisation is where gay marriage was in the early 2010s. The landslide in support has really started. Only the most ideological are rigidly opposed to it. Many people—perhaps a majority—are in support of it, whether they are willing to state it or not, and many are open-minded on the question. But it is an urgent question. It is not one that we can defer endlessly to the future because people—on the evidence that the inquiry accepted—are being significantly harmed by criminal law in this respect. They are being dragged into the criminal justice system and are marred with criminal records. Often these are vulnerable people. They are being subjected to harmful searches and their pathway to the criminal justice system roundabout is well and truly started by cannabis laws. We should not think of this as a policy question that can be endlessly deferred; it is of the most acute urgency.

The support on the committee speaks to a widespread view in the community that it is no longer justified to apply the strictures of criminal law to the use of cannabis. The committee recommended in recommendation 3 that the Government prioritise parliamentary debate and facilitate passage of the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham's Drug Misuse and Trafficking Amendment (Regulation of Personal Adult Use of Cannabis) Bill 2023. That was the recommendation around the decriminalisation of cannabis. Recommendation 4 was a related one—that the Government decriminalise personal use and possession of cannabis. As I said, these recommendations were passed with the overwhelming support of the committee.

Recommendation 5 recommends a staged process. We were careful—and the community ultimately expects the Government to be careful—on moving towards a process of full legalisation. We recommended that after decriminalisation the Government further engage in a staged process of reform and review and consider legislating to legalise the use of cannabis by adults in a manner that eliminates the illicit market so far as is possible and creates a safe, regulated and accessible statewide market for legal cannabis. For members who are cautious and think about the pushback from the right-wing media or how it might play out at an election, I invite them to dwell on the fact that the leader of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, a Liberal Party MP, three Labor MPs and—perhaps unsurprisingly—the leader of the Legalise Cannabis Party voted in support of that recommendation.

A related finding that leads to an important consideration, which is what is being achieved by criminalisation, was finding 3, which states:

The current criminal regulation of cannabis is not achieving its ostensible purpose of reducing use, and noting evidence that decriminalisation in other jurisdictions has not led to a material increase in use, is causing significant harm, criminalising users and forcing them to access cannabis through an illicit market that fuels organised crime.

An issue that was important in the inquiry, and I know is important in the community—anyone who thinks about the legalisation of cannabis eventually has to address this question—is the question of whether the current criminal regime is preventing mental illness. There is widespread concern that use of cannabis can cause psychosis. In some people's minds this is a rationale for the criminal regime. We received evidence from the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists strongly supporting decriminalisation. The report states on page 21:

NSW Health referred to the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists submission, which referenced a large cohort study from the United States which found there was no statistically significant difference in the rates of psychosis-related diagnoses or prescribed antipsychotics in states with medical or recreational cannabis policies compared to states without such policies.

This question of mental health is a really important one, but we must be guided by the evidence. Another important question is whether the current criminal regime is reducing use, because those who do not like cannabis sometimes say they support criminalisation because it suppresses use. The evidence we took in the inquiry does not support that conclusion. The Australian Capital Territory has decriminalised, and there has been no increase in use. Overseas jurisdictions that have legalised report a modest increase in use, but not among the cohorts that are vulnerable, and no increase in cannabis-related harm. The committee found:

Finding 5

That the decriminalisation and legalisation of cannabis can be done in a way that does not materially increase cannabis related harms and reduces the significant harms associated with the current criminal regime.

Another important recommendation was recommendation 6, again supported by the overwhelming majority of committee members, including a member of the Liberal Party and a member of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, which states:

That the Government, in the period before ... decriminalisation and legalisation ... immediately act to permanently remove the possibility of custodial sentences for adults found in possession of small quantities of cannabis ...

It was based on a finding, again supported in a tripartisan way, which states:

Irrespective of the merits of decriminalisation and legalisation, it is absurd, draconian and antiquated that in New South Wales the maximum penalty for the possession of a small quantity of cannabis is two years imprisonment.

I invite members to reflect on the strength of those words coming from a broad coalition of members in this place. The committee also made findings on the medicinal cannabis scheme, including the important finding that, in reality, it is facilitating recreational use. I invite members to reflect on a situation where it could be argued that the advantaged have created a scheme to protect themselves. If someone is advantaged enough to go to a doctor and get a prescription, if they have the wherewithal and the means, they can engage in recreational use of cannabis in a legal way. If someone is not so advantaged, then they are subject to the full strictures of the criminal law. That is inequitable and harmful. For those reasons, I hope that this report ultimately finds widespread support in this Parliament, because it recommends a long-overdue social reform that will remove some terrible harms being caused by the current regime.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (17:52): I take note of the report entitled *Impact of the regulatory framework for cannabis in New South Wales: Final report*. I endorse all of the comments of my colleague the Hon. Stephen Lawrence in his contribution. I thank all of the members of the committee for the constructive way in which they approached this important issue. I also reflect on the broad agreement—with members of the Coalition voting with members of the Labor Party, The Greens, the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party and so on—in support of the recommendations and findings in this report. I am not going to revisit some of the areas that my colleague the Hon. Stephen Lawrence spoke about, but I want to talk about a couple of things. The first is the notion that, at the moment, we have effectively a two-tiered system.

If someone has the ability to obtain a prescription for cannabis, and the money to pay for that cannabis—which is quite expensive; often twice the price of cannabis on the black market, according to evidence before the committee—they can avoid the criminal justice system by walking around with their script and their tub of prescribed cannabis. Yet people who cannot afford to pay the cost of seeing a doctor or for the prescriptions each month or week—whatever the usage is—will invariably end up in the criminal justice system for using cannabis for recreational use. It is not fair. We should not have two tiers to a criminal justice system. Everyone should have the ability to medicate using cannabis, if that is what they need. We should be treating recreational users in a way that does not discriminate against people who are poor. That is what is going on at the moment.

The second thing I wish to talk about is one of the report's findings that my colleague the Hon. Stephen Lawrence also spoke about and which bears repeating. Finding 7 states:

Irrespective of the merits of decriminalisation and legalisation, it is absurd, draconian and antiquated that in New South Wales the maximum penalty for the possession of a small quantity of cannabis is two years imprisonment. This degree of criminalisation, which has persisted for many decades, is irrational and an affront to the community's sense of justice and can be remedied by the Parliament in a way consistent with a policy position of the Government.

An important finding from this report is that we can deal sensibly and rationally with the ways in which people get caught up in the criminal justice system by following the recommendations that the committee has made to achieve the objectives. Sensible programs like the Drug Court and diversionary programs are simply not being utilised. Instead of dealing with cannabis abuse as a health problem, we are consigning people to the criminal justice system. It is absurd that having a conviction for cannabis use will exclude you from access to diversionary programs and the Drug Court. It is absurd that we have a situation where the Drug Court is a lottery, such that a person's postcode—where they live—determines who gets access to it and who does not. The very people who need the help provided by diversionary programs like the Drug Court and other assistance programs to deal with their drug issues are the ones being adversely affected by treating cannabis possession as a criminal problem.

This report sets out a road map for immediate steps that can be taken, in line with Government policy, that will remove the problem of being caught up unfairly in the criminal justice system. While members may think it is insignificant, and may say, "Nobody goes to jail for cannabis possession," the facts are that they do. What happens is people get a chance through a diversionary program. People may be lucky—they live in an area with a Drug Court and they end up being selected in the lottery and go there—but once they are through that system, if they have still got a problem, then the convictions they have had previously, or the fact they have been through those programs, count against the very people who need that support. They end up being thrust front and centre into the criminal justice system. Once they have got one conviction, the next time they invariably end up with a greater penalty, a greater sentence, and people ultimately end up going to prison for a relatively minor offence of personal-use cannabis possession. It is really unacceptable in this day and age. It is something that ought to be addressed.

One of the report's recommendations sensibly sets out the exact measures that need to be taken to correct the specific problems around this. What is more important, as I said, is that this report also provides a road map for a future government, if it should choose to do so, to implement decriminalisation. The view of the committee is that the model adopted in Canada is the most appropriate one to follow because of similarities between Canada and Australia in the way national, state and territory jurisdictions interact in both nations. The way that Canada effectively controls how products are distributed at a wholesale level means it is the appropriate model to follow if New South Wales does it, and we have set out a road map for that.

The committee also supports the legalisation of cannabis. The world has moved on. A lot of the current laws against personal quantities and the use of cannabis emanate from the failed policy of a war of drugs from decades ago. The committee recognised that and made recommendations to support decriminalisation. It also provided a road map towards legalisation should the policy of the Government shift. The way to achieve that is set out in the report. I will not add much more. I thank the committee secretariat and the chair of the committee for the enormous amount of work they did. This inquiry was very interesting. The chance to visit a cannabis production facility on the North Coast was eye-opening for me, although my clothes stank of cannabis for days afterwards. I dry-cleaned my suit jacket at least six times, but it still stinks of cannabis. It was great to see the operation.

It was also good to hear evidence from people on the North Coast who have been adversely affected by the criminal justice system. We also learned about the effect that red tape is having on businesses that are involved in the production of medicinal cannabis, and the flow-on costs affecting people who use lawfully prescribed cannabis. The flourishing black market is one of the things making it so expensive. People who cannot afford the high costs because of regulation often end up seeing a doctor, obtaining one lawful script and then refilling their tub of cannabis off the black market. It is the only thing they can afford to do. This excellent report is great reading for every member of this Parliament and for the wider public. I recommend it as a road map towards decriminalisation and, ultimately, legalisation. I commend the report to the House.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK (18:02): On behalf of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, I contribute to debate on the committee report entitled *Impact of the regulatory framework for cannabis in New South Wales: Final report*. I commend the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham, chair of the committee, for his principled leadership and the thorough, evidence-based approach he brought to this important work. The final report of Portfolio Committee No. 1 – Premier and Finance is a landmark document that reflects the kind of practical, compassionate policymaking our communities deserve. My party also believes that patients who follow lawful medical advice should not be treated as criminals. We believe medical cannabis is medicine.

Our policy is grounded in common sense, fairness and respect for patients. I am pleased that many of the report's recommendations reflect those same values. We strongly support recommendation 1, which calls for prioritising and incentivising the domestic cultivation and manufacture of medicinal cannabis. Local production not only ensures quality and supply for patients but also creates jobs in regional communities. That is something our party has always championed. We also strongly support recommendation 2, which urges the Government to establish targeted programs and grants, streamline regulations and fund clinical trials to grow the domestic

medicinal cannabis sector. That aligns directly with our action plan to cut red tape, support local industry and make access easier and more affordable for patients.

This report shows what is possible when members work together across party lines in good faith. It is a credit to the chair, the committee and all members who contributed to it. This shows the benefits of working with someone like the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham who listens, leads with integrity and puts people before politics. The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party stands ready to support the next steps in deliver meaningful reform on medical cannabis production and controlled use. We support a future New South Wales that leads the nation in compassionate, evidence-based cannabis policy.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES

Reports

Debate resumed from 5 August 2025.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (18:05): I take note of the committee's report entitled *The prevalence, causes and impacts of loneliness in New South Wales*, which was tabled in August. Firstly, I thank the committee secretariat, which supported the committee throughout the inquiry. I also thank my fellow committee members, the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, the Hon. Scott Barrett, Dr Amanda Cohn, the Hon. Anthony D'Adam, the Hon. Taylor Martin, the Hon. Bob Nanva and the Hon. Emily Suvaal. The committee approached this inquiry in the spirit of true investigation. Finding ways to prevent and protect against loneliness is a big issue. I appreciate that every committee member engaged with this issue in the spirit of open inquiry. I now turn to what the inquiry uncovered and some of the recommendations it made. There were a lot of submissions and quite a lot of public interest in this inquiry.

The committee received 146 submissions from individuals, the government and public sectors, the community, not-for-profit organisations, health and mental health services, academics, research institutions and professional advocacy bodies. I will not single out any submission, because they were all very thoughtful and considered. The people who gave evidence also provided a lot for the committee to consider. The inquiry looked at the prevalence of loneliness, including vulnerable populations, contributing factors and physical and psychological impacts. It also considered the existing initiatives to mitigate loneliness that are already out there. The committee went through the issues sequentially, starting with trying to define loneliness and its associated experiences. It looked at the differences between loneliness and social isolation. It also considered the fact that loneliness is something we all experience at times, and how that differs from social isolation.

The committee then went on to look at who experiences loneliness. It was interesting to hear from different researchers who were all using the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia data. They cut it in different ways to identify the different groups that experience loneliness. This meshed with other research conducted by advocacy-type groups, such as Ending Loneliness Together, which identified that one in three people are potentially experiencing loneliness at any given time. We could not say definitively that any one group of people in the community is more prone to loneliness. We could say that young people experience loneliness in a particular way, and there is something almost counterintuitive about it, given that social media has been explored as a way of creating connections. There was the paradox of social media being a way for young people to find their tribe or their people, but also being a means of keeping individuals isolated behind screens and not necessarily out connecting in the world. We looked at both the positives and the negatives in that respect.

We looked at the experience of loneliness in old people and received some very powerful evidence, research and testimony from older people about their experiences of loneliness and the very good programs being trialled. One was by Uniting, whose representatives talked about the concept of reaching in to support people who are experiencing loneliness. We often expect people who are experiencing loneliness to step up, join a group and somehow find the internal resources to make connections with other people, but Uniting talked about that idea of reaching in to people experiencing loneliness. We looked at carers and the particular circumstances that create loneliness for those who are charged with caring, especially in acute circumstances. We also looked at the economic disadvantage that can contribute to the experience of loneliness and the barriers that that creates for individuals.

We looked at how, with both the experience of loneliness and potential initiatives to mitigate loneliness, there are multi-level explanations. There are the individuals experiencing loneliness, and they have particular predispositions that might make them more likely to experience loneliness. Then there are community-level factors, including the physical and built environment that we live in. In fact, very interesting evidence was given by researchers at the University of Sydney about lonelygenic environments. By that, they mean environments that do not create space for people to gather and have incidental interactions.

Then we considered loneliness at the population level. What are the kinds of circumstances that create or exacerbate loneliness at a population level? We received quite a bit of evidence about stigma and shame around loneliness and how, again, an education campaign at a population level would be an appropriate way to try to reduce some of that stigma. We have become much more accustomed to talking about mental health generally, yet the issue of loneliness still evokes stigma and shame. There was consideration of what might need to be done to reduce that.

There is a bit of research on impacts of loneliness in terms of health outcomes and also costs to the health system over time when people's health deteriorates as a consequence of loneliness. Interestingly, it is not just mental health; the research tells us that it impacts on physical health outcomes as well. We considered a lot of that evidence. As I said, it is a multi-level, multifaceted experience for which there are no easy solutions. There are, of course, intersections of risk factors. As a consequence, there is the need to consider whole-of-government responses to the experience of loneliness and how we deal with it as a compassionate society.

In terms of interventions and solutions, many of the committee's recommendations—and there were 20 of them—called out community-focused, community-based activities and support networks that were demonstrably beneficial to people experiencing loneliness. We spoke with organisations that provided peer support, including mentoring. I spoke in this House the other day about Mentoring Men, which was one of the organisations that spoke to the committee. We looked at and spoke with neighbourhood centres as being organisations that are very close to community and a key resource for individuals seeking connection. In a similar vein, other community-located organisations like local libraries came out as being important institutions and third spaces for people to gather and make connections.

It was not a controversial inquiry. If there was anything approaching controversial, it was probably that we call out the role for local government to prioritise equitable access to third spaces and green spaces. It is always contentious to suggest that another tier of government might be part of the solution, given that we are all resource constrained, but the connection with local community is such that it was an appropriate recommendation. Another locally based initiative that was considered and encouraged was youth hubs, and recommendations were written in support of them. That was based on the idea that young people in particular, in looking to connect, need their own spaces where they feel comfortable sharing their experiences and making connections.

As I mentioned earlier, one thing that came out quite strongly was the impact of socio-economic status on the experience of loneliness. That is obvious in some areas in that, if a person does not have the resources to go and have a coffee at the cafe with their friend, to join a group that might require some resourcing or to travel the distance needed to make connections, it is much harder. The group of researchers who spoke about lonelygenic environments also spoke about the impact of lack of green spaces on mental health and the experience of loneliness. There is a real concern that, as we go down the path of ensuring housing, we make sure that planning takes into account the need for appropriate third and green spaces. There is also a concern that planning done in the past has resulted in areas, particularly in Western Sydney, that do not have access to those same third spaces and transport options. My colleagues have also been concerned about those issues in a rural and regional context.

The committee made recommendations about local experience, and I think some of my colleagues on the committee will talk specifically about some of those. We talked about the role of local government. We also talked about the fact that anything done from the State level needs to be a whole-of-government approach. This is not an issue that we can just charge the Minister for Mental Health with and say, "Solve it for us." It has to be built in to all of our key agencies and the work that they do, in everything from planning to health to education. The inquiry was a really good experience. It was broad; it was collegial. The recommendations are sensible, and I am looking forward to the Government's response to them. Again, I thank the other members of the committee and the secretariat for their diligent work during the inquiry.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (18:18): I thank the committee chair for her speech and for the wonderful job she did chairing the committee. It goes without saying that I also acknowledge the secretariat, who, as always, did a wonderful job. I must admit that when I was first substituted onto this inquiry, it was not something that I jumped at. It was not something that I was keen on because I did not think it was within my remit. But very quickly I learnt that it was smack bang in the middle of what I am here for, which is to represent regional communities and to ensure that regional New South Wales in particular remains the best place in which to live, work and raise a family. The more I sunk my teeth into the inquiry, the more it became obvious that this is exactly what I should be doing. Making sure that our regional communities are vibrant goes a long way towards creating opportunities for people and helping them to avoid slipping into loneliness. Regional communities can be incredibly friendly and welcoming places. They are renowned and famous for that, but there are also circumstances in our regional towns that exacerbate loneliness. We talk about distance and the lack of access to facilities that people have in metropolitan areas.

The experience of loneliness in a regional area is very different to what someone might experience in a metropolitan area. I am not detracting from the experience of loneliness in Sydney, but we need to recognise the differences that people face if we want to make a change in this space. One of the things that became abundantly clear early on was that you can have the most vibrant and welcoming community, but if you cannot get to those communities or events, then it is all for nothing. The importance of transport, particularly for people in regional areas, was very obvious to the committee. If someone loses their driver licence, for whatever reason—whether it is medical or they have done the wrong thing or they have aged out of it—that really takes away a lot of their agency. Being unable to go to different events by themselves can force further withdrawal from other activities. The other aspect to that is the current cost of living. The member who preceded me in this debate referred to the socio-economic impacts that affect loneliness. Expenses such as the price of fuel and the cost of damage caused by repeatedly driving long distances will add up over time, and people start having to make decisions.

Recommendation 11 of the report asks the New South Wales Government to acknowledge the importance of transport. Recommendation 12 asks the New South Wales Government to consider alternative transport options. Being the good Nationals member I am, obviously I pushed to have the regional seniors travel card put into one of the recommendations because they are the things we need to be thinking of to somehow overcome transport barriers. Something I have always believed and have long spoken about is how important our community groups and clubs are for holding our communities together. They are at the front line of combating the symptoms of loneliness, but also its causes. If people are engaged in their community and have a network of connections, that provides a safety net for when things go wrong. If events lead them to the path of loneliness, they already have people around them who will help to soften the blow. We need to make sure our rugby clubs, tennis clubs, bridge clubs, men's sheds and run clubs—whatever they may be—are strong throughout regional New South Wales.

Clubs not only provide the opportunity for connection but also pick up on red flags. For example, if someone stops turning up for cricket training that they had attended every week or stops coming to cards on a Wednesday night, that could be a flag. When people know that person, they can quickly pick up on it and say, "Johnno's not here today. Let's give him a call and see what's going on." The other thing organisations such as the Country Women's Association do is create a flow-on effect that they build on. People who go to the CWA have that network around them, but the CWA puts on events that also combat loneliness, such a drinks day or a high tea, that helps build the community. I cop a few jibes and giggles every time I congratulate someone for winning a competition or a new footy team starting up in Condobolin, but I am okay with that because I know how critical those clubs and organisations are to our communities.

The inquiry highlighted the importance of clubs and groups in combating loneliness pre-emptively as well. People who are part of a group have their friends and their groups that they can lean on to provide a safety net. The other thing that is particularly important in regional areas is the events. We all talk about how friendly rural people are and how they all know each other in town, but someone who lives on a farm might be an hour and a half from that town, which means they only get together a couple of times a year—perhaps at the show, the campdraft, or the old boys' rugby match. If one of those events is cancelled, that has a big impact on their social calendar. If the campdraft is not on one year because of cattle tick, that hurts people's social connectivity. If the show is washed out or if the footy club's gathering does not go ahead, that hurts the local community.

Another aspect the inquiry touched on was the importance of public spaces where people can meet within the built environment, which often promotes connection. I remember working for a charity during the drought that threw its support behind a tennis camp in Cudal. That was great fun for the kids who got to come and hit tennis balls on this very hot day at Easter time, but it was not really about them or about finding the next tennis star. It was so the mums and dads, or whoever was looking after the kids that day, could come to the tennis club, help to cook the barbecue, hand out ice creams and make sure everyone was wearing sunscreen. While they were doing that, they were chatting about what was going on at home, how everyone was and what might be coming up in the future. Rural areas probably do not have the same standard of facilities as those in metropolitan areas, such as tennis clubs and local green spaces.

Green spaces in rural areas sounds like an obvious thing, but during drought people do not have green spaces, technically, because there is no grass. During drought, for rural people to be able to stand on a bit of green grass is quite important. The same charity provided shade cloth to different areas so that people could get out of the heat. Recommendation 9 refers specifically to the importance of prioritising the development of green spaces in regional areas. Many green spaces are funded by grants. It is becoming harder and harder for community groups to obtain grants, particularly smaller regional communities who are competing with applicants whose applications have been written by professionals in places such as Newcastle and Wollongong. It might seem frivolous for a cricket club to win a grant to get some lights, but that club could be the lifeblood of a small community.

Recommendation 4 refers to extending The Welcome Experience, which seems to be a great program. At the moment, it is rolled out in a limited number of council areas, which also affects essential workers. In regional

areas, everyone is essential. The lady who works at the local rural supply shop could also be the president of the show society. The local mechanic may also be the coach of the soccer team. All those things are critical. The other thing The Welcome Experience does is incorporate partners. For example, if someone was moving to a town, it could help them to find a job but also help to connect their partners to the part of the community they might want to engage with.

I give a big shout-out to the committee, particularly, for visiting Orange. One of the first things that made me realise that the work of the committee was important is the discussion of how the committee could get firsthand experience of the regional perspective. I thank the chair for agreeing to hold one of the hearings in Orange. I thank the Hon. Bob Nanva, committee chair the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine, and all the members of the committee for going to Orange for that experience. It was critically important to have regional voices heard.

Throughout the inquiry, it became very clear that loneliness is a huge problem right across New South Wales, and it is increasing. In the modern world we are more connected, more updated and more productive than ever before, but it seems that people are losing genuine connection. We cannot simply think that when a person has a problem, the solution lies in medical treatment. We need to look upstream at how we make sure our communities are thriving so that people do not fall into loneliness. If you live in a rural community and you have good connections, you have a good group of friends and family and you are part of a good sports club, take it upon yourself to put your arm around someone who might not be so fortunate. Play your part in building a connected society.

The Social Issues Committee was a good committee to be a member of because it is a good example of how members of Parliament can work well together. This was my first interaction with the chair, who proved to be very different from the person I thought she was, given that this House can be a stage. All members of the committee worked very well together. I thank everyone who was involved. Let's all work together to make a better community.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Reports

Debate resumed from 9 September 2025.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (18:29): I rise to speak on the *Review of the 2023-2024 Annual Reports of the ICAC and the Inspector of the ICAC*. The report made a total of five recommendations and nine findings, which I trust will be accepted in full and implemented with haste by the Government. One of the most significant matters raised in the report concerns the jurisdictional and legal gap exposed by Operation Hector. The commission has made it abundantly clear through formal correspondence, briefings to the committee and evidence at public hearings that section 8 (2A) of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act in its current form fails to expressly capture public funds expended through subcontracting arrangements.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Order! It being 6.30 p.m., according to sessional order, the time for debate on committee reports and Government responses has concluded.

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

Bills

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

In Committee

Consideration resumed from 16 October 2025.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Before debate on the bill was interrupted, Ms Sue Higginson moved The Greens amendments Nos 20 to 23 and 25 on sheet c2025-216E in globo. Are there any further speakers?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (20:02): I believe I was midway through speaking.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Ms Abigail Boyd has the call.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: The Greens amendments Nos 20 to 23 and 25 seek to delete new sections 223A and 223B. Amendment No. 21 seeks to delete new section 223A, which would grant the Minister broad powers to issue guidelines on matters that would ordinarily be dealt with either in the legislation itself or in regulations. The Government has already agreed to the amendment that allows those matters to be dealt with by regulation but

still wants to retain the power to have them in guidelines. The Legislation Review Committee noted the unusual nature of that provision and made this comment:

The Bill would insert proposed section 223A into the *Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010* to empower the NSW Minister to issue guidelines about 'any matter relating to the delivery of education and care services', including in relation to quality standards and disciplinary proceedings.

The Committee generally prefers that substantive matters are set out in legislation where they can be subjected to a greater level of parliamentary scrutiny, particularly where they affect individual rights and liberties. The Committee understands that incorporating matters in external guidelines may provide flexibility and allow updates to reflect changing regulatory needs. However, in this case, the Committee notes that authorised officers must comply with the guidelines in relation to contraventions of disciplinary provisions and the issuing of disciplinary notices. The content of the guidelines may, therefore, impact individual rights and obligations. For these reasons, the Committee refers this matter to Parliament for consideration.

Amendment No. 22 seeks to delete new section 223B, which would grant the Minister the power to give directions to any person involved in the provision of an early learning service to take action to prioritise the safety, welfare or wellbeing of children attending services. Importantly, the regulatory authority already has the power, including through the imposition of conditions on service approval, to achieve the effect of those directions and is given an explicit power under new section 261A of the bill to make directions of the kind proposed to be given to the Minister under new section 223B. When I questioned the Minister's office about that, I was told that it would be more powerful for such directions to come instead from the Minister in the form of an announcement. To be honest, I took that to mean that the Government was more concerned about the look of the action than the outcome. We have spoken a lot about this Labor Government governing by media release, and The Greens do not believe that is sufficient reason to grant the Minister such extraordinary powers that are not reviewable by the Parliament.

Amendments Nos 20 and 23 are consequential to amendments Nos 21 and 22. Amendment No. 25 seeks to delete new section 261B, which puts the regulatory authority under the direction and control of the Minister. That is contrary to the Government's announcement that it would create an independent regulatory authority following the Wheeler review, which notably included the objective of removing the conflict of interest when the regulatory authority is involved in the regulation of government-run early learning services. I note that the Government has indicated that it still intends to establish the regulatory authority as an independent body, in accordance with the Wheeler review, in which case we would expect to see those provisions changed at that time.

I thank the Committee for allowing me to put the amendments in the way that I first intended to. I sincerely thank all of the members who appreciated the difficulties that people can sometimes have with particular content and who allowed me some dignity and courtesy last Thursday night. The secrecy in this sector is a huge part of the problems that we have seen uncovered this year. It has been a long journey to convince the regulatory authority to release its documents and the Department of Education to open up about how it regulates the sector. I am loath to see that secrecy continue. The amendments take us in the direction of greater transparency, openness and debate in this Parliament, rather than things being decided behind closed doors. Child safety should be above political games. Unfortunately, I believe this Government puts its media schedule and the look of the thing above actual policy outcomes, and that is not where we should be regarding matters such as this.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Order! The member's time has expired because she commenced her speech on a previous occasion. If another member were to speak, Ms Abigail Boyd could continue her contribution at a later stage.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I have one more sentence, if I can be granted leave to finish my contribution.

Leave granted.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: The lack of consultation with experts and stakeholders on the bill, the departure from the national consultation process and the way in which the Government has treated parliamentarians and the inquiry procedure showed just what sorts of government decisions would be made using those extraordinary powers without parliamentary scrutiny. I commend the amendments to the Committee.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (20:08): I oppose The Greens amendments Nos 20 to 23 and 25 to the *Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Amendment Bill*. The amendments would remove new sections 223A, 223B and 261B, which establish the framework for ministerial oversight of the regulatory authority under the bill. In effect, the amendments would strip the Minister of the capacity to issue directions or provide policy guidance to the regulator in the public interest. That approach is inconsistent with well-established legislative frameworks across multiple regulatory domains in New South Wales and would undermine clear lines of accountability for matters that are fundamentally about the safety and welfare of children.

Now that there have been a few days since the debate was adjourned on Thursday, I have had the opportunity to have a good look at where we can make some real comparisons to what The Greens are proposing and what it would mean. Ministerial oversight is not a novel concept; it is a settled feature of modern regulatory

governance in this State. When the former Coalition Government established icare and the State Insurance Regulatory Authority [SIRA] in 2015, the Parliament enacted explicit provisions to ensure that the Minister retained the ability to give directions in the public interest. Section 7 of the State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015 provides:

- (1) The Minister may give the ICNSW Board a written direction in relation to ICNSW if the Minister is satisfied that it is necessary to do so in the public interest.
- (2) The ICNSW Board must ensure that the direction is complied with.

That provision is accompanied by procedural safeguards, including mandatory consultation with the board and a requirement to publish a notice in the *Government Gazette* setting out the reasons why the direction is in the public interest. Similarly, section 20 of the same Act provides the Minister with the power to give directions to SIRA—again, where satisfied that it is necessary to do so in the public interest. That structure has enabled both icare and SIRA, two independent statutory authorities, to regulate with operational independence while maintaining a clear line of ministerial responsibility and parliamentary accountability.

The same approach is also evident in section 8AB of the Children's Guardian Act 2019. That section allows the Minister to issue guidelines to the Children's Guardian in relation to the implementation and enforcement of the Child Safe Standards. Subsection 8AB (2) then provides that the Children's Guardian must act in a way that is consistent with those guidelines. That is because the protection of children requires a regulatory model where responsibility ultimately rests with an elected Minister answerable to this Parliament. The Greens amendments, in effect, would remove that accountability. In doing so, they would create a regulatory model without a clear mechanism for ministerial direction, so without a capacity to respond to emerging risks and without a responsible Minister who can be held to account when the system fails. In the context of early childhood education and care, where the consequences of regulatory failure can be serious, I do not think that is good governance.

Importantly, the oversight model in the bill is not arbitrary. It reflects the considered recommendations of Mr Chris Wheeler, a highly experienced regulator who has served as Deputy Ombudsman for 25 years. The model was, of course, designed to preserve regulatory independence while ensuring that the Government remains accountable for the system it establishes. Ultimately, it places some responsibility on the Minister of the day in the context that when there are failures in compliance—when the regulatory system breaks down—it will be the Minister who will be answerable to the Parliament. The amendments proposed by Ms Abigail Boyd would remove that accountability.

One cannot have a situation where the Minister of the day has no legal capacity to give a direction on behalf of the Government to the new regulatory authority. I understand why The Greens might be moving these amendments, but having a body that is entirely run by bureaucracy, that is not accountable—that has a situation where, for some reason, in this space, we are leaving the Minister void of any ability to direct the authority in the public interest—is absurd, given the fact that we were prepared to do that in icare. The Coalition was certainly happy to have that for icare and SIRA and the Children's Guardian. Why should it be any different with this particular independent regulator? For those reasons, I oppose these amendments.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (20:13): I make a second contribution to debate on the amendments. I spoke only briefly when we debated this on Thursday night in the interests of trying to facilitate the passage of the bill at that time. Given the concerns raised in Committee of the Whole, it is appropriate that I speak a second time. I agree with many of the points made by the Hon. Tania Mihailuk about the similar powers that are seen elsewhere and the importance of ministerial accountability. I will refute the points made by Ms Abigail Boyd about concerns she has in relation to the Government's decision-making processes.

As I outlined in my second reading speech, this bill and this specific power is the result of a long period of work, including extensive consultation at a national level. This is a very detailed and nuanced bill. A package of reforms is being undertaken through this bill, more broadly through regulation, and also at a national level. This is a huge reform package. The member said that the Government is simply doing things by media release, which is completely inaccurate. I made the point last week—I have made the point consistently—that when families entrust their children to early learning, they hand over what is most precious. Our job is to make sure that the law gives us the tools to act fast, fairly and decisively whenever children's safety is at risk. In its current form, the bill does exactly that.

The bill introduces a graduated set of regulatory responses, the most serious of which is a ministerial direction. That power is fundamentally important because the Minister is directly accountable to the people of New South Wales through this Parliament. As the Hon. Tania Mihailuk said, ministerial directions are a common regulatory mechanism and they reflect the specific role, responsibility and accountability to the people of New South Wales, through the Parliament, that Ministers have as stewards of a sector. The ministerial direction

is the most serious and forceful direction focused on promoting the paramount consideration of the rights and best interests of children.

Consistent with the graduated compliance and enforcement regime established by the bill, the ministerial direction power seeks to support and elevate the regulator's direction—which is also proposed in the bill—by creating a complementary power with greater consequence in relation to a breach. The penalty for a breach of a ministerial direction is almost double that of a breach of the regulator's direction power. It introduces a clear power for the Minister to issue binding directions to the sector when there is an unacceptable risk to child safety. It aims to close gaps exposed by recent incidents, lift transparency and provide critical support to the regulator when needed. The proposed amendments would remove that power and, in doing so, maintain the gaps closed by the power. The Government does not want the bill to be watered down.

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

Leave not granted.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: In good faith and in good conscience, members have raised issues with the appropriateness of the penalties that could be imposed upon nominated supervisors under the new fines provisions. I use those issues to explain why the Government believes the powers that the amendments seek to remove are necessary. I do not seek to re-prosecute that argument, but it provides a good example of the need for a ministerial directions power. We understand that the member intended to substantively address the perception that nominated supervisors are sometimes inappropriately remunerated considering the importance of their role. I am told that in practice some are appropriately remunerated and some are not. The bill reinforces the responsibilities conferred on the nominated supervisor. Those responsibilities must be taken seriously.

Perhaps, in time, nominated supervisors will have their own classification in the relevant Federal awards to ensure appropriate and consistent remuneration for those workers. Until that time, a ministerial direction could be issued to require the regulator to consider the concerns expressed in Parliament about the fairness of the conditions for nominated supervisors when the regulator exercises its powers under the Act. Such a direction to the regulator would be legally binding. It is not something that the regulator itself could do with certainty. The Government has heard the concerns of the Parliament and believes that the amendments would remove the avenue through which the Government could address those good faith concerns without compromising a nationally agreed position or serious cases—

Ms Abigail Boyd: Point of order: It seems this is straying well away from the amendments. Please draw the Minister back to the amendments.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: To the point of order: This is a specific example of why and how a ministerial direction could be used. I am addressing the amendments that were moved by The Greens and directly addressing the need for this particular power.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): There is no point of order.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The Government believes that the amendments would remove the avenue through which the Government could address these good faith concerns without compromising a nationally agreed position or serious cases where the full force of the law should be applied. A ministerial direction is an official instruction issued by a Minister that guides or mandates actions, policies or decisions within a specified scope. These directions can be targeted at the broader early childhood education sector, which includes service providers, individuals, a category of worker like nominated supervisors and other stakeholders working within the sector—anyone who is a relevant person under the Act.

The Minister's power is bounded by the criteria of the section in question and the principles of good administrative decision-making whereas the power of the regulator is limited by the regulator's functions under the national law. As such, both powers are complimentary and necessary. This power is not unfettered; there are important protections. The power is limited to circumstances where the direction is necessary to prevent unacceptable risk to the safety of a child or children, and the Minister must consult with and consider the advice of the regulator before issuing the direction.

The proposed ministerial direction power is not abstract. It is a practical lever the Minister can pull quickly to scale up the regulator's response and prioritise the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children. The bill and the Government's public explanation give clear examples of what a binding direction might require. It might require practice settings to prohibit mobile devices in rooms, to mandate active supervision patterns or require spot checks and additional training for teams in higher risk contexts. In relation to service operations the Minister could direct a temporary closure during a natural disaster or other acute risk event, and require a service to notify families about the status of a significant matter and the steps being taken to address risks. In relation to workforce and

safeguards, the Minister could require compliance with a prospective national educator register when adopted or completion of a compulsory child safety training by a specified date.

At its core, the primary outcome of the ministerial direction is ensuring an outcome, and that outcome is to secure child safety through swift, proportionate action. We can see that ministerial directions to regulators are also a specific feature of care economy regulatory functions and have been incorporated into Commonwealth aged care and disability legislation, including the Aged Care Act 2024 and the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013. There are also equivalent direction powers elsewhere, such as the New South Wales Public Health Act 2010 and the New South Wales Education Act 1990, where the Minister can make specific directions to non-government schools. As part of imposing a graduated regulatory response:

The Minister may suspend, reduce or impose conditions on the provision of financial assistance ... to or for the benefit of a school that is a non-compliant school.

The Act outlines when a school is a noncompliant school. We should have these powers for early learning in New South Wales. In public schools the Government already has strong intervention powers. The Government directly operates public schools and also directly employs the people who work in public schools. The Government's power to directly impact how public schools operate includes measures it can take as an employer, along with the ability to issue binding directions. For non-government schools, where the Government is not the employer and has fewer direct levers, the Minister has a directions power. The early childhood education and care sector has greater similarity to the non-government schools sector, but it is also characterised by the fact that the sector serves our youngest and most vulnerable children. There is a regulatory gap and without ministerial direction powers, the Government lacks the ability to respond quickly and decisively where systemic child safety risks emerge in early childhood education and care settings.

The sector serves our littlest children, yet the Government has had the fewest tools to intervene directly when compared to the school system. Ministerial directions close this gap by giving the Government comparable powers. This creates consistency in the Government's ability to ensure that the measures for the safety of children in early learning environments receive the same level of attention as those for children in schools. It gives the Minister and the regulator a modern, enforceable tool to set immediate safeguards. It aligns the law with the community's expectations and it does so with a child-first test and clear accountability. I have said many times that most providers and educators are doing the right thing and want to keep children safe. The bill helps them by lifting the floor and setting clear expectations when risk is identified. I commend these directions powers and the broader package as a fair, firm and necessary step to put child safety first.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (20:25): The amendments seek to ultimately fix what the Government was doing, which is departing from the national laws and scheme. The Government is in fact moving in the opposite direction to other States in this country. It is making New South Wales the outlier. The amendments seek to have a proper, independent regulator in accordance with the recommendations of the Wheeler inquiry. I commend the amendments to the Committee.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Ms Sue Higginson has moved The Greens amendments Nos 20 to 23 and 25 on c2025-216E. The question is that the amendments be agreed to.

The Committee divided.

Ayes20
Noes21
Majority.....1

AYES

Barrett
Boyd
Carter
Cohn
Faehrmann
Fang (teller)
Farlow

Franklin
Higginson
Hurst
Latham
MacDonald
Maclaren-Jones
Merton

Mitchell
Munro
Overall
Rath (teller)
Tudehope
Ward

NOES

Banasiak
Borsak
Buckingham
Buttigieg

Houssos
Jackson
Kaine
Lawrence

Moriarty
Murphy (teller)
Nanva (teller)
Primrose

NOES

D'Adam
Donnelly
Graham

Martin
Mihailuk
Mookhey

Ruddick
Sharpe
Suvaal

Amendments negatived.

The CHAIR (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question now is that the bill as amended be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I move:

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

Motion agreed to.

Adoption of Report

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: On behalf of the Hon Rose Jackson: I move:

That the report be adopted.

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (20:34): On behalf of the Hon. Rose Jackson: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

This debate has gone on for some time, but I take the opportunity to pay tribute to the work of the Deputy Premier that she instigated before going on leave, in order to achieve these landmark and nation-leading reforms. It is particularly special that it can pass today for her. I place that on the record at this time.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

ROAD TRANSPORT AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MICROMOBILITY VEHICLES AND SMARTCARDS) 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. John Graham.

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 a later hour of the sitting.

Motion agreed to.

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT (PLANNING SYSTEM REFORMS) BILL 2025**Second Reading Debate**

Debate resumed from 16 October 2025.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (20:38): I speak on the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Planning System Reforms) Bill 2025. This bill represents the most extensive restructure of the planning system

in New South Wales since the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act [EP&A Act] was introduced more than 45 years ago. It is a bill that will change not only how we make decisions about housing and infrastructure but also how we determine what is in the public interest, how we protect the environment and how we ensure—or un-ensure—integrity in government decision-making.

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act was created to bring transparency, accountability and fairness to development decisions in this State. It heralded the end of the era of a planning system that was disorderly, corrupt and run by political chaos and interference. At the time, we led the world in modernising planning. We introduced independent environmental impact assessments and integrated the concept of ecologically sustainable development and all of its very important principles. Underlying it all was the enshrining of public participation and merit review of environmentally harmful developments by objectors in a specialised court. This is why the Land and Environment Court was established alongside the introduction of the Act. The Act established a clear link between planning and the public interest. It created a process that was meant to balance economic growth with environmental protection and social equity while building a reliable and considered jurisprudence around environmental decision-making so we can get it as right as we possibly can.

The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces reminded us that former Labor MP Paul Landa drove our world-leading scheme. It should not be lost on members of this House, or on any current Labor MP, that Paul Landa went to my part of the world at the time. He went to Terania Creek in the Northern Rivers, where the community was engaged in the biggest community-led resistance to the exploitation of this country since the First Nations Frontier Wars—the battle to end rainforest logging. In those days, Labor MPs went to the environmental protection frontlines to listen and learn from the community, unlike the Labor MPs of today who seem to be waging a war of intolerance and division while shooting down the people and communities as "fringe" and "extreme". This Government just calls them "nimbys" and pretends they are the enemy and the reason for decades of housing policy failure delivered by both the Labor Party and the Liberal Party in this State.

The core principles that our planning system was built upon have been eroded over time by successive governments which have sought to prioritise development expediency over community confidence and ecological integrity. This bill not only continues that trajectory but also goes much further. It replaces an accountable and participatory planning system with one that centralises powers in the hands of the Minister and the new agencies which are under direct ministerial control. It removes many of the checks and balances designed to prevent political influence, corruption and poor decision-making. It weakens the Government's duty to consider the environment, consult the community and uphold the public interest.

The Government has presented these reforms as a necessary response to the housing crisis, but the vast majority of changes in this bill have very little to do with housing. Instead, the bill rewrites the foundation of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act in a way that affects all developments across New South Wales, including mining, industry, energy and infrastructure developments. The planning framework created by this bill can be used to facilitate any kind of project, regardless of its environmental or social impact, without the safeguards that the public expects and deserves. These changes will reshape the relationship between the Government, developers and the community and risks dismantling decades of progress in planning integrity and environmental law.

The changes threaten to take New South Wales back to a time when development was driven by political influence rather than evidence, expertise and the rule of law. The most significant changes in the bill include the creation of the Development Coordination Authority [DCA]; enshrining of the Housing Delivery Authority; introduction of a new class of development pathway, known as targeted assessment development; and the removal or dilution of existing duties that require public consultation, environmental consideration and transparent decision-making. The Development Coordination Authority will operate as a new State-level planning body within the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

[Members interjected.]

It feels like I am competing with members. The DCA will be empowered to coordinate and oversee planning and development activities across government, provide advice to the Minister and make determinations under delegation. It will also be able to request information from other public authorities. The authority is described as a mechanism for efficiency, but it will also operate with limited statutory oversight, minimal transparency obligations and no requirement for public reporting of its advice or decisions.

The bill also introduces a new planning mechanism called "targeted assessment development" [TAD]. Under this pathway, the Minister will be able to declare that certain developments or classes of development be subject to a truncated assessment process. Once a project is declared as a targeted assessment development, it will be assessed without consideration of the environment, the suitability of the site or the public interest. Those matters, which are currently mandatory under section 4.15 of the EP&A Act, are the engine room of the Act.

These provisions allow the Minister to selectively exempt developments from the central evaluative duties that form the legal foundation of the planning system where polycentric decision-making takes place. This bill is taking that sophisticated method of decision-making out for exempt developments.

When taken together, these changes create a planning regime that concentrates power in the Minister and central agencies, weakens the statutory duties of consent authorities and narrows the role of expert and community input. The bill also amends the duty to consider environmental impacts under section 5.5 of the Act so that it applies only to activities likely to have a significant effect on the environment rather than the current standard of requiring consideration of all environmental impacts to the fullest extent possible. The reforms are wide-reaching and technical, but their effect is clear. They create new opportunities for politically driven decision-making, reduce transparency and erode the independence of environmental assessment. They shift the focus of the planning system away from public accountability and towards administrative control.

The integrity of our planning system has always depended on the separation of powers, transparency of decisions and availability of public scrutiny. When those features are weakened, corruption will follow—it always has. This is not a speculative concern; it is the documented history of planning in New South Wales. From Operation Dasha to Operation Spicer and Operation Cyrus, the Independent Commission Against Corruption has repeatedly exposed what happens when discretion is centralised, lobbying is unchecked and the rules that protect the public interest are relaxed in favour of political convenience. It is deeply concerning that the Government has claimed this bill was developed with the guidance of the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

In his second reading speech, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces stated that the reforms were informed by ICAC's recommendations and that direct engagement with ICAC had shaped the proposed panel changes and implementation approach. The clear implication of those remarks was that ICAC had been consulted, and that it had reviewed the bill and endorsed its integrity mechanisms. However, ICAC has now confirmed to me in writing that this is not the case. ICAC explicitly stated that it was not asked to comment on the bill itself. While staff from ICAC's corruption prevention division met with departmental officers in 2024 and 2025 to provide general probity advice, it did not review this bill nor provide any formal endorsement of it.

ICAC also made it clear that its advice could be released, but the Government has chosen not to do so. This means the Parliament is being asked to pass one of the most far-reaching reforms of our planning system in 45 years without knowing whether the Government addressed the corruption risks identified by ICAC. It also means that the Minister's claim that the reforms were developed in consultation with ICAC is misleading. ICAC's advice was general in nature and focused on high-level principles, including the importance of clear assessment criteria, separation between assessment and decision-making, transparency in communication and documentation, management of lobbying and verification of proponent claims. These are foundational probity measures that any government should apply as a matter of course. None of those principles is implemented in this bill.

The Development Coordination Authority, which the department discussed with ICAC, has been created without independent oversight or a probity framework and has no requirement to make its deliberations or advice public. The new targeted assessment development mechanism, which allows the Minister to exempt projects from considering environmental or public interest matters, has been created without any integrity safeguards at all. ICAC has long warned that concentration of power combined with weak transparency and an absence of enforceable standards creates fertile ground for corruption. The Operation Dasha report concluded that the planning system in the former Canterbury City Council became vulnerable to corruption because of a lack of transparency, inadequate separation between councillors and staff, and the absence of clear rules for managing lobbying and conflicts of interest.

The bill repeats those same design flaws but, worse so, on a statewide scale. It replaces local accountability and procedural fairness with ministerial discretion and a lack of administrative oversight. If the Government had truly sought to reduce corruption risk in the planning system, it would have ensured that the bill was reviewed by the Independent Commission Against Corruption before being introduced. It would have released the commission's advice and explained how each of its recommendations was incorporated. Instead, the Government has not disclosed that advice and pressed ahead with a bill that expands discretionary power without clear limits or accountability. I have written to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and requested that the ICAC correspondence and any related probity advice be tabled in Parliament. If the Government is confident that its reforms reduce corruption risk, it should have no hesitation in making that advice public. Until it does, this Parliament cannot have confidence that the planning system we are being asked to legislate about will operate with integrity.

The creation of the Development Coordination Authority is one of the most significant structural changes proposed in the bill. According to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, the DCA is intended to streamline decision-making and improve coordination across government. In practice, it will consolidate

control of planning assessments and advice within a single body that reports directly to the Minister. The DCA will be established as a New South Wales Government agency within the department. It will consist of the planning secretary and at least two additional members appointed by the Minister. It will be able to exercise any functions delegated to it under the Act or other legislation; provide advice and reports to the Minister on the supply and availability of housing, the zoning of land and the declaration of State significant development or targeted assessment development; and prepare guidance materials for use across government. It will also be able to request information from other public authorities, use departmental staff and facilities, and delegate its own powers to other persons or bodies.

That level of authority is extraordinary. The DCA will effectively become a clearing house for development proposals and planning advice across the State, including matters of high economic and political significance, yet it will operate without any requirement to publish its advice, disclose its communications or report publicly on its decisions. There are no provisions in the bill that require it to record lobbying contracts, publish meeting notes or release the reasons for its recommendations. Its annual report will be included as part of the department's report, which provides no meaningful transparency. ICAC has consistently identified such concentrations of power and discretions as high risk. Its corruption prevention principles emphasise the importance of independence between those who assess development applications and those who determine them.

The DCA collapses that distinction. It will assess, advise on and, in some cases, determine matters on behalf of the Minister. It will have the capacity to shape planning outcomes without being directly accountable for them. The department told ICAC that the purpose of the DCA was to create a more efficient and coordinated approach to planning. ICAC advised that if such an authority were to be created, it would need to have clear assessment criteria, transparent documentation and processes for managing conflicts of interest and lobbying activities. None of those recommendations appears in the bill. There are no statutory probity requirements, no obligation to publish decisions and no limitations on the Minister's power to direct or control the authority. The design creates several serious integrity risks. First, it allows ministerial discretion to shape development advice behind closed doors, undermining the independence of professional assessment. Second, it creates a pathway for lobbying and influence that is not visible to the public. Third, it removes transparency that enables communities and Parliament to hold decision-makers to account.

The DCA is also empowered to advise the Minister on whether specific developments should be declared as State significant or as targeted assessment development. That means it will play a direct role in deciding which projects are subject to limited environmental or public interest consideration. The combination of that function, with its lack of transparency, again raises the risk of politicised decision-making, something we have spent decades walking away from. The Environmental Defenders Office [EDO], the Australian Institute of Architects and Local Government NSW have all raised concerns that the establishment of the DCA will erode the independence of the planning system. The EDO has noted that the authority structure creates the same risks that have historically led to corruption and maladministration in planning decisions. The architects institute has warned that removing specialist panels and expert oversight will diminish both accountability and design quality. Local Government NSW has expressed concern that councils will be sidelined, undermining local expertise and democratic representation.

The DCA has been presented as an administrative reform but it is, in fact, a political one. It shifts the centre of decision-making from transparent and participatory processes to a single, ministerially controlled body. It removes the separation of functions that has long been recognised as essential to integrity in planning. It represents a fundamental change in the relationship between government, development proponents and the public, one that places convenience and control ahead of accountability and trust. One of the most troubling features of the bill is the creation of a new class of development, known as targeted assessment development. That mechanism has been promoted by the Government as a means of fast-tracking low-risk or high-priority projects, but the bill goes much further.

It allows the Minister to declare that certain projects or entire categories of development will be assessed and approved without consideration of the environment, the suitability of the site or the public interest. Section 4.15 of the Act currently requires decision-makers to consider a comprehensive set of matters before granting or refusing consent. Those include the provisions of planning instruments, the likely environmental impacts of the development, the suitability of the site, any public submissions and the public interest. Those criteria exist to ensure that all development decisions are made in a transparent and balanced way. They require the decision-maker to consider how a proposal will affect the community and the environment, not just whether it meets the technical requirements of the planning instrument.

Under the new provisions, a development declared as targeted assessment development would be exempt from those obligations. It would be unlawful for the consent authority to take some of those matters into account. In effect, the bill creates a second planning system that operates outside the established framework of

accountability. The Environmental Defenders Office has warned that this reform represents one of the most significant erosions of environmental law in decades. It enables the Minister to remove the central evaluation duty that has underpinned every planning decision since 1979. That duty was designed to prevent exactly the kind of opaque, politically-driven decision-making that led to the corruption scandals investigated by ICAC. The EDO, Lock the Gate Alliance and the Total Environment Centre have each raised the alarm that the targeted assessment development pathway could be applied to large-scale projects including coal, gas and renewable energy developments.

The Minister has amended the Government's own legislation by limiting the scope of targeted assessment development, which was a good move but, ultimately, that development path still exists. We are yet to see the work it will do. Because the power to declare a project as TAD rests with the Minister, the limitation on the type and scale that could be exempted from standard assessment requirements is still not known. Once a declaration is made, the environmental and public interest considerations that normally guide the decision are set aside. The Minister may declare a project to be a targeted assessment development simply by order, and that ultimately undermines the rule of environmental law by allowing the Executive to determine the scope of its own powers without clear legislative constraint. The lessons from the abolition of part 3A should not be forgotten. That regime also allowed the Minister to exempt major projects from environmental and community oversight on the grounds of efficiency. It resulted in widespread public concern, multiple findings of maladministration and corruption, and a complete loss of confidence in the planning system.

In part, the TAD provisions in the bill recreate that structure under a different name. The potential for abuse is obvious. A project that might otherwise be refused on environmental or community grounds could be declared as targeted assessment development and approved through a streamlined process, controlled ultimately by the Minister. There would be no requirement to disclose lobbying activities, no obligation to publish reasons for the decision and no opportunity for affected communities to appeal. The Australian Institute of Architects and Local Government NSW have both expressed concern that the TAD framework will undermine public trust. They argue that the discretion it provides is incompatible with the principles of good planning which rely on predictability, transparency, and consultation.

The EDO has called for those provisions to be removed entirely or at least be subject to clear statutory limits and independent review. Again, I acknowledge that the amendment that was moved has remedied this in some part. But the Parliament should not repeat the mistakes of the past. The targeted assessment development mechanism is an open door to interference. It undermines environmental protection, erodes the rule of law, and exposes the planning system to more corruption. It should be withdrawn entirely or at least referred to ICAC for a full corruption risk assessment before this bill proceeds further.

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act objects include the protection of the environment, the promotion of ecologically sustainable development, and the promotion of the public interest. Those objects were included to ensure that planning decisions are not only efficient but also responsible and fair. This bill weakens those foundations in several ways. First, it narrows the duty to consider environmental impacts. At present, public authorities are required to consider the environmental impacts of their activities to the fullest extent possible. This duty ensures that government agencies act as model decision-makers, giving due weight to environmental consequences before acting.

The bill changes that obligation so that it applies only to activities that are likely to have a significant effect on the environment. This fundamentally changes how environmental risk is managed in government decision-making and shifts the burden of proof from precaution to permissiveness, allowing agencies to ignore cumulative or indirect impacts that may not be classified as "significant" at the time of assessment. The Environmental Defenders Office has stated that this change will erode the integrity of public sector environmental assessment and make it harder to hold agencies accountable for poor environmental performance. It will allow smaller but cumulative activities to proceed without scrutiny, contributing to broader environmental decline.

The bill also removes section 3.25, which provides special consultation procedures for planning proposals that may affect threatened species, populations, ecological communities or critical habitat. Under the current regime, the environment agency head must be consulted on such proposals to ensure that biodiversity risks are properly assessed. The removal of this requirement cuts the final statutory link between biodiversity experts and the plan-making process. It means that significant environmental values can be affected by rezoning decisions without expert advice or community knowledge. I am aware, and the Minister assures me, that this work is done elsewhere in the system, but that completely defies the logic of having the provision in the legislation that acts as the impetus and the mechanism to drive all of the consultation that has been happening. Those changes directly contradict the Government's commitment to restore trust in the planning system and to deliver nature-positive outcomes.

The bill makes no reference to climate change or natural hazard resilience other than in the objects and provides no implementation of the object that is provided. It removes existing references to hazard assessment and fails to incorporate adaptation requirements. The Bushfire Protection Association has warned that this will increase public safety risks, especially for communities on the urban fringe and in regional areas affected by fire and flood. The association's submission notes that the removal of mandatory bushfire hazard assessments for new developments will expose councils and the State to legal and financial liability when disasters occur. This omission is not an oversight. It is part of a pattern within the bill to remove explicit environmental and safety duties and replace them with discretionary powers.

Where the current Act requires public authorities to act on environmental and hazard information, the new framework allows them to consider it, only if they choose to do so. That approach is inconsistent with best practice and contrary to the lessons of recent climate-related disasters across New South Wales. The Australian Institute of Architects, the EDO and the Total Environment Centre have all emphasised that a modern planning system must integrate environmental and climate considerations, not separate them. They have called for the duty to consider environmental impacts to be retained in its current form and for explicit reference to climate adaptation to be inserted into the Act. If those reforms proceed as drafted, New South Wales will lose one of the most important statutory protections for the environment and the community. We will have a planning system that prioritises speed over safety and political expedience over environmental integrity. This is not modernisation. It is in fact regression.

Community participation has always been a core principle of the EP&A Act. It is the foundation of public trust in the planning system. It ensures that the people who are most affected by development decisions, and in most cases have the most knowledge about their local environment, have the opportunity to be heard and to contribute to shaping the future of their communities. This bill reduces those rights. It replaces clear, enforceable obligations for public consultation and public exhibition with a system that relies on the statewide community participation plan and the discretion of the department. That change gives the Minister and the bureaucracy control over when and how the public can participate, rather than guaranteeing it through the Act.

Under the existing framework, the Act sets minimum exhibition periods and requires all relevant documents to be made available for the full duration of public consultation. That ensures transparency and allows communities, councils and experts to review the information that underpins a proposal. The bill removes those guarantees. It allows the Government to determine the length of the exhibition periods and whether documentation is made publicly available. That may seem an administrative change, but it has profound consequences. Without a statutory requirement to publish information, there is no assurance that communities will have access to the materials they need to make informed submissions. The Environmental Defenders Office has described this as a backward step for public participation. The Australian Institute of Architects has said that the proposed framework diminishes the accountability of Government and erodes public confidence. Local Government NSW has warned that councils and their communities will be left with less say over the character, scale and pace of development in their areas.

The bill also changes the structure of regional planning panels. It removes the Sydney district panels and centralises their functions within the new regional planning panels that will then be completely devolved into joint local planning panels. While each panel will still include two council representatives, the overall effect is to reduce the role of local government in regional decision-making. The panels will remain subject to ministerial direction on procedure, and their decisions will be influenced by advice from the Development Coordination Authority, which will operate under the control of the Minister.

The combination of those changes will distance the planning system from the people that it is supposed to serve. Local voices will be diminished. Expert input will be filtered through ministerial and departmental channels. The opportunities for communities to shape development outcomes will be fewer, and their ability to challenge poor decisions will be weakened. Transparency is not an obstacle to good planning; it is, in fact, the foundation. Public participation ensures that decisions are made with the benefit of local knowledge and independent scrutiny. When consultation is reduced to a procedural formality, decision-making suffers. Projects proceed without proper understanding of their impacts, and public trust declines.

The bill undermines that trust. It replaces participatory governance with administrative control. It prioritises speed and uniformity over inclusion and fairness. In doing so, it repeats the mistakes that led to widespread opposition to previous centralised planning regimes. A planning system that excludes the public cannot claim legitimacy, no matter how efficient it may appear on paper. A wide range of organisations have raised concerns about this bill. Their expertise spans law, planning, design, environmental science, local government and community advocacy. Despite their different perspectives, they have reached the same conclusion: This bill is dangerous, unnecessary, and inconsistent with the principles of good governance.

ICAC has confirmed that it was not asked to comment on the bill. It has also confirmed that it provided "general only" probity advice. The Environmental Defenders Office has undertaken a detailed review of the bill and concluded that it will weaken environmental safeguards, reduce transparency and increase corruption risk. The organisation has warned that the bill removes essential legal duties that require consideration of environmental impacts and the public interest and that it concentrates power in the hands of the Minister and the department. The EDO has also highlighted inconsistencies between the bill and the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023, noting that the reforms fail to properly integrate climate resilience into planning law.

The Total Environment Centre has described the bill as the most significant roll back of environmental protections in New South Wales in half a century. It has pointed out that the reforms will allow the Government to fast-track development—including coal, gas and renewable projects—without requiring environmental or community oversight. The organisation has also criticised the removal of biodiversity consultation requirements and the introduction of the targeted assessment development framework, which it says could be used to approve projects that would otherwise fail under existing law.

The Lock the Gate Alliance has written to members of Parliament warning that the bill uses the pretext of housing reform to diminish environmental and community protections for all classes of development. The organisation has expressed concern that the TAD provisions may allow major mining and energy projects to be declared exempt from environmental and public interest considerations. It has also warned that the bill could be used to bypass the recent Court of Appeal rulings in the Mount Pleasant and Bowdens Silver cases, which confirmed that decision-makers must consider downstream emissions when assessing projects. The Bushfire Protection Association has raised strong objections to the removal of mandatory bushfire hazard assessments and other natural hazard considerations. Its letter warns that the changes will increase public safety risks and expose councils to liability. The association also points out that the bill does not align with the State's bushfire policy framework or the lessons from the 2019-20 fires, which demonstrated the need for stronger, not weaker, hazard controls in planning decisions.

The New South Wales chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects has warned that the bill will reduce accountability and weaken the quality of design outcomes by removing independent and expert oversight. It has criticised the consolidation of decision-making powers in ministerial hands and the loss of statutory consultation requirements. The institute argues that good design and community participation are inseparable and that the new framework will erode both. Local Government NSW has expressed concern that the bill undermines local government's role as a key partner in the planning system. It has argued that councils will lose meaningful influence over the zoning and assessment of development in their areas and that this will damage public confidence.

Local Government NSW has also criticised the lack of consultation with councils before the bill was introduced. These are not partisan voices. They are the experts, professionals and community leaders who understand what happens when planning decisions are made without transparency or public input. Together, those organisations represent an extraordinary consensus across sectors that rarely agree. They include experts who have supported planning reform in the past but recognise that these changes are not genuine modernisation but are a regression in transparency, integrity and environmental protection.

The Government has justified this reform under the banner of housing supply, but this bill goes far beyond housing, and we know it does not address the real causes of the housing crisis. It changes how all development in this State is assessed, determined and regulated. It centralises unprecedented discretion in the hands of the Minister and a small group of departmental officers. It removes the obligation to consider the environment in full, the public interest or the suitability of a site in some classes of development. It replaces open consultation with bureaucratic control and creates new pathways for approval that bypass both expert advice and community input.

Parliament cannot responsibly legislate on this scale without understanding the corruption risks that have been identified and without seeing how the Government has addressed them. That is not a theoretical concern. The Independent Commission Against Corruption was created because the concentration of political power in planning decisions had repeatedly been used for private advantage. From the corruption scandals of the 1980s and 1990s to Operation Dasha in 2021, the pattern has been the same: secrecy, lobbying, discretion and influence. This bill repeats that pattern not by accident but by design.

The integrity risks in the bill are compounded by the environmental and community consequences. The duty of public authorities to consider environmental impacts to the fullest extent possible has been replaced with a narrower and weaker test. Consultation requirements for proposals affecting threatened species have been removed. Mandatory bushfire hazard assessments have been deleted. Climate change is nowhere to be found in the text of the bill. Community participation has been reduced to a matter of ministerial discretion. These are not isolated technical changes; they are a systematic dismantling of the values of integrity, transparency, participation

and environmental responsibility that underpin the planning system. Those are the very values that the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act was created to uphold.

At this stage, three essential actions should be taken before this bill can responsibly proceed. The Government should immediately release any written advice and correspondence provided by the Independent Commission Against Corruption. There is no legitimate reason to withhold it, and Parliament and the public are entitled to know. The bill should also be formally referred to the Independent Commission Against Corruption for a comprehensive corruption risk assessment. At this stage the bill should be paused and referred to a parliamentary inquiry. The scale and complexity of these reforms demand proper scrutiny.

I know the Minister has been generous in his briefings and has sat with many people to discuss the implications of the bill, but that is not a consultation process in earnest. That is just telling people what the bill does. The public should be given the full opportunity to contribute evidence and see how the changes will affect their communities. Until those actions are taken, the bill should not be passed in this House. The Parliament should not allow the most significant overhaul of our planning system in 45 years without independent oversight, environmental safeguards and public accountability.

The Government has presented this bill as a solution to the housing crisis, but it is not. It is a political instrument that will weaken our environmental laws, diminish community rights and concentrate power in the hands of a few. It will not deliver fairer or more affordable housing. It will deliver faster approvals for those with the most influence and those who stand to profit the most. New South Wales deserves a planning system that is transparent, accountable and grounded in the public interest, but this bill does not deliver that. The Greens oppose the bill and call on all members of this House to do the same. The Greens will move a number of amendments in the Committee stage, as I know other members will do.

It seems a shame that 1979 heralded such a significant point in this State's history with the introduction of a world-class system and, in 2025, we are being asked to weaken that system. We have the choice to take on expert advice, genuinely modernise the system and deal with the complexities. We are not just talking about building buildings; we are talking about the management of a living environment system in which communities either thrive or suffer as a result of planning decisions. The bill before the Parliament is not able to deliver what the communities of New South Wales deserve in 2025 and going forward.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (21:18): I make a contribution to debate on the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Planning System Reforms) Bill 2025. I understand the pressing importance of housing in New South Wales and recognise the need for reform in this area to modernise a planning system that dates back 40 years. I support the removal of unnecessary red tape and complicated and frustrating bureaucracy that impedes the delivery of much-needed housing. I also recognise the important need to ensure that the community continues to have a real and genuine say in their amenity. The balance between what is a real need for more housing with the protection of the rights of existing residents and existing communities is undoubtedly a challenge. As legislators, we need to be mindful that many in the community hold very real concerns as to the real, long-term impact of what some of the reforms will be to their neighbourhoods.

There is no doubt that we need more housing. With Sydney's median house price at \$1.4 million and rents up 15.2 per cent in the past year, young families are being priced out of our capital city and, in some cases, priced out of this State. Home ownership has always been an integral part of our stable Australian democracy, yet we are falling short of our targets for housing in this State. Fewer than 43,000 homes were delivered in the past year, missing the target by a staggering 43.5 per cent. There is more that needs to be done. As I have stated before, on the demand side we need the Government's Federal Labor colleagues to pull back on massive, historically high immigration that has fuelled housing demand in Sydney, increased the cost of housing and put huge pressure on existing State infrastructure. That part is obvious. On the supply side, we need to cut unnecessary red tape and streamline existing unnecessary regulations to ensure that more appropriate development and housing supply can come into the market as a priority.

It is a fact that we have a planning system that has become too slow, too expensive and too costly for homeowners, builders and developers collectively. Making the system simpler and more affordable and removing unnecessary duplication and waste is a good thing, and I recognise the Government for addressing that. However, any change to our existing planning system must be undertaken with due consideration. Any change needs to ensure that the public continues to have a real oversight and a genuine say as to what goes on in their neighbourhoods and in their communities. The involvement of communities in planning decisions is a good thing and, quite frankly, leads to better outcomes.

Diminishing the voice of the community in planning decisions might lead to faster decisions, but it undermines local trust and confidence in the planning process. How does slashing the public exhibition periods for State significant developments from 28 days to just two weeks, as outlined in the original bill, help generate

community engagement and allow people to respond to applications both fairly and constructively? I hold considerable concerns that the focus on the delivery of houses as quickly as possible, as stated in the bill, will see genuine community involvement and participation in planning decisions become diminished.

The demand for efficiency in planning and rapid housing development, which continually arises in these reforms, should not—and, I hope, does not—mean that a mindset develops where developers have a free-for-all across the State. The reforms must be considered carefully, and legislators must be mindful of the potential consequences. As legislators, we must consider the real impact of moving planning decisions away from local impacted communities and their elected councils in favour of a centralised government bureaucracy. My friend in the other place the member for Goulburn reminded us that with these proposals we are at real risk of returning to the Carr Labor Government part 3A reforms, which ripped oversight and decision-making away from communities and democratically elected local councils and put it in the secretive hands of the Labor Government.

There was a reason those unpopular pro-developer reforms were almost immediately repealed when the Coalition came to power in 2011. The reason was that they were a disaster for communities. Yet here we are with Labor legislation that once again centralises decision-making and diminishes the role local communities can play in development in their local area. I wish I could say that I trust the New South Wales Labor Government with the sweeping new powers, but the fact is that Labor's past form in government provides me and the community with little confidence. We continue to watch and analyse the reforms carefully. The fact is that people should have a right to have a real say in the future of their communities. We do need more housing, but that does not mean the people of New South Wales have to accept every proposed high-rise development as good for their local community. The fact is that the reforms make it easier for developments to be approved with less scrutiny than is required today.

I have been particularly concerned by the gaslighting of communities for daring to even question sudden high-rise, high-density development in their backyard, as the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces did to communities on the North Shore, calling them "un-Sydney-like" and stating that they were ignoring their collective responsibility to welcome high-rise developers to their community. When I dared raise that at estimates with the Minister, he showed a similar lack of restraint. Hectoring and sneering at reasonable questions and legitimate, considered opposition to large-scale development that will suddenly change the local character and amenity of a neighbourhood or suburb is no way to win support for planning reforms. I hope the Government will consider its abrupt and dismissive attitude towards those who want to have a say about the future of their streets and neighbourhoods.

We need to get the balance right on the need for more housing and the needs of existing communities. More housing needs to be supported by more infrastructure. The Coalition's record in government is unmatched in that regard. It is the Coalition's investment in infrastructure that has allowed so much planned new housing development to proceed. It would be good to see some of the same enthusiasm and passion for planning reform reflected by the Labor Government in the area of infrastructure delivery. If hundreds, or indeed thousands, more dwellings are to be built in an existing community, quite rightly that community will want to know what roads, hospitals and schools are going to be built to support that development.

Perhaps the Government that is giving us a new planning system for rapid housing development can also let us know when and where the next metro line is. We see public schools in the Hills District at 250 per cent capacity, yet we see the Government greenlighting new development with no new schools. Where are the schools for the thousands of new residents and their families? What about Chatswood, where a planned education precinct has been replaced with hundreds of apartments? What happened to Beaches Link, the visionary infrastructure planned by the Coalition when in government that would support some of the high-rise development the Government is currently trying to shove in by the truckload to the North Shore and the northern beaches. Quite simply, more housing requires more infrastructure. However, the Government has delivered none. It squibs the debate. It is all too hard.

That is not good enough. The fact is that the Minns Government is failing to provide even essential infrastructure that will bring about the construction of much more needed homes on greenfield sites. I am informed developers are walking away from greenfield sites because they are not economically sustainable without the Government providing the essential infrastructure such as water and sewerage connections needed for the registration of the land. I have walked the vacant land plots in places like Austral together with my colleague the Hon. Scott Farlow and heard the stories of young couples losing deposits on new homes after waiting for years for the registration of the land due to the failure to provide water and sewerage connections. The absence of essential infrastructure is stalling and delaying new housing supply under the Minns Government's existing planning laws. It is an appalling situation.

I am pleased that the Government accepted many of the Opposition's amendments in the other place. I congratulate the Hon. Scott Farlow for his tireless policy work in this area. I endorse the subjecting of the

Housing Delivery Authority [HDA] to a full statutory review, as the Opposition recommended. The bill makes the HDA a permanent part of the planning landscape. The HDA, created by the Government just before Christmas last year, is a particularly blunt instrument that has already been used to ram through major developments with zero need to consult with impacted local communities or councils. I am not a fan of either the way the HDA was created by the Government—without real consultation—or its method of operation since it commenced. Frankly, the three-person, all-powerful body needs to be made accountable, and I support any move to subject the HDA to further scrutiny.

The removal of district and regional joint planning panels in this bill is the wrong call. Those panels are staffed by independent experts and have served an important role as a channel for community feedback and discourse. They bring specialisation and expertise to the planning system. Demands for efficiency are no good reason to delete what has been a valuable part of the planning process. I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to debate on the bill. We need more housing, and the bill has the potential to deliver it. However, we need to be particularly mindful that this increase in the efficiency of housing approvals ultimately occurs at the expense of both local council oversight and the voices of local communities. Reform should not come at the expense of transparency, accountability and local democracy. We need more homes. However, community voices and established neighbourhoods need to be recognised and respected.

The community, councils and joint planning panels ought to play a key role in determining the future development of this city and State, not just the planning Minister, departmental secretary and developer lobby. Streets and suburbs that have developed their own distinct local character over many decades are changing almost overnight with increasing implementation of the Labor Government's planning reforms. People have a right to have a say in the future of their streets, communities and suburbs without being vilified or attacked as whingers or nimbys. Yimbys need to understand that it is not usually their backyards that they vocally demand be flattened for high-rises. Those residents and communities cannot be forgotten as the Government moves to develop more housing supply. As a legislator, I will continue to be vigilant as the bill becomes law and is implemented. I will continue to advocate for people to have a real and ongoing say about the future of their streets, neighbourhoods and suburbs.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (21:31): On behalf of The Greens I speak in debate on the Environmental Planning and Assessment (Planning System Reforms) Bill 2025 and support the excellent contribution by my colleague Ms Sue Higginson. In this place and the other place, the Government has presented the bill as a housing measure and a way to "cut red tape" and "streamline approvals" to address the housing crisis. The reality is that the bill is far broader and far more dangerous than that.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Hear, hear!

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I acknowledge the interjection by the Hon. Wes Fang. The bill is far more dangerous, according to him. It is not just a housing bill; it is a planning system overhaul that will fundamentally change how all development, including large-scale mining projects, are assessed in New South Wales. I make my contribution largely as The Greens portfolio holder for mining, coal and gas. At its core, the bill paves the way for projects to progress with less scrutiny, fewer public safeguards and limited avenues for appeal. It represents one of the most significant erosions of environmental assessment and community rights in decades. Under the reforms, agencies that we hope have the expertise to safeguard our environment and communities will be cut out of the process.

Schedule 3 to the bill removes existing requirements for expert agencies and ministers—such as the environment Minister, the water Minister, the Minister responsible for fisheries, or the Environment and Heritage Group within Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water—to provide advice on development applications. That means that decisions impacting threatened species, biodiversity, marine parks, heritage, water et cetera will instead rest with the planning Minister or the new Development Coordination Authority, which are not legally required to seek specialised scientific or ecological input.

WaterNSW has a long and respected history of providing strong, independent advice on the impacts of developments on the State's water security and catchments. It made a number of strong submissions to the Independent Expert Advisory Panel for Mining about the Sydney Drinking Water Catchment when South32 was applying to extend its Dendrobium longwall underground coalmine in the Sydney Drinking Water Catchment. Over a number of years WaterNSW has raised serious concerns about mining in the catchment and documented extensive subsidence, which has led to increased surface water drainage and severe damage to riverbeds and groundwater. Under the bill, that kind of advice will not need to be sought.

The same is true for the Environment and Heritage Group, whose scientists and ecologists provide crucial advice on biodiversity loss, threatened species and cultural heritage. The bill effectively silences the public service expertise that for decades has acted as a check on political and corporate power. The Greens are often frustrated

in this place, at budget estimates hearings and elsewhere that the advice of those agencies often does not seem to have been taken into account, but it has to be sought. The Greens also know that it sometimes is taken into account, potentially changing certain conditions or preventing certain approvals.

The corruption risks posed by the bill begs the question: Have we learned nothing? The last time we saw such a concentration of planning power and erosion of checks and balances, it led directly to corruption scandals that rocked this State to its core. I again note the contribution of my colleague Ms Sue Higginson, who documented the history of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, why it was so important and some of the corruption scandals. I also note her correspondence with the ICAC. It is extremely concerning that the letter has not been tabled, that this Parliament has therefore not seen that correspondence and, more importantly, that the ICAC has not been able to provide an official formal communication about that bill to this place.

We know how much planning and corruption are intertwined in the history of politics in this State. We do not have to look too far back. The Mount Penny coal licence scandal involving former Minister Ian Macdonald and Eddie Obeid saw a \$30 million windfall delivered to the Obeid family through the corrupt allocation of a mining licence in the Bylong Valley. I was a member of Parliament at that time. The processes were opaque, the oversight was weak and the public were shut out. After a year of winding back successive bills introduced to weaken the planning system, I remember various environmental groups and individuals saying at the 2019 and 2023 elections that they were desperate for a Labor government.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Careful what you wish for!

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Careful what you wish for—exactly. I said, "Remember, once Labor gets into power, it is the developers' best mate." We know that to be true from stories on the weekend, but we have seen it over the years. The bill takes us backwards to that same dangerous model where ministerial power is unchecked, expert advice can be ignored and the courts are deliberately shut out. As chair of the Centre for Public Integrity and former assistant commissioner to ICAC, Anthony Whealy, KC, told the ABC in relation to the bill, "Whenever you narrow the scope of independent advice and public oversight, you create the perfect conditions for corruption." He warned that the reforms "take us back to a time when planning was done behind closed doors, between ministers and developers". We know how that story ends. Surely all members in this place have a duty to ensure that never happens again.

I acknowledge the Government's late amendment to ensure that designated developments, including mining, cannot be declared targeted assessment developments. That is a small but important concession that the community deserves credit for forcing the Government to make. But it provides only limited reassurance because the bill still gives the Minister sweeping powers to rewrite what matters in planning decisions, and those powers can be exercised at any time through regulation. There is nothing stopping a future Government from changing the definition of "designated development" or excluding certain projects from that list.

Under current legislation, section 4.15 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 requires consent authorities to consider the likely impacts of a development, whether or not those impacts are significant. That basic safeguard ensures that all potential harms are on the table for consideration, but the bill changes that. Under new section 4.15 (1A), the Minister may also make regulations declaring certain factors irrelevant to the decision-making process. That could mean that water security, pollution, downstream impacts or—dare I say to National Party colleagues—agricultural impacts are no longer even required to be considered.

Minister Scully explicitly said in his second reading speech that that change would reduce the likelihood of legal challenge. That is an extraordinary admission. I acknowledge that the Minister is sitting in the President's gallery. The real purpose of that provision is not to improve planning outcomes but to make it harder for communities and environmental defenders to hold decision-makers to account. All communities across the State will be very upset when they realise just how far the bill has taken things. New section 65A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021 would expressly declare that the significant likely impacts of other related developments are not relevant to the development under consideration.

That is an intentional reversal of two important Court of Appeal decisions, *Hoxton Park Residents Action Group Inc. v Liverpool City Council* and *Bingman Catchment Landcare Group Incorporated v Bowdens Silver Pty Ltd*, which confirmed that consent authorities must consider the full scope of a project's impacts, including associated works. In plain terms, that means that decision-makers can now ignore the environmental and social impacts of a project's powerlines, access roads, waste pipelines or tailings dams, even when those components are essential for the project to operate. How are the National Party's constituents not dancing and screaming—and not out of joy—from the rooftops about that?

The timing of the bill is no coincidence. It comes as the Minns Government doubles down on mining and resource expansion under the guise of critical minerals. It announced the \$250 million Critical Minerals and

High-Tech Metals Activation Fund, declaring that New South Wales was entering the global race for critical minerals. But there is no mention of impacted communities, cultural heritage, agricultural land, protection of our water sources or biodiversity. It is not like everything west of the Great Dividing Range is a big desert. There would be environmental impacts even if it was a big desert, for goodness sake!

A few weeks ago, the Premier publicly backed Santos's controversial Narrabri Gas Project in the Pilliga Forest. The Gomeroi traditional owners have condemned the Minns Government for turning its back on country in pursuit of short-term profit. The Premier's message has been clear: Under his leadership, New South Wales is open for mining at any cost. The bill fits very neatly into that agenda. It makes it easier for government to approve resource projects and harder for communities to object. I have already raised the issue of the impacts of coalmining on Sydney's drinking water catchment, where subsidence, cracking and contamination from longwall mining have damaged swamps and waterways that feed into our drinking water supply. By narrowing what counts as a significant impact and by giving the Minister the power to rule certain water impacts not relevant, the bill could allow future mining proposals in sensitive catchments to be waved through without scrutiny from experts and bodies such as WaterNSW.

The proposed Bowdens Silver mine near Mudgee is another example of what is at stake. The massive open-cut lead, zinc and silver mine is proposed just two kilometres from Lue Primary School, in the middle of a thriving agricultural, wine and tourism region. The project would dig up and process lead ore within breathing distance of a community where families live, children go to school and visitors come to experience wine, food and nature. That is in the context of this Government and successive previous governments being unable to control and contain existing lead mining in Broken Hill, to the point where the existing lead mining activity is poisoning Broken Hill's children.

The Bowdens Silver mine would require the construction of a new high-voltage powerline corridor covering a total area eight times the size of the mine pit. In 2024 the New South Wales Court of Appeal ruled that the impacts of that powerline must be assessed under section 4.15 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act as part of the mine's likely impacts. The court found that the consent was unlawful precisely because those impacts had been ignored. But under the bill, new section 65A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021 would mean that the consent authority or the Independent Planning Commission [IPC] would not have to consider the impacts of that powerline in any future determination.

Further, the Minister could declare under new section 4.15 (1A) that impacts outside a given radius, of a given nature—such as the health impacts of lead pollution from the mine site on nearby families and schoolchildren, the contamination risks to local vineyards and farms, or the damage to the local economy and tourism industry—are not relevant. That is absolutely extraordinary. If that were to happen, the consent authority or the Independent Planning Commission could not consider those impacts. That is what is in the bill before the House. It is a textbook example of how the bill decimates the principles of a planning system that has been built over many years to protect communities and the environment against rapacious development.

The same is true for the Mount Pleasant coalmine expansion in the Hunter Valley, the largest coalmine expansion currently proposed in New South Wales. The project seeks to extend its coalmining until 2048, 98 per cent of which will be burned overseas. When the IPC approved the expansion, it failed to properly consider local climate impacts—a failure the Court of Appeal found to be unlawful. The court ruled that there is a causal connection between fossil fuel production and local climate harms, and that those harms are a mandatory consideration under section 4.15 (1) (b). However, under the bill, the IPC could simply disregard those impacts. By raising the threshold to "significant likely impacts" and empowering the Minister to declare local climate harms irrelevant, the bill could all but remove the obligation to consider the climate consequences of fossil fuel projects.

My colleague Ms Sue Higginson mentioned the risk the bill poses to the Government's net zero ambitions. The bill also risks the survival of many of our most threatened and most loved native plants—which are often forgotten—and animals, including our endangered koalas. Save Sydney's Koalas warns that the reforms will further erode protections for the last significant chlamydia-free population in south-west Sydney. We have already seen how developer lobbying has gutted protections under the Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan, allowing destruction of critical habitat in Campbelltown and the Nepean koala corridor. Now the new targeted assessment development pathway will make it even easier for large housing estates and urban sprawl to bulldoze through koala habitat under the banner of streamlining housing approvals. Once a project is declared a targeted assessment development, key environmental assessments can be switched off.

The bill is not about housing; it is about power. It represents a profound and retrograde shift in how we make planning decisions in New South Wales. It centralises decision-making in the hands of the Minister, cuts out experts and communities, and once again opens the door to corruption and political favouritism. It is a gift to developers, miners and lobbyists, who already have far too much influence over our planning system. If passed,

the bill will mean that communities from Mudgee to Muswellbrook, from the Illawarra to the Pilliga, could be left powerless to stop projects that threaten their water, air, farms, country and future. The Greens will oppose the bill and will move many amendments to restore full environmental assessment, strengthen transparency and ensure that communities, experts and the environment have a seat at the table.

This disgraceful bill is yet more proof of whose side Chris Minns is on. It is not the side of the community; it is the side of big developers and big miners. I echo the call of my colleague Ms Sue Higginson to refer the bill to ICAC. At the very least, we need to see the letter that ICAC has sent to Ms Sue Higginson. When millions of dollars are to be made from whether or not a planning official or a Minister ticks certain boxes or issues certain directions, does anyone really think that the mob in power is immune? Labor under Chris Minns is not immune to influence. That is already evident from decisions that have been made off the back of a front page scare campaign in the *Tele* or from a 2GB rant. It is already happening. The Government is not immune to corruption. If anything will fast-track that inevitability, it is this bill.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (21:49): The Libertarian Party supports the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Planning System Reforms) Bill 2025. The *Demographia International Housing Affordability* annual report has been published since 2005. It is an annual analysis of housing affordability in major markets across multiple countries. The report is currently compiled by Chapman University, a research institute in California. It is the world's most authoritative study of house prices. It factors in a wide range of data, including not only purchase prices but also currency, wages, cost of living et cetera. The study includes a table on the least affordable city in the world, and Sydney has ranked second worst for all but five of the 20 years since 2005. In the years Sydney did not come second, it was always third or fourth.

In the most recent list of least affordable cities, Sydney was again the second worst in the world. Los Angeles was fifth, London was twelfth and Toronto was thirteenth. The city that routinely comes first is Hong Kong, and that only makes the scandal worse because Hong Kong is tiny. The population density of New South Wales is 10.6 people per square kilometre. The population density of Hong Kong is 6,759 people per square kilometre. It is understandable that Hong Kong has high prices. Hong Kong started as a little fragment of the British empire. It was very successful, with lots of civil liberties and wealth. It was surrounded by communist China for 50 years. Then China became capitalist, and it was understandable that wealthy people from China wanted to live in Hong Kong, which forced up prices. However, it is absolutely unforgivable that Sydney ranks second worst in the world.

The highest cost of home construction is easily the cost of the land, but we have a tonne of land. However, we also have a monstrous level of government regulation that bogs down the construction industry. If the Libertarian Party ever came to power, there would be a five-year pause on all zoning and planning laws. We would let property owners do as they see fit and, on the back swing, save hundreds of millions of dollars in public servant wages. New South Wales would enjoy a house construction boom. Prices and rents would come down. After five years, there would be protests in front of Parliament from the public demanding that the pause continue indefinitely. This bill is a mile away from that *laissez-faire* ideal, but it is a good step in the right direction.

The Minister will not use these words, but the bill represents supply-side economics. It is based on the idea that if the Government can step out of the way of the producers, they will produce more things and consumers will ultimately win from lower prices and higher quality. The public is aghast about house prices. Parents fret that their kids might not be able to buy their own home one day. That is creating a pall of doom for many people, and that despondency flows over into reduced productivity.

The Libertarian Party supports the bill for several key reasons. First, it establishes a single front door for State approvals through the new Development Coordination Authority [DCA]. Presently, developers can find themselves dealing with up to 22 different government agencies just to get a single project approved. In a free market society, we would not need the DCA. We would not have 22 agencies all tripping over one another. The Government would simply get out of the way and let the builders build. For now, the new authority at least cuts through much of that bureaucratic tangle.

Secondly, the bill modernises the planning objectives. It declares that the purpose of our planning laws should be to promote housing construction. What a revelation! That update sends a positive message that New South Wales has a can-do approach to the construction of more homes. Thirdly, the bill introduces clearer and more predictable approval processes. That is a win for builders, communities and every family waiting on a development application that has been gathering dust on a council desk. Fourthly—this is my favourite—the expansion of the complying development pathway is long overdue. Councils will now have 10 days to approve minor variations, or they are deemed approved. That is excellent. I salute the planning Minister. That echoes and improves upon the reform I proposed earlier this year.

The Hon. Scott Farlow: The 60 days.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK: That's right, thank you. That is the Libertarian Party's Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (60 Day Deemed Approval) Bill 2025. This part of the bill is so bold that it puts the Libertarian Party in the awkward position of admitting that the Government is even bolder than it is on this occasion.

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: Yay!

Dr Amanda Cohn: It is not something to be proud of.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK: Well, we are proud of the Government. Obviously, the Libertarian Party is having a little impact. Fifthly, the bill standardises conditions on development approvals. That means fewer surprises, less red tape and greater certainty for all involved. The bill is not perfect, and it can be improved. One example is the Mount Pleasant Optimisation Project near Muswellbrook, which is an expansion project that employs nearly 1,000 people and keeps the lights on. The project was approved by the Independent Planning Commission in 2022, ticked off by the Commonwealth in 2024, but has since been dragged through endless rounds of lawfare by those who simply oppose coal because they have been brainwashed.

The Court of Appeal zeroed in on a very narrow, technical reading of section 4.15 (1) (b) about how to treat greenhouse gas emissions and whether they should count as "impacts in the locality". The court decided that the words "in the locality" applied to everything—environmental, social and economic impacts. In other words, the court said that unless an environmental impact happens inside the locality, it does not count. That is not just bad punctuation; it is bad logic. That interpretation ignores the famous Oxford comma. It ignores 25 years of legislative history, going right back to when that section was called section 90.

When Craig Knowles brought in reforms in 1998, he said the list was meant to be a "reduced and general" list of considerations, not a whole new way of thinking about the environment. The intention has always been that consent authorities should consider environmental impacts generally—whether they occur regionally, locally or otherwise—and then separately consider the social and economic impacts in the locality. Future mining projects cannot be left hanging on the meaning of an Oxford comma. The bill is a rare instance of the Government recognising that over-regulation has strangled the housing sector. It moves the dial towards a freer market and a more rational planning system. For that reason, the Libertarian Party will support the bill, with the hope that it is the start—not the end—of genuine reform in this space.

I cannot conclude without mentioning the elephant in the room. We are letting far too many people into Australia via excessive immigration levels. That is blindingly obvious. I hope the Government can encourage its friends in Canberra to give the country and our housing market a breather from excessive immigration. Supply and demand is an inescapable law of economics. It is not optional. We cannot build our way out of a crisis if hundreds of thousands of new arrivals are adding pressure to the system every year. Build, baby, build! I support the bill.

Dr AMANDA COHN (21:57): As The Greens spokesperson for local government, I reiterate our opposition to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Planning System Reforms) Bill 2025. I add to the excellent contributions of my colleagues The Greens spokesperson for planning, Ms Sue Higginson, and The Greens spokesperson for mining, Ms Cate Faehrmann. Ms Cate Faehrmann clearly articulated that the bill is not about housing. The housing crisis that is now impacting every corner of New South Wales is, of course, urgent—but the bill is not about housing. The bill centralises power and creates opportunities for massive developer profits and the corruption of elected representatives and senior bureaucrats, while significantly weakening environmental and community protection.

In drastically reducing community input and external oversight, the bill creates an extraordinary corruption risk. The proposed provision for the expedited amendment of environmental planning instruments that the Housing Delivery Authority considers reasonably necessary for carrying out State significant developments functionally allows expedited spot rezoning with no safeguards. That is a major corruption risk, which ICAC has repeatedly warned against. Further, the bill proposes to remove the role of specialised agencies in planning decisions, instead providing for the new Development Coordination Authority [DCA]—which is just a new name for the Planning secretary—to take over the referral and concurrence roles and provide general terms of approval for integrated development.

This is not just proposing coordination of government agencies or streamlining decision-making to reduce delays. There is no requirement for the DCA to draw on other departments or experts at all, whether that is the Environment Protection Authority regarding the impact of development on threatened species or biodiversity or the Rural Fire Service regarding housing future communities on bushfire prone land. Better funding for those agencies to increase their capacity to respond to requests for advice in a timely manner is a much better approach than what is proposed by the bill. Local government, the closest level of government to the communities they

represent and a sector with significant expertise in planning matters, has raised significant concerns about the bill. Those concerns have been largely ignored by the Government and last week the Premier finally said the quiet part out loud. He said very clearly what the Minns Government thinks of local government and what the bill means for them. He is reported as having said:

... local government is just an act of the state parliament.

We can effectively have eminent domain over their decisions. And they can be a pain, yeah, they can. But we've been rolling over the top of them for the last two years, and now we're about to formalise it with the bill.

Whose side is the Premier really on? This week it has been reported that Minns has been meeting with lobbyists on behalf of property developers without disclosing those meetings appropriately.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): Order! 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.

NSW AMBULANCE AWARDS

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (22:00): Recently I had the privilege of representing the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health, the Hon. Ryan Park, at the NSW Ambulance awards and recognition ceremony for northern New South Wales held in Ballina at the surf club, a beautiful location. The ceremony brought together around 70 people, including paramedics, emergency call takers, support staff, volunteers and their families to celebrate the remarkable service, bravery and dedication of NSW Ambulance personnel across the North Coast. It was held at the Ballina Surf Club on Bundjalung country, a wonderful council-owned and run facility.

I thank Ballina Shire Council for its presence at the ceremony. The ceremony recognised the extraordinary work of NSW Ambulance staff: people who respond to crises with professionalism, compassion, and courage, often at great personal cost. On the day, 26 awards were presented, including the commissioner's meritorious service medals, unit citations, certificates of appreciation, and long service and good conduct medals. Many of the recipients were honoured for their actions during some of the most challenging emergencies our State has faced in recent years.

In particular, the ceremony paid tribute to the staff who served during the 2022 Northern Rivers floods, which devastated communities across Lismore, Ballina and surrounding areas. Paramedics and aeromedical crews worked in extremely difficult conditions to rescue people from rising floodwaters, evacuate hospitals, transfer entire ambulance stations that were prone to being flooded and to maintain essential medical services, often while their own homes and families were at risk. One aeromedical crew was recognised for winching a mother and son to safety after a mudslide destroyed their home. In an extremely intricate operation—with rising floodwaters, fading light and a home that was structurally delicate and had slid halfway down a slope—they did extraordinary work to safely rescue the mother and son.

Another award recipient, paramedic Donna Sullivan, was commended for her bravery and professionalism during a high-risk rescue in Port Macquarie, working with New South Wales police to effectively de-escalate a situation and bring a patient to safety. The ceremony also acknowledged community heroes through the Community Star Awards, which celebrate acts of courage by young people. Ten-year-old Georgie was recognised for saving her father's life when he went into cardiac arrest, by flagging down help and ensuring emergency services were called. Two siblings, just six and seven years old, were honoured for calling 000 when their mother suffered a seizure. These stories are powerful reminders that courage and compassion exist at every age and in every community.

Throughout the event, one message came through clearly: The people of NSW Ambulance go above and beyond every single day. From the paramedics on the road to the call-takers in the control centres to the volunteers who give their time to strengthen local responses, each plays an essential role in protecting and supporting their community, particularly in disaster-prone regional areas like the North Coast. I acknowledge the NSW Ambulance team, including Deputy Commissioner Wayne McKenna, executive director Sarah Coombes and Chief Superintendent Damian Hughes, who continue to support staff across the North Coast with professionalism and care.

As a Government, we are committed to backing these frontline heroes with the resources they need. This includes 31 additional paramedics now working across northern New South Wales, as well as new and rebuilt ambulance stations in Lismore and Mullumbimby, both designed to be stronger and more flood-resilient following

destruction by the 2022 floods. We are also investing in expanded virtual clinical care clinics, modern emergency vehicles and improved training and wellbeing support for paramedics across the State. This includes the trial of extended care paramedics on the North Coast.

The people honoured at the Ballina ceremony represent the best of our public service: courage under pressure, compassion for others and an unshakable commitment to community. Their work saves lives, restores hope and strengthens the bonds that hold our communities together, especially in times of crisis. I thank every paramedic, volunteer and community hero recognised in Ballina. Their dedication embodies the very spirit of service, and this Parliament stands in deep gratitude for the work they do every day to keep New South Wales safe.

POLITICS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (22:05): Recently I had the pleasure of having Mackenzie Chisholm, a year 11 student at Loreto Normanhurst, undertake work experience in my office. During this time Mackenzie got an insight on how the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council operate and my role in the upper House and as the leader of the NSW Nationals in this place. I thank Mackenzie for the time she spent in my office. She assures me that it was enjoyable and gave her a firsthand look at politics and the parliamentary process in New South Wales. We also talked a lot about how important it is for young people to understand politics and the challenges in getting young people access to factual—sorry, I mean factual; that was a bit of a Freudian slip—information on political parties and policies and the role social media has to play.

The Hon. Cameron Murphy: You do have factions!

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We do not have factions in The Nationals. I asked Mackenzie to write a speech on this issue while she was in my office, and her response was very considered and articulate. As such, I wish to share some parts of her speech with the House tonight. On the topic of social media influencing young minds about politics, Mackenzie writes:

An increasingly prevalent problem within our current society is the overwhelming amount of uninformed political biases influencing our young communities' minds. Social media has become a "beacon of truth" to our young people, in which all who have access can voice their opinions. Whilst this freedom of expression is utilised in a multitude of ways, recently, the increasing media on political movements, actions, and publications, has allowed young people to become exposed to political biases through a rose-coloured lens of social media. Around 98% of young people in Australia regularly use social media. This overwhelming statistic allows a multitude of young people to be exposed to any views that have become prevalent on social media. Young people can take stances on politically incorrect or controversial opinions without having enough education on the subject, to make a formal, educated decision. Without true information, our young people believe social media is a trustworthy source they can depend their life decisions on. Whilst the majority of political influencers on social media platforms don't necessarily seek to be the educators for young minds, the app algorithms are based upon what the audience deems personally important. This allows for the push for a variety of controversial, political opinions, even if the audience engages only once with a slightly similar topic, resulting in mass exposure to a variety of different content that advertises certain social values to the young audience.

Mackenzie also raised concerns about young people's engagement with the parliamentary process. She writes:

Other than the primary school Canberra trip to visit Parliament House, young people do not get exposed to the political system enough, despite their future being in the hands of the decisions in Government. Many young people become disengaged with their local councils, state government, and matters at a federal level, as minimal exposure to Government activity results in a lack of interest. As a consequence, different influential forces become the educators; pushing their own personal beliefs and views upon the young, malleable minds through apps such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube.

I think members would agree that these are very important insights from the mind of a young person to be put on record in Parliament. I am inspired by that fact that when Mackenzie was in my office, she also had suggestions to make this better. Mackenzie says:

A proposed remedy is to ensure education about our political system, which could include introducing interactive activities throughout the junior years of high school. This allows an opportunity for young people to be informed on the basics of politics, to be educated on a multitude of political concepts, and ensure their future is secured through the decisions of the Government. Additionally, this approach would allow for young people to conduct and form their own opinions aligning with their personal beliefs and to have an informed say in their society which can increase involvement and political awareness.

I have always been a big believer in encouraging young people particularly to become involved in the political process and to understand the work of the Parliament. It was something I was very proud to do as a Minister. I continue to do it now in opposition, because for a lot of young people who show an interest in the work that we do—I know many members of Parliament have interns or high school students doing work experience—I think we have a role to play. I genuinely thank Mackenzie for her contribution on such an important topic and for her very sharp insights from her young mind. It is important. Her final statement to me in the piece that she wrote states:

We must act now on involving our youth in Parliament and increasing their political awareness through education, instead of allowing our younger generation to have social media as their educators.

That is a very excellent point. Once again, I thank Mackenzie for the time she spent in my office.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (22:10): The Department of Education leadership is a dumpster fire of failure where trust is shattered, accountability is a joke, and kids, families and staff are left bleeding out from the incompetence. Tonight I am calling it out because this House cannot keep turning a blind eye to the rot, and because it has got to the point where someone who was a proud public educator for 16 years feels like he should discourage his own daughter from following that path. What has led to this? First off, litigation is raging over three child protection bombshells, all pinned on the same principal at Shell Cove Public School. The so-called guardians of integrity in the Professional and Ethical Standards [PES] unit blew their mandatory reporting duty to hell by failing to flag child abuse as the law demands.

The principal was finally nailed for shaking a six-year-old autistic boy, leaving bruises on his tiny body. The penalty was a limp "monitoring" slap. How in God's name does he still lead a school? The ICAC hearings in Operation Landan exposed Secretary Murat Dizdar admitting that Anthony Manning, CEO of School Infrastructure NSW, floated "shooting an admiral to pull others into line"—code for sacking one principal to scare the crap out of the rest. Dizdar confessed 50 senior executives sat there like mute zombies, complicit in this thug culture. Is this the leadership we bankroll—a toxic brew of intimidation, silence and spinelessness? At Picton High School, a female principal begged for basic safety: walls for her students. The department's response was to boot her out, wreck her health and ruin her career forever. Seven years later, taxpayers are coughing up to install those exact walls.

Who is getting crucified for squandering public cash, demolishing a dedicated leader, and screwing over kids' public education for a decade? The Paving the Way Forward document—branded with the New South Wales Government crest—ranks principals from zero to three on a director's whim. The secretary swears it is not official, but it is right there in ink with the Government logo. It was presented at an official professional development event crafted by the Professional and Ethical Standards directorate, and it outlines formal actions against principals. Calling it "not official" is like saying the Sydney Opera House is just a fancy shed. This deception by Dizdar is not a clerical error; it is a deliberate lie to dodge accountability, and it is a slap in the face to this House's authority. This document violates the Government Sector Employment Act, the Teaching Services Act 1980, and every shred of professional standards that the department purports to stand for. Over 200 secondary principals vanished over three years after the document was presented.

Who greenlit this illegal hit list? Who answers for the purge that robbed our students of some of our best school leaders? It gets worse. The Minister's response to supplementary question 104 in budget estimates claimed that PES did not understand the term "wrong outcome" in investigations. That is so laughably detached from reality it is almost performance art. Court rulings in *Gooden v Secretary, Department of Education* and *Secretary, Department of Education v Williams* called PES's work an "egregious failure of fairness" and a "scattergun of serious allegations" with unreliable witnesses and insufficient evidence. These are not obscure legal footnotes; they were published well before December 2024, when Dizdar committed lies to paper in the Minister's name. Dizdar and Daryl Currie knew damn well what "wrong outcome" meant and fed the Minister a line that insults our intelligence.

The career assassination of Ms Gooden was kicked off under Jane Thorpe and dragged out by Daryl Currie, who stalled justice and demoted a stellar leader, shattering her health. What was her crime? Her general assistant ordered contaminated soil. How does this Government keep propping up process-abusing clowns like Currie? When does Currie face the music for his wrecking-ball tactics? The secretary flat-out lied in budget estimates, denying PES uses the term "unattached principal transfers". Industrial Relations Commission transcripts prove this to be a bald-faced lie. Why mislead the House? What hammer drops on Dizdar for his deceit? Lastly, families have zero faith in reporting anymore. At Murwillumbah High School, sexual misconduct allegations—some involving current students—were botched, delayed or buried. One deputy got quietly shuffled out and was then rehired by the Navy with shiny references.

A head teacher performing oral sex on students was handed off to "local management". Witnesses were intimidated and told by the perpetrator that she would accuse them of assault if they complained. Police misplaced video evidence. I know what is supposed to happen in situations like this because, as a former educational leader, I had to act on similar events. Minister Car was made aware of this via the local member and now Minister, Janelle Saffin. What response was there from the Minister's office for the most serious betrayal of the trust placed in teachers? Absolutely nothing.

LABOUR DAY

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (22:15): On 6 October 2025, New South Wales came together to mark Labour Day, a day typically seen as a welcome break from work and an extra day to relax. While that is true, Labour Day must also be a day to reflect on the hard-won wins of our trade unions and the transformative reforms that working people have achieved through their trade unions that have shaped the history of this great country. Those achievements by the labour movement have resulted in very tangible and practical outcomes that give meaning to the great words in our national anthem, *Advance Australia Fair*. As a member of a State Labor government, it is very pleasing for me to see those reforms being further progressed in partnership between the union movement and the Minns Labor Government.

Since taking office in 2023, the Minns and Albanese governments have worked effectively with the unions to deliver progressive reforms in industrial relations to promote fairness, strengthen protections, and empower our workers across our State. We have established the Industrial Relations Commission and the Industrial Court of New South Wales, reversing the previous cuts instituted by the members opposite and restoring independent oversight of workplace disputes. Building on this, the Government recently passed the Industrial Relations and Other Legislation Amendment (Workplace Protections) Bill 2025, which introduced civil penalties for workplace bullying and sexual harassment, strengthened protections under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW), and enhanced enforcement powers for regulators. Critically, the Government also criminalised wage theft, aligning with Federal reforms and sending a strong deterrent signal to exploitative employers. The Government has taken decisive action to close longstanding loopholes and expand worker protections.

Anti-discrimination protections now extend to workers experiencing domestic violence and those in insecure employment. The introduction of the right to disconnect gives workers the ability to refuse after-hours contact without penalty, while clarifying the definitions of "employee" and "employer" to address sham contracting and misclassification, ensuring greater fairness in employment relationships. Labour hire reforms now guarantee that workers receive the same pay as their directly employed counterparts doing equivalent work. The Government has also strengthened casual conversion rights, making it easier for long-term casuals to transition into permanent roles with greater job security.

We have enhanced union access to workplaces that support collective bargaining and effective dispute resolution and have implemented public sector wage increases for some 600,000 workers, breaking the cycle of the unfair wage caps instituted by those opposite. For over a decade, the wage cap stifled growth and failed to recognise the real value of workers' contributions. We have also introduced industrial manslaughter laws, which allow for jail sentences if employers are found to be negligent in the lead-up to deaths at work. The members opposite like to emphasise that a relatively small proportion of the workforce are members of unions, and they attempt to equate this with reduced effectiveness. This fails to recognise the highly effective outcomes achieved by unions across the economy and throughout Australian history, which have achieved a relatively fair distribution of wealth and income.

When we enjoy the well-earned rest Labour Day provides, let us also honour and remember the ongoing legacy of the union activists who fought for those well-deserved rights and recommit ourselves to building a fairer, safer and more equitable future for all. Such things do not fall from the sky; they can wither away overnight the moment we take them for granted. We need to cherish them, remember them, value them and strengthen them. That is exactly what the State Labor Government and the Federal Labor Government plan to do.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (22:20): Tonight I speak on the silent epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse in the digital age. This crisis affects millions worldwide and threatens the safety and dignity of our most vulnerable. We must acknowledge the shifting landscape of abuse, driven by rapid technological advancement. Abusers now exploit digital platforms with growing sophistication. Childlight Global Child Safety Institute estimates that more than 300 million children were subjected to abusive behaviour online in 2024. AI-generated child sexual abuse material is deeply disturbing. This technology enables the creation of realistic fabricated images and videos and makes it harder to identify real victims and to prosecute perpetrators under the current legal system.

In 2024-25, the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation received 82,764 reports of online child sexual exploitation, which is an average of 226 reports per day. This is nothing short of a national emergency. A 2023 WeProtect Global Alliance report found that the volume of global child sexual abuse material analysed by the United States National Center for Missing and Exploited Children grew by 87 per cent between 2019 and 2022. It also highlighted new forms of harm, including AI-generated material, financial sexual extortion, misuse of extended-reality headsets for exploitation and expanded use of end-to-end encryption without embedded safety

mechanisms. Live streaming has expanded the reach and impact of these crimes. It has amplified trauma and complicated enforcement efforts across jurisdictions.

Online grooming tactics have become faster and more covert. Conversations on social gaming platforms can escalate into dangerous situations in as little as 19 seconds. Research conducted as part of the Australian Child Maltreatment Study revealed confronting data. It looked at the prevalence and characteristics of online child sexual victimisation in Australia, focusing particularly on non-consensual sharing of sexual images and online sexual solicitation by an adult. The study found that online child sexual victimisation is increasingly common, with 7.6 per cent of participants experiencing the non-consensual sharing of a sexual image of a person by a perpetrator and 17.7 per cent experiencing online sexual solicitation by an adult.

The report also found that online sexual victimisation experiences began early in adolescence, with 15 per cent of participants reporting it starting before the age of 12 and 2.8 per cent of participants reporting it starting before the age of 10. Of those who had experienced online sexual solicitation by an adult, 25 per cent reported that it began before the age of 12 and 3 per cent reported that it began before the age of 10. "Sextortion", which is online blackmail involving explicit content, has risen sharply. Reports to the eSafety Commissioner in Australia have increased from 600 per quarter in 2022 to 1,700 in the same quarter of 2023.

Alarming, almost half of young Australians aged 14 to 17 have received a sexual message from someone online in the past 12 months. Furthermore, the Internet Watch Foundation reported a 360 per cent increase in self-generated sexual imagery of children aged seven to 10 between 2020 and 2022. These encounters impact a child's mental health and sense of safety. Every statistic in these reports represents a child whose life has been altered by a deliberate act of harm. Behind each number is a boy or girl who deserves safety, dignity and the chance to grow up without fear. But the technology used by abusers can also be a weapon for defenders. Used ethically and intelligently, it can reveal hidden networks, trace offenders and support victims. Responsibly developed artificial intelligence can be harnessed to detect child sexual abuse material, disrupt groomer patterns and remove harmful content faster than ever before.

The complexities of addressing child sexual exploitation and abuse in the digital age require a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach. We must focus on prevention, effective detection, reporting and prosecution. It demands close collaboration between agencies, technology companies, financial institutions, policymakers and non-government organisations. No single agency can tackle this crisis alone. In Australia, the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children Australia is among the organisations that play a critical role by working collaboratively with a range of stakeholders to provide information, training and resources and to enhance the capacity of its partners to detect and investigate online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

We must build a digital world where technology helps rather than harms. We must ensure that our laws and child safety systems evolve as quickly as the technology does. We must compel technology companies to act swiftly and ensure that encryption never comes at the cost of child protection. We must also invest in the education and upskilling of children, parents, carers and educators in digital literacy and awareness so that prevention becomes our first line of defence. We all have a responsibility to ensure that every child can grow up safe, protected and free from exploitation.

THE GREENS POLITICAL PARTY

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK (22:25): Tonight I speak about the New South Wales Greens' politics—above all, the tactic of coopting faux experts to manipulate and deceive the public. They elevate individuals like Stephen Bendle of the Australian Gun Safety Alliance, presenting him as an authority on firearms despite his qualifications being tangential at best. Let us examine his credentials. Mr Bendle holds a Bachelor of Education, but no firearms safety training qualification, and a Master of Science, but not in a technical discipline that helps him to understand firearms mechanisms. Instead, he is a registered health promotion practitioner and medical lobbyist—a glorified Healthy Harold without the fashionable giraffe costume.

Some of Mr Bendle's writings cite real data but, when data is lacking, he fills the gaps with scare tactics and fairy floss. He warns about 3D-printed firearms, yet there is no evidence on how those weapons have been used in crimes nor evidence that licensed gun owners have them or use them at all. He also ignores studies by Dr Samara McPhedran, whose research directly contradicts his claims about gun ownership and violence. Mr Bendle is a darling of the media—the ABC, *The Guardian*, *The Australian*—routinely citing their reports as "evidence". He publishes through the Australian Gun Safety Alliance and the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, not to promote balanced safety but to advocate confiscation. He claimed that Western Australia's legislation has "scared the pants off" the gun lobby, yet he insists that those reforms be adopted nationally, despite the furore from farmers, landowners, veterinarians, licensed gun owners and medical practitioners.

On 8 August this year Mr Bendle arrived in the Macquarie Room, smug and magnanimous, to share his wisdom on firearms—until critical questioning began. Like an ice cube under a bedside lamp, he dissolved, stuttering and stammering when I asked about his qualifications in conservation hunting. Eventually, he admitted that he holds a Victorian firearms licence and supports ownership for genuine reasons, such as hunting. He opposed the proposed 50,000-hectare expansion of hunting on Crown land in New South Wales, yet when Victoria expanded 130,000 hectares of national parks for hunting, his silence was deafening. How can New South Wales Crown land hunting risk public safety but Victoria's national parks do not rate a mention? Perhaps The Greens bought him a plane ticket, a nice hotel, and a fancy meal at Strangers' Restaurant? I speculate, but it is possible.

Far more heinous is The Greens' manipulation of Walter Mikac. As a father and husband who lost his wife and two daughters in the Port Arthur massacre, our hearts go out to him. That trauma is unimaginable. In response, John Howard implemented some of the toughest gun laws in the world. Once a pharmacist, Mikac now dedicates his life to advocating for violence prevention. That mission is laudable, but the strict gun control enacted is already over the top, and that tragedy was 30 years ago in another State. Yet the Animal Justice Party, the New South Wales Greens and their propaganda arm—the Invasive Species Council—continue to use Mr Mikac as a political tool, persuading him to relive his trauma for their agenda.

They misled him about the conservation hunting bill, lying about its contents and exploiting his grief while dancing, metaphorically, on his daughters' graves. How did he travel to Sydney? Did he sit beside Mr Bendle on the plane? Was there a discount for two tickets? Who paid for his time in New South Wales, and who is funding all the propaganda? Mr Mikac has devoted his life to saving lives and preventing violence. But The Greens' treatment of him, combined with reliance on Bendle's flawed expertise, shows blatant disregard for ethical, evidence-based policymaking. That is pure emotion masquerading as sound policy and is plain, misleading propaganda. New South Wales residents deserve better. We owe Mr Mikac compassion for overcoming personal tragedy, but The Greens' and the Animal Justice Party's unethical importation of misinformed and unqualified individuals to warp the narrative is beneath contempt. The public deserves honest debate, genuine expertise and truth in governance. That has not been on display.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): The House now stands adjourned.

The House adjourned at 22:30 until Wednesday 22 October 2025 at 10:00.