

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday 22 October 2025

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

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

Members

LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT

The PRESIDENT: I take this opportunity to wish the Leader of the Government a very happy birthday.

Motions

HEALTH SECURITY WORKERS

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (10:02): I move:

- (1) That this House acknowledges:
 - (a) that security officers and Health and Security Assistants [HASAs] play a vital role in keeping hospitals and health facilities across New South Wales safe for patients, visitors and staff;
 - (b) that International Security Officers' Day on 24 July 2025 provides an important opportunity to recognise the contribution of security personnel in both the public and private health sectors;
 - (c) that HASAs, employed widely across NSW Health facilities, fulfil a unique and complex role that combines patient interaction with frontline safety responsibilities, often under extremely challenging conditions;
 - (d) that secure, respectful and professionally supported workplaces for security officers and HASAs are essential to delivering safe, high-quality health care; and
 - (e) that the Health Services Union continues to advocate for better recognition, conditions and protections for these critical frontline workers.
- (2) That this House thanks all health security personnel and HASAs for their dedication, professionalism and care, and acknowledges their indispensable role in the delivery of public health in New South Wales.

Motion agreed to.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BICENTENARY REGIONAL ROADSHOW

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

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) the Parliament's Regional Roadshow visited Orange on 25 September 2025 and consisted of a public speaking competition for students in years 10 to 12, and youth forum;
 - (b) 14 school students participated in the public speaking competition, and 24 student leaders participated in the youth forum representing a range of schools across Orange and the wider region; and
 - (c) the roadshow was attended by:
 - (i) the President, the Hon. Ben Franklin, MLC;
 - (ii) the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine, MLC;
 - (iii) the Hon. Scott Barrett, MLC;
 - (iv) Mr Philip Donato, member for Orange;
 - (v) Mr Stephen Frappell, Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Council; and
 - (vi) staff from the Legislative Council and President's office.
- (2) That this House congratulates Jonah Grimshaw of Condobolin High School who won the Orange region public speaking competition and will now have the opportunity to speak in the Legislative Council Chamber for the grand final in December.
- (3) That this House acknowledges the work of staff in the Legislative Council and the President's office to ensure the success of the regional roadshows, and to enable the Parliament of New South Wales to engage with regional communities and showcase the voices and leadership of young people in New South Wales.

Motion agreed to.**MENTORING MEN CHARITY**

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

- (1) That this House notes that research by Australian charity Mentoring Men shows that:
 - (a) more than half—53 per cent—of men aged 35 to 50 in New South Wales, Victoria, and the Australian Capital Territory meet the criteria for loneliness;
 - (b) 47 per cent of men feel they lack companionship some of the time; and
 - (c) over one-third of men report trouble maintaining or navigating relationships.
- (2) That this House further notes that:
 - (a) men experiencing loneliness are around twice as likely to experience suicidal thoughts compared to those who are not lonely;
 - (b) men without close friends are twice as likely to experience suicidal thoughts; and
 - (c) men account for 75 per cent of all suicides in Australia, which is around seven deaths every day.
- (3) That this House acknowledges the impact of loneliness on men, and the work Mentoring Men is undertaking to raise awareness of this and the importance of connection, including by encouraging men to meet up with their friends through their Meet a Mate program throughout October.

Motion agreed to.**LET'S FIND A CURE FUNDRAISER**

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

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on Sunday 5 October 2025 Let's Find a Cure hosted their annual fundraiser at the Canterbury Hurlstone Park RSL Club;
 - (b) Let's Find a Cure began in 2010 when sisters Santina, Grace and Marina Rizzo turned their commitment to helping end breast cancer into a powerful movement; and
 - (c) this year's event raised over \$70,000 to support life-changing research into breast cancer by the Garvan Institute of Medical Research.
- (2) That this House acknowledges the commitment and work of the Rizzo sisters to raise both awareness of breast cancer and funding to help find a cure.

Motion agreed to.**RIVERWOOD COMMUNITY CENTRE SPRING FESTIVAL**

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

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) the Riverwood Community Centre Spring Festival was held on Sunday 5 October 2025;
 - (b) the festival was attended by:
 - (i) the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine;
 - (ii) Karl Saleh, Canterbury Bankstown councillor and vice chairperson, Riverwood Community Centre;
 - (iii) Zorka Petrovska, board member Riverwood Community Centre;
 - (iv) Elaina Anzellotti, Georges River councillor;
 - (v) Zhi Soon, Federal member for Banks; and
 - (vi) Mark Coure, State member for Oatley.
- (2) That this House acknowledges the hard work of the Riverwood Community Centre staff who organised the Spring Festival and ensured it was a great day full of wonderful food, performances and entertainment for the whole family that displayed the very best of multicultural Sydney.
- (3) That this House recognises the essential role of the Riverwood Community Centre in fostering community connection through events like the Spring Festival and in empowering and supporting individuals, families and the broader community through its diverse programs.

Motion agreed to.**WHITLAM INSTITUTE REPORT**

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

That this House notes that:

- (a) on Monday 13 October 2025 the Whitlam Institute at the Western Sydney University launched a report entitled *Legislating Human Rights Acts from Whitlam to Now*;
- (b) the report was launched by the Hon. Michael Kirby, AC, CMG, former High Court Justice and lifelong advocate for human rights; and
- (c) the report, co-written by Professor Azadeh Dastyari and Ms Cassandra Le Good, provides a compelling case for a human rights Act in New South Wales.

Motion agreed to.

UNITE AGAINST RACISM RALLY

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

That this House notes that:

- (a) the Unite Against Racism Rally was held in Belmore Park, Sydney, on Sunday 19 October 2025;
- (b) the rally was organised following the so-called March for Australia to:
 - (i) oppose racism;
 - (ii) show migrants, refugees, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds that they are welcome in New South Wales and Australia; and
 - (iii) demonstrate that the contribution of these groups is valued by the community.
- (c) the rally was endorsed by civil society organisations and unions, including the Maritime Union of Australia, Sydney Branch, National Tertiary Education Union, NSW Division, Independent Education Union of Australia, NSW/ACT Branch, NSW Council for Civil Liberties, Refugee Action Coalition, Tamil Refugee Council, Mums 4 Refugees, Labor for Refugees NSW, Teachers for Refugees and Grandmothers for Refugees NSW.

Motion agreed to.

WORLD STROKE DAY

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

- (1) That this House notes that World Stroke Day will be observed globally on 29 October 2025, with the theme "Together We Can: Prevent Stroke, Save Lives".
- (2) That this House recognises that stroke is a leading cause of death and disability worldwide, affecting over 12 million people each year, with significant impact on individuals, families and healthcare systems.
- (3) That this House acknowledges the importance of public awareness, timely access to emergency care and long-term rehabilitation in improving stroke outcomes.
- (4) That this House commends the work of stroke survivors, carers, healthcare professionals, researchers, and advocacy organisations in advancing stroke prevention, treatment and recovery.
- (5) That this House further notes the important work of the New South Wales and Commonwealth governments to:
 - (a) strengthen stroke prevention strategies, including public education on risk factors such as hypertension, smoking and physical inactivity;
 - (b) ensure access to stroke units, emergency response systems and post-stroke rehabilitation services across all regions;
 - (c) support ongoing research into stroke detection, treatment innovations and recovery pathways; and
 - (d) collaborate with international partners to share best practices and data on stroke care.
- (6) That this House encourages all members of Parliament to engage with their communities to promote stroke awareness and support local events and initiatives on World Stroke Day 2025.

Motion agreed to.

DAY OF THE DEAD

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

- (1) That this House recognises the cultural and spiritual significance of the Day of the Dead, known as Día de los Muertos, observed annually on 1 November and celebrated from 31 October to 2 November, as a time for remembrance and celebration of the lives of deceased loved ones.
- (2) That this House acknowledges the contributions of Mexican and Latin American communities in New South Wales, whose traditions enrich the multicultural fabric of our State.
- (3) That this House commends community organisations, artists, and cultural institutions across New South Wales that host Day of the Dead events, exhibitions and educational programs that promote cross-cultural understanding and inclusion.
- (4) That this House encourages all residents of New South Wales to learn about the Day of the Dead as a celebration of life, memory and family, and to support local events that foster intercultural dialogue.

- (5) That this House affirms the Parliament's commitment to recognising and respecting the diverse cultural traditions practised by communities throughout New South Wales.
- (6) That this House offers its best wishes for celebrations in 2025 at Sonora Mexican in Potts Point, Factory Theatre in Marrickville, El Camino Cantina at The Rocks and the Riverside Theatre in Parramatta.

Motion agreed to.

WORLD TOILET DAY

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

- (1) That this House notes that World Toilet Day is observed annually on 19 November to raise awareness of the global sanitation crisis and to promote access to safe, dignified and hygienic sanitation for all.
- (2) That this House recognises that over 3.5 billion people worldwide still live without safely managed sanitation and that poor sanitation is linked to the spread of disease, environmental degradation and social inequality.
- (3) That this House acknowledges the importance of toilet infrastructure in New South Wales, particularly in remote, regional and Indigenous communities, and the need to ensure equitable access to clean and safe toilets across the State, particularly public toilets.
- (4) That this House commends the efforts of local councils, non-government organisations, engineers and public health advocates who work to improve toilet facilities both in New South Wales and globally.
- (5) That this House encourages governments at all levels, to continue investing in public toilets, education campaigns and sustainable wastewater management to protect public health and the environment.
- (6) That this House supports international cooperation and innovation to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation for All by 2030.
- (7) That this House further notes the important work done by Portfolio Committee No. 8 – Customer Service in its recent inquiry into public toilets.

Motion agreed to.

DAME MARIE BASHIR PEACE AWARDS

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (10:07): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) the Dame Marie Bashir Peace Awards were held at New South Wales Parliament House on Monday 29 September 2025 by the National Council of Women NSW;
 - (b) the National Council of Women NSW was founded in 1896 and represents a range of women's organisations and harnesses their collective representative power to provide leadership and advocate for the empowerment of women;
 - (c) the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine and the Hon. Jodie Harrison, MP, Minister for Women, attended the awards;
 - (d) the following young women were recipients of the Dame Marie Bashir Peace Awards:
 - (i) Taylah Cowley - St Columba's Catholic College, Springwood;
 - (ii) Felicia Dimitriadis - Endeavour Sports High School, Caringbah;
 - (iii) Edith Hall - Rutherford Technology High School;
 - (iv) Manasseh Maugh Hall - Miller Technology High School;
 - (v) Monet Shortland - Mullumbimby High School; and
 - (vi) Octavia Williams - Northern Beaches Secondary College Manly Campus.
 - (e) the following young women were recipients of highly commended certificates:
 - (i) Zunaira Abrar - Al-Faisal College, Auburn;
 - (ii) Sadie Adair - St Vincent's College, Potts Point;
 - (iii) Mira Bharathy - Northmead Creative and Performing Arts High School; and
 - (iv) Laaiba Haque - North Sydney Girls High School, Crows Nest.
- (2) That this House recognises that each of the outstanding recipients have demonstrated an exceptional commitment to social justice and community cohesion, embodying the values of leadership, fairness and equality.

Motion agreed to.

QUEANBEYAN PARK TENNIS CLUB

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL (10:07): I move:

- (1) That this House congratulates the Queanbeyan Park Tennis Club on serving up an incredible 140 years since its establishment in 1885, making it one of the oldest continually operating tennis clubs in New South Wales.

- (2) That this House notes that:
- (a) in the same year Queanbeyan was officially proclaimed a municipality and elected its first borough council, and just eight years after the very first Wimbledon Championships was held in England, tennis in the town took flight;
 - (b) the first "courts" were transformed paddocks, though a lack of fencing often meant the arrival of spectators in the guise of a sheep or two or, perhaps more helpfully, lawnmowers;
 - (c) by the 1920s, with a population of just 1,500 people, the wider area boasted 50 tennis courts;
 - (d) in the 1930s, regional competition was fierce, with emerging champions including local builder Tommy O'Connor—also a dab hand at rugby league, golf, boxing and cricket—earning renown for selection in Australian cricket sensation Arthur Mailey's "Bohemian XV" 1928 team that played in the Australian Capital Territory, Tommy taking seven wickets for just 37 runs, one of those clean bowled no less than Don Bradman;
 - (e) Tommy was also a member of the 1931 New South Wales hardcourt tennis team which resoundingly defeated Queensland, 23 rubbers to 10;
 - (f) with the onset of World War II, tennis matches were suspended but resumed as soon as possible in 1947, the Queanbeyan Park Tennis Club going from strength to strength; and
 - (g) with upgrades to its lighting facilities and securing over \$530,000 under the former Liberal-Nationals Government in 2022 to build new courts, including dedicated pickleball courts, the club has enjoyed a remarkable 94 per cent surge in membership, proving that community spirit and a good backhand never go out of style.
- (3) That this House further notes that:
- (a) on 12 October 2025, the Queanbeyan Park Tennis Club celebrated its 140th anniversary;
 - (b) the Hon. Nichole Overall joined club and community members, including local councillors, club president Wendy Grant and committee members, to mark the event; and
 - (c) also present was another born and bred sporting icon who started her brilliant career as one of the most outstanding sportspeople Australia has ever seen on those very courts, Heather McKay, AM, MBE. Having won local championships, Heather would go on to international acclaim as the undefeated world champion in squash for 19 years before turning to racquetball where she also became a world champion, then returning to where it started and winning world titles in masters tennis. Heather continues to serve as a proud ambassador for Queanbeyan and Australian sport.
- (4) That this House commends the historic and significant Queanbeyan Park Tennis Club for its many achievements, its central role in the sporting and social life of the community it has served so long, and its commitment to nurturing generations of talent, and wishes it all the best for the future as it consistently "courts aces".

Motion agreed to.

MR BRAD BASSETT

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (10:08): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that, during the recent United Services Union [USU] conference, Brad Bassett received a Life Membership nomination from the southern branch of the USU.
- (2) That this House further notes that:
 - (a) Brad has been a member of the USU for 42 years and remains active with the union as a retired member;
 - (b) as an elected delegate to the southern branch, Brad informed the union of the activities of Sutherland Shire Council and regularly attended consultative committee meetings with the aim of improving the functioning of the council and making work more safe, enjoyable and efficient for USU members; and
 - (c) Brad's commitment made life easier for his colleagues by organising meetings, representing members, addressing management when needed and taking every opportunity to recruit new members, delegates and activists.
- (3) That this House congratulates:
 - (a) Brad Bassett on his Life Membership nomination of the USU; and
 - (b) USU General Secretary Graeme Kelly, OAM, and all USU delegates and members for continuing to uplift and support their members in gaining and fighting for workers' rights.

Motion agreed to.

YOUNG LIBERAL MOVEMENT

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

That this House:

- (a) notes that on 16 August 2025 the NSW Young Liberal Movement elected its new executive team, led by new president Cooper Gannon;
- (b) notes the importance of the Young Liberal Movement as the conscience of both the State and Federal parliamentary Liberal parties, and its development and nurturing of future leaders; and

- (c) congratulates the following members, newly elected to the executive team:
- (i) Cooper Gannon, President;
 - (ii) Abby Smith and Lachlan Clark, Metropolitan Vice Presidents;
 - (iii) Priscilla Spalding, Country and Regional Vice-President;
 - (iv) Bryson Constable, Secretary;
 - (v) Aryan Ilkhani, Treasurer;
 - (vi) Jem Craddock, Socials Director;
 - (vii) Maya Khurana, Women's Director;
 - (viii) Chelsea Burgess Hannon, Flying-Squad Director;
 - (ix) Flinders Brogden, Community Outreach Director;
 - (x) James Ardouin, Networking Director;
 - (xi) Abbey Dawson, Regional Director;
 - (xii) William Olive, Reform Director;
 - (xiii) Dan Padman, Executive and Membership Director;
 - (xiv) Pedro Roh, Campus Development Officer;
 - (xv) Aileen Tan, Communications Officer;
 - (xvi) Damon Hurley, Tertiary Institutions Liaison Officer; and
 - (xvii) Georgia Lowden, Immediate Past President.

Motion agreed to.

MACQUARIE HOME STAY DUBBO

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (10:09): I move:

That this House notes that:

- (a) Macquarie Home Stay in Dubbo is a registered charity that provides affordable, low-cost but not low-quality accommodation for patients, and their partner or escort, pre, during and post medical treatment;
- (b) facilities like Macquarie Home Stay help health services run more effectively and efficiently across regional New South Wales by focusing on reducing trauma, emotional stress and the financial burden which patients experience;
- (c) on 26 September 2025 Macquarie Home Stay in Dubbo officially opened its Country Women's Association of New South Wales [CWA of NSW] Guesthouse, and attendees included:
 - (i) State member for Dubbo, Dugald Saunders;
 - (ii) Federal member for Parkes, Jamie Chaffey; and
 - (iii) Duty MLC for Dubbo, Stephen Lawrence.
- (d) the CWA of NSW Guesthouse 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;
- (e) this accommodation has been built to especially support patients, with their families, while receiving treatment at the Western Cancer Centre;
- (f) Macquarie Home Stay at Dubbo has experienced growth, and people from across New South Wales are travelling to Dubbo for specialist medical care and choose to stay at Macquarie Home Stay, with more than 20 per cent of its guests being Aboriginal; and
- (g) Macquarie Home Stay has expansion plans to continue to meet the needs of the community, including stage 3, which will consist of five individual two-bedroom family units, and stage 4, a further 14 one- and two-bedroom units.

Motion agreed to.

COWRA CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (10:09): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on 27 September 2025 the annual Cherry Blossom Festival—Sakura Matsuri in Japanese—took place at the beautiful Cowra Japanese Gardens, where a record 3,922 people attended;
 - (b) the festival is a day to celebrate the arrival of spring and the Japanese culture;

- (c) the festival showcases Japanese culture through a range of activities and demonstrations with bonsai workshops, taiko drummers, sumo wrestlers, Japanese archery and sword demonstrations, origami, martial arts, singers, dancers, choir, kintsugi, ikebana, tea ceremonies and more;
 - (d) there were activities for children throughout the day, it being a festival for families and individuals of all ages to enjoy; and
 - (e) the Cowra Japanese Garden exists to mark the events of the Cowra breakout and the important relationship that exists between the Cowra community and Japan as a consequence.
- (2) That this House congratulates:
- (a) the Cowra Japanese Garden board management and staff; and
 - (b) Cowra Shire Council.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS URALLA

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

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) the Uralla Shire Business Chamber has officially rebranded itself as Business Uralla, in order to clearly distinguish its identity from local government and emphasise its independent advocacy role for local business and community interests;
 - (b) the rebranding was accompanied by a revitalised executive team, as Beth Platford has become the new president, succeeding Col Hull, Anne Rix is the new vice president, succeeding Claire Mailler, Teresa French has been elected secretary, and David Mailler continues in the treasurer role;
 - (c) the new logo, inspired by the infinity symbol, expresses the symbiotic and ongoing relationship between the business sector and the local community—one cannot thrive without the other;
 - (d) Business Uralla has signalled its priorities for the coming year will include:
 - (i) strengthening collaboration with sporting, cultural and government bodies to expand the visitor economy;
 - (ii) organising a Small Business Month networking event in Uralla;
 - (iii) engaging in advocacy around development application processes and reducing barriers to growth caused by the cost pressures of rates, water, power and bureaucracy; and
 - (iv) repositioning Uralla as a destination in its own right, not merely a stopping point en route to Sydney or Brisbane.
 - (e) the chamber's renewed vision underscores the evolving role of local business advocacy in driving regional resilience, cohesion, economic growth and community vibrancy across New South Wales.
- (2) That this House:
- (a) congratulates Business Uralla, its new leadership and its members on the rebrand and their renewed strategic direction;
 - (b) affirms the importance of empowered, autonomous local business chambers in providing a direct voice for small and medium enterprises in regional communities, especially in places like Uralla;
 - (c) supports the chamber in its efforts to reduce regulatory and cost-of-business burdens, attract visitors and new enterprises, and help local businesses engage better with government and community partners; and
 - (d) encourages all members of this House to engage with and back local chambers of commerce and business groups across New South Wales, as essential intermediaries that strengthen local economies, networks and social capital.

Motion agreed to.

REPUBLIC OF KOREA NATIONAL DAY

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (10:10): On behalf of the Hon. Natalie Ward: I move:

- (1) That this House notes:
- (a) on 24 September 2025 the Consul-General of the Republic of Korea in Sydney, Mr Yong Jun Choi, and Mrs Eun Young Jo hosted the National Day of the Republic of Korea reception commemorating Korea's independence and founding;
 - (b) the commemoration was attended by members of the Korean community and supported by members of both Houses of New South Wales Parliament as well as councillors and community representatives, including:
 - (i) the Hon. Natalie Ward;
 - (ii) the Hon. Anoulack Chanthivong, MP;
 - (iii) the Hon. Scott Farlow;

- (iv) the Hon. Chris Rath;
 - (v) the Hon. Greg Piper, MP;
 - (vi) Mr Stephen Bali, MP;
 - (vii) Mr Jason Yat-Sen Li, MP;
 - (viii) Mr Tim James, MP;
 - (ix) Mayor Michael Megna;
 - (x) Mayor Trenton Brown;
 - (xi) Councillor Daniel Han; and
 - (xii) members of the Korean Community and Korean businesses operating in New South Wales.
- (c) Korea's National Day on 15 August 2025 commemorates the founding of the Korean nation, recognises the enduring spirit of the Korean people and celebrates their rich cultural heritage;
- (d) the indispensable contribution of Koreans to our communities in New South Wales; and
- (e) the reception showcased Korean food, culture and innovation which were celebrated with some of the best that Korea has to offer on display, and it also featured a stunning performance by K-Pop group VIRTUE, featuring iconic songs such as *Soda Pop*.
- (2) That this House:
- (a) extends its thanks to Consul-General Yong Jun Choi and the Consulate of the Republic of Korea in Sydney for their work in Sydney; and
 - (b) recognises the contribution of the Korean diaspora in New South Wales.

Motion agreed to.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SIGN LANGUAGES

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (10:11): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) Tuesday 23 September 2025 was the International Day of Sign Languages, which commemorates the establishment of the World Federation of the Deaf in 1951 and affirms that there are no human rights without sign language rights;
 - (b) the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises sign languages as equal in status to spoken languages and obliges governments to promote the linguistic identity of the deaf community and ensure equitable access to education and services in sign language;
 - (c) there are more than 70 million deaf people belonging to signing deaf communities across the world, with over 300 distinct sign languages used worldwide;
 - (d) sign language is not universal, each sign language has its own unique and distinct culture and, just like spoken languages, each sign language has evolved and developed around the world over time;
 - (e) deaf people continue to face systemic barriers across society, including inadequate or a lack of access to professional interpreters, translated materials and quality and inclusive education systems, which prevents individuals from accessing essential services like education, employment, health care, social support and justice, and perpetuates inequities in communication and societal participation;
 - (f) sign languages are fully-fledged natural languages, and their preservation is essential to the diversity of New South Wales and the full realisation of the rights of deaf people; and
 - (g) the recent inquiry into children and young people with disability in New South Wales educational settings set a new benchmark for accessibility in parliamentary processes, with live Auslan interpretation at every hearing, the provision of Easy Read documentation and all proceedings published with Auslan interpretation.
- (2) That this House:
- (a) affirms that sign language rights are human rights, and that all deaf people have the right to agency, dignity, full participation in public life, and equal access to education and services;
 - (b) calls on the New South Wales Parliament and all members of Parliament to make disability-inclusive practices, including Auslan interpretation and Easy Read materials, standard practice across all parliamentary processes; and
 - (c) calls on the Government to work in genuine partnership with Deaf communities and experts across the disability advocacy sector to remove barriers preventing Deaf communities from full inclusion and access, and commit to embed the lived experience and leadership of deaf people in the design, delivery and evaluation of public policy and services.

Motion agreed to.

*Documents***GREYHOUND RACING INDUSTRY****Personal Information Redacted**

The CLERK: According to Standing Order 52, I inform the House that on Tuesday 14 October 2025 the Hon. Emma Hurst requested the production of redacted versions of certain documents returned on Wednesday 1 October 2025 and Friday 10 October 2025. The request was communicated to the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission on Tuesday 14 October 2025.

I table a return received on Tuesday 21 October 2025 from the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, together with an indexed list of documents with personal information that should not be made public redacted as requested.

*Visitors***VISITORS**

The PRESIDENT: I welcome to the gallery the member for Shellharbour, Anna Watson, and students and staff from Mount Brown Public School. You are all very welcome in the Legislative Council today.

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

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

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: On behalf of the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones: I postpone business of the House notice of motion No. 2 until the next sitting day.

*Bills***COMPANION ANIMALS AMENDMENT (CONTROL OF CATS) BILL 2025****First Reading**

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

Second Reading Speech

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (10:29): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Companion Animals Amendment (Control of Cats) Bill 2025 is a straightforward and long-overdue reform. It amends the Companion Animals Act 1998 and the Local Government Act 1993 to establish a clear duty on cat owners to keep their cats under control, in the same way that dog owners are expected to control their animals, and to empower councils to make and enforce reasonable orders to prevent cats from escaping the property where they are kept. The bill is about responsibility, balance and protection of our precious native animals from domestic cats that are allowed to roam. Roaming owned cats kill native birds, reptiles and small mammals. Recent Australian research shows that each roaming pet cat kills, on average, about 186 animals per year, of which around 110 are native animals, including 40 reptiles, 38 birds and 32 mammals.

Scientists have documented that free-roaming cats kill more than 2,000 different species worldwide, including 347 species listed as threatened or endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species. In Australia, cats kill more birds and mammals per square kilometre than anywhere else on Earth. They have fundamentally changed the ecology of our cities, our bushland and our island. They are also far more likely to experience harm themselves. Roaming cats have much higher rates of car strikes, dog attacks, cat fights and disease. A vet who operates in Sydney very recently wrote:

As a vet, I see the "feral" or stray/unowned cats that are brought in for treatment/picked up by council—they are usually unhealthy, with high parasite burdens (internal worms, external fleas, mites), often have bacterial or fungal infections and are carriers of chronic viruses (cat flu, feline immunodeficiency virus, feline leukemia virus). They are not living their best life and they will not live their best life even if neutered and released again. And they will still hunt and decimate our local wildlife and birdlife. They are often highly stressed and fear aggressive and cannot be easily handled or readily "tamed" (and would not make good pets).

Roaming cats are also the main domestic source of toxoplasmosis, a disease that infects about one in five Australians. It can cause miscarriages, blindness and brain damage, and is estimated to cost the health and agriculture sectors around \$6 billion every year. Responsible cat ownership is therefore also a matter of public health. Because many pet cats roam, become lost and reproduce uncontrolledly, they also contribute to the

population of feral cats. Australia's pet cat population is estimated at about 5.3 million, with around 71 per cent able to roam. Additionally, in a radio-tracking study in Adelaide among owners who believed their cats were inside at night, 39 per cent were in fact outdoors.

Each year, between 30,000 and 60,000 pet cats are surrendered or abandoned in New South Wales. Those animals that are abandoned unlawfully end up breeding in the wild, adding to the State's estimated 1.5 million to three million feral cats. Reducing the flow of owned cats into the feral population is one of the simplest, most humane ways to reduce the scale of lethal control programs in national parks and reserves. The evidence is clear: When owned cats are left to roam, they endanger wildlife, they endanger themselves and they undermine the broader efforts of invasive species control programs in our cities and across the regions. Every year, free-roaming domestic cats in Australia kill an estimated 323 million native animals. In Sydney alone, roaming pet cats are estimated to have killed over 62 million native animals in 2024.

The research shows that some of Sydney's densest areas for cat-related wildlife deaths are the inner west, the Central Coast and the Sutherland shire, but also include newer suburbs on the city fringe where urban bushland meets development. In these interface zones, roaming cats are having measurable impacts on populations of superb fairy-wrens, skinks, bandicoots and ringtail possums—species that should be endemic to, and thriving in, our neighbourhoods and backyards. In the inner west there are approximately 36,400 registered cats and the estimate of native animals killed by those roaming cats is 2.2 million for the year. In the Central Coast the estimate is 1.7 million native animals killed, and in the Sutherland shire it is about 1.4 million native animals killed.

Cats are responsible for the extinction of at least 27 native species and continue to threaten 120 others. The scientific evidence is irrefutable: Cats are among the most destructive invasive predators in Australia. Yet, here in New South Wales, our laws have not caught up with the evidence or with community expectations. Under the current Companion Animals Act, councils are effectively prohibited from introducing enforceable cat containment or curfews. The result is that responsible cat owners who already keep their pets safely at home are being let down, and councils trying to protect wildlife and neighbourhood amenity are being left without the legal tools they need to act. There has been a quiet cultural shift in how people think about cat ownership. Surveys by the Biodiversity Council and the RSPCA show that the majority of cat owners now keep their cats fully contained or are planning to do so. Containment is becoming the social norm in the same way that dog leashing and microchipping became standard practice a generation ago.

The public overwhelmingly supports change. A 2024 Biodiversity Council survey found that two-thirds of respondents—that is, 66 per cent—support laws requiring cat owners to keep their cats contained to their property. This is not a niche or controversial issue. The evidence is clear and so is the community will. I take a moment to acknowledge the extraordinary work of the organisations, experts and local councils who have carried this issue for so many years and have built the foundation that allows this reform to happen today. The evidence in this second reading speech is largely based on the work of hundreds of people across dozens of groups, so it is only right to acknowledge them here. RSPCA NSW has been one of the most consistent and credible voices calling for mandatory cat containment of owned cats. It told the parliamentary inquiry that containment is essential for both cat welfare and biodiversity, noting that contained cats live longer, suffer fewer injuries and are far less likely to become lost or contribute to the feral cat population.

The RSPCA reminded us that this is not just about protecting wildlife; it is also about protecting the cats themselves. RSPCA NSW's evidence showed that free-roaming cats face much higher risks of trauma, disease and early death, and that toxoplasmosis, a disease spread by cat faeces, infects around one in five Australians and costs our health and agricultural sectors approximately \$6 billion every year. RSPCA NSW also emphasised that mandatory containment must be paired with public education, affordable desexing and clear guidance for owners, to make the transition fairly and effectively.

The Biodiversity Council has provided the essential scientific backbone for this reform. Its research shows that pet cats in Australia kill an estimated 323 million native animals every year, most of them in urban and peri-urban areas. The council has demonstrated that simple containment measures—keeping cats indoors or in secure outdoor enclosures—dramatically reduce mortality rates for native birds, reptiles and mammals. The Biodiversity Council has made it clear that New South Wales lags behind every other jurisdiction and that containment is one of the simplest, most effective conservation actions available to households. Its public education campaigns have helped to reframe cat containment as an act of care and environmental responsibility rather than restriction, because that is what it is.

The Invasive Species Council has been tireless in its advocacy, bridging the gap between scientific research and policy reform. Its work has revealed the shocking scale of predation occurring in our communities. According to its analysis, roaming pet cats in Sydney alone kill more than 62 million native animals every year. In the inner west, they kill around 2.2 million native animals each year; on the Central Coast, 1.7 million; and in the Sutherland Shire, about 1.4 million. Those numbers are alarming. The Invasive Species Council has described those numbers

not as statistics but as preventable losses, wildlife that could be saved through responsible ownership and enforceable containment. It has reminded us that, without legal reform, local governments and communities are powerless to stop those losses from continuing.

Local Government NSW has also shown strong and principled leadership. Councils across the State have made it clear that they are ready and willing to act, but they have been denied the legal tools to do so. Local Government NSW has called for urgent amendment of the Companion Animals Act 1998 to enable councils to introduce and enforce containment orders, to manage nuisance complaints and to protect local wildlife. They have also called for funding support to educate communities and to help councils implement new responsibilities fairly and effectively. Councils are on the front line of this issue. They see the impacts daily: injured wildlife, nuisance complaints, and the frustration of responsible pet owners who do the right thing while some others do not.

WIRES and the NSW Wildlife Council have provided deeply sobering evidence about the consequences of inaction. Every year, their members and volunteers care for tens of thousands of native animals injured or killed by domestic and roaming cats. WIRES alone records more than 8,000 admissions a year directly attributable to cat attacks. These are animals such as bandicoots, ringtail possums, blue-tongue lizards and small birds that should be thriving in our suburbs and towns. The organisation said that most of these animals die from either the initial trauma or later infection, placing an enormous and preventable burden on volunteer carers. WIRES supports mandatory cat containment, combined with public education and affordable desexing, as the most effective way to reduce this toll and "prevent suffering at the source".

The NSW Wildlife Council, which represents more than 30 licensed wildlife rehabilitation groups, reported that domestic and feral cats are a leading cause of wildlife injury and mortality across the State. It told the committee that wildlife rehabilitators are "stretched beyond capacity" because of the number of animals attacked by roaming cats. The council called for 24-hour containment of owned cats, compulsory desexing, and amendments to the Companion Animals Act 1998 so that councils can enforce containment orders. It explained that even when victims are rescued, most die from infection, and that stronger containment laws are therefore needed to prevent attacks rather than respond to them.

The Australian Veterinary Association [AVA] and the Animal Welfare League have both reinforced that containment benefits the cats as much as it does wildlife. The AVA's evidence showed that contained cats live two to three years longer on average than roaming cats, experience fewer traumatic injuries and have lower rates of infectious diseases like feline immunodeficiency virus. The Animal Welfare League highlighted that a large proportion of the tens of thousands of cats surrendered to pounds or abandoned each year in New South Wales were once owned, and that uncontrolled breeding contributes directly to feral cat populations. Both organisations have called for containment laws with reasonable transition periods and support for vulnerable people, such as those experiencing homelessness or domestic violence, to ensure that reforms are fair and humane.

The Taronga Conservation Society Australia, the National Parks Association of NSW and the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions have provided national and global context. Taronga Conservation Society Australia submitted that cat predation is a primary threat to many ground-dwelling mammals and reptiles in both urban and regional New South Wales. It said that domestic cat containment must complement national feral cat control efforts, describing urban containment as "a cornerstone of invasive species prevention". Taronga recommended that cat management policy be integrated into the State's biodiversity and threatened species strategies so that domestic animal management supports conservation outcomes on public and private land.

The National Parks Association told the committee that domestic cat containment is "the missing piece" in New South Wales's approach to invasive species control. It explained that ongoing eradication and control programs targeting feral cats, foxes and pigs inside national parks are completely undermined when owned cats are allowed to roam and interbreed. The association urged the Government to introduce statewide legislation enabling councils to enforce cat containment and to deliver public education campaigns highlighting the ecological value of native urban wildlife.

The Centre for Invasive Species Solutions provided scientific evidence showing that cats are among the most destructive invasive predators on Earth. The centre noted that cats have been responsible for at least 27 Australian species' extinctions and have affected more than 2,000 species globally. It told the committee that domestic cats contribute to the wider invasive species problem by augmenting feral populations and continuing predation in peri-urban areas, and that mandatory containment of owned cats is a necessary prevention measure consistent with national invasive species objectives.

These organisations have each reminded us that cats are among the most destructive invasive predators on Earth, responsible for at least 27 native species' extinctions in Australia and over 2,000 species affected globally. They have highlighted that cat predation has fundamentally altered the ecology of many Australian ecosystems,

and that addressing domestic and feral cat populations is central to any credible biodiversity or invasive species strategy. These organisations have not only supplied the evidence; they have built the movement that has brought us here. They have educated the public, engaged councils, informed Parliament and translated science into action. They have worked with compassion, integrity, persistence and patience. They have shown that containment is not a punishment; it is a community responsibility. Their work has normalised cat containment as the social expectation, just as dog leashing, microchipping and desexing became norms a generation ago.

I also acknowledge the many local councils that have already acted or advocated for change: Hornsby Shire Council, Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council, Blue Mountains City Council, Tweed Shire Council, Inner West Council, City of Parramatta council and the City of Ryde have all taken leadership positions, adopting motions in support of enforceable cat containment or establishing education and compliance programs. That list is not exhaustive. Councils like Queanbeyan-Palerang have already introduced progressive containment policies that will make containment compulsory for new cats in coming years. Hornsby and Blue Mountains councils have run successful local campaigns promoting responsible ownership, and Tweed and Inner West councils have been strong advocates for State-level reform.

Across the State, councillors and community volunteers have worked together to find humane and practical solutions to a problem that successive governments have ignored. This bill is the product of that collective effort. It reflects the evidence of our leading animal welfare organisations, conservation scientists, veterinary professionals, wildlife rescuers and local government. It carries with it the moral authority of thousands of volunteers and community members who care deeply about their pets, their local wildlife and the future of our shared environment.

The bill stands on the shoulders of people who have been doing the hard work of reform for years, people who have made the case that responsible ownership and environmental protection are not in conflict but go hand in hand. New South Wales is now the only State in Australia that has not acted to reform broken containment laws for cats. In Victoria, more than 50 per cent of councils have introduced some form of cat containment under the Domestic Animals Act 1994. In the Australian Capital Territory, cat containment is mandatory across Canberra, and penalties reach \$1,870 for breaches. In South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania, councils can already introduce enforceable containment through local by-laws.

The announcement by the Western Australian Government last month that it will amend the Cat Act so that councils can make and enforce laws requiring pet cats to be contained, managed under local laws, has left New South Wales a laggard on the continent. This is not radical reform; it is simply bringing New South Wales into line with every other State and Territory. In communities that have introduced containment, the results have been immediate. Canberra's containment suburbs report fewer complaints, healthier cats and increased sightings of small native birds. Hornsby and Queanbeyan-Palerang councils, which have implemented local awareness programs, have recorded strong compliance and community pride in protecting wildlife.

The bill before us today does four key things. It creates a general duty of containment. The bill introduces a new section 29A into the Companion Animals Act 1998 that establishes a clear legal duty for cat owners to keep their animals under control. It requires owners to take all reasonable precautions to prevent their cats from escaping from the property on which they are kept. This duty reflects the principle that owning a cat carries a responsibility, not only for the animal's welfare but also for the protection of wildlife and community amenity. The provision makes it an offence to intentionally release a cat from a property unless the cat is under the effective control of a competent person. By codifying this obligation, the bill closes a longstanding gap in the companion animals regulatory framework and brings expectations for cat ownership into line with those that already apply to dogs.

The bill also establishes penalties that are fair and proportionate. It sets out a graduated penalty structure that increases with repeated noncompliance. A first offence attracts a penalty of 0.1 penalty units—that is about \$11 at current values—reflecting that initial enforcement will focus on education and awareness. A second offence attracts three penalty units, or roughly \$330, and a third or subsequent offence attracts eight penalty units, which is \$880. This scaling provides a fair and proportionate response to repeated breaches, while allowing time for owners to adjust their behaviour. The model is designed to prioritise education before punishment, supporting a culture of responsible ownership rather than relying on punitive enforcement alone.

The bill also protects vulnerable people. It includes a statutory defence to ensure that the new offences do not unfairly penalise people who may be in crisis or experiencing disadvantage. It provides that a person is not guilty of an offence if, at the time of the alleged breach, they were experiencing homelessness or were subject to behaviour constituting domestic or family violence under the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007. These provisions recognise that some people face circumstances that limit their ability to comply immediately with containment requirements and ensure that enforcement remains compassionate and proportionate.

The bill amends the Local Government Act 1993 to give councils clear authority to issue and enforce orders that require the occupier of a property to take action to prevent a cat from escaping. If an order is ignored, the person may be prosecuted for failing to comply, with a maximum penalty of eight penalty units. These provisions give local governments the practical tools they have long sought to respond to nuisance and predation complaints, manage risks to wildlife and public amenity, and support consistent standards for responsible cat ownership across the State. The bill also provides a staged commencement—12 months after assent for most provisions and six years for the full penalty regime—to allow time for education and cultural change to occur. This is a pragmatic approach that recognises varying personal circumstances, while also addressing the extreme risks of roaming cats.

Allowing cats to roam freely has real and measurable consequences for wildlife, for neighbours and for cats themselves. The Commonwealth's most recent assessment of invasive species costs found that cats imposed an estimated \$18.7 billion in economic losses between 1960 and 2022, more than any other introduced animal in Australia. Implementing containment for owned cats is one of the cheapest and most effective prevention measures available. In the context of broader invasive species control programs—from feral horse management in the alps to pig, fox and deer programs across regional New South Wales—it is inconsistent and indefensible that we have no enforceable framework for domestic cats, one of the most significant invasive predators in Australia. Responsible cat ownership must be part of our invasive species strategy. It is one of the most effective, humane and affordable interventions we can make to protect wildlife.

The New South Wales community is ready for this change; local governments are ready. Our precious native species have been suffering while obstructionists amongst us have stopped us from acting to protect them. The only thing that is missing is legislative action. The Government is reviewing the Companion Animals Act, and that work should continue, but this reform is simple, supported and urgent. There is no reason to delay it further. This is a narrow, practical measure that will deliver immediate benefits for communities, councils, the environment and even cats.

I urge all members to support the bill. This is not a partisan issue. It is about responsibility, coexistence and care—values that we all should share. The Companion Animals Amendment (Control of Cats) Bill 2025 is the product of years of advocacy by communities, councils and organisations that have seen firsthand the cost of inaction. It provides a fair and balanced framework for cat containment and responsible pet ownership. It aligns New South Wales with the rest of the country, protects wildlife, and supports the people and organisations already doing this work on the ground. I say in earnest that this bill is an invitation to every member in this place to get the job done, to do the right thing for all of us in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Documents

MOORE PARK GOLF COURSE

Production of Documents: Further Order

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (10:55): I move:

That, under standing order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 7 days of the date of passing of this resolution all documents created since 28 March 2023, excluding any documents previously returned under an order of the House, in the possession, custody or control of the Treasurer or the Treasury relating to the final business case and annexures regarding the transformation of Moore Park Golf Course and the future of Moore Park South, and any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

There have been previous returns on this matter, but the motion goes to the question of what should be provided to the House in those returns. The motion specifies one document, which is the final business case for the Moore Park golf course. We know that the NSW Treasury has completed that and we know that the document exists, but it has not been provided to the House. This fairly simple further order seeks just one document from the Treasury with respect to the order for papers. It specifies that document and orders that it be produced to the House.

There is precedent for the production of such documents. I draw the House's attention to 30 May 2019, when Mr Justin Field moved an order for papers for the draft and final business cases for the Broken Hill pipeline, which were not presented in response to earlier orders. They were subsequently provided to the House. It goes to the nitty-gritty of the Government's definition of Cabinet papers. There is a long history of determining what Cabinet papers should be produced to this House. In the case of the Broken Hill pipeline, the court said that Cabinet documents are only documents that disclose the deliberations of the Cabinet, not necessarily those that are prepared outside of Cabinet for the consideration of Cabinet. But there seems to be a trend in this Government to take a very broad definition of Cabinet documents. The only other possibility would be that the Government is not complying with orders of this House, so it must be a definitional debate.

We all know what these motions can lead to, but this is a very defined motion. It defines a particular document, which would not be made public. The order for its production would attract privilege, no doubt, but this House has an interest in being able to obtain that document. It sets a precedent in terms of the openness and transparency of this Government's deliberations as to what information it will provide to this House. When it comes to important decisions of government, this House should have the opportunity to see the inner workings. Privilege provisions attach to such information, of course, and that is right and proper.

It should not necessarily be out in the public, but it should be available for members of this House to see how the Government makes its determinations and comes to its decisions—what inputs the Government has and, to be frank, whether Government members are true to their word and what they say publicly accords with what they are being told privately. That is the inherent nature of Standing Order 52 and of the information that members of this House seek under an order for the production of papers and what we expect to receive from the Government.

This matter has a vexed history. Members opposite, particularly under the leadership of the Hon. Adam Searle, ardently prosecuted the case that documents such as those I seek today should be provided to this House. Chief Justice Spigelman determined in *Egan v Chadwick* that Cabinet documents should not be defined as anything that goes before Cabinet but rather as documents that determine the deliberations of the Cabinet. This is a narrow reading. When I was sitting on the other side of the Chamber, I remember the many times when, maybe with some sufferance, the former Leader of the Government, the Hon. Don Harwin, presented certain documents and even provided voluntary releases. With that being said, I commend to the House this motion seeking documents under Standing Order 52.

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

Members

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I inform the House that the Treasurer will be absent from questions without notice today. The Hon. Courtney Houssos will answer questions admirably on his behalf.

Questions Without Notice

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (11:00): My question is directed to the Special Minister of State. I note the Minister's advice that his grant of \$25,000 to the Arrahman Benevolent Society Ltd was in accordance with the eligibility criteria in section 3.1 of the Local Small Commitments Allocation guidelines. The criteria includes a provision that the department take certain factors into account, including "issues that could cause reputation damage or other risk to the New South Wales Government" and "poor past performance of the nominated organisation". Why does the brief approved by the Minister not include any reference to the revocation for noncompliance of the status of Arrahman Benevolent Society Ltd as a charity advancing social or public welfare or to its intimate connections with the designated terrorist organisation Hezbollah?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:01): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I was asked about this yesterday and the Hon. Damien Tudehope has referred to my answer. As usual, the Opposition Whip got the facts totally wrong, and now the Opposition is asking this follow-up question. I have supplied advice from the program office. Yesterday, I was asked why this company was getting money given that the guidelines clearly exclude grants to companies limited by shares. That part of the question was true.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Point of order: My point of order goes to relevance. I have acknowledged that the Minister has provided an answer. This is a separate question relating to the brief that he signed off on, which did not include specific information going to potential reputational damage to the Government. The Minister should address that question.

The Hon. Courtney Houssos: To the point of order: The Leader of the Opposition asked quite a lengthy question and then immediately jumped up to take a point of order on relevance. I lost count of the number of questions and items that were in his initial question.

The Hon. Mark Latham: Six.

The Hon. Courtney Houssos: Thank you. I acknowledge the interjection. The Minister has a level of discretion to provide broader context within the first 30 seconds of his answer.

The PRESIDENT: I have sympathy with the point of order taken by the Hon. Damien Tudehope. I also appreciate the comments made by the Hon. Courtney Houssos. I encourage the Minister to be directly relevant to the question he was asked. He is not being directly relevant at this point.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The company that the Leader of the Opposition asked about is not a company limited by shares. It is a company limited by guarantee and, despite the assertions made by Opposition members yesterday, that makes it eligible under the guidelines. The Opposition Whip failed to understand that distinction, but luckily public servants were on the case. This is part of a litany of errors made by the Opposition Whip, none of which he has apologised for. This additional question asks about the brief that I signed. Members will recall that this brief was released publicly a short time after I signed it. It is on record as part of the transparency around this program. Members are entitled to look at that brief.

I was then asked, "Why didn't the public service include this?" That question would be better put to the public servants. Members will have an opportunity to do that. This grant was recommended to me, and I supported the recommendation. That is on record. The Opposition will have the chance to put these questions to the program office on Friday, and I encourage them to do so. I hope the Opposition Whip gets some of his facts right. It would be good if he could get just some of them right. The first thing I expect him to do when he turns up is apologise.

RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (11:05): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister advise the House on how the Government is responding to issues raised in the Auditor-General's report on rail procurement?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:05): I thank the member for her question. This Government and its Premier have been prepared to give the former Government credit where it is due, particularly for its work in the transport and metro spaces. As the Minister for Transport, even I was surprised at the full extent of the nightmare when I read the Auditor-General's report on rail procurement yesterday. It is a \$2½ billion stain on the Opposition's record on rail procurement.

This tale of woe has three chapters. The first chapter is the privatisation obsession that meant the purchase of the regional rail fleet was set up as a public-private partnership. That has been a big part of the cost blowout of \$2½ billion on top of what should have been a \$4.3 billion project. The second chapter was a planning failure. The plan was to have 22½ per cent fewer seats on lines that were already over capacity, like the South Coast line and the Central Coast and Newcastle line. This was a total planning failure. It took me a little while to get my head around the Blue Mountains issue even though I was familiar with the campaign. The trains did not fit the tracks, tunnels or platforms. The plan was a train failure trifecta.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Who have you sacked?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The third chapter is an industrial relations failure. Industrial relations was an obsession of the former Government. According to the former Government's plan these were meant to be driver-only trains, but the trouble was that it never asked the guards. It ran into trouble and had to backflip on that. It also never asked the drivers about the design of the trains.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Yes, we did.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I encourage you to read the report. It never asked the drivers, and taxpayers had to foot the bill again. This all adds up to \$2½ billion, which is the ideological cost of an obsession with privatisation and industrial relations conflict. We have seen this at the Northern Beaches Hospital and in the Auditor-General's report, which laid bare what has been going on in rail procurement. The good news is that we acquired and then dissolved the public-private partnership set up by the former Government. Getting us out of that deal has saved \$400 million for taxpayers because the contracts and penalties were so bad. The other good news is that we landed a deal with rail workers in half the time the former Government did. The trains are back on the tracks to the Central Coast, Newcastle and the Blue Mountains. The South Coast line is coming next year. We are finally able to begin testing the new regional fleet. The Leader of the Opposition asked, "Who did you sack?" I can tell him who was sacked. The people sacked you lot.

MYALL LAKES FLOOD RECOVERY

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:08): My question is directed to the Minister for Finance in her own capacity and in her capacity representing the Minister for Recovery. The Minister for Recovery recently advised the member for Myall Lakes, in relation to further support for small businesses impacted by the May 2025 floods, that the Minister had "been an advocate for ongoing support". The Minister went on to say, "However, we are operating in a challenging fiscal environment. To date our advocacy has not been successful." What role has the

Minister for Finance played in backing the Minister for Recovery in her advocacy for further support for flood-impacted small businesses? Or has the Minister for Finance blocked the request for support of the Minister for Recovery based on the "challenging fiscal environment"?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:09): I thank the honourable member for the question in relation to my own responsibilities as the Minister for Finance and also my responsibility representing the excellent Minister for Recovery.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: She can't get any money for people.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I completely refute that interjection. The idea that she cannot get any money is completely inaccurate. This Government is spending more money, year on year—if the Treasurer were here, he would provide a quick interjection telling me exactly how much—on disaster recovery each and every year. This Government is spending a massively expanding amount, and that is because we are facing more and more disasters. Today there is a total fire ban, and the Minister for Emergency Services is telling everyone to download the Hazards Near Me app. We are coming up to summer. This is a new challenge.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: Point of order: I have given the Minister a minute to respond. The Hazards Near Me app and fire are not what I asked about. I asked specifically about flood recovery support for small businesses in Myall Lakes. I ask the Minister to address the question, not speak in generalities about disasters.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: To the point of order: The final part of the question related to the challenging fiscal situation. I was outlining the emerging threats that the State is facing, which will have fiscal implications.

The PRESIDENT: I have significant sympathy with the point of order taken by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. While I understand the point that the Minister makes, I ask her to come back to the broad gamut of the question in a directly relevant way. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: It's small business flood recovery, just so that we're not at cross-purposes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I appreciate the interjection from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. In relation to small business recovery on the Mid North Coast, it was an enormous event that confronted that area earlier this year. It was not long after the Minister for Recovery had been appointed to that role. I acknowledge the Minister for Recovery, her personal history and her advocacy—which, indeed, the question speaks about. She has been advocating on these issues for longer than I have been in the Parliament. The Government deeply respects the wealth of experience that she brings to that particularly challenging portfolio. There is no doubt that the process of recovery she is engaging with is extensive. She was crucial in working with the previous Government to set up the Reconstruction Authority and now has ministerial responsibility for it.

The challenges we face are the work to be undertaken across different departments as well as the Reconstruction Authority and, as I spoke about earlier in my response, the enormous amount of money that the Government is spending. Minister Saffin is doing an excellent job working on those challenges. To be honest, it was also the previous head of that authority, but he now has new responsibilities. But that work is ongoing and being undertaken in a considered and careful way. Yes, there are requests for more assistance. The Government is looking at those carefully, but doing it in a considered, methodical way because the challenge is huge.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Wes Fang will cease interjecting or I will call him to order.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:13): I ask a supplementary question. At the beginning of the Minister's answer, she refuted the Opposition's claim that the Minister for Recovery has been unsuccessful in her advocacy. If she has been successful, will the Minister advise when the Minister for Recovery will announce additional support for small businesses?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:14): I will not pre-empt any future announcements, and I will not discuss the considerations of various Cabinet committees in relation to them. The challenges facing the small business community on the Mid North Coast are similar to those that Minister Saffin's own community faced not too long ago. The Government is confronting those challenges across the State because of the increasing number of natural disasters. In the absence of the Treasurer, I will butcher the figure, but it was in the tens of millions of dollars that the previous Government was spending on disaster recovery. We are now spending billions of dollars every year on recovery. I do not want to get too political about it, but when this Government was first elected, in our first budget we were still paying outstanding bills from the Black Summer bushfires. This process is ongoing.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: Point of order: Again, my point of order goes to relevance. I specifically asked, if the Minister for Recovery has been successful in her advocacy, when more funding will be coming for small businesses on the Mid North Coast. It was pretty specific. I would like an answer to my question.

The PRESIDENT: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition knows that I cannot instruct the Minister how to answer or what to say, but merely to be directly relevant. The Minister was being directly relevant for almost all of her answer, until the final sentence or two. The Minister has the call, if she has anything further to say.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It is true that we have specific requests for support from the small business community. We also have requests in relation to roads funding and requests from our primary producers. The responsibility of our Government is to balance all of those requests. As I said earlier, due to the increasing number and intensity of natural disasters, those requests are huge. I am from that part of the world. I have swum in that river. The pictures I saw in the aftermath were deeply shocking. I heard stories from members in that area, and I pay tribute to them, including the work that the Hon. Emily Suvaal did. A range of members were there, helping in the recovery. That recovery continues, and this Government continues to support it. [*Time expired.*]

PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT OUTCOMES

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:17): My question is directed to the Hon. Courtney Houssos in her capacity as the Minister with education portfolio responsibilities. After nearly three years in office, what evidence is there, from either internal testing in the school education system or external testing such as the Program for International Student Assessment and NAPLAN, that this Government has, in any way, reversed the long-term, debilitating decline in student academic results in New South Wales?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:17): I thank the honourable member for a really important question. The question relates to why we are doing all of the work that we are doing. It also goes to the work of the parliamentary education committee in highlighting so many of the problems in the previous Parliament. I do not know how many times I have said it in this place: There is an enormous body of reform underway. That work has been ably led by the Deputy Premier for 2½ years. I am having a bit of a closer look, and I continue to be impressed with the amazing program of reform that is underway. Education outcomes are driving this Government in the improvements we are making across the education system. We cannot change overnight what happened over a period of 12 years. I will tell members the indicators of what we are fixing.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members on both sides of the Chamber will come to order.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: This is a really important question around education outcomes for our students. It is particularly important since we have so many students undertaking the HSC at the moment. I acknowledge that the maths exam—the second most commonly undertaken exam—is being undertaken today. The single biggest way to improve education outcomes in the classroom is to get a teacher in front of every classroom, and that is the work that the Deputy Premier has started doing.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: I like how they say that like there weren't teachers in front of classrooms before. Who do they think was there? Do they think nobody was there?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I notice that the shadow education Minister does not want to listen to this, and that is the way she did not listen when she was advised for years that there were teacher vacancies coming. It took a parliamentary inquiry of this House to uncover the fact that resignations were outstripping retirements for the first time.

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Sarah Mitchell will cease interjecting.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That is what was uncovered and what we are addressing because we know that if we get a teacher in front of every classroom, that is the first step. It is not the endgame; it is the important first step. I will also speak about addressing the massive problems. Students could not get a classroom across the fastest growing areas of Western Sydney because we were not building schools where families were moving to. The work that is underway is part of the fundamental changes that the Deputy Premier has made. We have just commenced work on 40 new and major school upgrades in the past school term—a record school building program—because we did not have classrooms where students wanted to go to schools. The member is right in asking the question: It is all about improving student outcomes. But this is not a tap we can simply turn on. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. Mark Latham: Mr President—

The PRESIDENT: A supplementary question?

The Hon. Mark Latham: No. Is this where I get to make a minute's speech?

The PRESIDENT: Not quite yet, Mr Latham. That will be on 11 November. We all eagerly await that date.

The Hon. Mark Latham: Did we not approve that yesterday?

The PRESIDENT: It starts on 11 November.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:20): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elaborate on her answer by providing just one piece of data that shows an improvement in student academic results in the past 2½ years?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:21): I would say stay tuned.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Wes Fang to order for the first time. You do not need to shout-laugh. It is not funny; it is pathetic. Do not do it.

The Hon. Wes Fang: It is a lot better than the answers.

The PRESIDENT: I call the Hon. Wes Fang to order for the second time.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: As I said earlier, improving student outcomes is absolutely what we are about. In terms of what we have done during our period in government, I spoke about teachers and building the schools, but the important thing is what is being taught in the classroom. The member asking the supplementary question is correct: There is a need for consistent assessment. Credit where credit is due—the previous Government introduced the phonics check. That is an important starting check on our students. We have now introduced a nation-leading numbers check at a similar point in development. This will now be rolled out across the country.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: That is good. I will give you credit for that. They just need targets as well.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I note the member is saying we need targets. Yes, absolutely we do. We are absolutely looking at improving student outcomes. But you cannot do that if you do not have anyone teaching students, if you do not have excellent curriculum being taught and if you do not have classrooms. In the education world that is called building blocks. The Government has started with building blocks. We cannot change things overnight. We cannot change the neglect and absolute obfuscation from members opposite overnight. But the Deputy Premier has started with the foundations for success. We will have more to say about the better outcomes we are getting for students, and there will be a very long-lasting legacy of the important work that this Government is doing to improve student outcomes, because that is what this Government is about.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:23): I ask a second supplementary question.

The Hon. Mark Latham: Where's your speech?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will get to that next time. Will the Minister elucidate that part of her answer about the Government's priority of investing in teachers and having more teachers in the classroom? Will she advise the House why the department's annual report shows an overall decline in public school teachers between 2023 and 2024? Why were there fewer teachers in the first 12 months of her Government?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:24): I thank the Hon. Sarah Mitchell for her supplementary question, but that is called leading with your chin. The teacher vacancy rates that we inherited have reduced. I made the announcement standing next to the Premier. The latest figures on day one of term three show a 61 per cent reduction in the number of teacher vacancies across schools.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Sarah Mitchell has asked a question. She will listen to the answer in silence.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: There is a reduction in teacher vacancies because there are more teachers in classrooms. Last week I was out at Darcy Road Public School—an amazing project where the entire school has been rebuilt in 18 months. There is not one teacher vacancy. In the electorate of Kiama, there is not a single teacher vacancy. Around the State we are seeing more teachers in classrooms, and that is what this Government is all about. It is about putting teachers in classrooms. The shadow Minister and I have been doing this for a while; we have been on different sides. She knows as well as I do that you can nitpick different pieces of data. But we inherited a chronic teacher shortage across the system that she refused to even acknowledge when she was Minister. On day one of term three 2025 we have 61 per cent fewer vacancies—more teachers in classrooms—as a result of the Government's policies.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (11:26): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Climate Change, and Minister for Energy. Will she update the House on the latest renewables milestones?

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: Are you having a nice birthday?

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Not really, no.

The PRESIDENT: The member will ask his question again.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Will the Minister update the House on the latest renewables milestones in New South Wales and more widely?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:26): I thank the Hon. Cameron Murphy for his question. To answer the question of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, my birthday is adequate. I would not really choose private members' day to spend my birthday if I had a choice, but I look forward to the day. I will talk about some of the milestones, not just in New South Wales and Australia, but globally. Our energy systems are being transformed as we decarbonise across the globe—as we must. Despite what the member for the Libertarian Party says, it is clear that climate change is real. We are feeling the impacts now. If we fail to do anything about it, it is not just about leaving a liveable, beautiful planet for future generations; it is also about economic systems and the foundation of our economies into the future. That is exactly what we need to tackle and why it is so important.

Moving to a net zero world requires a global economic shift, and it is already underway. A couple of weeks ago, media reported that for the first time renewables generated more electricity than coal around the world in the first half of the year. According to Bloomberg, global investment in renewables reached a record US\$386 billion in the first half of 2025. That was roughly three times the investment in fossil fuels around the globe. Former Vice-President Al Gore might be onto something. The International Renewable Energy Agency found that 90 per cent of new electricity generation capacity added worldwide in 2024 was for renewables. Despite the naysayers, Australia is part of the global shift in capital. In fact we are one of the most desirable places to invest, and that investment is delivering results.

Last month, media reported that the National Electricity Market achieved an instantaneous renewable record share of over 78 per cent in September. That is a very big deal when you think that our State has primarily relied on coal-fired power for decades before. In New South Wales, our shift to renewables is well underway and more progress is being made every day. According to the Australian Energy Market Operator, New South Wales achieved an instantaneous renewable record share of 86 per cent on 2 October. We will see how we go today; I suspect it might be higher again.

Since the Minns Labor Government was elected, almost three gigawatts of new utility-scale solar and wind capacity has entered operation, and there has been a twentyfold increase in utility-scale battery energy storage systems in operation. There are many more statistics, but the important thing to note is that our efforts to transition the energy system at home are not being done in isolation and are not being done in vain. Too often we are told that the transition will never work and, on the other side, plenty of people complain that it is not being done fast enough. In all of that rhetoric, we can miss what is actually happening: Economic reality is driving investment in cheaper and cleaner forms of energy production around the world, and that will deliver a reliable, more affordable energy system for homes and businesses across our State. [*Time expired.*]

ENERGY STORAGE

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (11:29): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Energy. I feel compelled to ask a question that follows up on the Minister's previous answer, particularly given the Minister gave examples of investment in energy capacity. My question is about the storage that is needed. It has been reported widely in the media today that Daniel Westerman, CEO of the Australian Energy Market Operator [AEMO], said that Australia's participation in a battery-sharing effort is waning and has fallen well behind assumptions made by previous AEMO modelling. AEMO has also previously said that a failure to effectively coordinate home owners' privately purchased and installed batteries would require an additional \$4.1 billion in investment in grid-scale assets. Does the Government have a plan, other than taking control of batteries privately purchased and installed by home owners, to increase storage in the New South Wales grid?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:30): You betcha. I am not sure if the member has looked at the recent results of a range of the Government's tenders and at the Federal Government's Capacity Investment Scheme. A number of very large battery energy storage systems, known as BESSs—they are basically big batteries—are coming online. They are already being delivered into the grid and helping to stabilise it. I remind

members that the Waratah Super Battery is now operational and is ramping up. At the moment, it is the most powerful battery in the world. It will be overtaken pretty soon, but that tells the story that large battery technology is changing. When South Australia put in place what was then the biggest battery in the world, it provided peak power for around 10 minutes. These days, we are talking about four to eight hours. That is what is changing, and that is fundamental. It is partly why the renewables rollout across the globe is going better.

A lot of work is going into how to orchestrate rooftop solar and household batteries. In New South Wales, over one million households have rooftop solar. When I last spoke to my Federal colleague the Hon. Chris Bowen, he was very happy to tell me that as a result of the Federal Government's battery program, batteries are being installed in over 1,000 households a day nationwide. It is very significant. There are real benefits for individual households when they install rooftop solar and batteries. But we get the biggest bang for buck across the grid when households feed into the grid and participate in what are known as virtual power plants so that we can orchestrate the energy supply in an area. In New South Wales, our Peak Demand Reduction Scheme provides incentives of up to \$1,500 for households to participate in virtual power plants. They can use that money when they get the 30 per cent discount on home batteries from the Federal Government.

A lot more needs to be done here. We need to be able to orchestrate it, but people who have rooftop solar and batteries also need to feel comfortable that the power is being used for their benefit, and that the tariffs and settings are right. If they get it right and bi-directional charging is working well, people can recoup the costs of their energy very quickly. Importantly for the grid more broadly, we need more orchestration and more people to sign up. The Government is modelling that all the time, and it is looking at ways it can incentivise people to get into it. In the future, households with an electric vehicle, rooftop solar and a battery feeding into the local grid will mean that we can avoid bigger infrastructure as we use those smaller power plants for clean energy in all of our suburbs.

PSYCHIATRY WORKFORCE

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (11:34): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Mental Health. Yesterday the Industrial Relations Commission made orders settling the final form of the interim award for a temporary attraction and retention allowance of 10 per cent, calculated on base salary; the special allowance; and the level 1 private practice allowance to be paid to all psychiatry staff specialists for a period of 12 months. What is the total cost of that 12-month allowance and how will NSW Health fund it?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (11:34): I thank the honourable member for the question. We were pleased to finalise that hearing yesterday. I will take on notice the final cost because, as that hearing was only yesterday and we were waiting for the final direction orders from the Industrial Relations Commission to be able to factor in those costs, NSW Health has not been able to advise me of an exact figure. I do not want to give a misleading figure to the House. NSW Health is responsive to my requests, but it cannot turn around that kind of determination in a day. I will take that part of the question on notice, and I will request that NSW Health expedite a figure for me to provide to the House.

But we are not able to be definitive about that figure for this reason: We hope that, as a result of that determination, more psychiatrists will come back into the system as staff specialists. That is our hope, our wish and our request. I have already met with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists to talk about what those pathways might look like. I have met with individual psychiatrists who have indicated to me that they are looking forward to coming back now that the issue is resolved. If it is indeed the case, as we hope it is, that more psychiatrists come back into the system to work alongside other mental health clinicians as staff specialists, the costs will increase. We accept that. We have agreed to pay that determination. But if there are more people working in those roles, then obviously the cost of paying the 10 per cent over the next 12 months will be greater.

As I said, we welcome that. NSW Health will be in a position to meet those costs. At this point it is only a 12-month determination, and we accept that too. We accept that the broader Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation award needs to be finalised. That is going to have broader implications across the entire remit of staff specialists employed by NSW Health. But this 12-month determination is an intervention, which has been well received by the psychiatrist community, to get people back into the NSW Health system. NSW Health will meet the costs of that 12-month determination, and we can now try to finalise exactly what those costs are based on the determination yesterday. But, as I said, it will be a little bit unclear going forward because we would hope that the number of people we are paying as staff specialist psychiatrists will increase as more people come back into the system and take up those roles that we would love them to play, working as part of our multidisciplinary teams.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (11:37): I ask a supplementary question. Would the Minister elucidate in relation to her hope that a number of people will come back as staff psychiatrists? What number of psychiatry

positions have been unfilled—and, therefore, the people of New South Wales underserved—during the process of the dispute?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (11:38): I will take the exact figure of the current vacancy rate on notice and endeavour to get an answer for the member. We have been clear that there are vacancies in the staff specialist psychiatry workforce. That is not new information; we have always been clear that those vacancies exist. To be clear, when I became the Minister, on day one a third of those positions were vacant. I inherited a system with a one-third vacancy rate, so the idea that this is a new problem is incorrect. It has been an ongoing problem. I reject the part of the question that suggests that, as a result of those vacancies, people have not been served in meeting their mental health needs. Yes, there have been challenges and we have not always got everything right. But we have been really innovative in finding ways to ensure that people have their mental health needs met.

We have been using locums and visiting medical officers, or VMOs, to ensure that positions are filled to the extent that care and support is available. Again, we have not always preferred to use locums and VMOs—we would want people to work with staff specialists—but we have made do. We had contingency measures in place. We also had the incredibly well-received and successful virtual psychiatry hubs. It shocks me that this has not been part of the system previously. Did we learn nothing from COVID? Did we not learn that a range of healthcare services can be delivered online, and psychiatry is one of those? It is not to say that it is the only way we can deliver care, or that we do not also want staff specialist psychiatrists in our public hospitals. The idea that you can use virtual care as part of the delivery of psychiatric care should not have been a new idea—but it was, one that we have now— [*Time expired.*]

The PRESIDENT: I welcome to the Legislative Council question time staff from the Parliament of Victoria, who are visiting as part of the long running parliamentary exchange program. You are all very welcome here today. I hope you are learning a lot.

RECREATIONAL FISHING

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (11:40): My question is addressed to the Minister for Agriculture. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government is supporting recreational fishing?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:40): I thank the member for the question. I certainly can. Gone Fishing Day was held this past Sunday, 19 October. It is a very big day around New South Wales for people who already love getting involved in recreational fishing. It is also an opportunity for people around the State—whether in coastal or non-coastal communities—to get involved in fishing, to try it for the first time and to get involved in community events. The day celebrates the thrill of fishing for everyone, regardless of background or skill level, and everybody is welcome to join in. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development hosted five fishing events across New South Wales, featuring free fishing sessions, expert advice, casting practice, advisory trailers and exciting giveaways.

This year's locations included Clarrie Kirkland Reserve at Evans Head, Lions Park at Masons Parade in Gosford, Mort Bay Park in Birchgrove, Lake Forbes Water Park in Forbes, Sydney, and Campbell Park in Inverell. Various fishing clubs and organisations across New South Wales also hosted their own community events, with contributing funding supported by the New South Wales Government. Our funding will help to promote recreational fishing in local communities across New South Wales and to make a positive impact on them—it will get people into the great outdoors, get people to either continue to enjoy fishing or do it socially, and get people who have not otherwise had a chance to turn up, have some lessons and realise that it is not so intimidating. People will support others to get involved.

A total of 40 fishing clubs and organisations have received fishing packages, and another 44 have been awarded grants of up to \$2,000 each to help run their own Gone Fishing Day events across New South Wales. Fishing packages included rod and reel combinations, circle hooks, tackle boxes, fish-measuring rulers and responsible fishing advisory material. New South Wales Gone Fishing Day activities are supported by this Government with funding from the Recreational Fishing Trust as part of our Fish For Life "Building a healthy fishing future" initiative. Gone Fishing Day is a collaborative effort that our Government and the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation work on together, and forms part of the national Gone Fishing Day program across Australia.

Recreational fishing is not just fun; it is also healthy. It is a great opportunity for people to get into the great outdoors, to learn more about our waterways, to learn more about fish, to have a social pastime or to enjoy peace and quiet on their own—which is also a good thing for mental health. It is also a \$3.4 billion industry that

supports the equivalent of 14,000 full-time jobs around our State. It is important to acknowledge this day and the positive impacts that the New South Wales industry and recreational fishers have. We are committed to expanding opportunities for more diverse access to fishing, including disability access.

WHITE SPOT DISEASE

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (11:43): My question is directed to the Minister for Agriculture. With the white spot control order due to lapse in December, did any Federal Minister consult with the Minister about their decision to lift the eight-year ban on unpeeled prawns from India, despite them being the most likely source of the white spot first appearing in Australia?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:44): I thank the member for his question, moving from recreational fishing to commercial fishing. I acknowledge that white spot continues to be a problem for the prawn industry in the Clarence region, in the Northern Rivers area of New South Wales. I have indicated a number of times to the House that we are working closely with the prawn fishers who have been impacted by white spot in that part of New South Wales. We are working closely with the industry and the groups that are impacted. We are continuing to provide financial support to the people who have been impacted, with income support continuing until the end of this year. Financial, mental health and other clean-up support has been provided by the New South Wales Government to these fishers since I first became the Minister.

This was one of the first biosecurity issues that I had to deal with. We have continued to provide financial support to these particular fishers in this very important industry, to this part of New South Wales. In relation to the question about decisions made by the Federal Government, no, that is not something that we were consulted on. I continue to lobby the Federal Government and the Federal Minister—and have done—about working collaboratively with the New South Wales Government, and with this industry, on further support that will need to be available if we still have biosecurity zones in place for the longer term. The white spot is a challenge that is being faced by a particular group of prawn farmers in New South Wales. They are having to suffer the consequences of a biosecurity decision to protect trade opportunities for Australia and for other States across Australia.

While we will continue to work with them, of course, it is not fair that a pocket of New South Wales industry is having to be in this situation. It needs to be supported by the New South Wales Government for the protection of other States and for Australia's trade ability with other nations. It is suspected that the white spot came in through raw prawn importation, which was a decision that was made many years ago. Nonetheless, the consequences are being felt by a particular part of New South Wales. We will continue to work with and push the Federal Government to provide proper support for these prawn farmers in the Clarence region, in particular. I know they are doing it very tough, and they continue to try to get through this period and make plans for their futures.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (11:47): I ask a supplementary question. Given the Minister's comments regarding the importance of trade around seafood, would she accept that the best way that we can support and protect our seafood trade is to ban the sale of contaminated prawns in New South Wales coming from India?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:47): I thank the member for this important supplementary question. This decision was made by previous Federal governments. I do not disagree; it is a problematic decision that has caused issues for this particular part of industry.

The Hon. Mark Latham: Ask Jacinta Price.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I am not interested in the commentary coming from the corner. This is a really important issue. A lot of serious prawn farming businesses are significantly impacted by this, and I know they will be interested in this answer. It is a good question. We will continue to work with those farmers. It is also something that needs to be factored in by the Federal Government. It must provide further support for this industry in New South Wales, for the benefit of the rest of Australia. Decisions that have been made in the past probably should not have been made.

The Hon. Mark Banasiak: It was just yesterday. The decision was made just yesterday.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: That is not right. That is a new decision. The decision in relation to imports has been in place for a very long time. This is a longstanding decision. It is our view that it probably should not have been made in the past, but it has been made. These prawns have been coming in for many years. It is likely, or possible, that that is what has caused the issue. It is not factually proven, but it is likely. The Government continues to support New South Wales prawn farmers who are impacted. I will continue to call on

the Federal Government to do more on the basis that it matters for the rest of Australia, and because these decisions were made in the past and are now having implications for the industry in New South Wales.

NATIONAL PARK CAMPSITES

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (11:49): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for the Environment. Minister, why is the National Parks and Wildlife Service preferencing commercial businesses that supply supported camping services over ordinary families and community members who are trying to organise a camping trip in a national park, especially in a busy holiday season, by allowing those businesses to reserve campsites 365 days in advance and release up to 55 per cent of the sites they reserve just eight days before the camping date, with no cost to the business, while ordinary families can only make a booking 180 days in advance, must pay in full at the time of booking and are refunded only 50 per cent for a cancellation made up to 30 days before the date of camping?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:50): I thank the Hon. Aileen MacDonald for her question. It is a bit difficult to know from the question exactly which area we are talking about. However, there are a couple of things to be aware of. There is a review that is being finalised and includes the nature of the booking system and fees that are charged at camping sites across the State. There has been a lot of feedback about that. There are many different issues involved, but that is one part that is ongoing and the Government will update people about it. Secondly, a number of rules are in place.

Having a variety of businesses that operate within national parks is not new. In fact, it is very welcome. All sorts of ecotourism businesses rely on national parks. That is really their playground and where they operate. I am very familiar with some of them, particularly the ones in Kosciuszko, but they are operating all over the State and the Government welcomes that. Some fantastic Aboriginal businesses are doing incredible work there, too. There is an issue around some of the changes for what we refer to as supported camping. Some people who are very fit like to carry all their own gear, their own water and their own food. They get to go to beautiful places in our parks. A whole lot of people want to experience the beauty of our parks, but frankly, they are not in a position to buy all the gear, carry all the gear and are not fit enough to use all the gear. However, they want to do that, and the Government wants families to do that.

For a whole lot of people camping is not part of their background or the way in which they have lived their lives, or they have not been able to go camping. The Government is in favour of supported camping. I do not apologise for contemplating that or for looking at ways in which more people can enjoy our national parks. Sometimes it is also partly about generating some revenue for the National Parks and Wildlife Service. That is perfectly fine. I understand some of the issues that have been raised in relation to this, but I am a little bit unclear from the question whether this is a specific issue. For example, there is a discussion about supported camping on Newnes Plateau. If the Hon. Aileen MacDonald provides some more detail, I am happy to obtain more specific information.

The bottom line is that the Government is looking for a way in which more people can enjoy our parks. Part of that is also managing the booking systems. Ghost bookings are a really big issue. We are looking at how we can incentivise people, if they are going to cancel, with ways that enable them to cancel. There is nothing worse than people turning up to find campsites have been booked but are empty and they cannot use them because they have not been cancelled. The Government is really trying to get to the bottom of this, but the principles are pretty basic. We want as many people as possible to enjoy our national parks. We want to find people who will do that in a different way that does not depend on their being a super fit bushwalker. I give a shout-out to all those people who are because they get to see some of the best places in New South Wales. The Government is really trying to find different ways so that people can enjoy the experience in their own way.

SCHOOL BULLYING

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (11:53): My question is directed to the Acting Minister for Education. Will the acting Minister update the House on the work underway by the Minns Labor Government to combat bullying in schools across New South Wales?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:53): I thank the Hon. Mark Buttigieg for a really important question. I was asked earlier in question time about student outcomes. As I said earlier, we know we need a teacher in the classroom and a classroom for students to learn in, but we must make sure that students are able to learn. Bullying in our schools is a huge challenge. In fact, it is a huge challenge not just in schools. The challenge is making sure that students optimise their learning. We know that the damage caused to

students through bullying is real. Their education and their wellbeing suffer and there have been some really tragic and heartbreaking consequences.

The Government absolutely does not accept that bullying is just part of the school experience. Last Friday on the Gold Coast, I had the opportunity to be briefed during the latest meeting of education Ministers from around the country about the important work that the eSafety Commissioner is leading. I was also briefed by the Federal Minister for Communications about the social media ban, or delay as some people are characterising it, and the important work that is being done at a national level. The point they made is that current bullying is not the bullying that was a problem when we were at school. I do not want to sound like I am aged 105, but it is not bullying that discontinues at the school gate. It follows students home. It continues into their bedrooms late at night.

As a government, we have a special responsibility to make sure that in our schools, we limit bullying as much as possible. We have done that through the leadership of the Premier and the Deputy Premier with a ban on mobile phones. We have certainly heard from principals, 86 per cent of whom say that socialising among students has improved. They are building face-to-face connections as much as they are having learning time, and 81 per cent of principals have said that student learning has improved. That is a direct improvement outcome for our students as a result of our mobile phone ban. We know that bullying in our schools is not just happening in public schools. I said earlier that it is not just happening in schools, but it is happening right across our school sector. That is why the Government is working closely with our Catholic and independent schools to make sure that we have evidence-based policies and approaches to lift behaviour and address bullying.

A cross-sectoral framework is being developed to prevent and respond to bullying and cyberbullying in New South Wales schools. We want students to have access to consistent best practice and be able to respond to bullying and the steps they should take. This has not happened before in New South Wales. Work initiated by the Deputy Premier in bringing the different school sectors together is nearing completion, but we believe that the anti-bullying framework will be a significant step forward in combating bullying in all our schools to get better student outcomes and ensuring that our kids are set up for success during that valuable learning time they have at the school gate.

POLICE PROSECUTIONS

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (11:56): My question is directed to Minister Moriarty, representing the Minister for Police. Minister, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission published a report on 17 October 2025 entitled *Review of NSW Police Force responses to failed prosecutions that include adverse comments made by judicial officers*, and concluded in part that the lack of skills and training—I have been advocating for more skills and training for many years—was a contributing factor, noting also that the majority of failed prosecutions will result in a civil claim against the New South Wales police. At a budget estimates hearing on 30 August 2024, the former commissioner, Karen Webb, stated:

... the Minister has written to me to ask me to do a review of all of the civil claims so that we have a better understanding of the root causes of the cost of civil claims and the drivers of civil claims et cetera. I've written back to her this week and accepted that I will undertake that review.

Minister, given that it has been a year since that promise was made, where is the report and what are its findings?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:57): I certainly thank the Hon. Rod Roberts for the question, which has been asked of me in my capacity representing the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. There are quite specific references in the question. I am not familiar with that specific report. I will undertake to obtain a specific answer and come back to the Hon. Rod Roberts. In general terms, of course the Government would be concerned about those issues and failed actions and cases, and takes that very seriously. The Government is certainly doing a lot to support our police. I take this opportunity for the record to thank our police officers for the incredible work they do. The Government certainly supports the police in New South Wales and is supporting them financially by paying them to undertake training. I know this has led to increased numbers of recruits for the police, which is what is needed across the State. While acknowledging and supporting our police, I will obtain a specific answer from the Minister and come back to the Hon. Rod Roberts and the House.

RISING TIDE PEOPLE'S BLOCKADE

The Hon. WES FANG (11:58): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Now that the Newcastle Local Court has dismissed charges against the first four of the 137 protesters charged with the offence of serious disruption of a major facility in relation to the Rising Tide blockade of the Port of Newcastle in November 2024, what steps will the Government take to ensure the smooth operation of the port in the face of Rising Tide's commitment to disrupt shipping by defying police directions and engaging in unlawful acts?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:59): I thank the member for his question. Like him, I am upset that the new standing orders are not in place and the Leader of the Opposition has backed down on his position of yesterday, because I would have liked to hear a speech from the member opposite. When that standing order comes in, the Government is going to demand answers from the members opposite. We will demand to know where they stand on a whole range of issues.

The PRESIDENT: As I might demand an answer from you on the question now, Minister.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You make a very strong point, Mr President.

The PRESIDENT: Members will cease interjecting. The Minister will return to the question.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I reckon the Leader of the Opposition will go all right, but I am not sure about some of his team.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance.

The PRESIDENT: I cannot overstate how much I am in sympathy with the Hon. Wes Fang on this occasion.

The Hon. Wes Fang: There's a first time for everything!

The PRESIDENT: There is a first time for everything, indeed. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Wait until you hear him speak, Mr President. You will be bowled over. The Hon. Wes Fang asked a very good question. The Government will apply the same approach to safety as was applied by the former Government when those events rolled out under its watch. I have answered this question a number of times. It is a real maritime safety issue. The Government will carefully assess that, and Maritime will act in the same way it did last year, the year before and in the years before that when the members opposite were in government.

The Hon. WES FANG (12:01): I ask a supplementary question. Unfortunately, I will have to disappoint the Deputy Leader of the Government and ask him to elucidate that part of his answer where he mentioned Maritime monitoring of Rising Tide's activities. Will the Minister inform the House what steps he will take to ensure that Rising Tide's planned Sydney Harbour flotilla on Sunday 26 October does not hinder the operation of passenger ferries or cause any safety incidents?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (12:01): I ask that the Hon. Wes Fang elucidate, and he will have the chance to do that in the next sitting week.

The Hon. Wes Fang: I am not here to do your job.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You've been sold out by the Leader of the Opposition.

The Hon. Wes Fang: You do the job. You're paid as a Minister.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: You'll have the chance. I look forward to the new rules. The Government takes this issue seriously. Maritime safety officials will be working carefully, with the full support of the Government, to ensure that there are no dangerous on-water activities. That protest will be monitored carefully, as were such protests under the former Government.

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

PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT OUTCOMES

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (12:02): I am delighted to update the House that there are now more teachers in our classrooms than when Labor came to government. Between 30 June 2023 and 30 June 2024 teacher numbers grew by 892, from 85,203 to 86,095.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Nichole Overall will come to order. Hansard has to be able to hear the Minister.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The Hon. Sarah Mitchell may be referring to a decline in temporary teachers, which is of course expected because the Government converted about 10,000 teacher roles to permanent roles. I am happy to update the House that permanent teacher numbers increased by 14.7 per cent between June 2023 and June 2024. There are more teachers in classrooms.

*Supplementary Questions for Written Answers***LOUVRE MUSEUM JEWELLERY THEFT**

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (12:03): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister representing the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. With the shocking news overnight of \$180 million worth of Napoleon's jewels being stolen from the Louvre, what action is the Government taking to second to the investigative team in Paris our crack New South Wales crime fighter and our answer to Inspector Clouseau, the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham?

The PRESIDENT: As much as I would like that supplementary question for written answer to stand, it must follow the same rules as for supplementary questions. As there were no questions on those issues, the supplementary question for written answer is out of order.

MYALL LAKES FLOOD RECOVERY

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (12:04): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for Finance. In relation to the correspondence from the Minister for Recovery in which she clearly says that her advocacy for support for flood-impacted small businesses has not been successful, will the Minister advise who is blocking that advocacy of the Minister for Recovery?

NATIONAL PARK CAMPSITES

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (12:05): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for the Environment. Appreciating the role of supported camping services, why are commercial businesses able to book sites 365 days ahead and cancel just eight days prior to camping at no cost while ordinary campers cannot?

*Questions Without Notice: Take Note***TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I move:

That the House take note of answers to questions.

POLICE PROSECUTIONS

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (12:05): I take note of the answer provided by Minister Moriarty representing the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism. Every king's court must have its jester. The court of King Henry II had Roland the Farter, with comical flatulating forming a key part of his act. Another fool whose performance stinks is Deputy Commissioner Paul Pisanos, a man who has been elevated higher than someone of his intelligence deserves. It became clear to me early in 2022 that Mr Pisanos was a man not to be taken seriously.

Since my first days in this place I have been deeply concerned about the amount of money that the NSW Police Force pays out each year in civil claims for failed prosecutions and misuse of police powers. Every year I asked a question on notice seeking the total amounts. The answers were shocking: It was tens of millions of dollars each year. Not for a minute did I believe that the police were acting maliciously. I believed it arose from deficiencies in their training. I still do. Apparently, so does the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission. On 10 February 2022 *The Daily Telegraph* reported:

"...To enforce the law they need to know the law, which by these figures they do not," said Mr Roberts.

"We need to support our frontline officers and the first step in this is ensuring that they receive the appropriate training to enable them to perform their roles professionally," he said.

Then Acting Deputy Commissioner Paul Pisanos, responsible for police training, replied:

There is a myriad of reasons why civil claims are brought against the NSW Police Force, and to suggest that training – or lack thereof – is the cause is incorrect.

Unlike Pork Pie Pisanos, I only deal in facts and evidence. Former Minister Toole belled the cat in question on notice No. 8332, answered on 16 March 2022. He stated categorically that training deficiencies lay at the heart of the problem. I took Mr Pisanos to task on that issue during the budget estimates hearing on 30 August 2024. Eventually, Mr Pisanos reluctantly agreed with me that I was right and that there was no myriad of reasons. My final assertion was "But we agree that there is no myriad of reasons then. There are no other reasons." With his trademark arrogance, all he could muster in response was "That's a fair comment."

This dopey deputy is so intellectually ill equipped that he lost an argument to a former lowly detective sergeant. Yet, his view of himself is so over-inflated that he applied for the role of commissioner. Minister Catley, not known for her wisdom, shopped him around for the job. Fools of a feather flock together. By his own example,

Mr Pisanos proves that his ignorance combined with arrogance and a lack of comprehension are the root cause of many problems faced by the NSW Police Force. This dead weight needs to be moved on.

MYALL LAKES FLOOD RECOVERY

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (12:08): I take note of some of the answers given by the Hon. Courtney Houssos in her capacity as Minister for Finance and as Acting Minister for Education. I note the issue I raised about the lack of support for flood-affected small businesses on the Mid North Coast, particularly in the Myall Lakes electorate. I give a shout-out to the member for Myall Lakes, Tanya Thompson, who has been a fierce advocate for her community members after what has been a devastating time for them.

The fact is we have been asking for a long time for more support for those small businesses. Tanya Thompson has been asking for months for more support for small businesses. She got a letter from the Minister for Recovery which states in no uncertain terms that the money is not coming. It states that the Government is operating in a challenging fiscal environment and, to date, advocacy has not been successful. I have no doubt the Minister is working hard in her role and I appreciate what she said about her lived experience. I think she is respected across this place and in the other place. But that is cold comfort to people in communities who are waiting for money. When a Minister of the Crown, talking of her experience sitting at the Cabinet table, says, "I'm trying with my colleagues but I'm not getting anywhere," it is a fairly damning indication of what is going on.

Disaster recovery funding sits with the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance. Governments can find money to invest in things if they want to. They can find money to support people after a natural disaster. The Coalition certainly did many times when we were in government. The Government has to front up. It is not good enough to turn up, be sympathetic and say, "We hear you. We want to help," but then not deliver. The fact that the Minister for Recovery has provided that in writing suggests that someone is blocking it. Someone is saying, "Sorry, there is no money for you."

It is up to members of the Government to be honest with the community. They should go there now, not just in the aftermath of a disaster to look sympathetic and say all the right things. They should go and meet with the small business owners now. Whether it is the Premier, the Minister for Finance or the Treasurer, they should meet with those people, look them in the eye and tell them that they do not deserve support. They should tell them that the Government is operating in a challenging fiscal environment so they cannot be given what they need. The reality is that some of the people in those communities are on their knees. They have had a very tough time and they are struggling to keep their doors open. It is not something that can or should be ignored by government. We will keep pushing this, as we have from day one, because it is not right.

I also take note of the Minister's answer about education outcomes in relation to the phonics check, something that has bipartisan support. In relation to the numeracy check that is being brought in, I urge the Government to set targets. It should say to schools, "This is where you were in phonics or numeracy and this is where you need to be." If checks are run without any accountability or any aims for improvement, it is not going to get the outcomes we know our children need.

RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (12:11): I take note of the question and answer regarding rail procurement and, in particular, I note the Minister for Transport's mention of the Auditor-General's report released yesterday entitled *Rail rolling stock procurement: Performance Audit*. The Minister was getting to the findings of the report but there were quite a few interjections, so it is probably worth restating what they were. The Auditor-General looked at how effective the Transport for NSW procurement of the new intercity fleet [NIF] and Regional Rail fleet [RRF] was. I ask members to keep in mind that the previous Government was responsible for the procurement, which was started and undertaken when that Government was in office. I say that because often Opposition members get a bit tetchy when we mention their record. What they do not acknowledge is that what we do now is path-dependent. We are fixing up the results of decisions they took during their 12 years in government, but I digress.

Turning to the findings made by the Auditor-General in his report, he stated that the procurement of the NIF and RRF was not undertaken effectively. He considered the processes and procurement policies required by the New South Wales Government, as well as probity and conflict of interest issues, and found that they were of concern. He also found that Transport for NSW did not effectively scope or estimate the full cost of the NIF or the RRF. Every time Opposition members, particularly the Leader of the Opposition, try to score points with regard to any procurement the Government is undertaking, it is quite a shameless position to take given what is now in black and white about the deficiencies in the procurement undertaken by the previous Government.

If members want to confirm that, the Audit Office has conveniently put some fast facts on its website, such as the five-year delay between the planned and actual date of the first NIF trains entering service, the greater than

55 per cent increase in the estimated capital cost to complete it and the 53 per cent increase in the estimated capital cost to complete the RRF. They will see in black and white—and nice graphics, actually—the failure of the Opposition in government to procure those fleets in an efficient and sensible way.

WHITE SPOT DISEASE

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (12:14): I take note of the answers given by the Minister for Agriculture to my two questions about white spot disease. The wise words of the Hon. Mick Veitch echoed in my head as I listened to her response. He always spoke about knowing your brief and reading the things that were put in front of you before you get up to speak.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Bring back Mick!

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: Bring back Mick. Clearly the Minister was not across her brief. She got the history wrong and she got the dates wrong. Allow me to provide the House the correction information. The white spot syndrome first hit Queensland in 2016, and it hit like a freight train. The incursion caused up to \$40 million worth of production losses. In 2017 the Federal Government rightly put a ban on uncooked, peeled prawns coming from overseas, particularly from India, because the investigations showed, with genetic testing, that India was the likely source of the incursion of white spot into Australia. Fast-forward to yesterday—not past history—when the tone-deaf Federal Labor Government made an announcement to reverse that ban that had reasonably protected our industries from the incursion of white spot. It did not totally protect them, but it did a reasonable job of protecting them from widespread white spot contamination across Australia.

Despite that, the Minister claimed that the Minns Government is doing better, but I am sorry to say that it is not. The Canberra desk jockeys are claiming it is safe to lift the ban in favour of strict protocols. What strict protocols? Are they like the strict protocols that saw varroa mite waltz off the port a few years ago or are they like the strict protocols that require that Border Force check only one in 20 containers when they come into Australia? Are they the strict protocols the Federal Government is referring to? The New South Wales Government should clearly state in response to the lifting of the ban that it will not allow the sale of those prawns in New South Wales. It should put a great big, dirty sign up that states, "Raw prawns from India are not welcome here. Wrong way. Go back." If any other State wants to sell that garbage, more foolishness to them. But in New South Wales, where we pride ourselves on pristine seafood—some of the best seafood in the world—why are we accepting an idiotic decision from the Federal Government to lift the ban on contaminated prawns from India? It is absolutely absurd.

PSYCHIATRY WORKFORCE

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (12:17): I take note of the answer given by the Minister for Mental Health in response to my question about payments for staff psychiatrists. The dispute has been ongoing since at least January, which is when the psychiatrists resigned. It is now October. There was also a dispute and negotiations before that. The Minister is asking us to believe that there are no calculations for the cost of the Industrial Relations Commission proceedings that have been going on for months and that there is no target number of positions for staff psychiatrists in the public system—that will just be however many happen to come back. It seems extraordinary to ask us to believe that during the negotiations with psychiatrists before the Industrial Relations Commission hearing, or when collating the figures that were submitted as evidence during the hearing, nobody ever wondered, "This is what the New South Wales health budget can bear. This is the number of staff psychiatrists we can pay at this rate," and that there is not at least some indicative figure of what is available.

Of course, it is not that surprising, given that we do not seem to have ever gotten a firm answer for how many visiting medical officers, or VMOs, were being paid instead of staff psychiatrists and what the additional cost of that was, or how many locums were being paid instead of staff psychiatrists and what the additional cost of that was. I am no mathematician, as members of this House are well aware, but rough back-of-the-envelope calculations indicate that because this dispute was not settled with the staff psychiatrists early, NSW Health was actually paying far more—roughly twice the daily rate of a staff psychiatrist to VMOs, and roughly three times the daily rate of a staff psychiatrist to locums.

Part of managing a government is, as we keep hearing, fiscal restraint. To exercise fiscal restraint, a government must understand what numbers it is dealing with—the number of staff positions that are available, how many it is trying to fill and how much the health budget can pay. It is extraordinary that this Minister seems to be totally unaware of the fiscal envelope in which psychiatry rests and the need for that money to be used to meet the mental health needs of New South Wales.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

ENERGY STORAGE

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (12:21): I take note of answers given by the Minister for Climate Change, and Minister for Energy today to the question I asked about the latest renewable milestones in New South Wales and more widely, and to the question asked by the Hon. Taylor Martin about the operation of batteries. As part of the inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones, members of Portfolio Committee No. 4 recently had the opportunity to take a look at the Waratah Super Battery Project. Led by the chair of the committee, the Hon. Mark Banasiak, a number of members of this House went to see the battery. It is fantastic. It is absolutely enormous. I have seen aerial footage of the battery in South Australia. I have never been to that one, but it looks quite small. The Waratah battery is enormous. It is on the side of an old power plant. It was just staggering to see the size and scale of this thing.

It is a battery that is not being used, at least at the moment, for storage. The design of the battery is to correct problems in the network. For example, if a lightning strike takes out a powerline somewhere, then the Waratah battery kicks in and can provide extra power to ensure that the network operates smoothly. We asked the operators what the capacity of the battery is in real terms. They took us through all the figures: It is 850 megawatts; it has 700 megawatts of usable power at any one time. We asked, "What does that actually mean?" They said, "It could power all of Sydney during peak hour for two hours." That is the size and scale of this battery. It is the largest in the world. This one battery system could power the enormous electricity usage of the entire city of Sydney during peak hour.

We need to be rolling out more of these so that we have battery storage and take pressure off the grid. The Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 is coming up for debate in this House. It is an important bill because, at the moment, a number of providers are trying to find ways to charge people for dumping solar-generated energy during the day. The bill will put an end to that. It will prohibit providers from charging people for dumping solar energy during the day. That will put pressure on energy providers to come up with a battery solution that stores that energy properly and ensures that it can be used to take pressure off the grid. The Government is doing great work. I wish the Opposition had done something during the 12 years it was in government. [*Time expired.*]

POLICE PROSECUTIONS

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (12:24): I take note of the answer given today by Minister Moriarty, representing the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, to the question asked by the Hon. Rod Roberts. I put on the record my concern that the Hon. Rod Roberts is a rank hypocrite. He was in here last week arguing against an inquiry into unsolved homicides and missing people in this State. That inquiry is supported by a 10,000-signature petition presented to the Legislative Assembly and championed by the former police Minister and current shadow police Minister, Mr Paul Toole—who sent me a message of congratulations—and welcomed by scores of families of murdered and missing people across the State. The establishment of that inquiry was also shamefully opposed by the Hon. Wes Fang and his mate, and by Heckle and Jeckle, the redneck, racist rejects from One Nation—the Hon. Hannibal Latham and the Hon. Rod Roberts. Then the Hon. Rod Roberts comes in here—

The Hon. Wes Fang: Point of order—

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

The Hon. Wes Fang: The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham made a derogatory comment about the Hon. Mark Latham. He called the member "Hannibal" Latham. The member should withdraw the comment or make his observation by way of substantive motion.

The Hon. Courtney Houssos: To the point of order: The Hon. Wes Fang berated the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham and yelled throughout his entire contribution. As you are aware, Mr Assistant President, the Hon. Wes Fang is currently on two calls to order. His behaviour is unparliamentary and he should be removed. It is clearly out of order for the Hon. Wes Fang to seek to take a point of order when his own behaviour has been so outside the standing orders.

The Hon. Cameron Murphy: To the point of order—

The Hon. Wes Fang: Further to the point of order—

The Hon. Susan Carter: To the point of order—

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): I do not need to hear further on the point of order. The Hon. Wes Fang will bear in mind that he is on two calls to order. He will refrain from interjecting—

or at least keep it down to a dull roar. I am sure the Hon. Mark Latham would not be overly offended, given his past, by being called a name during this debate. The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham has the call.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: Thank you very much for your ruling, Mr Assistant President. I put on record that one of the key arguments the Hon. Rod Roberts made was that the inquiry would traduce and distract from the work of the police—that it would be an affront to them. The Hon. Rod Roberts has built his entire political career on criticising the police. In his contribution to this take-note debate, what did he do? He tried to tear down a deputy police commissioner, calling him an "idiot" and saying that the police are not "properly trained" in this State. Last week he said, "We can't have an inquiry into missing persons because we don't want to offend the police", and yet he comes in here today and verbally attacks a commissioner, a decorated police officer who, over his 30 years of service, has risen to the highest ranks of our NSW Police Force.

The Hon. Rod Roberts has spent this entire term of government attacking the police commissioner and conducting his own inquiries, such as the Dural caravan inquiry, into current police investigations. To what effect? There has been zero effect—absolutely nothing. It is rank hypocrisy. One week he is trying to cover up and obfuscate, to deny the people of this State an opportunity to have a truth-telling inquiry into the egregious number of murders and unsolved homicides in the State, on the basis of defending the police, and yet he spends his entire time in this place attacking the NSW Police Force, at its highest levels, and saying on the record today that they are not properly trained. He is an absolute hypocrite and a disgrace.

RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. Dr SARAH Kaine (12:28): By leave: I make a point of clarification. I misspoke earlier when I referred to the findings in the Auditor-General's report. I note that it did not point out probity and conflict of interest issues. The rest of the issues I spoke about were mentioned. I wanted to clarify that.

RISEING TIDE PEOPLE'S BLOCKADE PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT OUTCOMES

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (12:29): I take note of the answer given by the Deputy Leader of the Government about Rising Tide's reckless disruptions at the Port of Newcastle, and the planned Sydney Harbour flotilla on 26 October 2025. I acknowledge the strong, principled stance that my colleague the Hon. Wes Fang has consistently taken on the matter. He and I are watching and have a duty to call out the cost and the consequence of such protest activity, which I have previously spoken about in the House. I call out such protest activity as economic sabotage. The port records confirm that the shutdown cost the port a total of \$48 billion, risking 9,000 Hunter jobs. The policing bill for the last protest was reported to have cost taxpayers \$500,000, with officers diverted to water rescues that, concerningly, involved children. The Newcastle Local Court's dismissal of charges against the four protesters also raises concerns about the lawlessness of such protests.

We know that Rising Tide's online training for the upcoming 29 to 30 November 2025 blockade is openly coaching supporters on civil disobedience, defying the 2022 anti-protest laws, which carry \$22,000 fines. Opposition members asked the Minister and the Government if they were aware of the matter, and whether they would take action and responsibility. We were informed that they were aware of and carefully monitoring the situation. Businesses and families deserve more. The community wants assurance that safety will be considered. I also take note of answers given by the Acting Minister for Education and Early Learning regarding security controls on workers on school properties. It is absolutely critical that those concerns are addressed to ensure confidence in public education. The Opposition put to the Minister today that the media reports a historic decline in enrolments in government schools. Parents need reassurance of safety in schools.

MYALL LAKES FLOOD RECOVERY

The Hon. WES FANG (12:32): In taking note of a couple of answers, I make a few observations about today's question time. The answers that Opposition members keep receiving from the Government predominantly seek to blame the previous Government for a lot of its current failings. The Government has not yet realised that it has been in government for quite some time. At some point, it must accept that it is in government and is therefore responsible for what occurs in this State. I particularly take note of the answer given by the Minister for Finance in response to a question asked by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell. She asked about the Government response to flooding on the Mid North Coast, specifically funds available to businesses. The Minister for Finance indicated that the Minister for Recovery has done a fantastic job fighting hard for those communities, yet those communities are crying out that they are yet to receive the funds promised by the Ministers who visited the Mid North Coast.

Only one of two things could have happened: Either the Government has lied to those people or the Ministers responsible are completely inept at their jobs. Either of those scenarios would be concerning, but Mid North Coast communities ultimately just want answers about funding. My colleague Tanya Thompson, the

member for Myall Lakes, is begging the Government to provide that support to her community. The answer provided by the Minister for Finance today, saying that the Minister responsible has been a strong advocate who has fought hard for the community, indicates that this Government does not have its hands on the wheel, because there has been a complete failure to deliver to that community. This Government has absolutely failed the people of the Mid North Coast. It continues to mislead and talk out of both sides of its mouth. The Government needs to take responsibility for the fact that, since it is in government, it is responsible for what occurs in this State. It should stop blaming others and start taking responsibility for delivering on the promises it gave people on the ground.

TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (12:35): I do not often take the advice of Federal Liberal members but, in closing the take-note debate today, I follow the advice of Federal Liberal Senator Jane Hume, who said last week that she could not join the Nats because she likes coffee too much and would have to speak too slowly. Following that advice, I completely refute that final contribution by the Hon. Wes Fang. Question time today showed three key challenges that this Government has inherited.

To draw an analogy, Government members seeking election by the people of New South Wales knew that they were seeking a bit of a fixer-upper with problems that needed to be addressed. Some of those problems had already been exposed through their work on the Opposition benches, but Government members did not quite realise how much of a renovator's delight they had bought. The three key challenges that Government members address were outlined in question time today. The first was our schools, which I spoke about extensively. The second was in relation to psychiatrists. [*Quorum called for.*]

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): The Clerk will stop the clock while the quorum bells are ringing.

[*The bells having been rung and a quorum having formed, business resumed.*]

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I was speaking to what this Government inherited and how the previous Government's neglect and failure to act on big challenges confronting the State have continued to be exposed. Those opposite do not like to hear it, but I specifically call out the excellent answer provided by the Minister for Transport about the Auditor-General's report. It was an excellent report. I have read quite a few of those reports in my time, but I cannot recall one as damning of the failure of planning and procurement for such an enormous public investment.

The failure of the previous Government has very real consequences for the people of New South Wales. We have seen a more than 50 per cent increase in the cost of both projects and a delay of more than three years and more than five years, respectively, in the two projects. It was more money and poorer services, and this Government was elected to fix that. It is not some kind of tap that we can turn and there are no easy fixes. But our Government remains committed to working through the big challenges, carefully and methodically, and delivering for the people of New South Wales.

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

Motion agreed to.

Written Answers to Supplementary Questions

SCHOOLS AND CHILD PROTECTION

In reply to **the Hon. SARAH MITCHELL** (21 October 2025).

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

I will update the House once I have considered the findings of the review, which is being provided to me by the end of October 2025.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND STATE ECONOMY

In reply to **the Hon. MARK LATHAM** (21 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:

Per the 2025-26 New South Wales budget: In the six years since the unprecedented 2019-20 bushfires, the New South Wales and Australian governments have spent \$9.5 billion providing disaster relief and recovery across the State. That averages \$1.6 billion per year—more than a 1,000 per cent increase compared to \$154.0 million per year on average in the prior six years.

These figures were calculated based on prior year actuals against the aggregate disaster recovery expense account from 2019-20 to 2024-25 and subsequently compared against the historical aggregate actuals from 2013-14 to 2018-19.

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

In reply to **the Hon. CHRIS RATH** (21 October 2025).

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

I am advised that under the guidelines:

A company limited by shares would not be eligible. A company limited by guarantee is eligible.

The Arrahman Benevolent Society advised the Premier's Department in their LSCA application [LSCA 284] that it is a company limited by guarantee. This was confirmed through a search with the ASIC Organisation and Business Names Register as part of the eligibility review. They were assessed as eligible for LSCA funding in accordance with section 3.1 of the LSCA guidelines. Their application was approved for funding for \$25,000 on 29 May 2024 [Tranche 19]. Their project has now been delivered and fully acquitted.

I made my decisions based on advice provided to me in briefs from the LSCA Program Office in the Premier's Department. Those briefs are publicly available.

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

Bills

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT (DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REFORM) BILL 2025

Returned

The PRESIDENT: I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly returning the bill without amendment.

Private Members' Statements

HOUSING SUPPLY

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (14:01): Today is the day that the yimbys can declare victory over the nimbys. With the planning bill set to pass Parliament with bipartisan support this week, we are seeing actions and not just words contribute to this victory. Both major parties are now proudly yimby. The housing crisis is an existential problem that affects young people. We are approaching a situation, maybe for the first time ever in this State, where the next generation of Australians may not be better off than the previous one. Analysis from the Centre for International Economics shows that regulatory costs take up a whopping 24 per cent of the cost to build a new greenfield home and 13 per cent for an infill development in Sydney. That figure is only 1 per cent for Melbourne and 2 per cent for Brisbane and Adelaide.

We cannot stand by and do nothing while millennials and gen Z are squeezed out of the housing market. My party got it horribly, horribly wrong last year when we moved a bill to disallow the Transport Oriented Development Program. We have learnt from the errors of the past on this journey, and we are now looking forward. In January Mark Speakman kicked off the year by offering the Premier a bipartisan approach to housing. That nine-month process was the genesis for the planning bill that is currently before Parliament. Mark Speakman first used the word "yimby" in August to describe his views on housing. We decided as a party to not oppose Labor's Woollahra train station and housing plan. In September we proposed our own plan for more housing at the Long Bay Correctional Complex. Now in October we are proudly supporting the planning bill.

Getting to this point would not have been possible without the tireless advocacy of members of Sydney YIMBY like Justin Simon, Peter Tulip and Tom Schinckel. I am also a proud member of Sydney YIMBY. The NSW Young Liberals have also been instrumental in pushing the dial on this issue. Past presidents, including Chanum Torres and Georgia Lowden, and the current president, Cooper Gannon, have retained housing as a top policy priority for the Young Liberals. Other Young Liberals members adding their voices to important advocacy include Lachlan Clarke, Aiden Brennan, Flinders Brogden and many more.

We will be launching the Liberal Friends of Housing tomorrow evening. I give credit to Mark Speakman and Scott Farlow for spearheading this group. We must set the record straight: Nimbyism is a product of the left, not of the right. Nimbys are against the conservative and Liberal values of home ownership. Nimbys are against property rights. Nimbys are against freedom, progress, prosperity, opportunity and upward social mobility.

Nimbys are in favour of big government planning regulations, endless red tape and bossy bureaucrats holding back supply. We are all yimbys these days, but I am elated that I was one of the first.

STATE POLITICS

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (14:04): Not long ago, seemingly sure of his facts, the Premier said, "We told you about this guy. We want the truth to come out in court about Mark Latham." If he had taken that attitude about his mate Jamie Clements, there would have been a court case for sure. Why was the Premier so cocksure in my matter? As word came down from Petinos to Kamper to Minns, they thought they had me on toast. How little they knew, and how little checking they had done.

Here we are three months later, and I can report to the House that I am not the one charged by the police. I am not the one who was arrested at Sydney airport. I am not the one who was thrown in the slammer. I am not the one who has lost my passport and been forced to live with a relative I detest. I am not the pathological liar hell-bent on revenge. I am not the one who has told dozens of lies under oath in the Local Court. I am not the one who has had my entire witness statement demolished by the simple production of messages. I am not the one who has gone crazy with revenge. I am not the one who went to the police and handed in my phone for forensic examination and then could not get an apprehended violence order even though the New South Wales police hand one out every 10 minutes. I am not one charged with a criminal offence that carries the possibility of three years in jail.

When it comes to crime-fighting, the Premier could not hit the side of a barn. At budget estimates, he entertained a photo sketch of someone he said looks like Ivan Milat, who was supposedly responsible for the Wanda Beach murders 60 years ago. The sketch actually looked more like Chris Minns. During budget estimates, Deputy Commissioner David Hudson told us that the guy in question had been at Wanda Beach the day before the murders. In any case, Ivan Milat was in Long Bay Correctional Complex at the time. The Premier gave a statement to police for his mate Clements that denied a sexual assault had taken place in the office of the member for Campbelltown. Minns' lieutenant Steve Kamper was out there slut-shaming Stef Jones and physically attacking her partner. He then tried to heavy Greg Warren into being part of the cover-up.

Then there is Sweet Nell, who comforted Clements by sending him love poems and messages. These are the people the Treasurer happily sits with at the Cabinet table even though he has total awareness and evidence of their culpability. This is the same Treasurer who said of the Matthews matter, "Back the victims of sexual harassment. Don't back Mark Latham." We all know that politicians make lousy crime fighters—just look at the Premier's dismal record. Some politicians are good at receiving information and using it to hold others to account. Like Nathalie Matthews, they picked on the wrong hombre.

DAME MARIE BASHIR PEACE AWARDS

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (14:06): On 29 September 2025 I was privileged to attend the Dame Marie Bashir Peace Awards in the Jubilee Room with the Hon. Jodie Harrison, Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. The National Council of Women New South Wales has conducted the Dame Marie Bashir Peace Awards since 2010 to honour its then long-standing patron and the first woman appointed as the Governor of New South Wales, Dame Marie Bashir, AC. Dame Marie Bashir never underestimated the importance of formal education and the benefit to our communities of women having access to professional and career opportunities.

The awards acknowledge young women students in year 10 to year 12 from public and independent schools who have demonstrated leadership and actively engaged in and contributed to social justice, inclusion, mentoring and harmony initiatives that impact ongoing peace across our communities. Six young women were recipients of a Dame Marie Bashir Peace Award this year, and four young women were recipients of a highly commended certificate. The following young women received awards: Taylah Cowley from St Columba's Catholic College in Springwood, Felicia Dimitriadis from Endeavour Sports High School in Caringbah, Edith Hall from Rutherford Technology High School, Manasseh Maugh Hall from Miller Technology High School, Monet Shortland from Mullumbimby High School and Octavia Williams from Northern Beaches Secondary College Manly Campus.

The following young women were recipients of highly commended certificates: Zunaira Abrar from Al-Faisal College in Auburn, Sadie Adair from St Vincent's College in Potts Point, Mira Bharathy from Northmead Creative and Performing Arts High School and Laaiba Haque from North Sydney Girls High School in Crows Nest. This year's Dame Marie Bashir Peace Award recipients exemplify the power of youth leadership, compassion and advocacy. From championing gender equality, Indigenous empowerment and environmental sustainability to promoting mental health, STEM education and community service, these young leaders are driving meaningful change. They have created podcasts, led cultural initiatives, mentored peers and raised thousands of dollars for vital courses.

Whether it was through political engagement, social justice activism or grassroots volunteering, each awardee demonstrated a deep commitment to peace, equity and inclusion. The highly commended recipients further reflect this spirit. They have overcome personal challenges, fostered wellbeing and built bridges across communities. Together, they remind us that courage, empathy and action can shape a more just and hopeful future. The 10 young women acknowledged this year reaffirmed to me that our future is entrusted to focused, committed and passionate women, whose achievements were rewarded and applauded by their families, schools and National Council of Women of New South Wales members and friends. I thank the council's president, Leshia Bubniuk, and the Dame Marie Bashir Peace Awards 2025 convenor and their team for their ongoing support of our young future women leaders.

CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (14:09): Today I speak on how Labor is failing our most vulnerable children and young people. Since coming into office, the Minns Labor Government has released eight quarterly statistical reports on the services for children and young people, revealing worsening conditions for vulnerable children in New South Wales. From April to June this year, 58,285 concern reports were made, which is a 2.3 per cent increase from last year. Of those, 42,063 were risk of significant harm [ROSH] reports, which is up 8.8 per cent since Labor took office. Although more children are reported at risk, fewer are actually being seen. In the last quarter, only 6,577 children were visited by a Department of Communities and Justice [DCJ] caseworker. That is a 6 per cent drop from last year and an 11.9 per cent decline since Kate Washington became Minister.

Our frontline workers are extraordinary people, but they are burning out. Chronic staff shortages and soaring demand mean many cases close without face-to-face visits or due to competing priorities. That means cases deemed less urgent are closed, leaving many children at risk. Under Labor, more families have been referred to targeted early intervention services, but in the last budget Labor failed to invest in TEI services to meet that demand, instead expecting the NGO sector to deliver more with less. What is worse, the number of children entering care rose by more than 13 per cent in the last year. Meanwhile, foster carers have dropped by 11.2 per cent, from 17,351 to 15,396 since Labor came into government. More children are now placed in costly residential care, up by 13 per cent under this Minister.

I have said this before and will continue to say it: Our frontline child protection workers do an amazing job. They are deeply committed, working long hours to protect the most vulnerable children in our State. But they are overworked and, according to the department, do not have the resources to assess all children reported at risk. Recruiting new carers is vital but so is retaining experienced ones who feel undervalued, under-supported and overwhelmed by increasing demand. Without access to respite, financial support and stronger wraparound services, even more foster carers will leave.

The DCJ data tells us everything we need to know about how the system is operating under Labor. The Minister claims that the department is "responding within its resource capacity", but that is not good enough. A child's safety should never depend on resource shortfalls but rather on need. Right now many needs go unmet. ROSH reports continue to rise and children remain unseen. This Government must take responsibility and rebuild the front line by recruiting and retaining caseworkers, supporting the carers we have and investing in early intervention to prevent children and young people from entering the system. Every number in the data represents a child who deserves to be safe, seen and supported. This Government's failure to deliver on that basic duty of care is unacceptable. The time for excuses is over.

AUSTRALIA-IRELAND FINANCE FORUM

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (14:12): I was delighted to recently attend the second annual Australia-Ireland Finance Forum, which took place on Thursday 4 September at the Mint in Sydney. The event was co-hosted by the Consul General of Ireland; Enterprise Ireland, which is the Irish Government's enterprise development agency; and IDA Ireland, the investment promotion agency that assists multinational companies to grow and expand into Ireland. The forum is an annual occasion that highlights and celebrates the deep and enduring financial services ties between Ireland, New South Wales and Australia. New South Wales and Ireland have deep cultural and historical social ties, and it was heartening to witness the emerging ties we are developing in finance, with the impressive level of talent, innovation and expertise that both nations bring to this important industry.

The evening featured an excellent program of speakers representing government, industry and the diplomatic corps. I formally acknowledge Fiona Flood, Ambassador of Ireland to Australia. The Hon. Emily Suvaal was there as the Parliamentary Secretary for Trade and Small Business and the Hon. Cameron Murphy as the Chair of Parliamentary Friends of Ireland. I also acknowledge Emma Costello, Chief Financial Officer of the Reserve Bank of Australia; Neil Hosty, chief executive officer of Fexco Group; Lysa McKenna, chief executive

officer of Corporate Markets, MUFG Pension and Market Services; and Anna-Marie Turley, head of fintech, financial services and cybersecurity for Enterprise Ireland. On the night, we heard invaluable insights from speakers who reflected on the challenges and opportunities facing the financial services sector, both domestically and globally. It was a privilege to hear their perspectives on the evolving nature of finance and technology, and the strategic role that Ireland and Australia can play in supporting innovation, investment and economic growth.

The forum also showcased several Irish companies that are at the forefront of financial technology and services. Among them were FINEOS, which provides core software systems for life, accident and health insurers; Daon, a leader in digital identity and biometrics; Engage Hub, a company specialising in customer journey orchestration and regulatory horizon scanning; 42Crunch, which focuses on API security and governance for financial services; and Org Group, a professional services consultancy with a strong emphasis on business transformation and technology. The forum was incredibly impressive, and I acknowledge all of the speakers, participants and organisers. The Australia-Ireland Finance Forum demonstrates the strength of the bilateral relationship between our two nations and the opportunities that lie ahead for deeper cooperation in financial services and technology. The future of financial services in Ireland and, indeed, in New South Wales is bright.

PROTEST LAWS

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (14:14): Today I speak about the recent decision of the Supreme Court of New South Wales in *Joshua Lees v State of NSW*, which was concerned with the constitutionality of the Government's places of worship anti-protest move on laws. It is hard to see that decision as anything other than a most orthodox application of the implied freedom jurisprudence by a very well-respected and non-activist justice of the Supreme Court. Putting the politics aside, it is clearly and obviously a vindication of all our rights. It provides yet another cautionary tale of the dangers of government overreach in times of moral panic and other powerful social forces.

The decision of the court struck down laws that gave police the power to move on protesters who were in or near a place of worship, if they were obstructing, intimidating or engaging in other conduct. As controversial as the case was, I congratulate Joshua Lees and the Palestine Action Group, and its lawyers, for their advocacy, both in and out of the courtroom. It has been smart, strategic and effective, both in this case and in other cases and actions. They did lose the Opera House protest case, but you cannot win them all. They are a volunteer army, and I was proud to join them at the Harbour Bridge protest.

The anti-protest laws were found to be inconsistent with the implied freedom of political communication, which requires that legislation or other actions must not burden existing freedom of political communication unless such laws or policies are reasonably appropriate and adapted to serve a legitimate end, the fulfilment of which is compatible with the maintenance of the constitutionally prescribed system of representative and responsible government. The fundamental flaw in the new laws identified by Justice Michelmore was that the obstruction, intimidation et cetera did not need to relate to the place of worship or people accessing or leaving it. In effect, that meant that under the laws the police had the power to move on any protesters near a place of worship, provided that police reasonably believed obstruction was occurring. That would mean that in the CBD, for example, most sizeable protests could be moved on, given the large number of places of worship in that area.

It is an interesting quirk that the Government voted against amendments in this place that would have expressly limited the powers to when an obstruction of a place of worship was occurring, but then its lawyers argued in court that that was, in fact, what the laws meant. However, the court disagreed, holding that the clear, plain meaning of the words created a power that was unreasonable, not adapted and overly limiting of free speech. As parliamentarians, we should reflect when a law that we passed is found to have trespassed on the rights of the people in such a fundamental way.

BOUGAINVILLE PARLIAMENTARY VISIT

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL (14:18): Gutpela de long yu—"good day to you" in Tok Pisin, one of the many languages of Bougainville. I have just had the amazing experience of travelling to that beautiful and rugged island in our Pacific neighbourhood to take part in the induction of members of their Fifth Parliament following October elections, invited by the Speaker of their House of Representatives, the Hon. Simon Pentanu. The ongoing partnership between the parliaments of New South Wales and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, first entered into in 2011, focuses on the strengthening of connections and relationships, and sharing experiences, both similar and different. A tropical paradise in many ways, but also a place that has suffered much hardship, it continues to rebuild after a decade-long war that saw it isolated from the rest of the world.

Nonetheless, its people demonstrate resilience, spirit and a pronounced commitment to democracy. The New South Wales Parliament was also ably represented by Mr Roy Butler, MP; Mr Simon Johnston, Serjeant-at-Arms and Clerk Assistant in the Legislative Assembly; and Ms Susan Want, director of the Office of

the Clerk of the Legislative Council. Our participation was made possible through the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the parliamentary strengthening project of the United Nations Development Programme. The visit and the schedule was intense but inspiring. The induction was held under a large marquee in front of the simple but dignified unicameral Parliament in the capital, Buka.

Of the 45 elected members, this will be the first parliamentary term for 22 of them. Five women were also elected. The visit featured long sessions, soaring temperatures and the famously flexible Pacific timetable, but enthusiasm never wavered. It was lively and full of warmth in all ways, not dissimilar to a Nationals branch meeting here at home. We covered everything from parliamentary privilege and committees to the role of members in their communities. We also shared our personal experiences as regional representatives, with a focus on balancing local needs, transparency, integrity and good governance. The challenges the Bougainville MPs spoke about are more than familiar to us: delivering services to regional, rural and remote areas; supporting local industries; connectivity; and ensuring women have a strong voice in leadership.

As I shared in my presentation, wherever we serve as representatives of the people, our purpose is the same: to make life better for our communities. In that, the distance between New South Wales and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville feels very small indeed. It was also uplifting to see the importance they place on democracy because perhaps they are aware more than most that it cannot be taken for granted but rather needs to be nurtured and protected, whether in the streets of Sydney, the town halls of Tumut to Tenterfield, or the villages of Bougainville. It was a true honour to represent the Parliament of New South Wales and to play even a small role in supporting our Pacific neighbours as they continue to build a strong and democratic future. I thank them for the privilege to have participated in their journey and wish them all the very best as they together shape the next chapter in their story.

SHARK MANAGEMENT

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (14:21): As members will have noticed, it is hot today. According to my phone, it is 37 degrees outside right now. Some parts of the State are tipped to hit 40. If someone is lucky enough to live near the coast, one thing they are likely to do if they have the time is head to the beach and jump in the water. For the past 88 years swimmers at New South Wales beaches have been comforted by the presence of shark nets at most of our popular beaches along our coastline. But this is coming to an end sooner rather than later. Notwithstanding the pause by the State Government on shark net removal following a fatal shark attack at Dee Why in August, many coastal councils stand ready to abandon shark nets altogether in favour of SMART drum lines, drone patrols, shark listening stations, the statewide SharkSmart community education and awareness campaign, the SharkSmart app, and shark and social research.

It is all well and good for shark nets to be removed, but on days like today there are no SMART drum lines at Shellharbour, Port Macquarie, beaches in Sydney's east or between Manly and Turimetta Beach. There are also no SMART drum lines at Forster, Tuncurry, Kiama, Coffs Harbour or Wollongong today. And there have been no explanations given as to why. For users of the SharkSmart app, notifications have been given today regarding great white sharks at Tura Beach, Kiama and Birubi, two at Avoca, and a bull shark at Yamba. Despite these notifications that come at all hours of the day and night, no guidance is provided on what to do with this information.

For users of the app, it functions more as a data dump rather than a useful resource designed to empower beachgoers to stay safe. It would be great to see the Government be more transparent when beaches are not protected by SMART drum lines. An easily missed notification via an app is not good enough, especially when no reason is provided. I also call on the Government to provide useful information on what to do when a shark is detected at someone's local beach. A simple notification of the event via an app is not useful to the public and can incite fear and confusion with no real information provided. The Government must address these deficiencies urgently, particularly if it intends on ending the pause on shark net reduction this summer.

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY HEALTH COURSES

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (14:24): I am deeply concerned and disappointed about the reckless proposed health course cuts announced by the University of Technology Sydney [UTS]. These decisions stand to jeopardise not only students and staff but the health capacity of our entire State. UTS management has proposed to disestablish the School of Public Health and abolish the master's degree, graduate certificate, graduate diploma and bachelor's degree in public health. Other key postgraduate degrees proposed to be scrapped include palliative care, mental health, diabetes education and management, nursing education and health services management—and the list goes on. These programs train the people who keep our communities healthy. They are public health experts, palliative care specialists, diabetes educators and current and future leaders of health services—all of whom are in critical demand in New South Wales.

An alarming list of subjects is also on the scrap heap, including—of all things—perinatal mental health, child and family health, caring for an older person, care of the newborn, Indigenous health and wellbeing, and a raft of midwifery subjects. The list goes on and on. The proposal to close the School of Public Health is appalling. UTS management is walking away from one of the few programs that trains professionals to prevent disease, prepare for crises and strengthen our health systems. Even more alarming is the proposal to axe all of their postgraduate palliative care courses, along with a number of palliative care subjects. As our population ages and more families face the challenges of chronic illness and end-of-life care, demand for skilled palliative care workers is only growing. To eliminate this course—a program respected across the sector—is to completely ignore the human side of health.

The Graduate Certificate in Diabetes Education and Management is another casualty of the proposed cuts. This course has supported, in particular, Indigenous educators and community health workers across the State, who are addressing one of the most significant and costly chronic health challenges facing us. Cutting training in this field is not efficiency; it is negligence. UTS management defends the proposals as part of "operational sustainability". But a university's purpose is not to protect balance sheets; it is to serve the public good. In gutting its health programs, UTS is abandoning that duty. These are not Government decisions. They are management choices, made without adequate consultation, transparency or regard for the public interest. I call on the vice-chancellor and the university council to reverse their position, genuinely look at the alternatives being proposed and recommit to their role as a public institution. The people of New South Wales deserve universities that invest in health, not ones that dismantle it.

GREEK-AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (14:27): I attended an excellent function on Saturday night convened by the Greek-Australian Society and organised by the president, George Mpliakas. It was attended by the Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Australia; the Minister for Multiculturalism, Stephen Kamper; the member for Prospect, Hugh McDermott; the Leader of the Opposition, Mark Speakman; the member for Oatley, Mark Coure; and many other dignitaries from the Greek community. It was a celebration of the Greek-Australian Society's fifth year. The organisation was formed to bring the Greek community together and celebrate the contribution that it makes to a very diverse and vibrant multicultural New South Wales.

One of the key things the Greek-Australian Society is pursuing is the idea that the Greek language should be fostered and perpetuated. This could be a template for other communities. Because of successive waves of immigration, we have second- and third-generation Greek immigrants, and the Greek language is dying out in Australia because it is no longer necessary. Therefore, it takes a proactive approach from government to make sure that language is perpetrated. One of the things we have been discussing that I would like to see the Government pursue is the idea that languages, rather than being an add-on to a child's education, could become front and centre as part of the mainstream curriculum.

Given the multiplicity of ethnicities and the volume of the waves of immigration New South Wales has had over the past 100 years, we have a massive comparative advantage whereby kids should be encouraged to learn the native tongue of the country from which they have come, to encourage cultural inheritance and continuity and to open people's minds by having another perspective and speaking a second language. It will be valuable for our citizens. It will make them more productive and more open to the rest of the world and will culturally enrich us. I thank the president, George Mpliakas, and previous president George Psihoyios, for running an excellent organisation. They put on a great night. I make particular mention of the project about language becoming front and centre and a comparative advantage for New South Wales.

The PRESIDENT: The member did not speak from notes. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask the member to please provide the spellings of the names that he mentioned.

Documents

MOORE PARK GOLF COURSE

Production of Documents: Further Order

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (14:30): I speak on behalf of the Government and indicate at the outset that it will not oppose the further order for papers. I am told many documents relating to the project were released to Parliament under previous orders, and the Government will comply with the further order. This initiative has good reasons and I will speak about them today. The Government's vision for Moore Park Golf Course has been well canvassed in both this place and the other place since October 2023. It has been

open about its plans to convert 20 hectares of Moore Park South into public open space, accessible to the whole community, and the last budget included a \$50 million commitment to deliver that.

I am told public engagement has been ongoing, including engagement on the discussion paper, which occurred from 25 February to 10 April 2024 and to which 8,615 survey responses and 315 submissions were received. A "what we heard" report was released on 9 December 2024. I am advised that the next phase of community consultation will take place from the end of October to the end of November 2025 and will be about the key features of the new park. We know that areas adjacent to and surrounding Moore Park have experienced significant population growth over the past few years. Currently 690,000 people live within a five-kilometre radius of Centennial Parklands. The population is projected to rise to almost 790,000 in 2041, making it one of the most densely populated areas in Australia. With the current density and the projected population increases, the Government has been guided by the importance of delivering good amenity for residents and public open spaces that are functional and for all the community to enjoy.

Estimates from financial year 2023-24 indicate that Moore Park and Centennial Parklands had around 30 million visitors. Delivering 20 hectares of much-needed public open space and parkland will not only accommodate the needs of a growing community, but also contribute to Sydney's tree canopy, grow Sydney's green grid and provide critical urban habitat for native wildlife. I am told Moore Park Golf Course will remain open while it is reconfigured and while the new park is being established. Temporary changes will be made to the course to accommodate construction of the new park and reconfiguration of the golf course. However, it is important to note that no changes will be made to the existing course until after the current operating agreement expires in mid-2026. This is an important change to the make-up of Moore Park and Centennial Parklands. There will be new facilities, new sporting fields, increased habitat for our local wildlife and more open space for the local residents. I indicate again that the Government does not oppose the motion.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bills

ABORTION LAW REFORM AMENDMENT (SEX SELECTION PROHIBITION) BILL 2025

First Reading

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

Second Reading Speech

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (14:35): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I introduce and speak in favour of the Libertarian Party's Abortion Law Reform Amendment (Sex Selection Prohibition) Bill 2025. The bill seeks to end the practice of aborting unborn babies based on nothing other than their sex. Whether a person believes in God, Mother Nature or evolution, we are all agreed that, for whatever reason, the natural pattern is that for every 100 baby girls born, 105 baby boys are born. Demographers have known of this pattern for over three centuries. That statistic is consistent across time and ethnic groups. But with the advent of modern medicine and the ability to determine the sex of a baby in the womb very early, there have been studies that have indicated that the ratio of 100 girls for every 105 boys can sometimes be way out of whack, resulting in what is known as a skewed sex ratio at birth.

Those studies indicate that gender-selection abortion is the reason. Parents want a child and are excited about a new child enriching their family, but they want to kill it if it is a baby girl because they insist on having a boy. Baby girls are being aborted for no reason other than being baby girls. Those studies have been contested by the pro-abortion lobby—inaccurately, in my view. Regardless, we now have the gold standard study on the subject. The debate about whether sex-selection abortion is happening is over. On 28 May this year a peer-reviewed paper titled "Indirect evidence of sex-selective abortion practices to the imbalanced sex ratio at birth in Australian migrant populations" was published in the *PLOS Global Public Health* journal.

It was conducted by researchers at Edith Cowan University and Curtin University, both in Western Australia. It was funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council, a Federal statutory body that has been around since the 1920s, and approved by the human research ethics committees of the departments of health in New South Wales and Western Australia. That paper was the result of 20 years of study, from the mid-1990s to the mid-2010s, and it examined over 2.1 million births in Western Australia and New South Wales. This is not a crackpot study. We should soberly assess its conclusions. We should act on its conclusions.

I seek leave to table the research article published in *PLOS Global Public Health* titled "Indirect evidence of sex-selective abortion practices to the imbalanced sex ratio at birth in Australian migrant populations", dated 28 May 2025.

Leave granted.

Document tabled.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK: The findings were unequivocal. In two migrant communities in particular—communities with a culturally high son preference—abortions were being conducted because the parents so wanted a boy that they decided to discard the baby girl only because it was a girl. Modern technology known as non-invasive prenatal testing, or NIPT, can reveal the gender very early in a pregnancy—around 10 weeks. Mothers who do not want a baby girl are taking the test and, in some cases, aborting the child if it is a girl. How did the researchers come to that conclusion? They found that for births in Australia where the mother was born in China or India, the chance of their first child being a boy or a girl were entirely in line with the natural expectancy of 105 boys born for every 100 girls born. So far, so good.

However, if parents from those ethnic communities already had two children and both of them were girls, there was an unequivocal skewed sex ratio at birth. If those parents already had two girls, then the ratio was 133 boys to 100 girls among mothers born in China, and 132 boys to 100 girls among mothers born in India. Australian-born mothers with two children who are both girls had a perfectly natural rate for the third child—105 boys for every 100 girls born. Bolstering the study was another finding that a Chinese-born mother was 9 per cent more likely to stop having children once a boy was born. The report made the front page of *The Australian* newspaper. That article stated:

Dr Gebremedhin called for a discussion about the "consequences of male-based sex-selective practices". He said sex selection could put pressure on women to have sons, reinforce gender inequality and make it harder for men to find a partner. "While maintaining rights of bodily autonomy, sex-selective abortion should be discouraged, as it undermines broader commitments to gender equality and non-discrimination".

That is a quote from the lead author of the report. In 2019 this Parliament voted firmly against the practice of gender-based abortions, which is good. But that vote only created guidelines and provided no form of punishment for the medical practitioners. In light of the Edith Cowan University and Curtin University research, the time has come for this Parliament to take action. The time has come to impose penalties on medical professionals who knowingly engage in a gender-based abortion. Whenever an abortion is performed in New South Wales, the abortionist needs to complete a form for the Department of Health. In the years after the 2019 guidelines were put in place, that form specifically asked whether the abortion was sought because of gender, but the 2025 version of the form has now mysteriously dropped that question.

The passage of this bill will send a clear and unequivocal message to expectant mothers: In Australia we uphold the human dignity of all people, and we are absolutely committed to the principle that the inherent value of a baby girl is equal to that of a baby boy. This is not a debate about the morality of abortion; it is a debate about our cultural attitudes to gender and human dignity. I pay tribute to Dr Joanna Howe, who has brought energy and leadership to this debate. I note that tonight at 5.30 p.m., out the front of Parliament House, Dr Howe will be holding a public protest in favour of this bill, and I encourage my colleagues in Parliament and the general public to attend. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Documents

POLITICAL LOBBYING

Production of Documents: Order

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (14:42): I seek leave to amend private members' business item No. 2564 for today of which I have given notice by:

- (1) Inserting "the Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, Minister for Sport and the Minister for Jobs and Tourism" after "the Premier,".
- (2) Omitting in paragraph (a) "meetings or correspondence with" and inserting instead "meetings, correspondence or briefings related to".

Leave granted.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Accordingly, I move:

That, under standing order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 21 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents created since 5 April 2023 in the possession, custody or control of the Premier, the Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism, Minister for Sport and Minister for Jobs and Tourism, the Treasurer, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, the Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast, the Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Youth, the Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning and Minister for Western Sydney, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research and Minister for the Central Coast, the Premier's Department, The Cabinet Office, Treasury, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (including the Housing Delivery Authority), Transport for NSW, the Ministry of Health, Sydney Water, the Department of Communities and Justice (Homes NSW), the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport (Liquor & Gaming NSW and Office of Racing) or Investment NSW (including Investment Delivery Authority):

- (a) all documents relating to meetings, correspondence or briefings related to the following:
- (i) Mr Morris Iemma;
 - (ii) IPPA Trust;
 - (iii) Iemma Patterson Premier Advisory;
 - (iv) Acusensus Australia Pty Ltd;
 - (v) Aland Developments Pty Limited;
 - (vi) American Special Vehicles Pty Ltd;
 - (vii) Andesine Consulting LLC;
 - (viii) Aoyuan Property Group (Australia) Pty Ltd;
 - (ix) Arrovest Pty Ltd;
 - (x) Aus Ship Operations Pty Limited;
 - (xi) Australian Capital Equity Pty Ltd;
 - (xii) Australian Retirement Holdings Pty Limited;
 - (xiii) AVJennings Limited;
 - (xiv) Bai Communications Pty Ltd;
 - (xv) Besmaw Pty. Limited;
 - (xvi) Billbergia Pty. Ltd;
 - (xvii) Blue Line Cruises Pty Ltd;
 - (xviii) Boral Shared Business Services Pty Ltd;
 - (xix) Boyuan Holdings Limited;
 - (xx) Broken Hill Cobalt Project Pty Ltd;
 - (xxi) Built Pty Limited;
 - (xxii) Cameron Brae Properties Pty Limited;
 - (xxiii) Capital Corp Trading Pty Ltd;
 - (xxiv) CDMA Australia Pty Ltd;
 - (xxv) Cenagen Pty Ltd;
 - (xxvi) Charter Hall Limited;
 - (xxvii) Coronation Property Co Pty Ltd;
 - (xxviii) Decode Administration Pty Ltd;
 - (xxix) Deicorp Properties Pty Ltd;
 - (xxx) Ecove Group Pty Limited;
 - (xxxi) Elanor Operations Pty Limited;
 - (xxxii) Emag Apartments Pty Limited;
 - (xxxiii) Golf NSW Limited;
 - (xxxiv) Green Star Australia Pty Limited;
 - (xxxv) Greyhound Racing New South Wales;
 - (xxxvi) Growthbuilt Pty Limited;
 - (xxxvii) Hatt Pty Ltd & Mararch Dev (Richmond) Pty. Ltd. & Redbank Unit Trust & Wengor Dev (Richmond) Pty. Ltd;

(xxxviii) Holdmark NSW Pty Ltd;
(xxxix) Honan Investments Pty Ltd;
(xl) Htrak Pty Ltd;
(xli) Hunter Primary Care Ltd;
(xlii) Ingham Property Development Services Pty Limited;
(xliii) ISS Facility Services Australia Limited;
(xliv) Landmark Group Australia Pty Limited;
(xlv) Leamac Properties Pty Ltd;
(xlvi) Leda Holdings Pty Ltd;
(xlvii) Leppington Pastoral Co Pty Ltd;
(xlviii) Marsden Park Developments Pty Ltd;
(xlix) Medich Corporation Pty Ltd;
(l) Network Strata Services Pty Limited;
(li) Novus Investco Pty Ltd;
(lii) Payce Consolidated Limited;
(liii) Perifa Developments Pty Ltd;
(liv) Planum Partners Pty Ltd;
(lv) Prime Moss Vale Pty Ltd;
(lvi) Private Healthcare Australia Limited;
(lvii) Property Exchange Australia Limited;
(lviii) Ramps Ridge Pty Ltd & R.N Harris & S.P Harris;
(lix) Ramsay Health Care Australia Pty Limited;
(lx) Roberts Co (NSW) Pty Ltd;
(lxi) Ronald McDonald House Charities Greater Western Sydney Limited;
(lxii) Sekisui House Services (NSW) Pty Limited;
(lxiii) Seven Group Holdings Limited;
(lxiv) Sparke Helmore Consulting Pty Ltd;
(lxv) St John Of God Foundation Inc;
(lxvi) The Chimes Pp Partnership Pty Ltd;
(lxvii) The Owners of Strata Plan 40417;
(lxviii) The Premier Communications Group Pty Ltd;
(lix) The Trustee for Capital Corporation Wahroonga Unit Trust;
(lxx) The Trustee for Carsingha Investments Unit Trust;
(lxxi) The Trustee for Christie Street Property Trust;
(lxxii) The Trustee for Coombes Investment Trust;
(lxxiii) The Trustee for George Hayek Family Trust;
(lxxiv) The Trustee for Harry Tibor Trust;
(lxxv) The Trustee for Outdoor Signage Unit Trust No. 3;
(lxxvi) The Trustee for The NSW Electricity Networks Operations Trust;
(lxxvii) The Trustee for Wesco Group Trust;
(lxxviii) ThirdlProperty Pty Ltd;
(lxxix) TMA Tech Pty Ltd;
(lxxx) Toga Five Dock No 2 Pty Limited;
(lxxxi) Tomra Cleanaway Pty Limited;
(lxxxii) Vicinity Centres Pm Pty Ltd;
(lxxxiii) VRA Rescue NSW Limited; and

(lxxxiv) Yang Ming (Australia) Pty Ltd.

- (b) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

It is a very simple motion. The Opposition is seeking more information about whether the Government is engaging with lobbyists in a way that does not conform with the standards that are applicable to New South Wales. We know this Government has declined to act on the recommendations of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and of Operation Eclipse, which are very specific in their call for greater transparency and accountability when it comes to meeting disclosures between government officials, Ministers, lobbyists and ordinary parliamentarians like myself—which I would be happy to comply with. What we have heard so far from the Special Minister of State is that this a priority for the Government, but it appears to be not so much a priority as to do anything about it yet, after 2½ years in government. It is somewhere on the list.

I do not know if the Government understands the meaning of the word "priority", but when something is referred to as such, you would imagine that in fact the Government would be interested in doing it up-front and up first. Instead we are getting report after report. In *The Sydney Morning Herald* just over the weekend, Michael McGowan released his latest story showing that the Premier did not disclose a meeting with Mr Iemma that occurred just a week before the former Premier sought to lobby his office over two major housing developments. What we have heard from the Minister for Planning is that Ministers have full discretion over how they categorise the meetings that they have with stakeholders.

The Hon. Wes Fang: A meet and greet.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That is right. I acknowledge the interjection, because we have been calling for greater detail and transparency since we unfortunately became the Opposition and took on the important job of holding this Government to account. Last year in budget estimates, I put the question to Minister Scully: How can Mr Morris Iemma be a lobbyist on Tuesday when he meets with the planning Minister, but not on Thursday when he meets with the planning Minister? The answer was that, in fact, Mr Iemma was engaging in "general planning matters" not related to specific clients. I do not think that passes the pub test. We are in a period of government where the Government should feel an obligation to be transparent with the taxpayer. Instead, already after just 2½ years, we are seeing some of the same grubby behaviour and influence that was present in the last Labor Government after 16 years. It is really concerning and very problematic. We need to get to the bottom of it.

The reality is that if we are letting Ministers decide what they consider lobbyist influence, we are letting down the people of New South Wales. We are not ensuring that their taxpayer funds are going to the right people or that rezoning in particular areas is happening in the interests of everyday citizens. These are the questions that we need to answer. The information that we hope will be provided through this Standing Order 52 motion will shed some more light on the way that the Government has decided to engage with lobbyists and their clients. We need to know more. If the Government had been more transparent, we would not need to seek this set of papers, or deep dive into the depths of briefings and meeting notes. We would actually be able to trust what was on the record. I have gone through meeting disclosures from Coalition Ministers. They are very detailed. They are nothing like the broad-brush explanations that we get from this Government. That is why the House needs to pass this motion—for the people of New South Wales.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (14:47): We know that cronyism is on the rise in the Minns Government, so it is hardly surprising that the Premier's mentor, Morris Iemma, turns out to be the chief and most lucrative lobbyist, aided by Chris Patterson. I have to say, for a minor figure—I think he was the Government Whip in the Legislative Assembly—Chris Patterson has been hit by a rainbow up his backside to be running off all this Iemma money that is sloshing around in the lobbyist game. *The Sydney Morning Herald* has put this on the agenda. It is a try-hard newspaper that may well have missed the main game.

Back in December of last year, I asked a question on notice about the Ingham Property Group at 475 Badgerys Creek Road. The organisation had a master plan in which it was moving around the planning department's development control plans to suit its own road interests, changing the alignment of the Eastern Ring Road and the Bradfield Metro Link Road, moving the location of the ring road and the link road intersection, upgrading certain roads, and upgrading the ring road intersection as well. It was receiving a fair bit of beneficial treatment. I have tried since then, in a serious way, to get the costings for that expense to the taxpayers of New South Wales to look after the Ingham Property Group. I asked that because Iemma and his lobbyists' efforts have met with the Premier and brought in the Ingham Property Group. I think that the Premier, not coincidentally, even went out to Badgerys Creek to turn the first sod on this Ingham Property Group's development.

If there is a big expense to the taxpayer, we should not be taxing billionaires—people who have made a lot of money out of the production of chicken meat and moved into property. Successive generations of the Inghams

after Bob and Jack also have experienced the rainbow effect I mentioned earlier. They are the richest products of the Casula High School we could every possibly imagine—and good luck to them. But what is happening with Morris Iemma and his connection to the Premier? I almost fell off my chair in my office. Everything went skew-whiff when I saw that the Transport for NSW submission on the Ingham Property Group Badgerys Creek Road master plan was lodged by someone named Graham Richardson.

What an amazing coincidence in State politics that the Director of Land Use, Network and Place Planning, Integration and Passenger, for Transport for NSW is Graham Richardson. It is the same spelling of Graham and the same spelling of Richardson. But I think I can report that this is not Darth Vader with his helmet off. This is not Mr "Whatever It Takes" from Balmain Welding. It is a different Graham Richardson. But members can imagine my surprise when I saw that he lodged the submission. He is a lobbyist for the other side, the omnipresent Michael Photios. We have to keep our eye on lobbyists, particularly if they are named Graham Richardson. [*Time expired.*]

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (14:50): The NSW Labor Party cannot seem to help it. Whenever it gets into government, it cosies up to big developers and demonstrates a concerning lack of integrity. It is the responsibility of this House to shine a light on the shadowy dealings between Labor politicians and the developer lobby. That is what this call for papers is intended to do. We now know that Labor Premier Chris Minns has failed to disclose a meeting with former Premier Morris Iemma—Chris Minns' mentor—who lobbies on behalf of a number of big developers. We also know that the Minns Labor Government so far has refused to adopt ICAC's recommendations to reform lobbying rules. Minns has just fulfilled the wildest dreams of his mates in the developer lobby by overhauling the planning system to radically scale back the safeguards that hold developers to account and provide environmental protections, expert oversight and community participation—concentrating power in the hands of the planning Minister, who has ties to Morris Iemma's lobbying firm.

At the end of my contribution to debate on the motion I will move an amendment to encompass some of the key players behind developer Coronation Property and its links to the NSW Labor Party which has been fighting *The Sydney Morning Herald* in court to prevent being reported upon. Coronation is one of Morris Iemma's star clients and it secured political victories from Labor Premier Chris Minns, despite the fact it has serious links to organised crime. Former member of Parliament, the Hon. Adam Searle, was so concerned about Coronation's ties to organised crime that he raised these concerns with Deputy Commissioner David Hudson. Hudson told the Hon. Adam Searle in a budget estimates hearing, "I am concerned about any people or any organisation that that particular group is associated with."

Despite developers' links to organised crime and the police's concerns, the Minns Labor Government has been handing out political victories to Coronation. Last year Coronation managed to secure the Labor Government's agreement to put a proposal for the Moore Point development on public exhibition, despite years of flooding and contamination concerns. That change in policy was reportedly motivated by lobbying efforts from Morris Iemma's firm. It is not lost on any member in this Chamber that those on the opposite side under Perrottet were also supportive of this proposal. Unsurprisingly, Coronation also has links to former Nationals Deputy Premier John Barilaro. I move:

That the question be amended by inserting at the end of paragraph (a):

- (lxxxv) Mr Joe Nahas;
- (lxxxvi) Mr Andy Nahas;
- (lxxxvii) Mr Daneille Elkor;
- (lxxxviii) Mr John Landerer;
- (lxxxix) Mr Zeljko Ranogajec; and
- (xc) Mr Zenon Pasieczny.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): Members will cease interjecting. There is too much audible conversation.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:53): I remind members that housing is the top priority for the New South Wales Government. It surprises no-one that the Premier and relevant Ministers meet with a range of stakeholders from NGOs to housing advocates and developers and their representatives to discuss housing issues. As required, the meetings are disclosed, and conflicts of interest are managed in accordance with established processes for declaring and managing potential conflicts of interest. I indicate that the Government will move three amendments that will be circulated.

The first amendment changes the date from which documents are sought to 26 March 2011. The second amendment adds additional terms to be searched for and produced by agencies, including documents transferred by former Ministers, departments and agencies to the State Archives. The third amendment goes to particular lobbying activities undertaken by the previous Government. That is important if we are going to clean this up. As the Special Minister of State has said, the Government is working through legislation related to lobbyists. I move:

That the question be amended by:

- (1) Omitting "created since 5 April 2023" and inserting instead "created since 26 March 2011".
- (2) Inserting "or transferred to the control of State Records Authority NSW or Museums of History NSW from all ministers, departments or agencies" after "or Investment NSW (including Investment Delivery Authority),".
- (3) In paragraph (a) inserting at the end:
 - (lxxxv) Mr Michael Photios;
 - (lxxxvi) Mr Lachlan Crombie;
 - (lxxxvii) Mr Chris Stone;
 - (lxxxviii) Mr David Begg;
 - (lxxxix) Mr Nick Campbell;
 - (xc) PremierState;
 - (xci) Premier State; and
 - (xcii) Premier State Consulting Pty Ltd.

If we are to learn anything—and members want to know about this—we should hold everyone to account. The Government believes that we need to look at the whole picture and work through those issues. Given the interest expressed in this House and the questions that have been asked relating to changes recommended by the ICAC, the Government believes that this call for papers will provide information to inform that.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (14:56): I will make just one point, which is that this Government has said in this place time after time that it could not possibly comply with the Opposition and crossbench requests for papers in the timeline of 21 days because the scope is too broad. They have continuously tried since the last election to narrow the scope because the hardworking public servants could not possibly put together all the documents within a 21-day time frame. But here we have it: The Leader of the Government has been caught out. This has been an elaborate lie since the last election because the Government is now saying it will trawl through every single document since 2011 and produce all of the documents in the 12 years of the previous Government within a 21-day time frame. The Government no longer has any credibility in this House if the Leader of the Government seeks to broaden the scope all the way back to 2011—no credibility whatsoever. That is the main point I want to make.

This is an elaborate ploy by Government members, who no longer have any credibility whatsoever when it comes to Standing Order 52 motions. If the Government can broaden a Standing Order 52 to include 12 years of the previous Government, then Government members should not come into this House time and again on every other Standing Order 52 motion and try to narrow their scope or broaden the number of days in which to comply. It is absolute complete hypocrisy because of the recent well-published and well-documented allegations in newspapers about the dealings of Morris Iemma lobbying the Government. The Opposition has nothing to hide, but it is incredibly strange that the Government can comply with an order seeking 12 years of lobbying documents within a 21-day time frame. The Government no longer has any credibility.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (14:58): I support the amendments to the motion and the motion itself. I commend the mover of the motion. It is important that we get to the bottom of the lobbying efforts of anyone in this area. It is true that we are facilitating housing in this State, and that is welcome, but it is also true that we need to ensure the planning and development system in this State has integrity. Historically, that has been undermined by the efforts of lobbyists, and we have seen that again and again in ICAC. I have been appalled by the revolving door of politicians making the jump to lobbying firms. I have often advocated for a cooling-off period of forever for politicians becoming lobbyists.

Once someone has been a politician, they should never become a lobbyist because of the perception and the real possibility that they will undermine the integrity of the planning system via their access. We have seen it again and again in this place, be it in mining, property development or wherever. I certainly welcome the call for papers. I welcome the amendments from Ms Sue Higginson regarding those particular developers, and I also welcome the amendment from the Government. Let us bring all of that into the light. This is about transparency. Let us broaden the scope and hop in the wayback machine, all the way back to 2011. For those reasons, I support the amendments and the motion.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (15:00): I contribute to debate on the motion and note the wonderful amendment from the Leader of the Government. It really got under the skin of the Opposition Whip. What was it about that amendment? I can tell you: Lobbyists are a scourge on all sides of politics, particularly undisclosed lobbyists. That is why I support the amendment. We should look at all of those people and the influence they have. I see lobbyists wandering the halls of Parliament House and talking about their issues, and I wonder why they do it. I reckon the Hon. Mark Latham is in large part responsible for it. Many of those people would not have a job other than that of being a lobbyist, and when the Hon. Mark Latham moved to remove pensions from members of Parliament, a lot of people ended up in that position. I do not think they should be. It is awful.

Politics ought to be open and transparent. I know the Minister is working on ensuring that we get rid of the scourge of lobbying, but we must look at lobbyists from all sides. They have a pervasive influence. I listen to contributions like that of the Opposition Whip, but then I see people like Michael Photios who seem to be embedded in the Liberal Party's structure. He is not just a lobbyist; he is part of the internal voting structure of the party and its administration. Lobbyists are a pox on both sides of the House. We need reform, and we should look at this issue. I support the amendments of the Leader of the Government, which will broaden this call for papers to ensure that we look at the issue properly and appropriately, because there is no place for that sort of undue influence. Members of the community who have particular problems, whether they be charities or ordinary community groups, simply cannot compete with those people exercising undue influence. It is unfair and inappropriate, and it ought to end. I am confident the Minister is working on that. If we are going to delve into this issue, let us look at it properly.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (15:03): I contribute to debate on the motion and thank the Hon. Jacqui Munro for bringing it to the House. I was concerned when I read the article published by Max Maddison in *The Sydney Morning Herald*. I have a lot of respect for Max. He is probably one of the better journalists in our press gallery, and he has obviously done a little bit of investigative work here. What intrigued me was that the breakfast meeting between Chris Minns, senior adviser Cherie Burton and Morris Iemma on 8 April last year was not published in the ministerial diary, as is required under laws designed to increase transparency over ministerial contact with lobbyists. When questioned, Premier Minns said:

So I suspect it was a political meeting about something to do with the local political scene.

He did not deny it. He did not say, "No, this is definitely to do with a political matter." He just said "I suspect". There was no clear recollection to hang his hat on whatsoever. Further, the article stated:

A week after the catch-up, Iemma emailed Burton and referred "to our discussion in relation to the proposed housing redevelopment projects" in Macquarie Park and Kogarah.

Clearly something needs to be done here. This is systemic with the Premier. Recall how, with the Rosehill incident, he recorded in his diary a meeting with Steve McMahon—a friend of his for a number of years—as a meet and greet. This is a man who treats his diary, which should be open to the public, as a plaything. This is the same Premier who came in saying integrity is a verb, not just a noun. We have seen him gild the lily quite a lot on different things, particularly the Dural caravan incident, which he claimed was terrorism. We know it was not. We know he said there were 700 incidents of antisemitic attacks, but I have spoken on that with the Leader of the Government in this House, and she conceded that it was perhaps a little bit wrong. The Premier is a man who will say anything, cover anything and do anything. I am glad that this motion has been brought and that we might get to some truth.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (15:05): This motion flows from revelations of meetings between Mr Morris Iemma and the Premier. They have been fairly well explored. It also arises out of the Government's blatant disregard of correspondence from ICAC about a lobbying code that the Deputy Leader of the Government says is the Government's priority and something it is working on. The Government seems to be clearly avoiding the issue. What do we make of the Government's amendment? It is absolutely a distraction from the main game. Labor had 12 years in opposition and did not go anywhere near this sort of call for papers. The main protagonist of calls for papers under Standing Order 52 did not think that this was an issue for the former Government because it was not even on his radar. But, because this issue has been raised today, the Government needs an excuse to give cover to what has been going on in the Premier's office, and likely a number of other offices as well, relating to the scurrying around for opportunities for advancement. That is why the Government's amendment is necessary. It is trying to deflect attention from what is going on. But there is a test coming for that, because I seek to amend the Government amendment. I move:

That paragraph (3) of the amendment of the Hon. Penny Sharpe be amended by inserting "within 42 days of the date of the passing of this resolution documents relating to the following:" before "(lxxxv)".

Let me be clear about the intent of this amendment. The call for papers requests that the documents be produced by the Government within 21 days, but we know that the Government amendment seeks additional documents. The intent of this amendment is that those additional documents be produced within 42 days.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (15:09): I move:

That paragraph No. (1) of the amendment of Ms Sharpe be amended by omitting all words after "Omitting" and inserting instead "within 21 days of the passing of this resolution the following documents created since 5 April 2023" and inserting instead "within 42 days of the passing of this resolution the following documents created between 26 March 2011 and 6 April 2023, and within 21 days of the passing of this resolution the following documents created since 5 April 2023".

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: I think you're saying what I was trying to say, and you did it much better.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: There is nothing like drafting amendments on the fly. I will not say what I was originally going to say, but I will quickly say that I support the amendment and the comments of my colleague Ms Sue Higginson. This issue is incredibly important. I find it a little worrying that the Government is so keen to see what the previous Government was doing. I want to see that—we all want to see it—but an admission that the previous Government was doing a thing is not permission for the current Government to do that same thing. The Greens would love to see an end to the Government saying, "Yes, we're doing a thing, but it's not as bad as what they did. We're doing the Local Small Commitments Allocation grants, but it's not as bad as the pork-barrelling that John Barilaro was doing."

It is not okay to continue to erode democracy by having meetings behind closed doors, by doing things that are not in public view and by giving access to the very powerful people in this State in a way that preferences them and excludes the ordinary people of New South Wales who voted for us to be here to represent them. That is the principle we are working towards. We need to be moving much more quickly to put in place rules that shine a light on lobbyist meetings. We need to implement ICAC's recommendations. In the meantime, it is no excuse to say, "Yes, but the other guys were worse than us." I look forward to reading all the documents from all those years of government but, at the end of the day, what we really want to see is reforms that implement ICAC's recommendations.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (15:11): I came to the Chamber to speak on the next item of business, but when I saw—

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: You felt compelled to speak, did you?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I have never seen the Opposition Whip in such a lather as when Michael Photios was mentioned. I then felt compelled. I accept a number of the points made by Ms Abigail Boyd. I reiterate that the Government will be bringing forward changes to lobbying rules, and I have already spelt out some of those. I make the point that for all the carry-on from the Leader of the Opposition—

The Hon. Wes Fang: Point of order: The Minister's time has expired.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: —the report dropped in June 2021. The former Government never acted upon it, but this Government will.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): Order! The time for debate has expired.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I seek leave for a six-minute extension of the debate.

Leave granted.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I had concluded my remarks.

The Hon. WES FANG (15:13): I make a brief contribution to debate on the motion. I note the amendment of the Government seeking to broaden the terms of the call for papers. This Government has sought a couple of times to expand the terms of calls for papers. It did so when it sought to sully the name of a good public servant who happened to be a member of the National Party. We had an inquiry in relation to that. And what happened? Nothing. Absolutely nothing was found in relation to that person. The Government was trying to destroy somebody simply because they were a member of the National Party. The Government is using the same tactics again. It is trying to obfuscate its responsibility because the Special Minister of State had not done his job in bringing the legislation to the Parliament as he said he would do. Former Premier Morris Iemma had breakfast with the current Premier, with Cherie Burton, no less, in attendance—the same person who happens to type into a hard-copy spreadsheet. I do not know if Cherie Burton was there to take notes in her hard-copy spreadsheet—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: There is a pretty wide latitude in debates about calls for papers, but if the Hon. Wes Fang wants to go after a member of the Premier's staff, he should do so by way of substantive motion.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): The Deputy Opposition Whip will return to the leave of the motion.

The Hon. WES FANG: Cherie Burton deliberately misled the inquiry into the Local Small Commitments Allocation grants, and that will be exposed again when she is brought before the committee.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: It is the same point of order. The member is out of order.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): I uphold the point of order. I remind the Deputy Opposition Whip that he is on two calls to order. He is not to stray too far from the motion.

The Hon. WES FANG: I do not seek to stray too much. I just seek to point to the fact that the Premier of this State and Cherie Burton, who we know is very questionable in relation to some of the evidence that has been given to another inquiry—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): The Hon. Wes Fang will resume his seat. I reminded him that he is on two calls to order.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (15:15): I move:

That the question be amended by inserting at the end of paragraph (a):

- (lxxxv) Celestino;
- (lxxxvi) Steggles;
- (lxxxvii) Sydney Science Park;
- (lxxxviii) John Camilleri.

I hope this is an amendment that the Government will accept, given that Michael Photios is being added. If we are going to make the motion comprehensive, we should do it properly. Regarding the old defined benefit superannuation scheme mentioned by the Hon. Cameron Murphy, one only needs to ask the question: Who are the three best-known lobbyists in New South Wales? They are Graham Richardson, Michael Photios and Morris Iemma, and they are all on the old defined benefit scheme. My advice to the honourable member is that if he is ever at the racetrack—if he can get in and stay there—and there is a horse running called Post-Politics Greed, he should get on it, because those blokes are banking the old defined benefit super and the money they take as lobbyists. It has nothing to do with a super scheme; you just back greed.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (15:17): In reply: To disclose or not to disclose—that is the Government's Iemma dilemma, and it certainly has not been resolved. In the latest in the sorry saga of questions that arise when "Labor", "planning" and "mates" are in the same sentence, the Government has had to move amendments to try to muddy the waters and to say, "Look over here. There's nothing to see. We've been in government for just 2½ years and we're going to compare our record with 12 years of a Coalition Government." It is quite extraordinary. The Hon. Chris Rath spoke about hypocrisy. I remind the House of a budget estimates interaction with the Hon. John Graham and the former Premier. The Hon. John Graham asked:

... given your comments about corruption, and given the concerns raised by my colleague, do you have concerns about links between ... Coronation Property and the Alameddine crime gang?

He also asked:

Are you aware that a photo of a Coronation Property individual was placed at estimates before police and the New South Wales Crime Commission? It included figures known to authorities and they have both indicated they will be examining these matters further.

The Government cannot claim to be ignorant of the links between crime and developers in the list of Mr Iemma's clients. Last year in budget estimates, I asked Minister Scully if he received briefings from his department about the entire list of clients that Mr Iemma had, including significant developers. Minister Scully said he had not received such a briefing from the department. Then I had to ask how he could possibly know, when he was speaking to Mr Iemma, what matters related to his portfolio or not, because Mr Iemma might be eliciting particular information from Minister Scully that Minister Scully has no idea is valuable to Mr Iemma and his property developer clients. That is part of the heart of this.

The Minister, and potentially other Ministers, and certainly the Premier, have decided to use their own discretion to determine what is appropriate or not. That has not resulted in any useful reflection of the truth of the matter. We have to find this out through requests under the Government Information (Public Access) Act, through excellent journalism and through the budget estimates process. Now we have to find out more through the Standing Order 52 process. We need that further information. We need that further detail. We are very pleased to have the crossbench's support on this. They understand how valuable this information is when they are not receiving it themselves from the Government. I commend the motion to the House.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): This motion has certainly energised members. By my count, we have five amendments from five different members.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: The intent of the amendment I moved is identical to that of the amendment which was more eloquently put by Ms Abigail Boyd. In those circumstances, I seek leave to withdraw my amendment.

Leave granted.

Amendment withdrawn.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): The Hon. Jacqui Munro has moved a motion, to which Ms Sue Higginson has moved an amendment to add additional lobbyists to the list; the Hon. Penny Sharpe has moved an amendment to add additional lobbyists to the list and to extend the time frame of the order, to which Ms Abigail Boyd has moved a further amendment to paragraph (1) to separate the dates for return of documents; and the Hon. Mark Latham has moved an amendment to add additional lobbyists to the list. The Hon. Damien Tudehope moved an amendment to the Hon. Penny Sharpe's amendment and withdrew the amendment by leave.

The question is that the amendment of Ms Abigail Boyd to paragraph (1) of the amendment of the Hon. Penny Sharpe be agreed to.

Amendment of Ms Abigail Boyd to paragraph (1) of the amendment of the Hon. Penny Sharpe agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): The question now is that paragraph (1) of the amendment of the Hon. Penny Sharpe as amended by Ms Abigail Boyd be agreed to.

Paragraph (1) of the amendment of the Hon. Penny Sharpe as amended by Ms Abigail Boyd agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): The question now is that paragraph (2) of the amendment of the Hon. Penny Sharpe be agreed to.

Paragraph (2) of the amendment of the Hon. Penny Sharpe agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): The question now is that the amendment of Ms Sue Higginson be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): The question now is that paragraph (3) of the amendment of the Hon. Penny Sharpe be agreed to.

Paragraph (3) of the amendment of the Hon. Penny Sharpe agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Taylor Martin): The question now is that the amendment of the Hon. Mark Latham be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.

STEPHEN LAMBLEY

Production of Documents: Further Order

The Hon. EMMA HURST (15:25): I move:

(1) That this House notes that:

- (a) on Wednesday 25 June 2025, this House ordered the production of documents relating to Stephen Lambley in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research and Minister for the Central Coast, Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission or Greyhound Racing New South Wales;
- (b) in response to the order of the House:
 - (i) on Monday 14 July 2025, a return was received from Greyhound Racing New South Wales stating that "it does not hold any documents within its possession, custody or control that fall within the scope of the order";

- (ii) on Wednesday 16 July 2025, a return was received from The Cabinet Office stating that "any documents currently under the possession of the Minister's Office are covered under standing order 55" (SO55) and accordingly "any such documents cannot be provided to the House"; and
 - (iii) on Thursday 17 July 2025, a return was received from Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, stating that certain documents concern the administration of justice and "they should properly be sought by a resolution passed under Standing Order 55".
- (c) the response from Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission further stated that:
 - (i) certain documents not returned "directly relate to the ongoing investigation, and possible disciplinary action regarding Stephen Lambley that may follow, as well as possible prosecution";
 - (ii) advice provided by the Solicitor-General and Ms Anna Mitchelmore SC to the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet on 6 May 2014, asserted that "documents have reference to the administration of justice if they contain material touching on or concerning court proceedings or a police investigation leading to the administration of justice."; and
 - (iii) as the "requested documents relate to the "administration of justice"", they are "not required" to be produced to a resolution passed under standing order 52.
- (d) the Government has previously relied on a similar interpretation of the administration of justice in relation to orders for papers made under standing order 52, including, for example, in response to the order for papers regarding the arrest, charging and detention of Mr Luke Moore on 25 February 2021.
- (2) That this House reiterates the view expressed in the resolution of the House of Wednesday 11 May 2022 relating to the operation of standing order 55, previously standing order 53, and documents concerning the administration of justice, that:
 - (a) rejects the broad interpretation of the administration of justice preferred in the Crown Solicitor's advice of 6 May 2014;
 - (b) notes that, as ruled by President Ajaka on 24 March 2020, the distinction between the standing orders is that standing order 55 applies to matters that fall within the purview of the Crown and the courts whereas standing order 52 applies to matters that fall within the purview of the Executive Government, and that, as held in *The Queen v Rogerson* [1992] 174 CLR 268, police investigations are not part of the course of justice as the police do not administer justice;
 - (c) notes that the documents ordered do not fall into the categories previously recognised as within the scope of "administration of justice" for the purpose of standing order 55 which, as noted by former President Ajaka on 15 September 2020, "include documents that make reference to actual court proceedings; touch on or concern actual court proceedings; concern or relate to the administration of a sentence on conviction and the orders made; concern conditions of custody that could be seen as giving effect to or being closely connected with a court-imposed sentence; and documents relating to legal action";
 - (d) notes that previous rulings on the scope of standing order 52 have tended to take a broader view of the standing order and power of this House; and
 - (e) asserts that the documents ordered to be produced on Wednesday 25 June 2025 are not sufficiently concerned with the administration of justice to fall within the scope of standing order 55 and were therefore validly ordered under standing order 52.
- (3) That this House notes that the interpretation of Legislative Council standing orders is a matter solely for the Legislative Council and that, by failing to produce the documents, both the Government and Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission have not complied with a valid order of the House.
- (4) That, under standing order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 14 days of the date of passing of this resolution all documents, excluding any documents previously returned under an order of the House, in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research and Minister for the Central Coast or Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission relating to all complaints, investigations, inquiries, inspections or disciplinary action regarding Stephen Lambley, and any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

Members will recall that on 25 June this House ordered the production of documents relating to Stephen Lambley, an individual who had recently been subject to an interim disqualification order by the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission [GWIC] for animal welfare breaches. Despite being ordered to produce documents by this House, both GWIC and the Minister's office have refused to produce any relevant documents relating to the interim disqualification, claiming that they relate to the administration of justice and therefore fall within the scope of Standing Order 55, and are not required to be produced under Standing Order 52, or SO 52.

I have sought advice from the Clerk on this matter. In short, it appears GWIC and the Minister are relying on an overly broad and inaccurate interpretation of Standing Order 55, or SO 55—one that the Legislative Council has consistently disagreed with and rejected. The Clerk's advice and position on this is outlined in paragraph (2) of my motion. It is their view that the documents sought in this call for papers do not fall within the scope of SO 55, and therefore were validly ordered under SO 52 and should have been produced. GWIC's claim and the Government's claim that the documents may touch on court documents are not relevant in these circumstances. I want to be clear that, as far as I am aware, there are no current civil or criminal proceedings against Mr Lambley,

nor is there any police investigation. This is consistent with advice that I have received from the New South Wales Government.

As such, it is very difficult to understand how, on any interpretation, documents in the possession of GWIC or the Minister's office could fall within SO 55, even on their very broad interpretation of the administration of justice. The allegations against Mr Lambley are some of the most serious animal welfare breaches imaginable in the greyhound racing industry—think back to the live baiting scandals in 2016. I believe there are very good reasons why the House should insist on the production of these documents, particularly in the context of broader concerns about systemic treatment of animals in this industry, which led to the Drake inquiry. Beyond the greyhound racing industry, though, the non-production of documents is a serious matter that goes to the heart of the powers of this House.

I know many other members share my frustration that, despite promises of transparency and openness from the Minns Labor Government, it seems to be increasingly difficult to get it to produce documents and comply with orders of this House. I and other members are having to return to the House over and over, with further orders such as this, just to get basic documents out of the Government. I urge all honourable members to join me in insisting on the powers of this House to produce documents under SO 52 and to reject the overly broad definition of SO 55 which is being used to prevent members from obtaining legitimate, important documents to do our work. I urge all members to support the motion.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (15:28): I speak for the Government on the motion and will place some matters on the record on behalf of the Minister responsible. I understand that the Hon. Emma Hurst does not agree with the Government's position on this matter, which I set out as follows. As was outlined previously in this place on 25 June 2025, the matter referred to in the proposed order for papers relates to the disqualification and an investigation by the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission of allegations of serious animal welfare breaches by a greyhound racing participant. The Government remains concerned that this order may prejudice the fair and proper testing and prosecution of those allegations. That is why the Minister's office has offered the Hon. Emma Hurst a briefing from the commission on this matter. It is also why the Government's instructions are to oppose the motion.

On 16 July 2025 the Cabinet Office provided to the House a letter from the office of the Minister for Gaming and Racing relating an order for papers about Stephen Lambley, which was passed by the Legislative Council on 25 June 2025. That letter, as the House has heard, advised that any documents falling within the scope of the order and in the possession of the Minister's office fall within the ambit of Standing Order 55, rather than Standing Order 52. Returns were also received from the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission and Greyhound Racing NSW. As independent agencies, they provide their returns directly to the Legislative Council, rather than via the Cabinet Office.

Standing Order 55 documents that fall within the purview of the Crown and courts include, as outlined in Standing Order 55, documents concerning "the administration of justice". Those documents do not fall within the purview of the Executive Government and cannot be required to be produced under Standing Order 52. Rather, their production may be requested under Standing Order 55. As noted in the motion, the Crown Solicitor and Anna Mitchelmore, then of counsel, provided advice on the scope of Standing Order 55 in a 2014 advice. I also refer members to the Crown Solicitor's advice dated 19 January 2021 regarding this issue, which was tabled in response to an order for papers naming the NSW Police Force.

The advice considers the operation of what was at the time Standing Order 53, now Standing Order 55. It considers the standing orders and previous case law and provides some helpful and clear guidance as to whether a document concerns the administration of justice. Paragraph 11 of the advice notes the following three principles on the issue. Firstly, the advice notes that the historical and constitutional basis for the distinction between the operation of former Standing Order 53—now Standing Order 55—and Standing Order 52 lies in the distinction between the Crown as sovereign and the Executive Government, as well as the separation of judicial and legislative functions. That context should inform the interpretation of former Standing Order 53. I seek an extension of time.

Leave granted.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I thank the House for its indulgence. Secondly, the advice notes that documents will "concern the administration of justice" if they contain material touching on or concerning court proceedings. There must be some connection with actual court proceedings, including prospective proceedings, which is important. That is the relatively settled aspect of former Standing Order 53. Thirdly, the advice notes that there is more doubt about the extent to which antecedent matters, such as police investigations, and subsequent matters, such as the administration of a sentence, generally might be caught in the scope of matters "concerning

the administration of justice". However, documents containing material touching on or concerning matters antecedent or subsequent to identifiable court proceedings, including conduct which interferes with or prevents the institution of identifiable court proceedings, may do so if they bear a sufficient relationship to such proceedings. The Government takes every measure to ensure that all documents required to be produced are produced, but I have set out the reasons for the Government's position.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (15:32): Anyone listening to the arguments put forward by the Hon. Emma Hurst and those put forward by the Government might think that there was room for interpretation about Standing Order 52 and Standing Order 55, and that they are somehow so broad and vague that it is impossible to know whether a document should be produced. In fact, the Government has the benefit of not only the 11-year-old advice that it keeps referring to, but also numerous reports from the independent legal arbiter, who has been appointed on many occasions to review claims of privilege following calls for papers by this House.

As I noted earlier in debate, my interpretation is that the Hon. Keith Mason, AC, KC, is getting pretty fed up with the Government's refusal to listen to his advice. It is pretty absurd that the Government continues to say, "Yes, but in 2014 something was written that we have decided to interpret this way." No matter what the Clerk writes or what the Hon. Keith Mason, AC, KC, writes in every single one of his privilege reports, the Government persists. The Greens support the motion moved by the Hon. Emma Hurst and thank her for continuing to uphold the powers of this House. I read out some of what the Hon. Keith Mason, AC, KC, said in a report dated 2 September 2025, entitled *Report on Disputed Claim of Privilege: SafeWork NSW Investigation of the University of Sydney*. He makes a number of scathing comments, including the following:

I have no understanding about the in-house education of those who are tasked with assisting their agencies, their superiors, and the Parliament in attending to calls for papers. And I have no idea who reads any of the reports of independent arbiters or the growing body of materials summarising them. So I content myself with requesting the House to request the Cabinet Office to bring this Report to the attention of general counsel and others tasked with preparing submissions in aid of privilege claims in the parliamentary (non-curial) context.

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

I would think too that it is an embarrassment for general counsel legal officers to see their usually competent handwork addressed in terms such as this. Is it too much to hope that someone might do something about this problem ...

That is the most scathing report of the Government's attitude towards Standing Order 52 that I have ever read. The Government seems quite allergic to transparency and accountability. In that report, the Hon. Keith Mason, AC, KC, goes on about investigations by the Parliament. I seek an extension of time.

Leave granted.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: He says:

As I pointed out in my Report on *Local Community Grants* dated 27 November 2023:

'Investigations by the Parliament frequently occur in parallel with activities and investigations occurring in the other arms of Government, even the judicial arm. Numerous reports under Standing Order 52 have also emphasised that oversight of processes being conducted by the other arms is itself an aspect of accountability. ...'

In other words, it does not matter that the Government has information that it thinks might be useful for an investigation conducted within the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission; it is still within the rights of this House to see those documents. If the Government thinks the documents should not be returned publicly, it can make its claim of privilege, but it should not bring a bogus argument about Standing Order 55.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (15:36): On behalf of the Opposition, I indicate that we support the call for papers under Standing Order 52, as we always do in the interest of accountability and transparency. I thank Ms Abigail Boyd for her cracking speech, which very clearly pointed out what the independent legal arbiter has said for months. He is almost saying, "I'm grateful for the extra work you're giving me. Thank you very much for paying for all this independent legal advice, but please stop. I've had enough. I don't want this line of work anymore. I'm so sick of requests from the Legislative Council. The Executive Government never reads the tea leaves or any of the reports I've given the Legislative Council and the Executive Government for years. Please stop giving me these requests. I'm grateful that you've probably paid for a huge number of my expenses and all my holidays, but I just don't want this line of work anymore." The Opposition would prefer to rely on the advice from the independent arbiter than whatever bogus legal advice the Government seems to be relying on.

The Hon. EMMA HURST (15:38): In reply: I thank the Hon. John Graham, Ms Abigail Boyd and the Hon. Chris Rath for their contributions. The Government has the option to provide the documents under privilege, but there is no option for governments to simply claim that Standing Order 55 applies just to avoid complying with orders of this House. As stated, there is no police investigation or any civil or criminal proceedings. It is

inappropriate for the Government to use such excuses to refuse to comply with a call for papers that has already passed in this House. As I mentioned, we stand by the advice of the independent arbiter, but I also propose that the Government takes the advice of a very valuable and capable Clerk, who indicated to me in my meetings with him that Standing Order 52 is very clearly applicable.

We do not want to create a precedent where we allow the Government to claim that Standing Order 52 motions that are passed in this House actually fall under Standing Order 55, particularly when that is reliant on outdated advice. The Government is pulling out the same old excuses to avoid transparency and avoid complying with the orders of this House. It has become a very hostile government that continues to reject and refuse Standing Order 52 motions from across this House. I know I am not the only member of this place who is struggling to get the Government to agree to calls for papers. We sometimes had problems with the previous Government, and we probably complained then, but the situation has become infinitely worse now that we have a Labor Government.

I thank the members of the crossbench and the Opposition for standing united to protect our powers. When a government refuses to comply with a Standing Order 52 motion and tries to find excuses not to comply, it affects every one of us. The content of the call for papers does not matter. If the order has passed this House to allow us to do our work, whether we are on the crossbench or in the Opposition, we have the right to do that. We have been elected to do that. When a hostile government simply refuses to comply with the orders of this House, it damages the whole process. It damages the relationship with the Government and damages the trust in the Government, because questions arise as to why the documents are being hidden from us. As I said, the documents are not even being provided to us in a privileged form so we can at least have a look at them. Lastly, I echo the words of the Hon. Chris Rath in thanking Ms Abigail Boyd for her cracking speech.

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

The House divided.

Ayes21
Noes15
Majority.....6

AYES

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

NOES

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

PAIRS

Tudehope	Jackson
Ward	Mookhey

Motion agreed to.

Bills

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT (PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION) BILL 2025

First Reading

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

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

Statement of public interest tabled.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I move:

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

Motion agreed to.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I move:

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

Motion agreed to.

Documents

LOWER MID NORTH COAST HEALTH SERVICE PROJECT

Production of Documents: Order

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (15:49): I move:

That, under standing order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 21 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents created since 1 January 2023 in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast or the Ministry of Health relating to the Lower Mid North Coast Health Service Project:

- (a) all documents relating to the Lower Mid North Coast Health Service Project encompassing the Stage 2 Redevelopment of Manning Hospital and the Urgent Care Centre in Forster, including:
 - (i) clinical services plans or reviews;
 - (ii) consultation undertaken with clinicians;
 - (iii) Project Control Group minutes;
 - (iv) capital investment proposals;
 - (v) costings and budgets;
 - (vi) points of care profiles or projections;
 - (vii) value management studies; and
 - (viii) transport planning.
- (b) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

This is a straightforward call for papers relating to the Lower Mid North Coast Health Service project, which I am told is the official name for the work that is underway to redevelop the Manning Hospital and the Forster urgent care centre. I have moved this motion under Standing Order 52, or SO 52, on behalf of the member for Myall Lakes, Tanya Thompson, who does a wonderful job as the representative of her community. Health is a big issue in that part of the State because of its ageing population. Communities are very invested in these health services. For a number of months, the member for Myall Lakes has been diligently serving her community by trying to get information on where these projects are up to.

She wants to understand exactly how much has been allocated, what is happening with clinical service plans and reviews, what consultation is underway and, most importantly, what is happening around costings and budgets. These projects have history. Money was allocated under the previous Government, and some money was taken out by this Government during its first budget cycle. More money has now gone back in during this process. This is an opportunity for the local member and members of this House to understand where these projects are up to. We aim to get some factual, up-to-date information that can be shared with the community. That is all that this motion asks for, and I hope members support it.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (15:51): I lead for the Government in debate on this motion and thank the Hon. Sarah Mitchell for bringing it before the House. The Government supports the call for papers under Standing Order 52, or SO 52 but notes that 21 days is a short turnaround time. I am advised that Minister Park's office has had conversations with the member's office about some of the challenges it faces in searching for and returning papers. An agreement has been made to produce the papers in two tranches if necessary. The Government has instituted a system of proactively releasing papers. Unfortunately, the member did not proceed with a request for proactive release.

I reiterate to the House that this system is in place to ensure that information can be provided proactively by the Government to avoid unnecessary burdens on our health department, which does really important work. It is fair to say that there is a bit of history to this project. The member said that money had been taken out of previous budgets, but that is incorrect. When we were in opposition and the members opposite were in government, stage 2 of this project had completely ground to a halt and was bogged down. It is a shame that the Hon. Bronnie Taylor is not here to speak on this motion. She went up to Forster in the midst of an election campaign and announced \$20 million for a public hospital in Forster. There was no budget case, no plan—nothing.

I remember speaking to members of the community at the time who said, "What is this? We've got a hospital in Forster, albeit a private hospital, and we don't need another one. What we need is an urgent care service. That is ridiculous. We will be taking resources away from Taree." They were absolutely right. Members opposite announced whatever they wanted to with no business case at all. There was no planning, just an announcement to the community. We all know that \$20 million is not going to buy a new public hospital. That was the case at the time, and it is still the case now. When we came to government, we got stage 2 of the project back on track.

I acknowledge those in the local community who worked really hard for a very long time to get information out of the previous Government. The Hon. Courtney Houssos had to put through a freedom of information request, a request under the Government Information (Public Access) Act and eventually an SO 52 motion just to get a clinical services plan out of the members opposite when they were in government. I acknowledge Graham Robinson and Peter Liebmman from the Forster-Tuncurry Country Labor branch, MidCoast Council Mayor Claire Pontin, Digby Wilson and all of our rank-and-file members on the Mid North Coast who have now been asking for this service for over a decade. It is ridiculous that members opposite have come to this House with an SO 52 motion about this issue. [*Time expired.*]

Dr AMANDA COHN (15:54): I indicate that The Greens support this motion. I thank the Manning Great Lakes Community Health Action Group, which I have met with, for its tireless advocacy for health services in the region. Most of its members are volunteers who do extraordinary work on behalf of their community. I am sympathetic to the point made by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell about the challenges in getting information about capital projects and health infrastructure from NSW Health in particular. This sympathy comes from my own experiences trying to get information about the Albury hospital redevelopment out of this Government.

I have had to move three orders for the production of papers regarding the Albury hospital redevelopment. The Government has refused to release the business case that underpins the redevelopment and says that this is its normal practice. The redevelopment has completely lost its social licence. It is opposed by 13 local councils. The community is asking the Government to justify this project. If the project stacked up then the Government would release the business case, but it is not releasing it proactively nor under a call for papers. I am very sympathetic to the member who moved this motion to use the important powers of this House to seek transparency on a health infrastructure project.

It is unacceptable that health services are being built to suit a budget and not the health needs of the community. It is even worse when it is not done transparently or communicated appropriately to the community so that it can actually understand what is being built. I understand that there has been discussion around the time frame of 21 days. However, my previous calls for papers asked for a similar range of information about the Albury hospital redevelopment and were able to be completed within 21 days.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (15:56): In reply: I respond to comments made by the Hon. Emily Suvaal during her contribution to debate on this motion. I am a little bit confused. At one point, she said that when the former Government announced money for a hospital in Forster, the community said it did not need it. She then thanked the members of the community who had been tirelessly looking for public hospital services in the area. I am not quite sure which is which. When we were in government, a petition calling for a hospital in Forster gained 10,000 signatures within eight months. I would argue that the community up there actually does want a public hospital. Nevertheless, this motion is about getting access to important information.

It was remiss of me not to acknowledge Minister Park's office in my original contribution. I also apologise to the staff in his office, because I have either been in meetings or not in my office every time they have tried to see me today. They have managed to speak to some of my staff and colleagues. The Minister's office is very good at consultation, and other Ministers should follow his example. I appreciate the pressure that public servants are under. I have kept the time frame at 21 days because things have not come back within time frames in the past. Other departmental offices are maybe not setting the best example.

We will still have a week of sittings to take further action if there is not enough information delivered in the first tranche of documents, but I am sure that we will not need to. I am sure that this Minister and his office will provide as much as they can within 21 days. We are happy with that. We understand if more needs to come at a later date, and we will keep those lines of communication open. I do not think that 21 days is an unreasonable

amount of time to get certain documents from ministerial offices and agencies. The Government can probably produce a fair amount of the documents we are after in that time. I thank all members for their support of the motion, which is about transparency and information for the local community, and that is exactly what this House seeks to provide.

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

Motion agreed to.

VIRTUAL STOCK FENCING

Production of Documents: Order

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (15:58): I move:

That, under standing order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 21 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents created since 1 March 2023 in the possession, custody or control of the Premier, the Premier's Department, The Cabinet Office, the Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales and Minister for Western New South Wales or the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development relating to virtual fencing:

- (a) all documents relating to the legalisation of virtual fencing in New South Wales;
- (b) all documents relating to the Halter company;
- (c) all documents relating to Mr Brent Thomas; and
- (d) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

My motion under Standing Order 52, or SO 52, seeks information and papers left over from the budget estimates hearings with our very good Minister for Agriculture. Certain questions regarding the development of the virtual fencing policy inside the Premier's office and the Premier's Department were not answered at those estimates hearings. The reply that came back to me was "Go ask the Premier." We know in this place that there is not much point in that, because he does not answer any questions, so a motion under SO 52 is the next best process for eliciting important information.

The obvious concern is about why the Premier's very good friend Brent Thomas has had such a radical career shift. He went from working at Airbnb to TikTok in Australia for the Chinese to the comms campaign for the Australian Turf Club and the failed program to sell Rosehill Gardens Racecourse. Why then, seemingly before the announcement by the Minister on the 30 April of the legalisation plan for virtual fencing in New South Wales, would he have joined up with Halter? That is a New Zealand firm that has an agricultural product consisting of necklaces or halters that they put around cows' necks to zap them, in order to keep them within a certain perimeter—so-called virtual fencing. Why would Brent Thomas undertake that radical career change unless—and this would seem obvious—he had asked his very good friend if virtual fencing was likely to be legalised in New South Wales?

The documents need to be produced to see if there has been a form of political insider trading where the Premier's friend got a tip. There was not much point in joining Halter—which, apparently, on the back of the news of legalisation in New South Wales, is the fastest growing company in New Zealand—if the product was to be illegal in his home State. Brent Thomas is a former Federal Labor candidate and part of that southern Sydney group—I will not call them the mafia—around the Premier, including Steve McMahon, who was mentioned earlier, Jamie Clements and on the list goes. Brent Thomas is very important to the Premier, and one would have expected some form of communication to him to say, "You can go ahead. You won't be selling an illegal product. There's money to be made through Halter."

The Minister for Agriculture has performed her duties, but what has gone on behind the scenes with the Premier and one of his close associates? That is the purpose of this very straightforward motion under SO 52. It should be supported by the House in the name of transparency, completing information that was not available at budget estimates hearings and ensuring that there is no cronyism or insider trading with the Minns Government. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (16:01): The Government does not oppose the motion under Standing Order 52 in relation to the work that we are doing on legalising virtual fencing in New South Wales. There is nothing to hide here. I remind the House that the Government's decision has been considered by the Parliament in many forms. Prior to that decision, the member for Orange introduced a bill into the other place. That bill was simply to amend the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act to legalise virtual fencing. That bill was referred to a parliamentary inquiry for consideration. That inquiry resulted in recommendations to the Government

that we support changes to the law in relation to virtual fencing. The Government has considered that, and we are making such changes.

Farmers have been asking me to introduce virtual fencing for some time. I am trying to help farmers to modernise agriculture in New South Wales and embrace technology where it provides assistance for the growth of the sector. Back in April, I announced on behalf of the Government that I would be doing that work but would take some time to consider it and make sure proper safeguards were in place in relation to animal welfare, biosecurity, public safety and all of the things that people would expect. That work has been underway since I made that announcement in April. I asked the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development to engage in consultation work with the sector, stakeholders and interested parties, and that has occurred over a number of months. All of that documentation will be able to be provided as part of this call for papers.

The consultation also included factoring in consideration by the Federal Government of furthering the legalisation. We have been using the draft *Animal Welfare Guide for Virtual Fencing*, which is a national document agreed to by States and Territories, as part of the consultation. Other States are moving in the direction of allowing virtual fencing, for the same reasons that New South Wales and I, as the agriculture Minister, are allowing it to be used—to support farmers to embrace technology. Prior to the 2024 inquiry, the department that I am responsible for participated in discussions about virtual fencing, so there will be documents in relation to that. There is nothing to hide here. We are considering this change of policy and law. We are consulting broadly to make sure we get it right, and I still am looking to get it done by the end of the year.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (16:05): On behalf of The Greens, I indicate our support for the call for papers. It is interesting to hear the Minister's contribution. There is this notion about the predetermination of events, policies and laws, and I send a warning to the Government about how we should do business in this State. The lobbying of Ministers by big-business interests is particularly relevant this week. We have learnt that the Premier failed to disclose meetings that he had with the lobbyists of property developer giants.

There are just three virtual stock fencing companies in Australia, of which the Halter company is one. It is a big and fast-growing multinational company. I do not believe that it is a coincidence that the Government announced its support of virtual fencing just seven days after the Minister for Agriculture met with the Director of Strategic Relations at Halter, Brent Thomas, who was formerly involved in advocating for the sale of the Rosehill racecourse to developers, a pet project of Premier Chris Minns. I am sure that others hear a pattern, because we do. This is not an opportunity to argue the merits of virtual stock fencing, especially considering that the Government has pushed ahead with changes to the regulations. But we should interrogate the dealings of people who have significant influence over the most senior elected representative in New South Wales, the Premier.

In an answer from the Leader of the Government in May, the New South Wales ministerial code of conduct was referenced. The Independent Commission Against Corruption Regulation 2017 contains disclosure obligations for Ministers. But the truth is that ministerial diary disclosures are woefully outdated, incredibly difficult to access and, given the bare minimum of information contained in them, unfit for purpose. Considering the revelations that the Premier has exercised those obligations to his own standard, it is worth investigating the influence that has been exercised by a large company that stands to make squillions of dollars as part of, potentially, a sweetheart deal between the Premier, his big-business friends and favoured crossbench members in the other place. Something needs to be understood about the way this State operates, and it is time for some senior members of this Government to understand what the words "integrity in politics" really mean. There are notions of tip-offs, insider trading, influence and significant benefit, and that is not in the public interest in New South Wales.

The Hon. EMMA HURST (16:08): On behalf of the Animal Justice Party, I support the call for papers, which seeks documents concerning the decision by the New South Wales Government to move towards legalising the use of shock collars on animals in this State. The Animal Justice Party is very concerned about that decision. Let me be clear: We are not talking about fencing; we are talking about shock collars. They are collars that give animals electric shocks through their necks, outlawed by the Labor Government many years ago due to cruelty concerns and the pain and suffering that such vile devices cause to animals. Shock collars are an aversive control method. They cause physical and psychological harm. There is a very high risk of misuse, and the potential harms from malfunctions are extremely dangerous. There is no reason to change the law so that shock collars can be used on any animal. If we recognise that they are cruel to use on dogs, then we can recognise that they are equally cruel to use on cows.

There are serious questions about why the New South Wales Government would seek to change the law around this, which the Standing Order 52 call for papers seeks to explore. This kind of double standard—treating animals differently depending on how humans wish to use them—completely undermines the basic principles of preventing animal cruelty. It is particularly concerning that the Government interest in allowing cruelty might be

rooted in personal connections. This adds a very worrying layer to this issue and warrants close examination. Repealing criminal law should attract the highest level of transparency and conflict-free justification. We are yet to see how this space will be regulated and whether the Government leaves core details about the use of shock collars up to private companies. Leaving decisions about animal welfare in the hands of private commercial companies is unacceptable, even more so when those companies may or may not have personal connections to the Government.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (16:10): I support the motion because, as always, The Nationals are keen to see more transparency. But I am disappointed that a good policy is being muddled by this whiff of dodgy politics. Virtual collars are a good idea. They will add to productivity, particularly for dairy farmers and beef farmers, who can use this as a tool to improve animal welfare outcomes. Deputy President Roberts and I travelled to Tasmania to see virtual collars in action. We saw what an advantage they were to dairy farmers using them to manage their cattle.

It means that dairy farmers and workers do not have to get up in the dark and the cold in wet and rainy conditions to move cattle around because it can be done with these low-frequency collars. It would be a massive shame if there are any spiders on this. Good on the member for bringing the motion forward to look for spiders. But it would be a shame to have dodgy politics upset what is ultimately a good policy. The pace to get here has been quite slow since we first started talking about virtual collars under this Government. It is a change we need to make, but let us make sure nothing dodgy is going on behind the scenes. More and more there seems to be a whiff of those sorts of dealings coming from the Government.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bills

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL (NO 2) 2025

Returned

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

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

Messages

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly agreeing to the Legislative Council's amendments to the bill.

Motions

DIWALI FESTIVAL

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (16:13): I move:

- (1) That this House recognises Diwali, the festival of lights, as a significant celebration for Hindu, Sikh, Jain and some Buddhist communities across New South Wales, symbolising the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil.
- (2) That this House notes that communities statewide will mark this joyful occasion with vibrant colour, lights and gatherings.
- (3) That this House acknowledges that on 13 October 2025 the Premier, the Hon. Chris Minns, and the Minister for Multiculturalism, the Hon. Stephen Kamper, hosted a Diwali event, continuing this important tradition.
- (4) That this House recognises that Diwali highlights the vital contribution of our diverse communities and promotes harmony, hope and the strength of our multicultural society.

This month communities across New South Wales have come together to celebrate Diwali, the festival of lights. Diwali or Dipavali is a vibrant celebration of colour, culture and connection. Celebrated by our State's Hindu, Sikh, Jain and some Buddhist communities, it is a time to reaffirm the power of light over darkness and a time to come together to honour traditions and celebrate among loved ones. It has been a month of festivity, with events across the State, including on Monday as communities celebrated the festival of lights. Diyas have been lit, meals and treats have been shared, and gifts have been exchanged amid prayers and well wishes.

It is a time to embrace the spirit of Diwali, of hope and renewal, reminding us that light and colour brighten even our darkest of corners. Every year it is a joyous occasion celebrated by so many communities. It also reminds us of the immense contribution of these communities to our State and of New South Wales's vibrant multiculturalism, which we are all proud of and cherish. We thank all of these communities for sharing their

celebrations and traditions with us because the sharing of culture and festivities enriches and educates us in a spirit of unity and colour.

Last week the New South Wales Government hosted its annual Diwali event for 200 community leaders and bathed the sails of our iconic Sydney Opera House in gold to mark this important celebration. A tradition that dates back to 2011, this event brings everyone together to celebrate and share in the joy of Diwali. Attended by community and faith leaders, I was also pleased to see a large Parliament of New South Wales presence. Members from across our Houses and parties joined to share in the event's unity, celebration and hope, which goes far to illustrate that Diwali unites us all in a spirit of hope and message of goodwill. I thank members who attended and those behind the event, particularly at Multicultural NSW.

Diwali is a coming together of colour, light and communities. It has been a joyous month, and we thank all those who have organised Diwali events across New South Wales. We also thank the communities celebrating Diwali. By celebrating and honouring their traditions and culture, they share it with all of us, enriching our State, strengthening multiculturalism and ensuring that the spirit of Diwali will live on for generations to come. These communities contribute so much to our great State, and the Minns Government will always support them.

This motion signifies the importance of this special time and festival and acknowledges those communities who celebrate it. It would show that each of us in this House acknowledges the importance of Diwali and illustrate a formal recognition of this important time and festival. I urge members to support the motion and look forward to hearing the contributions from my parliamentary colleagues. These events are incredibly important, and it is important that we recognise and celebrate them in Parliament. They enrich our country and State but, probably more importantly, they change who we are as human beings. They have a subtle effect, showing us the true meaning of multiculturalism. Diwali is such a big part of the Indian community, who make up a large proportion of the Australian community.

As I have said on many occasions in this House, it is a massive comparative advantage for this country that we embrace different cultures and multiculturalism because it expands our perspective and makes us more complete human beings. For our own individual benefits as people who are trying to make sense of life, the more perspective you bring to what life is about, the better you will be at handling it and understanding the meaning of it all. In these different traditions we have people from Buddhist backgrounds and different religious beliefs sharing their faith rather than putting up the shutters and saying, "No, this is what we believe. You have to believe it too." Opening your mind to other ways of thinking and traditions is a healthy and vibrant thing. It is one of the reasons that we celebrate multiculturalism. I acknowledge the contribution of the Indian community and Diwali. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (16:18): On behalf of the Coalition, I support the motion. I thank the Hon. Mark Buttigieg and wish all of the Hindu community across New South Wales Shubh Diwali. Diwali is the festival of lights. Two years ago I was in India in the lead-up to Diwali, and it was amazing to see the amount of effort that goes into celebrating the festival of lights and the festivals that lead up to it. Those celebrations and traditions are transplanted into Australia as part of the vibrant multicultural community across New South Wales. Diwali is celebrated by those of the Hindu, Sikh, Jain and some Buddhist faiths. It is a time to reflect on the triumph of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance, values that resonate across all cultures and communities.

In New South Wales, Diwali has become one of the most cherished celebrations on our multicultural calendar. I note the comments of the Hon. Mark Buttigieg about the history of celebrating Diwali by lighting the sails of Opera House, which started in 2011 under the O'Farrell Government and then Minister Victor Dominello. That ensured it was an important part of our calendar, marking our State with joy, colour, light and togetherness. It is an occasion that brings together people of all backgrounds to share in the beauty of Indian cultures, to learn from one another and to celebrate the diversity that makes our State so unique. Over many years, I have had the privilege of joining local communities for Diwali celebrations across New South Wales. Whether in Parramatta or Pymble, Blacktown or Baulkham Hills, Castle Hill or Chatswood, the energy, warmth and hospitality of those events is always remarkable. It is a true reminder of the generosity of spirit within the multicultural communities across our State.

I acknowledge the outstanding contributions of the many community organisations that help bring these events to life. Groups like the Hindu Council of Australia; BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha; the Resourceful Australian Indian Network; the Indian Support Centre; the United Indian Associations Inc; the Council of Indian Australians; Sri Om Care; the Indian Advocacy Forum, which held an event in Parliament last week; the Sydney Community Group; and the Australia India Business Council all play a vital role in promoting culture, community service and inclusion, and in bringing the community together. Faith organisations, business leaders, local media and cultural groups also deserve thanks for preserving traditions and supporting communities, especially during important times like Diwali, when the community can come together to celebrate.

These celebrations enrich our public life, strengthen community ties and remind us of the power of faith, family and friendship. There are so many organisations supporting the community across the State and all of them do a fantastic job. I wish everyone celebrating Diwali—Hindus, Nepalis, Sikhs, Jains and all who join in the festivities—a joyful and memorable festival of lights. On behalf of the Coalition, I extend my warmest wishes to you and your family. May the festival of lights bring peace, prosperity and happiness to you and your loved ones. Shubh Deepawali. I commend the motion to the House.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (16:21): As The Greens spokesperson for multiculturalism, I speak in support of the motion recognising Diwali, the festival of lights. I extend warm wishes to everyone in New South Wales who celebrates this beautiful and deeply meaningful occasion. Diwali symbolises the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance and good over evil. Across New South Wales our streets, temples and community halls are looking incredible. They are illuminated with colour, song and dance as families come together to share food, light diyas and celebrate renewal and connection.

While the symbolism of light and candles is similar, Sikhs mark the beginning of Diwali as the day of Bandi Chhor Divas, the day of liberation, remembering when Guru Hargobind, the sixth guru in the faith, was released from prison in 1619. At the Gurdwara Sahib—the Sikh temple in Glenwood, in Sydney's north-west, which I have had the pleasure of visiting on multiple occasions—community members have extended the hours of their usual service to the community, offering free meals. What a beautiful service they provide.

As the Greens spokesperson for multiculturalism, I put on the record that members should be careful when acknowledging events like Diwali to also acknowledge minorities within communities and their struggles for justice, equality and recognition. Diwali festivals include Ravan Dahan, or the burning of a Ravana effigy. For Tamils and caste-oppressed Hindus, Ravana is a revered ancestor and deity, making the effigy burning, I am told, a public act of religious vilification similar to the burning of the Koran for Muslims. It is controversial. That is important to recognise and acknowledge in this place, and it is also important to meet with and listen to all groups within multicultural communities, including those within the Indian diaspora in New South Wales. Having put that on the record, on behalf of The Greens, I extend heartfelt Diwali greetings. Shubh Deepawali to all who are celebrating Diwali in New South Wales this week.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (16:24): I associate myself with the excellent motion brought by the Hon. Mark Buttigieg and extend my good wishes and congratulations to all those in the community who are celebrating Diwali. It is five days of celebration, and Monday 20 October was the main day of celebrations. It is important for the community of New South Wales to acknowledge the many multicultural days and events that we have. It ensures that multiculturalism works and thrives, and it brings our communities together.

Diwali is such an important event, for the reasons outlined by the Parliamentary Secretary, but I want to acknowledge the extent of it. In the 2021 census in New South Wales, 273,800 people said that their religion was Hinduism, compared with 181,400 in the 2016 census. That is a rise of 51 per cent, and it represents 3.4 per cent of the total New South Wales population. Of those people, 121,230, or 44 per cent, were born in India; 55,020, or 20 per cent, in Nepal; 54,165, or 20 per cent, in Australia; and 17,280, or 6 per cent, in Fiji. It is a large and growing part of the Australian community, which is welcome.

Celebrating events like Diwali not only is important for local multicultural communities but, as the Parliamentary Secretary outlined, it also changes Australia and makes it a better place. It makes us a country with, as the Parliamentary Secretary put it, a comparative advantage because we understand cultures that we trade with and deal with overseas. It also makes us better people, and that is why we should all endeavour to understand other cultures within our own and learn about different celebrations. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (16:27): In reply: I acknowledge all of the contributions to that very good and gratifying debate. The Hon. Scott Farlow used a very appropriate word, "transplant", when he spoke about cultures coming here. The concept of transplanting means that something becomes different due to new cultures, and that has been reiterated on several occasions during the debate. That is the essence of modern-day multiculturalism.

I have reminded the House on previous occasions of just how far this country has come in a relatively short period of time. Let us consider the evolution from what was an inward-looking White Australia policy to one of assimilation. In other words, they said, "We'll have you here for the economic labour that we need, but you will conform to the monoculture," which was predominantly white Anglo-Saxon and northern European. That has changed to "Hang on a minute. Maybe if we embrace different cultures, that will rub off on us and we'll become a better nation." That is where we are now.

Given recent events, I inject into my reply the fact that these things are not a given, and they are not linear. They do not necessarily evolve in a natural way. I commend the Opposition because these things can fall away

pretty quickly if there is not a bipartisan approach. I am not criticising the people who wanted to participate for valid reasons in the march that happened a few weeks ago. But unless there is a bipartisan approach to nip in the bud racist overtones when platforms like housing shortages and economic insecurity are used as arguments against immigration and multiculturalism, those things that we cherish and that make us strong can drop away very quickly.

Again, it is important that we celebrate these sorts of things, particularly such a big event—and the Hon. Cameron Murphy, the Deputy Whip, outlined just how big this community is. Unless we celebrate them and nurture them, they can drop away pretty quickly. I also acknowledge the contribution made by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann. She noted that it is important that we are sensitive to the nuances within those subcommunities and surrounding some of those deities. There are different politics within those communities. Having said all that, it is a great thing. It is a good celebration. We commend the community for bringing these cultural enrichment celebrations to us. We value it and we thank everyone for their contributions. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bills

ANZAC MEMORIAL BILL 2025

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (ELECTIONS) BILL 2025

First Reading

Bills received from the Legislative Assembly.

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

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I move:

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

Motion agreed to.

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

Statements of public interest tabled.

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

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 15 October 2025.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (16:31): The Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025—which represents a dodgy deal between the Shooters and the Minns Government—seeks to radically change the way hunting is regulated in New South Wales. It would abolish the current Game and Pest Management Advisory Board and replace it with a Conservation Hunting Authority dominated by hunting interests, create an unprecedented statutory "right to hunt" in New South Wales law, allow hunting to expand across more Crown land and other public lands, and—until the Premier backed down under public pressure—open the door to the use of silencers and other prohibited weapons by so-called "conservation hunters". He has potentially done the same with "right to hunt" after that pressure. The bill dresses these changes up as "conservation hunting", claiming that hunters play an essential role in managing feral animals and protecting biodiversity.

After months of public scrutiny, a parliamentary inquiry and evidence from leading scientists, animal welfare experts and community safety organisations, that claim has been exposed for what it is: hollow, misleading and dangerous. The inquiry received more than 2,600 submissions. The vast majority opposed the bill. Those submissions came from animal welfare and environmental science evidence-based organisations, including the Invasive Species Council, the Biodiversity Council, Bushwalking NSW, the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, RSPCA NSW, Outdoors NSW and ACT, the Public Health Association of Australia, Lucy's Project and domestic violence advocates, among many others. These are not fringe voices. These are experts, community leaders and safety advocates telling us loudly and clearly that this bill will make New South Wales less safe—for people, for animals and for the environment.

The Greens have always opposed attempts to import American-style gun culture into Australia. Surely the vast majority of members in this place should oppose that, as indeed the vast majority of people in this State. The proposed "right to hunt" was the centrepiece of this bill, and it remains its most sinister element. As Gun Control Australia, the Australian Gun Safety Alliance and the Alannah and Madeline Foundation each made clear, the National Firearms Agreement—born from the tragedy of Port Arthur—rests on one simple principle: that gun ownership is a privilege, a responsibility, not a right, and that public safety must always come first. Creating a legal right to hunt would have torn a hole through that agreement. It would have given statutory recognition to gun use, fundamentally undermining Australia's gun safety framework.

That is why experts said it risked "bringing American-style gun politics into our communities", as my Greens colleague the Ms Sue Higginson rightly described in her dissenting statement to the inquiry report. Thanks to huge public pressure—tens of thousands of people signing petitions and writing to members of Parliament, along with very negative media—the Premier eventually backed down on some of it. He announced that Labor would not support the "right to hunt" clause, nor the provisions allowing access to prohibited weapons. That was the right decision, but it came far too late, as the only thing this Premier can respond to is negative media headlines. Let's not forget this bill was only referred to an inquiry after the Premier's own Government initially supported it and signalled that it was going to support it.

Remarkably, the Government even allocated \$7.9 million in the 2025–26 budget to establish the proposed Conservation Hunting Authority before the bill had even passed Parliament—before this authority has even been established. As the Department of Primary Industries told the inquiry, it could not recall another instance where taxpayer money was set aside for a private member's bill. That alone should set off alarm bells. The new authority proposed under this bill is nothing less than a taxpayer-funded propaganda arm for the gun lobby. Under the bill, it would be controlled by representatives of the hunting sector and charged with "promoting the benefits of hunting". As the Alannah and Madeline Foundation put it, it would be "a legislated marketing agency to promote hunting, paid for by taxpayers". The Invasive Species Council described it as "a taxpayer-funded propaganda unit for the shooting lobby".

Even the Natural Resources Commission—which sits in the Premier's portfolio—warned that such a body, without clear scientific independence, would blur the line between evidence and advocacy. Yet the Government set aside millions for it anyway. The inquiry revealed that none of that \$7.9 million would go towards actual pest control or invasive species management. Instead, \$4 million would fund the authority itself, and another \$3.9 million would fund compliance and enforcement. Not one cent was earmarked for reducing feral animal populations or supporting landholders doing the real work on the ground. This is at a time when Government agencies are having to cut staff. I saw the remarkable similarity between \$7.9 million for a Conservation Hunting Authority and \$7.5 million in savings that the Art Gallery of NSW, for example, has to find.

They have had to cut 45 staff to make a saving of \$7.5 million. Meanwhile, in this same budget, the Government has allocated \$7.9 million to a Conservation Hunting Authority with exactly zero staff at this point in time, and it is not even established. It is pretty clear whose side Chris Minns is on when it comes to guns or galleries. The bill's supporters claim that expanding recreational hunting will help control feral animals and protect native species, but the evidence says otherwise. The Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, the Invasive Species Council, the Natural Resources Commission [NRC] and RSPCA Australia all told the inquiry the same thing: Recreational hunting is not an effective method of pest control. Dr Tony Buckmaster from the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions said bluntly:

Recreational hunting alone can't reduce feral animal populations. As a primary control tool, it is completely ineffectual.

Jack Gough from the Invasive Species Council provided damning figures. In 2023-24, hunters operating across 1.8 million hectares of State forests—land where aerial culling and baiting are banned—killed around 3,000 deer and 5,000 pigs. By comparison, professional and coordinated government programs removed 131,000 feral pigs and deer in a single year through aerial control. That is the scale of the difference. Aerial baiting and coordinated, science-based pest control does work. Unregulated, ad hoc recreational shooting does not.

The NRC said that hunting can play only a minor role—what it called mop-up operations—within a properly coordinated biosecurity strategy. Without planning, monitoring, measurable targets, significant investment and coordination, this really is little more than a hobby. We know that this is what the bill is all about. The bill pretends that hunting is conservation. It is not. This is a political deal for votes in this place—let's be honest about that—dressed up as pest control. The RSPCA pointed out that there are no independent animal welfare standards governing hunting in New South Wales and enforcement is patchy at best. As RSPCA NSW general counsel Kathryn Jurd told the inquiry after 18 years of prosecuting cruelty offences, it is unlikely that participants would report themselves to the regulator.

The reality is that recreational hunting lacks oversight, lacks training standards and too often results in avoidable suffering. The proposal to open more Crown land to hunting also raises really serious public safety risks. For over two decades, hunting has been allowed in parts of State forests, but the expansion envisaged by this bill—into additional Crown lands used by families, bushwalkers, schools and tourists—goes much further. The Alannah and Madeline Foundation told the inquiry that hunting cannot safely coexist with other public land uses. As the foundation's senior policy adviser, Stephen Bendle, said, "It's not in the public interest to have children camping or bushwalking on land where people with guns may be shooting nearby. Governments have a duty to ensure public safety, and this bill fails that test."

Outdoors NSW, which represents outdoor education and adventure operators guiding over two million people a year in public spaces, warned that this bill could devastate the sector. CEO Lori Modde said many schools would be forced to cancel outdoor excursions due to insurance and risk concerns. She told the inquiry that even just the public awareness of the bill has increased the number of calls from operators who are concerned about whether it will interrupt access in certain areas, and that schools will be the first ones to pull out of State forests.

The Biodiversity Council and Bushwalking NSW also raised alarm that expanding shooting into shared spaces could drive away other recreational users entirely. Beyond accidents, the bill also heightens broader community safety risks. Lucy's Project, supported by domestic violence organisations across New South Wales, presented evidence from Professor Sarah Wendt showing a clear link between gun ownership for hunting and increased risks of firearm-related domestic violence. They warned that the bill would "increase the tendency of perpetrators to use guns to intimidate victim-survivors" and raise the risk of lethal outcomes. The Australasian Injury Prevention Network echoed these concerns, noting that when firearms are present, the risk of suicide or domestic homicide rises dramatically.

The Greens share the view of those organisations that any legislation that increases access to firearms, normalises gun culture, or expands shooting in the community makes us less safe, not more. Frankly, I cannot believe that I am even having to say that. The inquiry itself exposed not only the dangers of the bill, but also the Government's poor handling of the process. One of the most striking aspects of the inquiry was just how little evidence there is to support the claim that recreational hunting reduces feral animal populations. I felt for the Minister for Agriculture, in her second reading speech to the bill, having to support the very notion that so-called recreational hunting would make a skerrick of difference. Indeed, it would actually make the problem worse.

The NRC said plainly that there is "a dearth of knowledge" about long-term environmental outcomes from hunting. The Centre for Invasive Species Solutions identified five successful invasive species programs across Australia—and not one relied on recreational hunting. Instead, again the evidence shows that coordinated, professional programs deliver measurable results. In contrast, ad hoc recreational hunting can actually make the problem worse by dispersing animals, disrupting coordinated control efforts, and diverting funding away from programs that work. We all know the old story about how all the deer got into State forests and national parks in the first place and are now running onto our roads and highways. In the words of the Invasive Species Council, "This bill doubles down on past failures in pest management across the State."

Many witnesses at the inquiry also criticised the cynical use of the word "conservation" in this bill's title. RSPCA Australia's chief science officer, Dr Suzie Fowler, said it was simply "putting a different name on something to make it more palatable to the public". The Biodiversity Council warned that such language risks undermining public trust in genuine conservation science and confusing the public about what works for environmental management. The fact that the mover of the bill has put "conservation" hunting into the title, as though the mover of the bill from the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party actually cares about conservation, is really a bit too much to stomach.

The Greens stand firmly against this bill. We oppose the creation of any statutory right to hunt. We oppose the establishment of a taxpayer-funded conservation hunting authority. We oppose the expansion of recreational hunting across public and Crown land and any erosion of New South Wales' world-leading gun safety laws. We support evidence-based, humane and coordinated invasive species management—led by scientists, not shooters. We support the National Parks and Wildlife Service's Supplementary Pest Control Program, with coordinated, science-driven programs. But we will not support a bill that uses "conservation" as a fig leaf for the gun lobby.

Finally, I know my colleague Ms Sue Higginson has also done this, but I acknowledge the extraordinary community campaign that helped to expose and derail this bill. It was pretty clear from the start, when we saw the bill, how shocking it was and it was pretty clear from the start where it had come from and why it was being introduced. We heard Government members in this House having to justify and support the bill, and that was really quite depressing—and almost embarrassing that that was what they were being asked to do. The community came out in force. Members of the public were phoning talkback radio because they were absolutely appalled at this attempt to expand hunting in New South Wales.

Because of that, Chris Minns, the Premier—it is all about what he put forward, what he has done and what he wants—was ultimately forced to retreat from his initial support for a bill by the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party to legislate a right to hunt in New South Wales. Let's be very clear what the Premier, Chris Minns, had agreed to with the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party to get his workers compensation legislation passed and probably to support a hell of a lot of other deals over the next 12 to 14 months of this Government. The right to hunt clause was scrapped. I thank everybody who campaigned on that. Finally, I acknowledge the excellent work of my colleague Ms Sue Higginson and her team. I give a shout-out to Daniel Reid, whose tireless work on this bill and this campaign was instrumental in revealing the truth about the bill and getting so many people to kick up a stink about it.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (16:49): I make a contribution to debate on the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025 and state my support for the bill. I recognise that there are strong views held by the various parties represented in this Chamber, as is indicated by the volume of amendments I have become aware of. I will not pass comment on the majority of those amendments because I will chair the Committee stage and it is most important that I remain neutral. In my support of this bill, I note that its final form may alter, but my support will stand because it is the intent of the bill that has my backing.

It seems clear to me that all sides of this debate agree that feral pest introduced species are wreaking havoc on our native wildlife, vegetation and farmlands. In February this year the Australian Bureau of Statistics published data related to feral mammal species in Australia and found that New South Wales has the highest number of feral mammal species in the nation, with animal pests expected to cause damage in excess of \$489 million a year by 2026. That is just next year. The Australian Bureau of Statistics report led the NSW Farmers conservation and resource committee to conclude:

It's little wonder we're the feral capital of Australia – we've got hordes of feral pigs and packs of wild dogs as well as feral deer, foxes, cats, rabbits and mice to boot ...

This is just the start of a long list of feral species that farmers are battling to control as these pests wreak havoc and harm production across the key agricultural regions of our state, trashing crops and pastures and even killing livestock—

not to mention the amount of disease that those feral pests spread.

Two weekends ago I was home for a couple of days, and I had a chat with my good neighbour Brian McClelland. Brian is a builder and concreter who lives right across the road from me. If anyone needs a builder or concreter in Goulburn, look him up. He is a lovely bloke and a well-respected member of the community. Brian also happens to hunt and shoot, and he is well aware of this bill. Brian said to me, "What's happening with that bill up there?" I said, "Mate, I'm going to support the concept of the bill in terms of helping to control feral pests." He said, "Good. I'm glad you are, Rod. Let me show you a few photos on my phone." He then showed me photos of some pigs he had recently shot out the back of Taralga, and they were bigger than about 10 members put together. He showed me where they had been rooting through crops and the damage they had caused.

One of the most intriguing and concerning things that Brian told me was that feral pigs can now be found within five kilometres of the township of Goulburn. While it is clear that recreational hunting is not the silver bullet to the problem of feral animals, it will supplement all existing and proposed pest control programs. At this point, any help in dealing with our pest problem is better than the status quo. In many places in our State, forests and farms are being overrun by feral animals.

I note the Premier has made it clear that the Government does not support this bill making changes to firearms or prohibited weapons legislation, and the Government has tabled amendments to remove the bill's proposed changes to the Weapons Prohibition Act. I also note that the bill does not propose any other changes to weapons and firearms laws in New South Wales. It does not relax laws on the possession or purchase of firearms, and I support that position. The vast majority of licensed firearm owners are good, decent, law-abiding members of our community. They enjoy their pursuits legitimately and, in doing so, inject money into many rural small businesses and towns and help control feral animals. But the sad reality is that a small percentage of whatever is added to the legal firearms market will make its way into the unregulated black market. That occurs either by theft or via unscrupulous dealers. Because of that, I have serious concerns regarding the bill's desire to lower the licensing regulations for obtaining a firearm suppressor.

While some here have already made arguments for the safety of other users of public land, I simply make the point of the increased danger to our law enforcement officers and the general public if a greater number of crooks are able to get their hands on suppressors and choose to use them for nefarious purposes. Think back to Sunday 5 October when Artemios Mintzas allegedly unleashed at least 50 bullets from a second-storey window on random members of the public in Croydon Park. Imagine how much greater that threat would have been if police and passers-by were unable to gauge the location of the alleged shooter because a suppressor was fitted. As I said, many amendments are proposed for this bill, but the ones that seek to remove the proposed relaxing of

laws around obtaining a suppressor have my support. I close by returning to my original point: I will support this bill in its final form because I support its intent. Adding recreational hunters to all current and future pest control programs can only assist the State in its desire and need to reduce the number of feral and pest animals.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (16:55): I lead for the Liberal Party in debate on the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025. The Liberal Party stands firmly against this legislation. This bill is not about conservation, and it is not about managing invasive species. It is a political deal that seeks to recast recreational hunting as an environmental policy. It is a dangerous and disingenuous piece of legislation that risks public safety, undermines confidence in our firearms framework and reverses the decades of progress made since the Port Arthur tragedy. There are claims that this bill recognises the role of hunting in managing feral animals. The bill in its current form, in truth, enshrines a statutory right to hunt, creates a taxpayer funded conservation hunting authority and opens Crown land to armed recreational activity without community consent or scientific oversight. None of that delivers measurable conservation benefit.

Let us be clear. Firearm ownership in Australia is not a right; it is a privilege granted under licence and subject to the overriding principle of public safety. That principle has guided our State since the introduction of the National Firearms Agreement in 1996. The bill seeks to dismantle that understanding by embedding rights-based language into New South Wales law, the very language our predecessors agreed must never again be included. But do not take my word for it. Let us go back in history and learn from the Game Council New South Wales, which was created in 2002 as a result of political horsetrading. The Shooters Party, holding the balance of power in the upper House, demanded it as a price for legislative support. Mr Robert Brown, a member of this House, was its former chair. The Game Council was given an extraordinary dual role both representing and regulating hunters, a clear and dangerous conflict of interest.

A decade later in 2013 the Government commissioned Steve Dunn, a respected former senior public servant, to conduct an independent review. His findings were damning: Public safety did not receive a high level of attention in planning documents, there was an inherent conflict of interest between representing hunters and regulating their activities, and allowing the Game Council to continue on its path was not an option. He found that, more than 10 years after its creation, the council still had no governance framework, no risk strategy, no internal compliance system and no published strategic plan. When that review was underway, senior executives of the Game Council were under police investigation for using a government vehicle to engage in unauthorised hunting, crossing into a national park and discharging firearms. One was later convicted of multiple gun and hunting offences. As a result, the Government suspended all amateur hunting in State forests, the Game Council was abolished and its regulatory powers were transferred back to the Department of Primary Industries. Oversight returned to the hands of government, not lobbyists.

So why, with full knowledge of that history, would this Government introduce a bill that restores a statutory authority dominated by hunting interests, establishes a hunting Minister and grants a right to hunt in law? Let us call it what it is: Game Council 2.0, a rebrand of a failed institution that Parliament had to dismantle to protect the public. Even the Minister for the Environment at the time of the 2013 scandal, Robyn Parker, insisted on tight controls for hunting in national parks: There was no hunting during school holidays, no hunting without full supervision, no hunting by children under 18, no use of bows or black-powder weapons, and parks were closed to visitors during hunts. Why? It is because public safety matters. Today this Government proposes opening Crown land to hunting with far weaker protections and without any comparable trial period or safeguards. That is not a lesson learnt; that is a lesson forgotten.

The inquiry received 615 submissions, and the weight of evidence is against this bill. Lucy's Project, Domestic Violence NSW, No to Violence, People with Disability Australia and Full Stop Australia warned that firearms in domestic and family violence contexts significantly increase the risk of harm and lethality to victim-survivors and that introducing a right to hunt may legitimise firearms access and embolden perpetrators. Full Stop Australia said that the bill risks putting firearms into the hands of those subject to family violence orders and that many women and children are killed or seriously harmed by intimate partners with gun access. Those are not abstract fears. In rural communities, access to firearms is already a risk factor for family violence. Normalising gun use under a right to hunt will not make families safer.

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation went further, warning that the bill "is the most regressive firearm legislation" proposed since 1996 and that it undermines the spirit of the National Firearms Agreement and ignores firearms safety. The RSPCA reminded the committee that the bill contains no requirement for humane practice, no monitoring and no measurable conservation outcomes. It stated plainly that the bill had nothing to do with evidence-based pest control. The Invasive Species Council, which actually supports effective feral animal control, stated that the legislation is a political project, not an environmental one, and that it provides no scientific rationale for hunting as a conservation tool. The Biodiversity Council warned that uncontrolled shooting may in fact worsen

ecosystem outcomes by dispersing pest populations and interfering with coordinated control programs. Gun Control Australia described it as a Trojan horse for expanding gun access and weakening community safeguards.

When domestic violence advocates, child safety foundations, conservation scientists, animal welfare organisations and governance experts are all united in opposition, Parliament should listen. We are not alone in opposing this bill. Conservation experts across New South Wales have condemned it in the strongest terms. The National Parks Association of NSW, a highly respected voice for biodiversity and public land protection, has sounded the alarm. Its CEO, Gary Dunnett, was unequivocal:

This Bill, introduced by Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party MLC Robert Borsak, is nothing more than a rebranded version of the discredited Game Council, which was abolished in 2013 following serious governance concerns.

He went further:

It is deeply disappointing that the NSW Government appears to be buying into the myth that recreational hunting is an effective way of controlling the feral animal crisis impacting our biodiversity.

We agree. Recreational hunting has its place, but it is not the silver bullet for managing invasive species across vast landscapes. The claim that this bill represents a conservation strategy is misleading. Mr Dunnett concluded:

The ill-named 'Conservation Hunting Authority' isn't about eradicating damaging feral animals — it will simply follow the same path as its predecessor and impede genuine conservation action.

Let me be clear: Professional land managers, environmental scientists and pest control specialists use the evidence-based techniques of baiting, trapping, targeted culling and, where appropriate, aerial shooting. They do so under strict protocols, not on weekends for sport. The bill confuses recreation with conservation, and that confusion puts our native species at risk.

The bill would establish a Conservation Hunting Authority dominated by hunting interests with a direct advisory line to a new hunting Minister. It seeks to remove the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development from its regulatory role, replacing it with a lobby-driven board whose purpose is to advance hunting, not environmental protection. That is not good governance; that is regulatory capture. It also allows Crown land to be declared open to hunting without consultation. That includes land used by families, bushwalkers and First Nations communities. It is unsafe, unaccountable and unnecessary.

I will spend a few more moments addressing the governance structure proposed in the bill, which creates a statutory body, but it fails to address basic questions. Who will provide independent oversight? How will conflicts of interest be managed? Will the authority be required to share firearm information with police and courts, especially in the context of apprehended violence orders? What mechanisms for complaints and appeals are in place for decisions that affect safety, community use or animal welfare? The original Game Council failed on all those fronts, and the new body risks repeating every single mistake. It is a textbook case of bad governance.

What does real pest control look like? Effective feral animal management is not achieved through hobby hunting. It is achieved through coordinated professional programs—baiting, trapping and aerial shooting—guided by biosecurity experts and managed by ecological outcomes. Our farmers, landholders and environment managers understand that. They need science and strategy, not politics. If this bill had appeared in the 1980s, it might have been debated as a bold experiment in community-led feral animal management. But in 2025 it feels tone deaf and out of step with modern expectations around governance, environmental protection and safety. The bill does not reflect contemporary conservation science or modern best practice, nor the community's expectation of transparency, rigour and independence. It instead takes us back to a structure that was rejected by the Parliament, the public and even by government after its litany of failures.

Another issue raised in the submissions was the expansion of hunting on public lands, including national parks and nature reserves. That has historically been one of the most controversial policies in New South Wales, introduced as part of a deal between the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party and Government in exchange for support on unrelated legislation. The public rightly raised concerns then, and those concerns remain today. Who is liable if someone is shot or injured? How are non-hunting users—hikers, families, birdwatchers—protected? What happens to the cultural heritage sites, particularly Aboriginal heritage areas? There is no answer in this bill, only silence. It is policy by omission, leaving the dangerous details for others to sort out.

There is something deeply frustrating and, frankly, dangerous about legislation that seeks to revive a failed model without addressing why it failed. It shows disregard for the public servants and inquiry officers who exposed the failures, the communities affected by those failures and the experts who have built evidence-based solutions to the very problems this bill claims to address. One submission to the bill put it well: "This bill is not about invasive species; it is about ideology." That may be blunt, but it is not wrong.

The Opposition opposes this bill because we believe that conservation should be science led, not politically led. Firearm and hunting licences must be rigorously regulated. Public safety should be paramount, especially for

women and children. Governance must be transparent and with clear accountability to the Parliament and the public. We believe in effective, evidence-based feral animal control, not the romanticised rebranding of its failed institutions. We have seen this movie before, and we know how it ends. The Parliament has a duty to remember the lessons of our past and to legislate for a better future. We do not need another Game Council, another scandal, another system where safety is compromised and accountability is optional. We need robust, integrated pest control. We need strong protections for women, and we need laws that reflect the values and evidence of 2025, not 2002. For those reasons, the Opposition will vote against the bill and urges every member of this House to do the same.

Dr AMANDA COHN (17:11): I add to the previous brief comments I made on the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025 before I was truncated. I reiterate my strong support for the excellent contributions to this debate made by my Greens colleagues, and the Hon. Emma Hurst. The bill seeks to amend the Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002 to establish the Conservation Hunting Authority; to recognise the role of hunting in the preservation of native species, the natural environment and cultural heritage; to recognise the right of citizens to hunt for cultural and recreational reasons; and to amend the Crown Land Management Act 2016 to establish the mechanisms by which Crown land may be made available for hunting and for related purposes. The bill also makes amendments to the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998 to provide that conservation hunting may be considered a genuine reason for the Commissioner of Police to issue a permit for the possession and use of a prohibited weapon.

There is absolutely no doubt that the bill is a weakening of gun regulation in this State, and that is unconscionable. Walter Mikac, who lost his wife and two daughters in the Port Arthur massacre, has warned that the bill will weaken the National Firearms Agreement. He said:

Let's leave it. Let's leave that as a monument. It needs to stay for all those people who lost their lives that day. All the first responders, and the people who have suffered right across the rest of their lives—not excluding myself—missing out on all those events with my daughters, and my wife, like a life sentence that doesn't go away. So we just need to keep our guard up, and try and leave the legacy that we've got from Port Arthur in place. There's a danger in being complacent.

The bill will hand management of public land to the gun lobby. This will mean more recreational shooting on public land, worse outcomes for the environment and extreme danger for the non-gun-toting community. The bill will see the reconstitution of the Game Council New South Wales in the form of the Conservation Hunting Authority. The Game Council, after being reviewed in 2013, was found to fail on governance, safety, integrity and outcomes. Some of the senior officers on the council were charged with illegal hunting, trespass and firearm offences. A key manager was even stood down for allegedly pursuing trophy animals on private property.

As it stands, the bill will create an authority operating with a similar model to the failed council, where the gun lobby is being favoured over conservationists, scientists and landholders. Further, the proposed Conservation Hunting Authority is not just regulatory but promotional. It will be stacked with hunting lobbyists, will have the ability to make recommendations to the Government and even intervene in management planning processes. As my colleague Ms Sue Higginson noted in her contribution to the second reading debate:

This is a return to a failed and discredited model that puts public safety, environmental governance and democratic process at enormous risk. We shut this door once, and we must now resist and not let them force it open again.

The bill inserts a new section 4A into the Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002, which establishes a right to hunt for culture, recreational and animal management purposes. The bill does not specify the condition of these entitlements or establish a requirement that hunting be planned or professional.

New section 4B creates an obligation for public land managers—such as councils and other public sector bodies—to consider the right to hunt when making land use decisions, and to assess whether it is practicable to facilitate hunting access on their land. The only land that will be exempted is our national parks—for now. Criteria compliant land is any land that is reserved for a prescribed purpose and is greater than 400 hectares, including catchments, Crown land, State forests and recreational areas where people go to safely enjoy their time in nature and not bounty hunt. The Greens are not debating the right of farmers to shoot invasive species on their own land. The bill is about our public land.

New section 4C, headed "Decisions not invalidated by the right to hunt", provides that the making of a decision is not invalid just because the right to hunt was not considered. This means that the right is not even enforceable, but it is a political weapon for the pro-gun lobby. The bill invokes conservation to sanction its contents, but it is clear that there is little genuine regard for effective invasive species control. We know that unregulated recreational hunting means little for coordinated, monitored, best-practice interventions. While new section 15 rebrands "restricted licences" as "conservation hunting" licences, there is no change to ensure that those licences equate to acts of conservation. A restricted gaming licence that was enforced before commencement will immediately become a conservation hunting licence with the same rules. There are no requirements for licensees

to hold ecological knowledge or commit to targeted conservation efforts. Calling it a conservation licence is merely a farce that benefits the hunting lobby, with no demonstrated benefits for our environment.

The Invasive Species Council has pointed out that recreational hunting is not effective for conservation and, in fact, undermines effective control. It notes that this is in part because the very principles of recreational hunting have nothing to do with conservation. In its submission to the inquiry into the bill, the Invasive Species Council stated:

Elevating the influence of hunting groups is likely to undermine the effective control of invasive animals. Granting the Hunting Authority the power to influence the management of public lands is likely to create impediments to effective control, propagate fallacies about control, risk the transformation of public lands into game reserves, and divert scarce public funding from effective control programs.

The Invasive Species Council also raised serious concerns around governance risks, noting that the bill:

... will undermine the credibility of the NSW Government on invasive animal control, potentially promote potential breaches of the general biosecurity duty, and foster social conflict.

The Biodiversity Council has similarly disproven claims that the bill will support conservation. In its submission to the inquiry, the Biodiversity Council stated:

Recreational hunters do not play an important role in controlling invasive species ... While hunting kills individual invasive animals it does not occur at a scale or with sufficient coordination and strategy to produce significant population reduction of invasive animals ... nor their impacts.

The RSPCA also points to serious risks posed by the bill. In its submission to the inquiry, the RSPCA argued that "the bill unacceptably weakens restrictions around hunting and risks significant animal welfare and personal safety compromise". Further, it noted that, without the effective principles of conservation, hunting can:

... fail to reduce pest populations sustainably, disrupt professional control programs, and may lead to the disruption of habitat, suffering or death of non-target and native species, including endangered ... To be effective and safe, pest management must be carried out as part of a co-ordinated program by qualified pest management officers, who possess the expertise and training required to apply best-practice methods. Certified pest management officers are legally obligated to meet specific training.

In other words, not only will the bill not improve conservation efforts, it may also even make them worse. The RSPCA has also pointed out that the bill "will result in an increase in hunters who lack the foundational training currently considered necessary for public safety, animal welfare and regulatory compliance. Without adequate training, hunters may lack the skills necessary to ensure a humane and effective kill." That is also backed by research from the Australia Institute, which has found the following:

Invasive species management approaches like the one proposed have a largely unsuccessful history in Australia. Worse, such methods can result in growth of invasive species populations.

The institute also found:

Programs that focus on the elimination of individual animals, rather than on mitigating their impacts, are generally ineffective outside of limited circumstances ... which do not apply to this Bill. Without coordination and management of hunting for conservation, the Bill also risks unintended consequences through disruptions to the existing ecosystem, including increases in the number of invasive species after hunting has taken place in an area.

Not only does the bill fail to improve conservation, it also represents an active harm to the humane treatment of animals. The Australasian Injury Prevention Network has confirmed that the bill presents a massive danger to human safety too. It has said that the inclusion of suppressors and night-vision equipment for conservation hunting "presents significant risks to public safety, increasing the presence and use of firearms in public lands, particularly by recreational hunters, and introduces a new definition of a 'right to hunt'." It added:

These proposed changes to legislation directly contravene the principles of the National Firearms Agreement, signed by all states, including NSW, which affirms that gun ownership is a privilege, not a right, and is conditional on the overriding principle of public safety. This is also the primary objective of the NSW Firearms Act.

I seek to spend most of my weekends and holidays in and around our State forests to go bushwalking with my partner and two beautiful rescue dogs, who are quite rightly not allowed in national parks. People who enjoy public land for recreation, like me and my family, should be able to do so safely and not at the exclusion of each other. It is important that members enter the debate with their eyes open. As I have already raised in the Parliament, there was a death from a hunting accident in New South Wales in April this year. It is not a theoretical risk. Accidents like that can and will happen on public land if the bill is passed. It will harm people who are in those spaces to simply to enjoy public land rather than engage in hunting themselves. We should be able to share and enjoy those spaces and not put people at risk.

There was another hunting death in Victoria in 2024, when a 64-year-old man died in Gippsland in a hunting accident. In 2021 a 37-year-old man died of a gunshot wound at Mount Buffalo in Alpine National Park in Victoria. The matter is very serious. It is egregious to pretend that there have been and will be no deaths, and

that it is entirely safe. Members are being misled about the safety risks posed by the bill. In their submission to the inquiry, Bushwalking NSW said simply, "We do not want to get shot, even by accident." There are the risks posed to bushwalkers and nature lovers like myself, but it is also worth noting that Lucy's Project, Aboriginal Women's Advisory Network, Domestic Violence NSW, No to Violence, People with Disability Australia and Full Stop Australia also reject this bill because of the following:

... potential increased access to weapons and the risks of severe and fatal violence to women, children and animals experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV). We are particularly concerned about the impacts for families living in outer metropolitan, rural, regional and remote areas.

The Public Health Association of Australia also rejects the bill. It states:

It proposes to create a legally confusing and deeply inappropriate so-called 'right' that would operate in contradiction to other laws, including vital laws protecting public safety in NSW in furtherance of the National Firearms Agreement.

...

Any other course than rejecting this Bill would leave the NSW Government and Parliament open to the charge that they had abandoned their commitment to national firearms policy, and to the paramount principle of public safety in these matters.

This bill will provide for state-sanctioned killing of animals and risk the safety of public citizens. As I have stressed, it will do nothing for managing ecosystems. Further, it will systematically open up Crown land and travelling stock reserves for the recreational hunting lobby. New section 9A.2 of the Crown Land Management Act, for example, will make huge parcels of land hunting accessible. New section 9A.3 goes further by setting out that Crown land reserved for one or more prescribed purposes, whether a single lot or directly adjoining lots, is designated as land on which hunting is permitted if the land is a minimum of 400 hectares. As my colleague Ms Sue Higginson pointed out:

There is no ecological rationale behind the 400-hectare test. It is an arbitrary political threshold that allows entire landscapes to be declared hunting grounds with minimal assessment.

Even more worryingly—if that is even possible at this point—new section 9A.4 provides that the Minister can amend or substitute the entire list of designated land by order without parliamentary approval. The section states:

The Minister may, after consulting with the Conservation Hunting Authority—

which is the new agency representing the gun lobby—

by order published on the NSW legislation website, amend or substitute Schedule 5A.

The level of control that the hunting lobby will have under those changes is obscene. This is land that should be prioritised for community access, heritage protection and environmental value, not prioritised based on lobbying pressure. Schedule 4 amends the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998 to provide that conservation be considered a genuine reason to apply for prohibited weapons. That means that a recreational shooter could apply for permits for silencers, night-vision scopes and other dangerous accessories. As I have stressed, along with my colleagues, there is nothing in the bill to provide for these weapons to be used as part of a professional, planned or scientifically supported invasive species control program. I reiterate that the bill will hand management of public land to the gun lobby, which will mean more recreational shooting on public land, worse outcomes for the environment and extreme danger for the rest of us, who seek to enjoy public land.

An extraordinary array of stakeholders has united in their opposition to the bill—not only conservation groups and groups representing the wellbeing of animals, but also domestic violence groups, families of the victims and survivors of the Port Arthur massacre and groups like the Public Health Association of Australia. It is extraordinary to see such a broad range of well-respected advocacy bodies on so many different matters unite in adamant opposition of one bill. The bill recreates the Game Council, which in 2013 failed on governance, safety, integrity and outcomes. Some of its senior officers were charged with illegal hunting, trespassing and firearm offences. It is just unconscionable that we can be recreating a body—

The Hon. Robert Borsak: That's bullshit—complete bullshit.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The member will be heard in silence.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Mr President, there was some deeply unparliamentary language used just now by the Hon. Robert Borsak.

The PRESIDENT: There are some strong views on all sides of the issue. The Hon. Robert Borsak will cease interjecting. The member will be heard in silence.

Dr AMANDA COHN: In reiterating The Greens' firm opposition to the bill, I think it is important to comment again on the political context in which members debate the bill. The last time that I had the opportunity to speak on the matter was during a week that the Government sought to rush through workers compensation

legislation, which has subsequently been sent to an inquiry. There were very serious and very credible allegations of a deal being struck between the Government and the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party relating to the current bill and an utterly unrelated piece of legislation. Given the community's extraordinarily unified opposition to the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025, it is actually extraordinary that the Government would proceed to support any part of it.

Premier Minns is now on record as saying that he will not support the right to hunt and that it is important not to water down gun laws in this State, but it is clear from the stakeholder evidence that I have already relayed that the rest of the bill is still a weakening of gun regulation in this State. It is a good thing that the Premier has indicated that the Government will not support the right to hunt, but the Government should go further and not support any part of the bill, because it does not do what it proposes to do and will expose people to significant harm. Further to that, the Premier made a promise on record that the Government would not provide Government time in Parliament for debate on the bill. I echo the comments of my colleagues that many members of the Legislative Council will hold him to that promise.

The Greens reiterate our firm opposition to the bill. On a personal note, as a very new member of this place, I find it frankly extraordinary that we continue to debate something that is so baseless and has been shown not to achieve any of the things that it claims to seek to achieve. As I have already said, there is such extraordinary breadth of opposition from so many different people. I am one of many people who was deeply moved by the advocacy of Walter Mikac, who has been through enough and has done extraordinary work in the wake of the Port Arthur massacre to ensure that what happened to his family will not happen to another family. For him to have to continue that advocacy now—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The member will be heard in silence.

Dr AMANDA COHN: I am deeply saddened that he has had to advocate against this piece of legislation but also very grateful for his advocacy. We should listen to those voices regarding the legislation, and not to the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party.

The PRESIDENT: The Clerk will stop the clock. Before I call the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, I will let members know what we will do from here. Item (9) on the business list for today, as determined by the committee, states:

That, if not adjourned earlier, proceedings be interrupted after 60 minutes, but not so as to interrupt a member speaking ...

Accordingly, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell will have a choice, as Ms Cate Faehrmann did last week. There are 35 seconds left on the clock. At the end of that time, if the member wishes to move to adjourn the debate, that would be appropriate. It is then up to the House if it wishes to proceed in that way. Alternatively, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell may give her entire speech. It is entirely up to her.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (17:32): Thank you for the clarification, Mr President. On behalf of The Nationals, I speak in debate on the Game and Feral Animal Legislation Amendment (Conservation Hunting) Bill 2025 for a second time. Obviously, we had an initial debate on the bill before it was referred to a committee. I acknowledge those who were involved in the inquiry. I was not but the Hon. Scott Barrett was, and I am sure he will have something to say about that work when he makes his contribution. I put on record that The Nationals' position is to support the bill with some of the amendments. We will support it at the second reading stage to go to Committee of the Whole. We have some of our own amendments, and we will also support some of the other amendments that have been foreshadowed by other members in this place when we reach the Committee stage.

Debate adjourned.

VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING AMENDMENT (RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES) BILL 2025

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 15 October 2025.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (17:33): I speak in debate on the Voluntary Assisted Dying Amendment (Residential Facilities) Bill 2025. I make it clear that Labor members will have a conscience vote on the bill, which is a well-established practice in matters such as these. As such, I am speaking not on behalf of the Labor Government or the Labor caucus, but rather on behalf of myself and the Minister for Health. We will oppose the bill, based on the advice provided by NSW Health. The bill will allow residential facilities to transfer permanent residents out of their homes to undergo voluntary assisted dying. That is, residential facilities will not be required to allow reasonable access to authorised voluntary assisted dying practitioners to support permanent residents to access voluntary assisted dying.

The bill also removes the current "reasonable steps" test for private hospitals and residential facilities transferring patients out of their facilities to undergo voluntary assisted dying. The bill will remove the list of factors that the current Act requires both of those types of facilities to have regard to when they consider whether a transfer is reasonable, being whether the transfer would be likely to cause serious harm to the person, whether the transfer would be likely to adversely affect the person's access to voluntary assisted dying, whether the transfer would cause undue delay or prolonged suffering in accessing voluntary assisted dying, whether the place to which the person is proposed to be transferred is available to receive the person, and whether the person would incur financial loss or cost because of the transfer.

Advice from NSW Health is that, in practice, the bill would mean that an immobile resident seeking access to voluntary assisted dying would likely not be transferred by the facility. It goes without saying that some residents who seek access to voluntary assisted dying are immobile. They simply cannot be transferred. They are very unwell and suffering greatly. Some of them do not want to be transferred. Those residential facilities are their homes, and sometimes they have lived in them for many years. They have made those facilities their homes for the end of their life, and they wish to end their life in those homes. Combined with the change to practitioners' access into the facilities, the bill will likely result in patients and residents in certain private facilities no longer having access to a legal end-of-life choice. That will result in them dying in a way that is not in keeping with their wishes. I cannot support that.

Another reason that I do not support the bill is that it commences on assent. Advice from NSW Health is that that would have implications for patients, particularly those in residential aged-care facilities—permanent residents who have made those places their home for the end of their life. There are instances in which the residents in aged-care facilities impacted by the bill have commenced the process of voluntary assisted dying, with the expectation that they will be able to access that legal procedure in their home. If the bill is passed, a consequence will be that that would no longer continue. I consider that to be particularly heartbreaking and cruel for those people.

Finally, it is not clear what consultation has been done on the bill. In sensitive areas such as this, it is essential that clear, open and comprehensive consultation occurs. The current Act requires the Minister for Health to undertake a review into its operation and effectiveness two years after its commencement. That review is scheduled to commence after 28 November this year, and the report will be tabled in November next year. NSW Health has committed to conducting the review on behalf of the Minister for Health. The consultation will be wide-ranging and will include peak medical bodies, unions, private organisations, religious and faith groups, and other community groups. The review focuses on strengthening the model and frameworks that support voluntary assisted dying in New South Wales. It will focus on key themes such as patient choice, equitable access, respect and inclusion, safeguards for patients and healthcare workers, and service delivery and sustainability.

Legislative change has not been ruled out as an outcome of this review process. This is the appropriate forum to explore the issues raised by the member, and I encourage her to raise these issues as a part of that process. This bill is premature because the review process is incomplete. It risks creating cruel outcomes for people who are elderly, immobile and suffering greatly. Some people simply do not want to be transferred out of their home to access voluntary assisted dying. On behalf of the Minister for Health, and based on the advice of NSW Health, I oppose the bill.

Dr AMANDA COHN (17:40): As The Greens spokesperson for health, I indicate our collective opposition to the Voluntary Assisted Dying Amendment (Residential Facilities) Bill 2025. I clarify for members that this is a matter of health policy and not individual conscience for The Greens. The Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2022, which came into effect in November 2023, was the result of many years of campaigning by people with a terminal illness and their families and loved ones, and by experts and advocates. This reform passed with bipartisan support and was co-sponsored by all six Greens MPs in the New South Wales Parliament at the time. The Voluntary Assisted Dying Act honours the dignity, autonomy and wishes of individuals. It has provided many people with the important choice and right to end their life on their own terms.

The Voluntary Assisted Dying Amendment (Residential Facilities) Bill 2025 would restrict access to voluntary assisted dying by allowing residential aged-care facilities to refuse to allow medical practitioners to attend to a resident who has requested their presence for the purposes of voluntary assisted dying. A medical practitioner is required at multiple stages of the voluntary assisted dying process. By refusing a medical practitioner access to a patient, the bill would prevent a medical practitioner from attending not only a resident to administer a voluntary assisted dying substance but also the facility for the purposes of providing information, recording decisions or making assessments related to voluntary assisted dying.

Residential aged-care facilities are people's homes. Individuals should be able to access their right to voluntary assisted dying in their own homes. The bill threatens the rights of individuals to access legal health care in their own home and the rights they are afforded in this State because of views held by their facility management.

Older people and people with terminal illness must have the same rights no matter where they live. The bill proposes that if an individual is seeking voluntary assisted dying, a residential facility must take reasonable steps to facilitate the transfer of the person to a medical practitioner who is eligible and willing. This would include transferring individuals to other facilities for first and final requests for first assessments, consulting assessments and written declarations, and for applications for administration decisions; administration of voluntary assisted dying substances; and access to information about voluntary assisted dying.

In practice, the bill will increase the suffering of already vulnerable people by repeatedly transferring elderly and potentially frail individuals. Transferring people out of their homes to exercise their right to health care is cruel, unnecessary, potentially harmful and impossible in some circumstances. In her second reading speech, the mover of the bill claimed that the process of transferring residents:

... will simply mean that they will be transferred to some other location, typically a hospital, for the last stage of their life. This transfer close to death is not unusual.

Even the mover of the bill recognises that not everyone enters a faith-based aged-care facility because they share that faith. In some regional areas there is little or no choice because there are few options for aged care. I invite the member to speak to anyone in a rural area about how simple it is to transfer someone to the nearest hospital—I assure her it is not. The reality is that repeatedly transferring an already vulnerable individual from their home to access information; to request assessments, consulting assessments or written declarations; to make an application for an administration decision; or to apply for the actual voluntary assisted dying substance is both impractical and cruel. In the words of Go Gentle Australia:

... they would be forced out of their legal home and away from their friends and community to die amongst strangers in a place they do not know.

That was not the intention of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act that passed this Parliament. The current legislation deals with residential facilities under part 5, division 2, which provides that a residential facility:

(a) must not hinder the person's access at the residential facility to information about voluntary assisted dying, ...

It also must allow reasonable access through the provision of information from a registered health practitioner or another person, and enable that practitioner or other person to provide information; or for a member of the navigator service to provide support, assistance and information. This recognises that a residential aged-care facility is a person's home. The Legislation Review Committee found that by refusing a medical practitioner access to a patient, the bill would unduly restrict a vulnerable cohort of people from accessing relevant health care.

This bill also removes the current "reasonable steps test" for a private hospital or residential facility transferring a patient out of its facility to undergo voluntary assisted dying. It removes the list of factors that the current Act requires residential facilities to consider in relation to the transfer of individuals, including whether the transfer would be likely to cause serious harm, adversely affect an individual's access to voluntary assisted dying, or cause undue delay and prolonged suffering. A facility must also consider whether the provision of voluntary assisted dying is available elsewhere or whether it would incur financial loss. Current Ministry of Health guidance regarding considerations for private entities when transferring a patient or resident states:

For example, a person may be so unwell that the transfer process would be traumatic or painful, or the medications required for transfer, including analgesia, could affect the person's decision-making capacity and make them ineligible for voluntary assisted dying.

This bill proposes to give residential facilities the freedom and choice to deny the provision of voluntary assisted dying services to people in their own home, but a building, business or organisation does not have a conscience. Conscientious objection provisions for individual health practitioners should not be extended to institutions. I am grateful to have been provided the following examples from real people who this bill would impact. I share these with Parliament today with their consent, although some names have been changed to protect their privacy.

Caroline's mother is a permanent resident in a Catholic aged-care home in Sydney. She suffers from cholangiocarcinoma, a rare cancer of the bile ducts. She wants voluntary assisted dying but has been told that even though she can be assessed onsite, she will have to move to another facility for administration. Caroline's mother is frail and only weighs 32 kilograms. She suffers from painful rheumatoid arthritis and has bedsores. Caroline says:

She's in so much pain. Any movement is excruciating. It's unreasonable to move someone in that situation.

Sandra's mother, Jean, lives in a faith-based aged-care facility south of Sydney. Jean has metastatic breast cancer and decided to apply for voluntary assisted dying. She was originally told by staff at the facility that she would have to have all of her assessments and the voluntary assisted dying administration offsite. Jean is 80 years old and bedbound. She needs to be moved by a hoist. Sandra, a registered nurse, and Jean's voluntary assisted dying doctor had to intervene to remind the aged-care facility of Jean's rights as a permanent resident of the home. It

was only after significant pressure that the facility manager relented and agreed that Jean could have voluntary assisted dying onsite. Sandra said:

It's appalling. Someone needs to give these facilities the facts about their obligations to residents. They need to be educated.

Current provisions allowing hospitals to refuse access to voluntary assisted dying are limiting the autonomy and choice of patients. Marian was terminally ill and admitted to a Sydney faith-based hospital. She started the process of applying for voluntary assisted dying through her GP, but was then told voluntary assisted dying assessors were not allowed into the hospital. She was too ill to transfer to another facility to complete the voluntary assisted dying approval process. Marian's friend said:

It was absolute obstruction to the end-of-life decisions she wanted to make for herself. Why should her living near that hospital, when that was her catchment area, restrict her decisions for end-of-life? It was so unfair.

Dying with Dignity NSW, Older Women's Network NSW, Older Persons Advocacy Network and Go Gentle Australia strongly oppose this bill. They note that an individual whose home is a residential facility should have the right to access voluntary assisted dying. They have also indicated that changes made by the bill would be contrary to the Commonwealth Aged Care Act 2024, which is due to commence on 1 November 2025. The Commonwealth Act outlines a statement of rights which provides that an individual has the right to exercise choice and make decisions that affect their life and that, if necessary, they be supported to make those decisions. This includes equitable access to palliative care and end-of-life care when required.

I also note the strong community interest in this bill. Since 7.00 a.m. this morning I have received over 1,000 emails from individual constituents in opposition to this bill. I thank those individuals for taking the time to contact legislators, especially those who shared their personal experiences or those of their loved ones. I know that the Parliament will consider this issue very carefully. I urge members to vote against this bill.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (17:49): I make a contribution to debate in support of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Amendment (Residential Facilities) Bill 2025. The bill does not seek to overturn the Parliament's earlier decision to allow voluntary assisted dying. Rather, it makes changes to the legislation to ensure that aged-care facilities operated by churches and other religious organisations are treated effectively in the same way as hospitals. The bill will ensure that such institutions are not required to facilitate voluntary assisted dying and that residents there will not be exposed to its carrying out. The bill is careful to ensure that residents are not deprived of information about their rights to access the scheme. It balances their right to know about, and perhaps ultimately access, the scheme with the rights of a religious organisation not to be involved.

The answer the bill produces to the balancing exercise is that such residents will, if it is reasonably possible, need to leave the place to access the scheme. People leave such institutions for all sorts of medical reasons. In some circumstances, they are not able to leave, but I am satisfied overall that the answer to the balancing exercise produced by the bill is a reasonable one. To me, this is an important human rights issue. Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR] requires signatory states to protect of freedom of religion. It provides:

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.
2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.
3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

Voluntary euthanasia schemes raise the concept of personal belief, often as to the sanctity of life. In my view, it is uncontroversial to say that a law providing for euthanasia must, in order to be consistent with article 18, make allowances for those of a firm view that engagement with such a scheme violates the sanctity of life and is something with which they simply cannot be involved. That is why human rights require us to allow medical workers not to participate in such schemes. In my view—and, again, I think this is uncontroversial—that extends to religious institutions. Such institutions will not be able to freely practise their religion if they are forced to participate in schemes such as this against their firmly held religious belief. That logically applies to aged-care facilities as much as individual medical staff or hospitals. These are important matters to the maintenance of a rights-based framework. People will have different views about which human rights are particularly important but, in my view, all the rights in the ICCPR are important, and a rights-based framework is important to uphold.

I understand the contrary argument that won the day when the Act to be amended was passed. In short, an aged-care facility is a person's home and therefore access to the scheme should be ensured in that person's home. It is ultimately a question of balance, but I do not think that argument outweighs what I see as a religious freedom issue. I also understand and appreciate the argument of Dr Amanda Cohn that, in some cases, transfer will not be reasonable and therefore some people may be denied access to the scheme. That will require people, if possible,

to make informed advance choices about where they reside and may, particularly in regional communities with limited choice, make for very tough choices for people. But, ultimately, that factor does not persuade me that the bill should not be supported. That is particularly so because I am left unsure of exactly how many people would fit into the category of being deprived of a reasonable possibility of being transferred. Similarly, I am not sure how many people in that category might be able to, going forward, make advance choices to live elsewhere. While I do not suggest that it is not an important factor, in my view it is outweighed by the other important factors that are posed here.

One of the most precious and important parts of our culture is our enduring attachment to the central importance of human life. It manifests in many ways and protects us in ways beyond merely the preservation of life. The long-term impacts upon that of schemes like voluntary assisted dying concern me. I say that with absolute regard to the horror of terminal illnesses and the things people endure. For all those reasons, I support the bill and thank the honourable member for introducing it.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. I inform the Hon. Rod Roberts that, in relation to private members business item No. 2479, the Business Committee has determined "That, if not adjourned earlier, proceedings will be interrupted after 30 minutes, but not so as to interrupt a member speaking ..." The Hon. Rod Roberts therefore has a choice. If his speech is longer than nine minutes and 21 seconds, this information will be for the following member called. They will have a choice at the end of that time to either seek to adjourn or finish their contribution. The Hon. Rod Roberts has the call.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (17:55): Thank you for your advice and guidance, Madam Deputy President. My contribution will not take nine minutes and 21 seconds. I contribute to debate on the Voluntary Assisted Dying (Residential Facilities) Bill 2025 introduced by the Hon. Susan Carter. From the outset, I wish it to be known that I am a co-sponsor of this bill. Winston Churchill famously said, "The only guide to a man is his conscience." Whilst I remain somewhat agnostic on matters spiritual, I have a deep faith and belief in the right of a person to live and act according to their conscience. For those who are unaware, members should know that I voted for the legislation that legalised voluntary assisted dying. It is something I support. I did so because I believe in the right of a person to act according to their conscience and beliefs. It is for that very same reason that I support this bill. Corporations and organisations are often formed by individuals who share a particular world view and belief system. It could be a trade union, for example, or a faith-based residential facility. Those groups and alliances should be free to function according to their beliefs.

I support the bill because it safeguards religious affiliated residential facilities to act according to their conscience, a conscience informed by their deeply held religious beliefs. Families and individuals select faith-based residential care facilities, in the majority of cases, because they deliberately seek a faith-based community where care is delivered in accordance with shared beliefs and values. As the Hon. Susan Carter articulated, the bill is not designed to limit access to voluntary assisted dying, and it is not a handbrake on accessing euthanasia. I would not support it if it was because, as I said, I supported voluntary assisted dying and still do.

Voluntary assisted dying remains unchanged but the place where it is administered may alter. The bill ensures that faith-based aged-care facilities are treated no differently from faith-based hospitals. It would extend to residential facilities the same rights that our legislation currently confers on hospitals to decline to facilitate voluntary assisted dying on their premises. It would not impede the access of individual residents to voluntary assisted dying. The obligation to make reasonable alternative arrangements, which also exists for hospitals, remains. The bill is a commonsense change to existing legislation that closes a loophole that compelled individuals and organisations to act against their conscience. The beliefs of the State should not be imposed on the conscience of the faithful.

We rightly speak in this place about the evils of coercive control in personal relationships. Perhaps I am beginning to sound a bit like the Hon. John Ruddick, but it is worth considering that the State is currently acting like an abusive partner who is attempting to apply coercive control on faith-based residential care facilities. I believe the bill achieves balance, recognising that respect for choice and dignity must extend to both individuals seeking voluntary assisted dying and, on the counterbalance, faith-based providers whose beliefs do not allow participation in it. The choice of residents to seek a faith-based facility is equally deserving of dignity and autonomy. As I said in my introduction, I remain somewhat agnostic on matters spiritual, but I have a deep faith in the right of a person to live and act according to their conscience. The bill makes small and sensible changes to the Act to understand and support the practice of faith-based residential facilities. For that reason, I ask members to join me in supporting the bill.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK (17:59): On behalf of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, I support the Voluntary Assisted Dying Amendment (Residential Facilities) Bill 2025, which affirms a foundational principle: that institutions, especially those built on faith and service, must not be compelled to act against their conscience. The bill does not restrict access to voluntary assisted dying [VAD]. It simply ensures that faith-based

aged-care facilities are afforded the same protections already granted to faith-based hospitals. It recognises that care is not just clinical; it is cultural, spiritual and communal. It respects the right of institutions to uphold the ethos that defines their mission.

Let us be clear: Individuals retain the right to seek voluntary assisted dying. But with that right comes a responsibility to choose a care setting that aligns with their values and expectations. It is not reasonable or respectful to demand that a facility abandon its foundational beliefs to accommodate a choice that was foreseeable and avoidable. Residents and families must take responsibility for understanding the policies of the facility they enter. That is not a burden; it is due diligence. We have heard concerns about regional access, but our shared experience of the VAD legislation indicates that country residents have not faced barriers to accessing euthanasia. The only difference the bill introduces is that residents may be transferred to a hospital or agreed location near death. That is not unusual. It is standard practice in aged care.

We have a yardstick. Two reports from the Voluntary Assisted Dying Board show no systemic issues with access. If any emerge, the Parliament retains the tools to address them. Two-thirds of VAD requests come from the regions, where only one-third of our population lives. If this reflects free choice, it is not problematic. But if it signals deeper issues in primary or palliative care access, then that is a matter for urgent attention separate from the bill. The values that underpinned the original VAD legislation were respect for freedom of choice and conscience. The bill honours those same values. It protects the right of faith-based facilities to decline participation in VAD while preserving individual access through reasonable alternative arrangements. The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party stands for fairness, community and the right of institutions to serve without coercion. We support the bill because it respects both individual choice and institutional conscience. It is a measured, principled amendment. We thank the Hon. Susan Carter for introducing the bill and commend it to the House.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (18:02): I contribute to debate on the Voluntary Assisted Dying Amendment (Residential Facilities) Bill 2025. In my party members will vote according to their conscience. The Hon. Susan Carter said the bill was carefully crafted and narrow. I accept that is correct. I listened carefully to the contribution of my colleague the Hon. Stephen Lawrence about rights, and I accept that that is the argument. It is an argument about rights, but I take the opposite view of the Hon. Stephen Lawrence for these reasons. Fundamentally, we are talking about people's right to access the voluntary assisted dying service in their own homes. The arguments around freedom of choice for the provider of the service fall away in that context. The balance of rights has to fall on the side of the individual who has made that choice.

The Minister said that the bill is constructed so that it will operate immediately upon assent. That means people will no longer be able to access a service that they could access on the basis that they may have entered an aged-care facility. My position on this issue is similar to my previous position: If someone objects to providing the full range of health services available in a health facility, then they should not operate the health facility. If the law of the land and the view of the Parliament and the State of New South Wales is such that people have a right to access voluntary assisted dying—which I support—then health providers ought to provide the service wherever they are. If they want to exercise their right to conscience and freedom of religion where their deeply held view is that they should not provide that service, then they should consider whether they should be in the business of providing aged-care facilities—in the same way that they should carefully consider whether they should provide health services if they will not provide all the health services that are available.

I will consider carefully any amendments to the bill if it goes to the Committee stage. But after considering the legislation carefully this afternoon, I place on record that I do not support the bill. I accept the importance of it being a deeply held matter of conscience, but this is not simply an extension of earlier circumstances where members and the Parliament have taken a view about conscience in relation to hospitals. The bill is fundamentally different because it deals with people in their homes and proposes to remove their choice in circumstances where it is not reasonable to say that they should move out of an aged-care facility to access voluntary assisted dying. That will not be possible for some people, particularly because the bill has been constructed to commence upon assent. For those reasons, I do not support the bill. I am always open to being convinced and I will consider the issues carefully, but I do not support the bill as it stands.

Debate adjourned.

Motions

INSURANCE AND CARE NSW

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (18:08): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:

- (a) on 17 June 2025 the Treasurer, the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, MLC, gave evidence to the Public Accountability and Works Committee inquiry into the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, in which he said about the Nominal Insurer's finances, "I can report that icare has advised me that the scheme deficit is expected to rise from \$4.9 billion at 31 December 2024 to nearly \$6 billion in the absence of reform by 1 July"; and
 - (b) on 13 October 2025 *The Daily Telegraph* reported data not yet publicly released but provided to them by the Government that based on its June valuation the Nominal Insurer has a reported \$5.4 billion deficit, that is, a \$600 million lower deficit than that predicted by the Treasurer in June 2025 to justify the proposed cuts.
- (2) That this House further notes that:
- (a) according to the Government's own data, the scheme financial position is around half a billion dollars better off than predicted when the Government embarked on its proposed cuts to workers compensation entitlements; and
 - (b) in response to question on notice No. 4129, icare confirmed it is expecting a \$4.5 billion claims valuation benefit to the scheme over the next 10 years, however due to actuarial valuation rules that assumption is not incorporated into the scheme's liability estimates and, during budget estimates on 1 September 2025, icare CEO Geniere Aplin and icare Workers Compensation Group Executive Tony Wessling confirmed that this remained icare's assumed impact and reconfirmed it had not been incorporated into the scheme valuation.
- (3) That this House calls on the Government to cease providing misleadingly worded statements to the media that imply a worsening financial outlook for icare when the Treasurer's own statements indicate the opposite. Back in May when we referred the Government's proposed workers compensation reforms to inquiry, I spoke about the profound harm that the Government's bill would have on injured workers in the State. Noting that profound harm, I asked members to think very carefully about whether that harm was justified in the circumstances. For the reforms to be justified, we would need to satisfy ourselves that, firstly, the New South Wales Government compensation scheme was in such dire financial straits that we had no choice but to undertake such radical cuts to workers' entitlements; and, secondly, that if we were so satisfied, that the reforms are the fairest and most effective way of stabilising that financial position. If we are not satisfied of those matters, then we cannot in good conscience vote through a bill that would have such a devastating impact on workers in this State.

Through the Public Accountability and Works Committee inquiry that I have been proud to chair into the Government's proposed bills, we have established a number of matters. Above all, and thanks to the incredible testimony of so many who would be directly impacted, we have established that the harm and damage that would be wrought upon injured workers if we allow the workers compensation bill to go through would be devastating—as bad, or even worse, than I imagined when I gave that speech five months ago. As I made clear then, deciding whether to pass the bill is literally a matter of life or death. We have also clearly established in our inquiry that the financial case for these reforms has not been made out.

As suspected, the Government has been putting forward information that, in the most generous interpretation, is misleading or—more generous still, perhaps—driven by errors. In a less generous interpretation, it is simply the Government lying, catastrophising icare's finances in order to bolster their arguments for introducing such a cruel bill. That brings me to the text of the motion before us where, once again, we have numbers that on the face of them perhaps could be correct, but in the context in which they are put imply a worsening of icare's finances. When we look at what is being said and compare it with what data we already had, it becomes clear that we actually have seen an improvement in icare's finances since the Treasurer first began to catastrophise and tell us that the sky was falling in.

Nowhere is it clearer that the Government and the Treasurer are trying to catastrophise and build a case of fear and imminent disaster than in the Treasurer's insistence on describing contributions to the Treasury Managed Fund [TMF] as a bailout. Alternatively, they are just woefully misguided and do not understand what they are doing. But the Treasurer knows full well that we cannot bail out the TMF. The Treasurer is quite proud of himself for playing his part in instigating the McDougall review of icare. This is what McDougall had to say about the economic literacy of people who criticise the scheme as requiring bailing out:

I add that the opportunistic usage of the term 'bailout' misrepresents the truth, which is that the payment into the TMF was a normal, although in monetary terms very large, incident of the designed operation of the NAHLP.

There is nothing of substance in this allegation. The emotive and pejorative term 'bailout' is unjustified. The report is, factually inaccurate. And, to the extent that the media commentary sought to assign to icare responsibility for the need for the transfer of cash into the TMF, it was wrong.

Let's not get hung up on the Treasurer's florid language, despite his stubborn insistence on continuing its use. It is to be expected when the policy unit of this Government is really a media strategy, utterly lacking in intellectual rigour. The Treasury Managed Fund, according to the Treasurer, is incurring liabilities solely, or at least predominantly, as a result of psychological injuries. The Treasurer made the point—in inaccurate and misleading language, but the core of it remains—that the Treasury Managed Fund has received \$6 billion between 2018-19 and 2023-24. He would have us believe that was due to psychological injury payments, but that would be a lie, because between 2018-19 and 2023-24, grants totalling \$6.1 billion were transferred from the Consolidated Fund to the Treasury Managed Fund under the Net Asset Holding Level Policy. Of the contributions, \$3.7 billion is for general lines, including for COVID, natural disasters and historical abuse claims.

The latest icare annual report reads total liabilities were \$2 billion unfavourable to budget, driven by the increase in the provision for outstanding claims liabilities. The TMF workers compensation outstanding claims liabilities were unfavourable to budget largely due to higher claims numbers, lower return to work, an increase in psychological claims—mostly in the non-emergency portfolio—and slower work injury damages finalisations and higher weekly active claims in the New South Wales police portfolio. The TMF general lines outstanding claims liabilities were unfavourable to budget due to the significant increase in child abuse claims, event losses largely relating to floods, a large property claim and the impact of a discrimination class action. I have run out of time. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (18:13): I speak on behalf of the New South Wales Government. The Government refutes the points raised by Ms Abigail Boyd in the motion. The statements made by the Treasurer are accurate, or were accurate at the time. The figures provided are point in time. Changes in the share market this year—obvious to anyone who has watched the financial markets closely since June, which the Treasurer certainly has; I make no comment on my own attention to them—would note that they have deflated and then inflated investment forecasts, including investments icare holds against its liabilities. The share market has not, and cannot, change the declining nature of our workers compensation system. Despite stronger than expected returns on investment, the scheme has deteriorated by \$1.7 billion over the past financial year. The deficit is getting bigger. That does not seem to be in dispute.

How large the deficit is going to be seems to be the only area of disagreement. The only statements making an ignorant or misleading interpretation of those facts are contained in this motion. I think the Treasurer should be commended for his transparency in regularly reporting updated figures. I think he should be commended for acting to reform the system. It seems that everyone is in agreement about the need for some reform. This House should act quickly to fix a system that is broken for both workers and employers. On that basis, the motion should be opposed.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (18:15): I thank Ms Abigail Boyd for bringing this motion to the House, because it clears up, in some way, the fog which the Treasurer, either deliberately or inadvertently, has sought to develop in relation to his vicious attacks on seriously injured workers and the manner in which he has portrayed those attacks since March. Make no mistake, the Treasurer's approach to workers compensation is to attack the most vulnerable. That seems to be lost in this. He is obsessed with using a set of figures to demonstrate his entitlement to attack the most vulnerable. The Treasurer's real concern is to prop up his out of control budget by cutting the liabilities of the Treasury Managed Fund through axing financial and medical support for public sector workers—such as nurses, teachers and Corrective Services officers—with serious psychological injuries.

To achieve this, he has been shamelessly alarming businesses, disability service providers and not-for-profits with threats of 36 per cent premium rises based on dire predictions about the Nominal Insurer deficit increasing by \$6 million per day. Day after day we hear that outside this place and inside this place, often from members opposite who have been given a speech to read by the Treasurer. The Nominal Insurer "deficit" is not a cash deficit based on income and expenditure over a single year but is rather the difference between total current assets and long-term liabilities. The calculation of long-term liabilities is complex and uncertain. It includes an 11 per cent "risk factor" added on top of all the other elements. The Treasurer has recently revealed that the Nominal Insurer deficit as at 30 June 2025 was \$5.4 billion—up \$0.5 billion in the six months since 31 December 2024.

This increase was at \$2.76 million per day. Not good, but less than half the daily increase predicted by the Treasurer. This 50 per cent plus reduction was achieved by icare without the passage of either of the Government's harsh workers compensation bills. But rather than welcome this good news, the Treasurer is yet to correct his \$6 million per day figure. This is being quoted by Labor members of Parliament, the media, alarmed businesses and not-for-profits. This motion should be supported, because the language of the Treasurer has been nothing but disgraceful.

The Hon. BOB NANVA (18:18): I respectfully disagree with the points raised by Ms Abigail Boyd. The statements made by the Treasurer are accurate, or were accurate at the time that they were made. The figures are provided at a point in time. It is obvious to anyone who has watched financial markets since April, in particular, that changes in the share market this year have deflated and then inflated investments and investment forecasts, including investments that icare holds against its liabilities. The share market has not, and it cannot, change the declining nature of our workers compensation system. The Treasurer, if nothing else, has been utterly transparent in regularly reporting the figures. He should be commended for at least having a dig at trying to reform the system. He is having a go, unlike those opposite.

There are some specific points in the motion to which I wish to provide a response. Firstly, in relation to the scheme deficit, the previous statements from the Treasurer reflect advice from icare on the projected deficit.

The statements were made on 17 June, before the end of the financial year. They reflect projections based on the best information available at the time. Icare's financial statements for the 2024-25 financial year will be finalised and released as part of its annual report. The \$5.4 billion scheme deficit reported publicly still means the Nominal Insurer does not have enough assets to pay for its expected liabilities.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Over what term? Over what period?

The Hon. BOB NANVA: What is undeniable to everyone—including the honourable member opposite, who will concede this—is that the deficit is getting bigger. That should not be in dispute. In the second half of the financial year 2025 the deficit grew by a smaller amount than was projected, but that does not negate the overall trend and the trend over a significant number of years. Secondly, I refer to the scheme's financial position being around half a billion dollars better off than predicted. The half a billion dollars better off refers to a difference between the scheme's actual financial position at the end of 2024-25 and a projection made during that year.

The need for reform arises from a long-running trend of deterioration in the financial position of the workers compensation scheme. Unusually strong investment returns have partially offset the ongoing deterioration in the financial position in the second half of 2024-25. The Nominal Insurer recorded strong investments over the past year but, while there is a usually strong year of investment returns—and that is welcome—it is not a strategy to support the long-term financial sustainability of the scheme without structural reform.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (18:21): I did not intend to speak, but I am moved to do so. I speak against the motion. The Government refutes the points that have been raised and is very firmly of the view that all the Treasurer's statements on this matter have been accurate—or were accurate at the time. Things change and figures are provided at a certain point in time. The changes in the share market this year have been obvious to anyone who has watched the financial markets since April. They deflated and then inflated investment forecasts, including investments that icare holds against its liabilities. Obviously, that cannot be avoided and cannot necessarily be predicted.

The share market has not changed and cannot change the unfortunate reality of the declining nature of our workers compensation system. Having been a part of the first and shorter inquiry into the bill, I did not hear any evidence from anyone who proposed that no change was necessary. There seemed to be consensus that change is necessary, and the argument is about the nature of that change. The fact is that the only statements that are misleading or contain a misleading interpretation of the facts are the statements in the motion. The Treasurer should be commended for his transparency.

The Hon. Rose Jackson: Point of order—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): The Clerk will stop the clock.

The Hon. Rose Jackson: I understand that this is a heated debate. Government members listened in silence to some pretty hostile contributions, yet every single Government member who has spoken has been peppered with interjections that have been really quite nasty at times. It is not becoming. If members cannot have the discipline to sit and listen to other members respectfully, they should go to their office and watch the debate on television.

Ms Abigail Boyd: To the point of order: I agree that we need to have respectful debate and that interjections are disorderly at all times. But last Thursday night I was on the receiving end of some of the nastiest comments I have ever experienced in this place from members on the Government benches, so it is a little hypocritical.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): I will not call any member to order but I remind members—particularly those who have been called to order several times—about their behaviour in the House. The Hon. Stephen Lawrence has the call.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I was so engrossed in my submission that I did not notice what was going on. I address the issue of the \$4.5 billion referred to in the motion in paragraph (2) (b), which states:

... in response to question on notice No. 4129, icare confirmed they are expecting a \$4.5 billion claims valuation benefit to the scheme over the next 10 years, however due to actuarial valuation rules that assumption is not incorporated into the scheme's liability estimates, and during budget estimates on 1 September 2025, icare CEO ... and icare Workers Compensation Group Executive ... confirmed that this remained icare's assumed impact and reconfirmed it had not been incorporated into the scheme valuation.

The motion makes assertions in respect of that, but the Government's position is that the \$4.5 billion represents avoided liabilities.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (18:25): Madam Deputy President—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): Is the Hon. Damien Tudehope seeking to speak further?

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I seek to speak a second time. This arises pursuant to Standing Order 92, "Explanation of speeches". A member who has spoken previously may speak a second time to explain a matter that has been misunderstood. I suggest that in his contribution to debate, the Hon. Bob Nanva certainly misunderstood my position.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): Is the Hon. Damien Tudehope seeking to clarify his position?

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Yes. I put to the member that the Treasurer understood the state of the scheme at the time he was making submissions. It is directly relevant to the heart of this motion that he understood the true position of the scheme but continued to represent the old position in relation to the scheme. An additional point is that the Treasurer can make misleading statements through neglect. A member should not hide something they know to be true. Members should be transparent and identify the truth. The case in point is that the Treasurer knows icare advised him that it expects a \$4.5 billion claims valuation benefit to the Nominal Insurer over 10 years, but this expectation is not reflected in valuations by the actuaries.

It can be, and ought to be, taken into account by the Minister for Work Health and Safety when she has the power to give a statutory direction capping the average rise and the Nominal Insurer premiums. If this \$4.5 billion is fully taken into account, there is no reason premiums should rise and cannot be capped around consumer price index rises. The Treasurer made the misleading statement that he knows material to be true. Icare told him about the revaluation of the scheme based on available material, yet in all his public disclosures about that the Treasurer seeks to scare businesses, the not-for-profit sector and the disability sector into thinking their premiums will increase.

The Hon. Bob Nanva: Point of order: The member sought to make an explanation under Standing Order 92, which is to explain a matter on which the member has been misquoted or misunderstood. I suggest that he is now introducing new matters into the debate.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): In regard to Standing Order 92, a member may speak a second time if their remarks are strictly confined to matters upon which they feel they have been misunderstood. I remind the member that he may not introduce new matters. I think he was skating close to moving on to new matters.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I acknowledge that, but it goes to— [*Time expired.*]

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (18:29): In reply: I thank all members who contributed to this debate. I am so glad I brought this motion because the Government has now admitted it. It is an extraordinary thing. I am shocked. Firstly, we agree that the Nominal Insurer is \$600 million better off. I did not hear anyone say that was not true. No-one said anything about paragraph (2) of the motion, which says the claim valuation is going to get better by \$4.5 billion over the next 10 years. So everything in my motion is correct, despite the Government telling me that I am in some way incorrect. But that is what we expect in relation to this matter. Yes, the financial position of the scheme has improved, as we suspected. I thank Government members for the lesson on the share market! I know a lot about how investment returns work. That is why I pointed out to the Treasurer that those scheme liabilities and valuations are very much dependent on a whole bunch of things that have nothing to do with psychological injury claims.

The fact that the investment income of the scheme has such bearing on the financial position of the scheme is worth focusing on because it brings me to another point: The Treasurer continues to deliberately use the wrong numbers. Every time the Treasurer says that the scheme only has 80 cents on hand for every dollar in liabilities, or words to that effect, he is deliberately using the wrong figure. That number is called the accounting funding ratio. McDougall debunked its usefulness and recommended using the economic funding ratio, which recognises that the scheme is in fact designed to be funded below 100 per cent of the total liability because it relies on investment returns. It is also a long-tail scheme. We do not need to have all the money right now; it is meant to pay out over 20, 30 or 40 years.

Another misleading figure the Treasurer loves to trot out for conservative media outlets is the \$250,000 average claim cost of a psych injury, which is just untrue. The State Insurance Regulatory Authority tells us very clearly that the average is \$55,915, but the Government has inflated the figure by 500 per cent. This brings us back to the fact that we have a Treasurer and a Premier saying that the sky is falling and that we have a terrible situation of 80 cents in the dollar because they know the average person does not understand the complexities of the icare system. But we do. We know that it is reliant on investment returns. It is reliant on a whole bunch of

assumptions that get made. There is no moment of crisis with icare, certainly not to the extent that we suddenly have to be that cruel to the most vulnerable injured workers in our State.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bills

CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (WAR MEMORIAL OFFENCES) BILL 2025

Returned

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

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

VICTIMS RIGHTS AND VICTIMS OF CRIME COMMISSIONER BILL 2025

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2025

Returned

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

Documents

METROPOLITAN MEMORIAL PARKS CEMETERY SITES

Return to Order

The CLERK: According to the resolution of the House of Wednesday 17 September 2025, as varied on Monday 13 October 2025, I table:

- (a) A return received on Wednesday 22 October 2025 from Metropolitan Memorial Parks, together with an indexed list of documents; and
- (b) A return received on Wednesday 22 October 2025 from Metropolitan Memorial Parks of documents subject to a claim of personal information.

NSW CHILDREN'S GUARDIAN

Claim of Privilege

The CLERK: According to the resolution of the House of Wednesday 15 October 2025, I table a return received on Wednesday 22 October 2025 from The Cabinet Office, together with an indexed list of documents subject to a claim of privilege.

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

Return to Order

The CLERK: According to the resolution of the House of Wednesday 15 October 2025, I table:

- (a) A return received on Wednesday 22 October 2025 from The Cabinet Office, together with an indexed list of documents;
- (b) A return received on Wednesday 22 October 2025 from The Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of privilege; and
- (c) A return received on Wednesday 22 October 2025 from The Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of personal information.

TRANSPORT ASSETS AND WORKFORCE

Return to Order

The CLERK: According to the resolution of the House of Wednesday 10 September 2025, I table:

- (a) A return received on Wednesday 22 October 2025 from The Cabinet Office, together with an indexed list of documents;
- (b) A return received on Wednesday 22 October 2025 from The Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of privilege; and
- (c) A return received on Wednesday 22 October 2025 from The Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of personal information.

*Motions***RURAL AND REGIONAL DROUGHT ASSISTANCE**

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL (20:02): I move:

- (1) That this House notes the severe and worsening toll drought is taking on regional communities across New South Wales, and that urgent action is needed now to lessen the devastation that will only deepen in the months ahead.
- (2) That this House acknowledges that:
 - (a) as reported by *About Regional* journalist Edwina Mason on 5 October 2025, southern New South Wales's farming heartland is bracing for one of its toughest seasons in years, with adverse conditions becoming more pronounced by the day;
 - (b) the NSW Combined Drought Indicator, maintained by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, shows that almost 52 per cent of the State is now experiencing a level of drought;
 - (c) 77.8 per cent of the 15 local government areas stretching from Carrathool and Hay in the west to the Snowy Valleys, Cootamundra and Hilltops in the east are already drought affected;
 - (d) drought monitoring across all Local Land Services regions shows worsening conditions over the past year across the Central Tablelands, Central West, Murray, Riverina, south-east and western regions;
 - (e) at the Southern NSW Drought Summit, held in August, farmers and councils made clear that New South Wales producers are being left behind while other States are providing direct drought subsidies;
 - (f) farmers have expressed frustration given Victorian and South Australian producers have been dealing with the same drought conditions and their respective governments have provided them with significant support and relief, but the most the Minister for Regional New South Wales can do is release a statement saying "flexible, low-interest loans of up to \$250,000 were available";
 - (g) mayors across the most affected regions have repeatedly appealed to the Labor local government Minister and the Premier for urgent support; and
 - (h) one regional mayor has warned of a "clear disconnect between Government policy and on-ground reality", calling for drought to once again be recognised as a natural disaster in New South Wales, as farmers describe this current situation as "of a scale and magnitude never seen before".
- (3) That this House further acknowledges:
 - (a) while the Commonwealth has announced a \$27 million funding package, and the New South Wales Government provides a level of assistance and limited support services, for many communities this may already be too little, too late;
 - (b) the importance of long-term drought preparedness and water resilience programs, including:
 - (i) the Future Drought Fund, established by the former Federal Coalition Government with a \$3.9 billion investment, releasing \$100 million a year to build drought-resilient farms, landscapes and communities, supporting innovation in water conservation, grazing and agricultural technology;
 - (ii) the NSW Water Strategy, developed and released by the former New South Wales Coalition Government, the State's first 20-year plan to strengthen water security and resilience for all regions; and
 - (iii) as introduced by the former New South Wales Coalition Government, the Drought Infrastructure Fund, which afforded long-term low-interest loans of up to \$1 million to improve on-farm infrastructure in response to intensifying drought conditions, and the Government's drought relief measures between 2018 and 2021 that provided emergency short-term relief aimed at maintaining business viability during drought.
- (4) That this House calls on the Government to act immediately and decisively to deliver direct drought relief and support to regional, rural and remote communities as what is currently on offer is a drop in the ocean or, in this case, a drop in the bottom of a parched, cracked dam bed. I speak about drought again. For me, it comes from more than having read or listened to a media headline or news grab; it is direct experience. My grandparents were on the land at Hay, on the Murrumbidgee River, when I was growing up. Somehow they survived many a long, dry year, though certainly not unmarked. In the 1970s the area was a dust bowl as far as the eye could see. From 1982 into '83, that sometimes-mighty river barely trickled past, and the red sand from its dried-out bed blew back under the door and through the windows, no matter how many times we swept it out. The people of our regions have borne and suffered through so many instances. They can be so severe that they can cripple a nation and bring to its knees, as we saw with the Federation Drought at the turn of the twentieth century. In that instance, the economic saviour was a rust-free strain of wheat cultivated by a Queanbeyan grazier, William Farrer.

Drought is not new and history repeats, but what can also be repeated is good governance when dealing with such incredibly adverse conditions. Currently, that is just not happening. According to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's Combined Drought Indicator, almost 52 per cent of the State is currently in drought or on the brink. Some 12 out of 15 local government areas have been declared drought affected, stretching from the south to the east and out west. It is not, though, about stats; it is people, livelihoods and a constant struggle that is becoming more devastating by the day.

At the Southern NSW Drought Summit, held in August, almost 500 people came together—from farmers to agronomists, rural suppliers to local councillors, and politicians too—and they pleaded for help. That pleading has clearly fallen on totally deaf ears. They are not asking for sympathy; they are asking for action—like what is

occurring in Victoria and South Australia, where there is direct government drought relief as they face similar circumstances. One New South Wales beef producer described how water and feed costs have soared while pastures have vanished. Another summed up the burgeoning hardships, saying, "We're in a financial drought to follow the actual drought." In the face of all that, the Labor Government tells us it is "monitoring conditions". While it monitors, dams are turning to dust. While it reviews, the last of the topsoil is literally being scattered to the wind. As a regional mayor stated, there is a "clear disconnect between government policy and on-ground reality".

Drought is an insidious thing, which does not strike like floods or fires, but ravages slowly and perniciously. It creeps in quietly, but the signs are there, and they build and gather momentum. That is precisely what has happened and is happening throughout those areas. Yet, despite warnings from councils, producers and industry groups, the Government has failed to act decisively or adequately. The Nationals and Liberals could show them a thing or two, if they would only take it on board, because we treated drought for what it is: a natural disaster. We delivered the NSW Water Strategy, the first 20-year plan for water security across the regions. We established the Drought Infrastructure Fund, providing substantial long-term low-interest loans to improve on-farm infrastructure. We rolled out direct drought relief measures—short-term emergency assistance that kept families in their homes and the doors of businesses open.

At the national level, the former Federal Coalition Government played its part with the establishment of the significant Future Drought Fund, a \$3.9 billion investment. Yes, the Commonwealth has now announced \$27 million nationally but, seriously, that is little more than a drop in the cracked, dry bed of a parched dam. It must be backed by real, direct State support—and a \$250,000 loan scheme, personalised coaching and peer-to-peer case studies from this Labor Government just do not cut it. Regional New South Wales deserves better than Government members who constantly parrot that they are taking it seriously. Our people deserve more than pity posts on social media and photo-ops in dying paddocks. They need and deserve immediate practical support, because what is being offered is not providing a safety net. It is a mirage—a false reality—with no water and no help. We have to learn from the lessons of history how to be better prepared and more future facing. What is happening now needs to be fully faced up to and comprehensively addressed.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (20:07): I contribute to debate on the motion on behalf of the Government. We will not support the motion, and I will outline why. When we are discussing serious issues like drought—and a number of parts of the State are experiencing dry conditions, and a number of people are doing it tough—it is important that we do so with facts. Instead of just talking about things, it is important that we actually take action. That is precisely what I am doing as the Minister for Agriculture and what the Government is doing to support farmers. We are taking considered and effective action to support people who are experiencing those dry conditions.

Again, I acknowledge that in some parts of the State, some farmers are doing it tough. That is why we are focusing on targeted programs that support farmers—things that farmers have asked us for. They include the \$250 million Drought Ready and Resilient Fund, which provides low-interest loans for a range of drought mitigation supports and infrastructure. We have recently announced a \$43 million joint package with the Federal Government to continue the very popular Farm Business Resilience Program, which provides up-to-date information for farmers making decisions. To fob it off as peer-to-peer discussions when it is up-to-date, proper advice and information from experts to assist people with decision-making is ignorant at best. That \$43 million of the recently announced fund gets us to nearly \$300 million on the table. Farmers experiencing these conditions can apply for that support to get through this period.

Drought adoption officers have delivered 306 farm visits, 474 workshops and over 1,500 one-to-one engagements since July 2023. There is \$18 million for the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program, which builds capacity. Mental health support is essential to support people who are doing it tough and assist them to make decisions about their businesses with clearer minds in stressful times. All of this support is available in a package on the DroughtHub website. The member is right about stats not necessarily meaning anything to people who are hurting, but the stats in this motion are also factually incorrect. In fact, 27 per cent of the State is currently drought affected and 0.1 per cent is in drought. That part of the State is doing it tough. Again, there is nearly \$300 million of support available, which I encourage people to apply for. There is very serious money and support available that farmers can take advantage of.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (20:10): I associate myself with this motion. Back in early May I was out in Wagga.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Did you send me a note?

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I did not send you a note. I was there to meet a great bloke and local farmer from out there, James Gooden. I remember meeting him at the end of the last Parliament when the Hon. Wes Fang, the Hon. Rod Roberts and I were out there for a New South Wales farmers conference. When I went out to his farm it had lush green paddocks. Fast forward to early May this year and it is now barren dirt. It is quite a stark contrast. That is how quickly things can change in the bush and in our rural communities. I will repeat what I said when I spoke about this in May: Farmers are not calling for more debt or low-interest loans. One of the things they are telling me is "Give us some freight subsidies." That is a practical solution to deal with drought which can get feed to a farmer's stock and then get that stock to the saleyard if they have to destock. Freight subsidies are a concrete way to assist farmers that is not just more debt.

The other thing farmers are calling for is the same thing that my party has been calling for, at least for the past six years that I have been a member of this House. They want a structured response to drought rather than ad hoc announcements of funds and money that are sporadically distributed. They are after a structured response to drought that is coordinated between the State Government and Federal Government that gives farmers certainty about what support will be triggered from the State at a certain point and what support will be triggered from the Feds at another point. Farmers want certainty and a structured response, not ad hoc announcements that are made when the media cycle is slow and local media need something to pad out the week. This is unfortunately something we have said to both the former Government and this Government. I cannot support this motion. To do so would be an endorsement of the last Government and would say it did a good job.

The Hon. Wes Fang: You're backing Labor?

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: This Government has not done a stellar job either. I will also not endorse it and say it has done a good job. Frankly, I will not support or be against this motion, because neither side has set the world on fire with its response to drought or its support for farmers.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (20:13): I indicate The Greens position that droughts are awful and destructive. They wreck communities and cause untold damage to the natural environment. They are becoming more severe and frequent as a direct result of burning coal that has been dug up in this State. The awfulness of drought cannot be separated from its causes. The Opposition and the Government should not play political point-scoring games while communities and the environment bear the brunt of the suffering. I seek to amend the motion. Therefore, I move:

That the question be amended by:

- (1) In paragraph (2) omitting all words after "That this House acknowledges that" and inserting instead "the climate crisis is making extreme weather events more frequent and more severe, including droughts."
- (2) Omitting paragraph (3).
- (3) In paragraph (4) omitting all words after "support to regional, rural and remote communities".

The Bureau of Meteorology report *State of the Climate 2024* was horrifying, shocking and very telling. The key points in the document are:

- Australia's climate has warmed by an average of 1.51 ± 0.23 °C since national records began in 1910.
- Sea surface temperatures have increased by an average of 1.08 °C since 1900.
- The warming has led to an increase in the frequency of extreme heat events over land and in the oceans.
- In the south-west of Australia there has been a decrease of around 16% in April to October rainfall since 1970. Across the same region, May to July rainfall has seen the largest reduction, by around 20% since 1970.
- In the south-east of Australia, there has been a decrease of around 9% in April to October rainfall since 1994.
- Heavy short-term rainfall events are becoming more intense.
- There has been a decrease in streamflow at most gauges across Australia since 1970.

The NSW Nationals passed a motion at its State conference in Coffs Harbour that called on the party to reinstate its full support for the use of coal in power generation, keep coal power stations open and explore building new high efficiency, low emission coal-fired power stations in the future. If The Nationals are serious about standing up for the regions and minimising the catastrophic impacts of drought, then they should get off the coal train and realise what that means for drought.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (20:16): I thank my colleague the Hon. Nichole Overall for bringing forward a motion about an issue that is having a huge impact in the area where she lives. I get that it is easy for people who live in an area that is not impacted by drought to forget that people in affected areas are suffering. That seems to have happened for a lot of members who live in Sydney. We have heard from the Minister about all of the great things the Government is doing.

I was listening to comments that the Mayor of Greater Hume Council made on *Country Hour* in response to the package provided by the Minister. She summed up her feelings about this support in one word: hideous. That was the actual word that Mayor Lea Parker used to describe the support that this Government has provided. She said it was hideous. The mayor naturally sought to have a meeting with the Minister so she could put forward what is actually needed by her community rather than what the Minister is telling the community it needs. According to the mayor, the meeting was cancelled 48 hours before it was due to take place.

I get that these things happen. A lot can happen in Parliament and things can change. But meetings with people who need them have been cancelled at the last minute too many times. One of the key factors we need to be aware of when considering the impacts of drought is that it does not only impact farmers. It is about so much more than that. Drought affects entire communities. Farmers spend a lot of money in our towns. There are the family expenses and groceries, of course, but there is also the money they spend on farming enterprises. They buy new tyres, spend money at the mechanic and buy fencing gear. These things slow up in drought when farmers do not have money to spend, and that impacts the entire community. Fewer dollars are being put into local tills, and there are fewer opportunities for casual workers and contractors to earn an income.

The impact is not just financial. The social impacts are huge at a time when people need a social outlet. Drought conditions can come with feelings of helplessness, heightened by the relentlessness and all-consuming nature of the conditions. At those times, an outlet is needed, such as watching the footy for the day, doing a park run or playing a game of cards with friends. Just when those things are critical, they are hardest to come by because the organisations and the people who run them struggle. We need to make sure that we support the entire community. Once again, on an issue that is hurting regional New South Wales, we need to see better from the Government and this Minister. There are some tips in the motion that might help.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK (20:19): I associate myself with the motion and support my colleague the Hon. Mark Banasiak. The drought is biting hard across regional New South Wales. Nearly 52 per cent of the State is now affected by drought and conditions are deteriorating rapidly in areas like the Riverina, the Central West, the south-east and the western regions. Farmers are facing one of the toughest seasons in years, and the ripple effects are being felt well beyond the farm gate. This is not just an agricultural crisis; it is a community crisis. Drought impacts every facet of rural life. Stockfeed suppliers, transport operators, machinery dealers, local cafes and pubs all depend on the health of the agricultural sector. When the land dries up, so do the livelihoods of entire towns. The toll is not just economic; it is deeply personal.

According to the New South Wales Government's climate impact data, drought is linked to increased mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression and, tragically, suicide. The risk among rural men aged 30 to 49 rises by up to 15 per cent during a drought. They are our neighbours, friends, family members and people who need not just financial support but also compassion and connection. Some areas may appear green after recent rainfall, but we must not be fooled. It may well be a green drought—the surface may look healthy, but subsoil moisture is depleted, pasture growth is shallow and water storage remains critically low. Farmers know all too well that you cannot feed stock on colour alone.

As if that were not enough, we now face the growing threat of bushfires. With dry fuel loads and unpredictable weather, farmers are facing a double whammy: pasture that may just be beginning to recover, only to be wiped out by wildfire. The emotional and financial toll of rebuilding after drought is immense. To then lose that fragile recovery to fire is devastating. We need to ask ourselves why this happens again and again. Farmers are facing a veritable groundhog day. No matter who is in government, the pattern repeats: Drought hits, communities cry out and the response arrives too late or too little. People in the bush are tired of that cycle. They deserve better.

As if the groundhog day were not enough, the second whammy is now joined by a third: a veritable plague of hogs. Feral pigs are ravaging farmland, tearing up crops, destroying fences and even preying on lambs. It is not just a nuisance; it is a biosecurity threat. Yet in places like the Upper Hunter, aerial shooting programs have targeted deer in areas not severely affected by drought, while pigs run rampant in regions already under siege. This is not just a criticism; it is a call for a smarter, more regionally responsive deployment of resources. Long-term resilience must also remain front of mind. Programs like the Future Drought Fund, the NSW Water Strategy and the Drought Resilience Innovation fund, initiated by previous governments, offer a blueprint for building drought-proof farms and communities. Let us build on those foundations and not just reinvent them.

The Hon. WES FANG (20:22): I support the motion moved by my good friend and colleague the Hon. Nichole Overall. I take note of a few contributions to the debate. The first is that of the Minister, which was flabbergasting. She said that some parts of the State are dry. That was an interesting word to use because a lot of this State is in drought. We have heard differing figures; I understand that. The motion gives a figure of around 40 per cent. The Hon. Robert Borsak just mentioned a figure over 50 per cent. The Minister says that 0.1 per cent

of the State is in drought. I challenge the Minister to come to my part of the world—the southern Riverina—and say that on the main street of any of the small towns along the great irrigation areas of southern New South Wales.

In fact, the Minister and I were in Deniliquin only a couple of weeks ago, and she did not make any mention of it there. There would be a riot in the street if the Minister said that only 0.1 per cent of the State is in drought at the moment. Southern New South Wales is hurting, yet the Minister is telling this House that she is providing the assistance that farmers are asking for. Other members made the point that farmers are asking for a lot more than the Government has put on the table.

Farmers need assistance with fodder—to find fodder, to transport fodder and to feed their stock. When the Coalition was in government, we had that in place. When the drought started biting earlier this year, we called for similar programs. There is still nothing like that in place now, and we are moving into what we expect will be a very dry spring and an extremely dry summer. I digress a bit to talk about energy policy. The Minister for Energy will not admit that she needs to keep Eraring open to keep our grid stable. There may be a policy to introduce new high efficiency, low emissions coal-fired power stations, but in circumstances where the Minister has to keep Eraring open, it will reduce emissions— [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (20:26): The Government will support the amendment moved by Ms Sue Higginson because it is important to acknowledge that what is happening with our climate across New South Wales, Australia and the world is having an impact on farmers. It is causing dry conditions, drought and the floods we have seen across the north of the State to occur more often than they have throughout history. That is important to acknowledge. As I have outlined, the nearly \$300 million that I note the National Party called "hideous"—

The Hon. Wes Fang: Point of order—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Just sit down.

The Hon. Wes Fang: I acknowledge the interjection of the Minister. The Minister for Agriculture just indicated that the National Party said that. No, it was a local mayor who called your drought package hideous, Minister.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): Order! There is no point of order. I remind the member that he is on two calls to order. If he wishes to take part in any future divisions this evening, he will cease interjecting. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: To wrap up, we will support the amendment because it is important to acknowledge that broader factors are at play while the Government works through the kinds of support people need. Almost \$300 million is on the table to get people through this period, and I encourage them to reach out for it. It is not helpful when members pretend that there is no support. The whole Parliament should be telling farmers and singing from the rooftops, "There is support available. Please reach out for it. Please use it." The Government acknowledges what is going on with the climate. We are factoring in how to support farmers and the rest of the community well into the future. Part of this motion from the Nats calls on the Government to re-establish drought as a natural disaster, yet they were the ones who removed it.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (20:28): I was not going to make a contribution to this debate. This could have been a civil debate. It certainly started out that way, and it should have remained that way, but for the contribution from the Hon. Wes Fang. The Greens moved a simple amendment to acknowledge that climate change is one of the catastrophic factors adding to drought. Yet the National Party members, who are probably dragging their Liberal colleagues down with them, are the main climate wreckers.

The Hon. Stephen Lawrence: The coalmining party.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: They want to coalmine everything; they want to burn everything. They are anti-renewable energy. They want to make the climate crisis worse, and if we pursue the climate-wrecking policies of the National Party that are now splitting the Federal Coalition, we will have more drought. We will be in a position where everybody is worse off. Insurance rates will rise, and farmers will not have crops. The National Party should get on board with renewable energy, which will enable us to fix the climate problem.

It is extraordinary that the National Party has not learnt from its climate-wrecking policies of the past decade. It now wants to revert back to this extraordinary position so extreme that the main proponent in the party, Barnaby Joyce, will not even be in the party soon because he is so extreme. He is looking to leave and join the kooks and crackpots in One Nation. Even the Hon. Rod Roberts, the Hon. Mark Latham and the Hon. Tania Mihailuk left that shitshow, but the National Party is completely signed up to it because their members are utter

kooks in terms of their climate policy. I would have thought they are better than that, but instead they will drag down the entire Coalition. One would expect the National Party to be the party that supported farmers and said, "Renewable energy will help you out of drought."

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

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: But the National Party is not doing that at all. In the interests of time, I leave my contribution there. I commend the amendment to the House.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (20:30): I make a brief contribution to the debate.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Give your party leader a go, mate.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You're on two calls, mate. That is all I would say.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): Order! I remind the Hon. Wes Fang that he is on two calls to order.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I make a very short contribution. No-one in this place thinks that drought is a good thing or that the landholders who are experiencing it are not doing it tough. There are differing views on how the Government supports them. Let us talk about Barwon, the Murray and Orange. First, let us talk about most of the State, where the National Party no longer represents anyone because the people there do not support its views or approaches. Secondly, let us talk about climate change. Members opposite who continue to support a fossil fuel-based future for our energy system are consigning the very people they say they represent to harsher droughts, harder floods and more disasters.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): Order! The Hon. Wes Fang will come to order.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No-one thinks that the drought that people are experiencing is good. But let us be honest about what we are experiencing in terms of extreme weather events. Half the State is so close to flooding if there is a large dump of water, which is coming as a result of a warming climate. Then we have people in the same State who need support because of drought. It is just not reasonable to pretend this is not an issue, particularly when members opposite want to see more fossil fuels.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL (20:32): In reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate, including Minister Moriarty, the Hon. Mark Banasiak, Ms Sue Higginson, the Hon. Scott Barrett, the Hon. Robert Borsak, the Hon. Wes Fang, the Hon. Cameron Murphy and Minister Sharpe. In the end this is about the people—those suffering—and it is about providing solutions. The Minister has said that, from Labor's perspective, the ongoing drought action is considered and effective. The Nationals did not suggest that the action was hideous but suggested that those who are suffering through the consequences of drought are the people that need to be considered. We should not be having slanging matches with each other; it is about listening to what they are going through. I also agree with the Hon. Mark Banasiak that we need a structured, strategic plan to futureproof our regions. We need to do better.

The Drought Summit presented a clear road map of short-, medium- and long-term measures. But the Government seems to be scattering a few seeds on stony ground—a program here and a loan there, meaning debt—hoping something might take hold long enough to look good in a headline and that there will be anything left to take root and rebloom, given all that has and is being endured. I point to a number of matters that the Minister referred to. Talking about statistics, there might need to be a review of the statistics on the ground. Otherwise, I ask to be pointed in the direction of how the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development got the statistics wrong about how much of the State is currently in drought or on the brink.

Regarding the \$43.2 million investment in the joint announcement between the State and Federal governments and the peer-to-peer case studies that the Minister commented on, I note that in the media release that is exactly what this money is intended for—personalised coaching, workshops, digital learning and peer-to-peer case studies. I am interested in what they are. Is that simply talking to others who are suffering in the same way? Some of the support that the Minister is referencing in the \$300 million total that has been touted includes business counselling on the current website. On that is "Business Connect, a free service providing advice to all small businesses in New South Wales". Well, it did, but the Labor Government axed it on 30 September. So why is it still listed, and what will it be replaced with?

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Nichole Overall has moved a motion, to which Ms Sue Higginson has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes19
 Noes14
 Majority.....5

AYES

Boyd	Higginson	Murphy (teller)
Buckingham	Hurst	Nanva (teller)
Buttigieg	Jackson	Primrose
Cohn	Kaine	Ruddick
Donnelly	Lawrence	Sharpe
Faehrmann	Moriarty	Suvaal
Graham		

NOES

Banasiak	Farlow	Munro
Barrett	Latham	Overall
Borsak	MacDonald	Rath (teller)
Carter	Merton	Roberts
Fang (teller)	Mitchell	

PAIRS

D'Adam	Ward
Houssos	Tudehope
Mookhey	Maclaren-Jones

Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.

Bills

KOSCIUSZKO WILD HORSE HERITAGE REPEAL BILL 2025

Second Reading Speech

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (20:45): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am proud to introduce the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Repeal Bill 2025 to this place, a necessary and long-overdue piece of legislation that seeks to turn the page on a shameful chapter in our State's history. In doing so, I pay tribute to Dr Joe McGirr, the Independent member for Wagga Wagga, whose electorate covers over one-third of Kosciuszko National Park and who developed this bill and ensured its passage through the Legislative Assembly with cross-party support from Labor, the Liberal Party, Independents and The Greens. Dr McGirr was supported in this by Labor member for Monaro, Steve Whan, and Liberal member for Albury, Justin Clancy. Their electorates cover the other two-thirds of the park. Independent member for Murray, Helen Dalton, also gave a stirring speech in support of this legislation in recognition that what happens to the headwaters of the Murray and Murrumbidgee directly affects her electorate.

At the outset, let us be clear: This repeal bill has been written and proudly championed by a cross-party alliance of local MPs whose communities are most impacted by the destruction caused by feral horses. Both the member for Monaro and the member for Wagga Wagga went to the last election actively campaigning on a commitment to deal with the out-of-control feral horse population and repeal this law. They won their seats easily. I am pleased to be asked by Dr McGirr to shepherd this bill through this House and ensure it becomes law. Five years ago, this Parliament made a decision that defied science, logic and the principles of conservation that have guided us for decades. Barilaro's feral horse protection law, the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018, elevated an introduced, invasive species above the native wildlife, alpine rivers and landscapes that the Kosciuszko National Park was established to protect.

I was in this place when the 2018 bill was introduced by then Deputy Premier John Barilaro, and I remember the absurdity of the debate and the frustration of so many members of The Nationals and the Liberal

Party that they were being forced to push through a law that had virtually no friends in either the Parliament or the community. It was opposed then by Labor, and I am pleased that the Government has indicated its support for this repeal bill now. It was sadly supported by the Liberal Party in a deal which they have come to regret, and I was very pleased to hear the Leader of the Opposition, Mark Speakman, say in the other place that he regrets that his plan to reduce horse numbers to 600 was never implemented and also say:

... the Liberals will support this bill because it ... is about stewardship of our natural environment and taking a science-based approach to managing an invasive species.

The current law is, in essence, a protection racket for feral animals, driven by political interests rather than environmental stewardship. Let us recall that it was a bill drafted by Peter Cochran to protect his horseriding business interests and introduced by Barilaro to protect his local political interests. Back in 2018, I said:

The long title of this bill should be amended. This is not a bill about protecting our heritage or the Kosciuszko National Park; this is a bill to protect feral animals and destroy Kosciuszko National Park in order to protect the business interests of Mr Peter Cochran, The Nationals donor who is sitting 50 metres away outside this Chamber watching the debate.

It is telling that since then the Coalition has been turfed out of both the Monaro and Wagga Wagga electorates, and Mr Cochran has abandoned the National Party and stood instead as a One Nation candidate.

Kosciuszko National Park is the absolute pinnacle of our heritage. It is a fragile, ancient and profoundly unique landscape. It is the rooftop of our nation, the headwaters of our three great southern rivers—the Murray, the Murrumbidgee and the Snowy. Its ecosystems, from the snow gum woodlands to the alpine herbfields and moss beds, are found nowhere else on Earth. It is a landscape that has been under assault, not by malice but by mistake—a mistake codified into law in 2018. It ignored the catastrophic environmental damage caused by feral horses: the trampling of delicate wetlands, the pollution of pristine waterways, and the erosion of fragile alpine soils. As my colleague and friend Dr Joe McGirr so eloquently stated in his speech, it is a matter of observable fact that these animals are harming the park. They are not a romantic part of our heritage. They are an ecological disaster.

This observable fact is backed up by the science. The NSW Threatened Species Scientific Committee has listed habitat degradation and loss by feral horses—brumbies, wild horses—as a key threatening process under the Biodiversity Conservation Act. The Federal Government's Threatened Species Scientific Committee has described feral horses as an imminent threat to the Albanese Government's commitment to prevent new extinctions of plants and animals and stated that feral horses may be the crucial factor that causes final extinction of 12 alpine species. The argument that they are linked to our Gallipoli diggers has been debunked by the Australian War Memorial. The claim is a myth—a piece of misplaced romanticism that has been used to justify a destructive policy. We cannot allow myth to triumph over science and reason. Would we have a wild rabbit protection Act just because we used to have a rabbit fur industry and we have a rugby league team called the Rabbitohs? Or, as alluded to in the Legislative Assembly debate, would we loosen stock theft and robbery laws because *Waltzing Matilda* and Ned Kelly are so important to Australian culture?

What is most remarkable about the bill before us today is the broad, cross-party consensus that it represents. Unlike the 2018 Act, which was deeply partisan legislation, the bill brings together members from all sides of the political spectrum. This is not a partisan issue; it is a matter of responsible governance and environmental integrity. I acknowledge the work of our now Minister for the Environment, Penny Sharpe, who has shown remarkable courage and leadership on this issue. I recall that she introduced a similar repeal bill in 2019, recognising the grave error made by the previous Government. At the time, she stated that the 2018 Act "cast aside over 75 years of bipartisan consensus on the best way to manage the park" and that it "threw out over two years of work that had been done by the former Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Mark Speakman".

The Hon. Wes Fang: Who's he? I've never heard of him.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: I acknowledge the interjection of the Hon. Wes Fang, who said he has never heard of the Leader of the Opposition while on two calls to order. That the Minister, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, is now the one to finally get the horse numbers down is testament to her steadfast commitment to the park and to evidence-based policy. I hope she will take the consensus on this bill as an opportunity to go further and properly protect the park from feral horses. I also acknowledge the advocacy of former Liberal environment Ministers Matt Kean and James Griffin, as well as the important role played by Federal Liberal Leader Sussan Ley when she was environment Minister in forcing the State's hand. Their actions demonstrate that protecting our national parks is a shared responsibility, not a political football.

That is also revealed by the breadth of respected organisations that made a submission that was supportive of the amendment to allow aerial shooting of the feral horses, including RSPCA NSW, the Australian Veterinary Association, the Australian Academy of Science, the New South Wales Government Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee, the Brungle Tumut Local Aboriginal Land Council, the Public Service Association, the

Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Community Advisory Panel, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council and the Southern Ranges, Greater Sydney, Northern Inland and the Hunter Central Coast national parks regional advisory committees, the Royal Zoological Society of NSW, the Invasive Species Council, the Biodiversity Council, and Bushwalking NSW. In particular, I also pay tribute to the years of advocacy by scientists, environmental groups, Indigenous voices, and concerned citizens from all walks of life. We would not be here today without the community campaigns led by the Invasive Species Council and Reclaim Kosci. They have refused to turn away from this issue and they have forced us to act.

I now turn briefly to an explanation of how the bill works. This bill is designed to be a clear and professional fix. It repeals the flawed 2018 Act in its entirety and, importantly, it brings the management of feral horses under the established National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974. This will allow our professional and well-respected national parks staff to manage feral horses like any other pest species, using science-based methods. While this bill is a vital step forward, I must acknowledge that for political reasons it allows the current management plan to continue until 2027. This plan, while a vast improvement on the previous inaction, is not a perfect solution. It is the product of a political deal between John Barilaro and Matt Kean, not a scientific consensus. The bill aims to reduce horse numbers but still allows 3,000 horses to remain across 220,000 hectares, which is 32 per cent of the park. This includes critical areas like the Pilot and Byadbo wilderness areas on the Victorian border, the Kiandra-Long Plain regions in the north, and the Snowy Plain north of Lake Jindabyne. That is a problem. Leaving 3,000 horses in those vast areas is locking in environmental damage, locking in expensive management costs and, paradoxically, locking in the necessity of culling.

While we have made progress, this current plan is not the end goal. It is a temporary measure. At a minimum, the next plan must be a truly science-based one that drastically reduces the population target. This would minimize the environmental impact and reduce the need for widespread, costly and distressing management. The choice before us is simple: We can enshrine a myth, or we can restore a masterpiece. We can protect a feral animal, or we can protect Australian animals, Australian rivers and Australian landscapes. I commend the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Repeal Bill 2025 to the House.

Second Reading Debate

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (20:56): I speak in support of the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Repeal Bill 2025. This bill will restore integrity to the way in which we manage our national parks. It is a bill that puts science, conservation and community back at the heart of decision-making in relation to our parks. The Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018 was a mistake. It gave unprecedented statutory protection to a feral species in one of Australia's most ecologically significant landscapes. It sidelined expert advice, ignored decades of scientific evidence and elevated the interests of a single stakeholder group above the broader public good. In 2018 I stood in this place and said that the Act would "cast aside the National Parks and Wildlife Act in favour of an introduced species long recognised as contributing to and causing severe damage to Australia's fragile alpine environments". That warning was not heeded. Today, we have the opportunity to correct that error.

Let us be clear: Wild horses are not native to this land. They are an introduced species. Their unchecked proliferation has caused extensive damage to Kosciuszko National Park—trampling vegetation, eroding riverbanks, destroying wetlands, degrading water quality and threatening endangered native species like the corroboree frog, the broad-toothed rat and the stocky galaxias fish. Labor has always stood for the protection of Kosciuszko. Labor governments have a proud conservation history at Kosciuszko. The McKell Government established the Kosciusko State Park in 1944, the Cahill Government instigated the 1957 soil conservation works on the main range, the Wran Government adopted the 1982 plan of management that prevented further damaging grazing in the park, and the Iemma Government approved the 2006 plan of management. That legacy continues today with the New South Wales Government taking the necessary steps to get wild horse numbers under control.

Under this Government, we are already seeing progress. The wild horse population has significantly reduced over the past 18 months using best practice humane methods. I have seen with my own eyes how the park is starting to recover. When horse numbers were out of control, waterways had been trampled so much that they had turned to bogs of mud with no vegetation and murky water. Now these muddy bogs have been replaced with native grasses that provide important habitat for our furry friends like the broad-toothed rat and, importantly, the water runs crystal clear again. This is only the beginning. Recovery will take time, possibly decades. That is why this bill matters. It removes the statutory protection for horses and integrates their management into the existing plan of management for Kosciuszko National Park. It ensures that decisions are made transparently, accountably and in line with the broader conservation goals of the park. This is a managed transition, not a sudden shift. If the bill is passed, the current target of reducing population numbers to 3,000 by mid-2027 will remain in place.

Importantly, the bill does not disregard the cultural value that some people place on wild horses, and we have to be honest about that. It does not call for their eradication, and it does not end rehoming opportunities. It

does remove the special treatment the horses have received under standalone legislation, and it returns their management to the proper statutory framework. The Government is committed to continuing the investigation into the feasibility of fertility control for horses. I know that the Hon. Emma Hurst has been very interested in that, while she disagrees with what we are doing with the horses. But that work continues, and the outcome of the bill has no bearing on the impact of those investigations.

The amendments moved by the Government in the other place ensure that the community advisory panel will remain in place throughout both the transitional and implementation phases. That panel has played a vital role in advising me on community views regarding wild horse management. Its continued involvement is essential to ensure that the transition is smooth, effective and informed by the people who care deeply about the future of the park. I thank the community advisory panel for all of the work it has undertaken. There are differing views within that group, but it has managed those differences in a fair, open, inclusive and transparent process.

The amendments also provided additional time for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to finalise the amended plan of management. The timing of that transition, falling after the next State election, makes it prudent to allow the public service to complete its work thoroughly and without political pressure. In summary, the Government supports this bill as it puts Kosciuszko National Park back in line with every other national park across New South Wales. It lets science and sense guide our decisions, and it restores the integrity of our national parks. The Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018 has no place in modern conservation. It should and must be repealed, and we must recommit to protecting one of Australia's most precious natural places.

I acknowledge a number of people and organisations who have been involved with this, in particular the Invasive Species Council and Reclaim Kosci. I thank those who have worked in the community for a very long time, having some very hard conversations about how we manage horses in Kosciuszko. I particularly acknowledge Richard Swain, who has provided me with advice, taken me through the park, shown me the damage and articulated very carefully and importantly the ways in which we should be able to protect it.

I also acknowledge the local members who support the bill. I particularly acknowledge Dr Joe McGirr, the member for Wagga Wagga, for his unfailing support for the Government to do the right thing for that precious landscape. It has not been easy to make the case for doing the work to remove the horses. It has involved death threats, the police, and threats to our families. I know that the member for Wagga Wagga has experienced that, as have others, and I acknowledge his courage and his support for me in doing what is necessary. He is in the gallery tonight. I am not sure how long it has been since he went to the park, but I have been for a look, and the change in the landscape is already profound. No-one could look at the before and after photos without realising that removing hard-hoofed animals from that fragile landscape has improved the water and the environment. We need to do that.

I also give a shout-out to the member for Albury and the member for Monaro. This is their local area and their precious park. They know how important it is for the local economy. Before we even talk about conserving it, it is worth millions of dollars to the local economy in jobs and support as people visit this very special place. The members know the damage that was caused by the horses, and they have been prepared to stand up. We have not had that before, and it provided support for the Government to take the difficult decisions that it has.

I place on record my thanks to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, particularly the staff who have done the hard work looking after that park over many years. They saw the damage happening in the park and felt they were not able to do anything about it. I thank the staff who do the aerial shooting. They are very skilled, careful and thoughtful people doing the tough job that we asked them to do under difficult circumstances. Let us remember that staff of the National Parks and Wildlife Service had a severed horse head thrown on the front doorstep of their office. They have had issues with their families' and their own security and protection, and they have dealt with that admirably and carefully. I give a shout-out to them. When I go there and speak to the rangers, the field officers and those who have cared for the park for most of their careers, I see their relief and gratitude at being able to protect the park. I encourage people to talk to those national park officers. They have an important story to tell, and their pride in being able to care for that place, as we ask them to do, is something that everyone should understand.

Finally, I know there is disagreement about this issue, and it has at various times been a pretty poisonous debate, but what this bill does is pretty straightforward. It puts horses in the same category as all other invasive species in the way that we manage them on conservation lands under the National Parks and Wildlife Act. It is as simple as that. We still have to do the same work in the same categories because we must tackle the rest of the invasive species. Whether it is foxes, cats, dogs, pigs, goats, or camels in some parts of the State, this is a really important way that we manage them.

There are members on the other side of the House who constantly say the Government is not doing enough on a range of matters. We are doing a lot, but we accept that we need to do more. One of the best things we can

do for the environment is tackle invasive species and the harm they cause. I have not even talked about weeds. We could talk about weeds for a really long time as well. The point is that the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act does not make any sense, and it should not be part of New South Wales law. I look forward to its repeal and again thank those who have done the work that has allowed us to bring this bill and build a consensus across most of the Parliament to get it done. I commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL (21:06): On behalf of The Nationals I speak against the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Repeal Bill 2025. The Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018 was passed by the New South Wales Parliament under the former Coalition Government to achieve a balance of conservation and culture and to humanely and transparently manage one of Australia's iconic living symbols, the Snowy Mountains brumbies. The Minister for the Environment has herself acknowledged that those horses are embedded in our national consciousness. Books, films and artworks celebrate them. Rugby teams and pubs are named after them. Regional tourism thrives because of them. It is not just a 135-year-old poem for which they are most famed, and that poem is inaccurately suggested to be the sole underpinning of their significance.

The existing Act is not about protecting pests; it is about preserving a piece of our national identity that is linked to the past and is a continuation of the story of families, livelihoods, identity and community. Those horses have been a part of the landscape for almost two centuries, but it is really only in the past two decades that the management of the Snowy Mountains brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park has become such a fractious issue. This is not only about those who live, work and know the region. It is for Australians across the nation and beyond our shores. This in itself reflects the regard and legacy of those horses in the annals of our history. Despite claims to the contrary, this is not a matter of misplaced romanticism or nostalgia; it is one of fact, science, culture and heritage.

Do members know that the Snowy Mountain brumbies are the only animal population in the entire world formally identified as having significant heritage value? Recognised under the Burra Charter and the National Heritage List criteria, the Kosciuszko brumbies stand alone as a living treasure and a cultural attribute, a bridge between our past and the communities that have cared for them for generations. Yet these very same and acknowledged heritage horses have been decimated through aerial shooting under the authorisation of this Labor Government that promised it would not do that due to the recognition of their cultural importance, which we heard about again this evening. Now the Government seeks to repeal that recognition, not because of new evidence or environmental catastrophe, but because of ideology and misleading information.

In 2001, research commissioned by the National Parks and Wildlife Service [NPWS] and undertaken by ecologists from University of Canberra estimated there to be between 3,000 to 3,500 horses in the entire Kosciuszko National Park. With other known horse habitat areas not included in the aerial survey, that means that the number was likely closer to between 4,000 and 4,500. Those numbers are comparable to today, yet back then there was no claims of a scourge and no call for eradication. In 2003 the NPWS drafted a plan entitled *Horse management plan for the alpine area of Kosciuszko National Park January 2003 – January 2005* that made that point clearly. The plan proposed the removal of a tiny number of horses from alpine locations—above 1,800 metres—and the immediate feeder areas only. NPWS ensured that the local community were involved in developing that plan and had local volunteers help trap the horses.

How things change. NPWS acknowledged that the rest of the park inhabited by brumbies were historically former grazing runs, mining areas and Snowy Hydro corridors, where horses had existed for generations. Then came the 2003 bushfires, which killed a large percentage of them. The local residents adjoining the park have long recognised that the brumbies bring benefits such as keeping dense bush and grasslands open, reducing fuel loads and maintaining the character of the high country. The horses are not invaders; they are descendants of the stock that helped open, support and sustain this country. As documented in government-commissioned and independent studies, the brumbies are intrinsic to communities' sense of wellbeing, and their removal would result in a strong sense of loss. As yet another indication, an online petition supporting the brumbies drew over 210,000 signatures, compared with 11,000 signatures for repeal. That overwhelming public sentiment cannot be dismissed.

Reports from the Independent Technical Reference Group, which ran from 2014 to 2016, and the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Scientific Advisory Panel, which ran from 2018 to 2021, had advised and recommended that management must be based on localised environmental impacts and that removal should not be based on flawed numbers. Between 2019 and 2024 official NPWS counts fluctuated wildly, from around 12,000 to 25,000. An independent expert biostatistician gave detailed evidence exposing fundamental flaws in the population survey methodology. Her testimony highlighted that the aerial survey model was both statistically unsound and, in many cases, biologically implausible. If the Government is planning lethal management not only based on flawed estimates but against its own scientific advice, that is not science; it is administrative convenience.

I say again that it was not local advocates or politicians who declared the brumbies heritage icons. It was independent consultants commissioned by the NPWS. In 2014 to 2015 it engaged Context Pty Ltd and

GML Heritage from Victoria to undertake an independent assessment of wild horse values within Kosciuszko National Park. Their report found that the brumbies met five of the nine National Heritage List criteria under the Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975, when only one of the criteria is needed to qualify for inclusion on the National Heritage List. The report concluded that the wild horses of Kosciuszko National Park are a living link to Australia's pioneering, pastoral and military history and are valued by the community for their association with the Snowy Mountains stockmen and the legends of the high country.

The New South Wales heritage commissioner described them as the most recognised wild horses in Australia and said that their image is inseparable from the nation's identity. No other animal species in the country has ever received that level of formal heritage assessment. In the confirmation of the heritage status of the Snowy brumbies by the Government's own commissioned research, there was no ambiguity. The Government's own documentation confirmed that the horses are, and deserve to remain, formally recognised for their cultural, social and historical importance. As Dr Jane Lennon, AM, the Australian heritage commissioner stated in 2002:

The pastoral theme as expressed in Australia's highest mountains has strong social value ... demonstrated in the very active continuation and celebration of its traditions and the respect for its physical remains, including its pastoral landscapes, wild horses and stock routes.

It referenced *The Man from Snowy River* and noted that the social value of the theme is one of national importance. It went on to state:

The most celebrated wild horses in the Australian pastoral tradition are those associated with Kosciuszko, which have to some extent become a national icon, along with their riders and musterers, as demonstrated in literature, art, film and the "Man from Snowy River" sequence that opened the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney.

That independent statement from one of Australia's foremost heritage authorities cements what the Government already knew: The Snowy brumbies are not merely local curiosities; they are national icons, woven into the identity of this country. In backing this up from a local perspective alone, in *Region Riverina* online news from the Wagga Wagga electorate, on 16 October 2025, a poll on the member's bill to repeal the Wild Horse Heritage Act found that 79 per cent of people opposed the idea.

From a scientific perspective, the brumbies are also the subject of ongoing genetic and DNA research. The University of Sydney and international institutions have collected and stored brumby DNA in an international biobank for global study. That research demonstrates that Australian brumbies carry unique and valuable genetic lines, closely linked to rare Iberian breeds. That is heritage in every sense—cultural, historical and biological. Where we are now is part of a much longer story that reaches back at least as far as 2008 when the Labor Government introduced a management plan for wild horses. That 2008 plan focused on population targets. While numbers were not specified, there was no suggestion of complete eradication and the plan did not include aerial culling.

That followed the hugely controversial October 2000 aerial cull by NPWS of horses in the Guy Fawkes National Park—approved by Labor—with many left wounded and dying where they fell. Yet another aspect often overlooked is dead horse carcasses lying everywhere, including in waterways. That is not terribly environmentally friendly. The Guy Fawkes incident was similarly stated to have been an effort to reduce the impact on the park's vegetation, but instead it sparked a massive wave of public outrage and even threats of a court case. The RSPCA, after reviewing the operation, condemned the cruelty involved. The fallout was such that the Labor Government imposed a blanket ban—apparently permanent—on the aerial culling of horses.

The 2018 legislation was formulated after considerable public engagement, consultation, review and careful crafting. The Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018—which provided the legal framework for the Kosciuszko National Park wild horse heritage management plan—set a figure for the target population to ensure balance. It was to be no more than 3,000 horses by 2027. Independent assessments, NPWS and the Minister for the Environment have now all confirmed that the horse population is below that figure, in light of the fact there was another two years for this target to be reached. In other words, the management plan in place is working. There is every chance it would still have done the same without the backflip on aerial culling, given the length of time still available for following the plan as outlined.

This management strategy, one born of hard-fought consultation, review and planning, with the goal of balance and respect for environment and heritage, is succeeding and is now in such a position that it could easily continue to be maintained. While attention is fixated on the few remaining horses, Kosciuszko continues to be under far greater threat from deer, pigs, wild dogs, foxes and cats. Those pests cause significantly more damage and must be the focus of priority management when it comes to environmental protection. In the face of the cruel cost of aerial culling, when it comes to actual costs, there is ample information to hand—not least thanks to the inquiry that was conducted in this place—that aerial culling is one of the most expensive methods for dealing with such a small and targeted population.

To those who dismiss the idea of heritage management, let us look further afield. Around the world, nations celebrate their heritage animals—the Dartmoor ponies of England, the Camargue horses of France, the mustangs of the United States of America. Yet here in Australia, our most famous horses are condemned. The only wild horses formally recognised for cultural significance anywhere in the world are now the very ones marked for destruction.

The United States offers an excellent template for how it can be done. The free-roaming mustangs are recognised and managed under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. That Act declares them to be "living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West" and places them under the care of the Bureau of Land Management and the US Forest Service. Those agencies oversee herds across 10 western states, covering more than 25 million acres. They use population monitoring, adoption programs to manage sustainability and fertility control—not mass eradication. The law does not mean mustangs roam uncontrolled; it means they are managed with respect and purpose, balancing ecology with heritage. If the United States can manage its wild horses with recognition of its cultural and historic value, surely, here in New South Wales, we can do the same.

At this point, perhaps most critically, I direct attention to the fact that in the budget estimates hearing just a matter of weeks ago, the Minister for the Environment stated unequivocally, "We have no plans to eradicate all the horses." How many will the Minister guarantee will remain? I ask the Minister to continue to stand by her statement and preserve what is left of this significant breed, and to do more than that—to give the community some confidence as to how many horses the Government intends will remain, to restore the trust that has been so badly eroded throughout this entire process. Ultimately, this debate is not only about horses; it has also rapidly evolved to become one of truth, governance and public accountability. Governments cannot just attempt to erase their own record—and that of the previous Government—on an ideological whim.

The Nationals do not support the bill. Should it pass the second reading stage, we will propose amendments in Committee of the Whole to do all we can to try to make this bad and unfair bill better. There is the very real prospect that the remaining horses, including the famous Kiandra greys and other rare strains identified as having significant heritage value, will be lost to us forever. Such a loss of genetically and historically significant bloodlines would represent not only an animal welfare tragedy but also the permanent destruction of a recognised heritage asset of national importance. Ultimately, this is a matter of balance: Preserve the horses; protect the environment. The Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018 is not a token gesture; it is a balanced and responsible framework that recognises both our natural and cultural heritage, and it is working. It deserves the opportunity to continue working. We need real leadership to maintain that balance.

The Hon. EMMA HURST (21:23): I speak on behalf of the Animal Justice Party to strongly oppose the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Repeal Bill 2025. I appreciate that brumbies are beloved by many people in New South Wales and, indeed, around the world, but my primary, overriding concern has always been the wellbeing of the brumbies. As a member of the Animal Justice Party, I will never vote for a piece of legislation that will make it easier for the New South Wales Government to harm innocent, sentient animals—and that is exactly what this repeal bill will do. It will pave the way for the New South Wales Government to enact a further mass murder on the surviving horses in Kosciuszko National Park, until there is not a single survivor left.

The path to the bill has been long, bloody and sordid. When I was elected in 2019, the aerial shooting of brumbies had not been undertaken in New South Wales since the botched aerial killing at Guy Fawkes in 2000 that horrified the community and animal welfare advocates alike. However, brumbies were still being subjected to the cruel practice of being trapped and sent to knackeries, as well as ground shooting. I recall that shortly after I was elected, I heard whispers that the Hon. Penny Sharpe and Labor were planning to seek to repeal the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act—though, at that time, Labor still insisted they did not support aerial shooting. Of course, as soon as Labor was elected in 2023, it backflipped. It moved quickly to amend the Wild Horse Management Plan to allow for aerial killing, and it commenced shooting, completely ignoring an inquiry that had been set up by the Animal Welfare Committee to scrutinise that decision.

The Government was supported by the Invasive Species Council, a group obsessed with killing animals, which has led the charge behind this campaign to vilify and eradicate horses. The Invasive Species Council paid volunteers to go out and gather signatures, and used Facebook ads to collect pro-forma submissions that had been filled in by people confused by the ads themselves and by people outside of New South Wales, with many seemingly located outside of Australia. Despite the highly dubious origins of the pro forma and the lack of support it received from the residents of New South Wales, the Government was happy to use them as a cover to justify a killing campaign it had already decided would happen regardless of community and expert opposition. The animal welfare consequences of the New South Wales Government's aerial shooting campaign have been horrific. Thousands of brumbies lost their lives. The evidence clearly shows they suffered a terrifying and painful death. I will never forget the photos and videos I saw of the brumbies that were killed by aerial shooting, including

images of mares who had spontaneously aborted foals or who had been shot in the spine, whom the Government simply left to rot in the park, even in the waterways.

I have spoken to many community members who have been absolutely traumatised by what they saw in the wake of those killings. The Government has shown zero regard for the welfare of the brumbies in its relentless killing campaign. It has allowed horses to be killed with chest shots, despite knowing that chest shots do not cause instantaneous death and are associated with prolonged, agonising death. It has failed to put any limits on helicopter pursuit times, despite the RSPCA warning the Government that it is an unacceptable animal welfare risk, meaning that horses are liable to suffer from stress, exhaustion and injury prior to death. On top of that, the Government chose to allow shooting during foaling season, despite concerns from their own veterinary experts that it would considerably raise the risk of "orphaned animals suffering protracted deaths", which of course, as we know now, they did. There was evidence of foals lost from their family groups, who were open to predation or death by starvation. We saw small foals brutally killed, and horses abort in fear during the chase.

The reality is that there is no way to make aerial shooting humane or palatable to the community, but the Government argued it was a necessary evil because of the overwhelming number of horses in the park. Of course, that turned out to be untrue as well. For years, local community members and expert statisticians have been highlighting the major flaws in the methodology used by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service to estimate the number of brumbies in the park. The rate of brumby population growth that the National Parks and Wildlife Service claimed was occurring was so absurd it would have required brumbies in the park to be breeding at double the maximum population growth rate possible for wild horses.

I could go on about the many obvious problems in the population methodology used. To give one example, Ms Claire Galea, an independent statistician, gave evidence at the inquiry of how only a small number of horses had been sighted in one of the raw counts—so small in fact that the model used to estimate the number of horses could not be applied as the minimum number of horses had not been sighted. So the National Parks and Wildlife Service and its expert, Stuart Cairns, simply added together the number of horses sighted in both the 2014 and 2019 surveys. That of course created a hugely inaccurate and inflated figure that simply did not reflect the actual number of horses in the park.

If the requested requirements to apply the model have not been met, then the model cannot be applied. Every statistician knows that. Falsifying the data by adding in numbers that were not relevant so that the model can be applied means that the model was used inappropriately and that the numbers were wrong to begin with. I studied psychology at university, which included studying statistics almost every year for six years, but people do not need to be statistics experts to know that is not how statistics work. Those are "lies, damned lies, and statistics".

Still, the New South Wales Government continued to ignore genuine criticisms and calls for an independent, transparent count, and proceeded to rely on those inflated numbers to justify a mass aerial killing. That was despite the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, knowing that Labor had genuine concerns about Stuart Cairns' methodology in an inquiry held during her time in Opposition, in which the number of kangaroos was inflated. Members can see the same flawed data and methodology with the brumbies. To demonstrate just how far everything goes, I note that in October 2023, just prior to commencing aerial shooting, the Government claimed there were between 12,797 and 21,760 wild horses in the park, with a 95 per cent confidence interval. Since then, the Government says that just under 6,000 horses have been aurally shot. Yet, by the 2024 population survey, the New South Wales Government suddenly conceded that the numbers had likely dropped below 3,000 wild horses.

Doing the maths, even with the Government's own dubious numbers, there could never have been more than about 10,000 horses in the park, which is far below the lowest end of the Government's enormous population estimate. The New South Wales Government website speculates a number of causes for that sudden drop in population estimate, including that the reproduction rates of horses might not have been as high as previously estimated, or that they may have double counted the brumbies. I and other advocates said so for years, yet we were all treated like mad conspiracy theorists anytime we dared to question those population estimates. The New South Wales Government has never apologised or publicly acknowledged that it was wrong. The probable reason it has not is that it would mean that there was never a justification for aerial shooting. The numbers were exaggerated. The Government used them to justify a killing method it knew would cause undeniable cruelty. When it was proven the numbers were wrong and that the method to kill those animals could never be justified, it went quiet.

Everyone who voted for and supported aerial shooting should be absolutely ashamed. We now know with 100 per cent certainty that non-lethal means such as fertility control could have been used. That is the other side of these exaggerated numbers: They were used to reject humane options. They were used as false arguments against compassion, and that is unforgivable. None of it was ever necessary or justified. The numbers now show

that without a doubt. It also raises a further question: If the number of brumbies has already dropped dramatically—and many of us believe there may be much fewer than 3,000 brumbies left in the park—why do we need this repeal Act today? I hope the New South Wales Government will explain at some point why it has chosen to make such a major policy change through the highly unusual method of supporting a private member's bill.

As I said, those numbers also totally undercut the argument made by the Government and the NSW Parks and Wildlife Service that they have not been able to commence any fertility control trials in the park because there are simply "too many horses". That argument never made sense, and I continue to be baffled and incredibly frustrated by the refusal of the NSW Parks and Wildlife Service to meaningfully engage with the issue of fertility control. I have been advocated for that solution since I was elected, but I still get the same circular logic in the response from NSW Parks and Wildlife Service and the Government: We cannot use immunocontraceptives because they have never been trialled on wild horses in Australia, yet we cannot trial them on wild horses in Australia because there are too many.

The truth is that fertility control holds enormous potential to humanely manage wild animal populations, not just of brumbies but also a whole range of species. That is where the New South Wales Government should invest its money, instead of mass killing programs that never work in the long term. Immunocontraceptive darting has proven successful in wild horse populations overseas, including in the United States, and the science is only continuing to improve. While previous fertility control options required multiple darts to render a horse infertile, I have met with researchers in the United States who have had promising results using an oocyte growth factor, which can make horses infertile with a single dart with minimal animal welfare impacts. That would be an excellent option to trial in Kosciuszko National Park.

The researchers from the United States have expressed strong interest in helping to facilitate a trial. But nothing has happened, even though I have raised it for years and connected the researchers with parks. I note the Minister for the Environment has committed to reviewing fertility control options, with a report due before the end of the year. But to date we have not seen any concrete plans and, as I will explain, I am concerned that the bill will see an end to any plans for humane approaches. I take the opportunity to remind the Minister of her promise to members that she would secure a fertility control trial. I assume that is still underway.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Yes.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: That is great. I note the interjection from the Minister for the Environment. I would hate to have to come back to this place to keep pushing for fertility control trials. Unfortunately, certain groups who vilify brumbies have been actively campaigning against immunocontraceptives. Sadly, if immunocontraceptives had been implemented 10 years ago, there would be no horses being killed still today. We could have reduced the population humanely and without animal suffering. Neither the current or previous Government started trials, despite agreeing to my motion during the last term of Parliament calling for urgent humane methods.

I turn to the specific impact of the bill, which will repeal the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act in its entirety. The current wild horse management plan will remain in effect until the transition date. At the latest, that will occur on 1 November 2025, at which time the management of brumbies will be governed by a broader management plan governing Kosciuszko National Park as a whole. I appreciate that the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act has not done a great job of protecting the brumbies. We have sadly lost thousands of animals in brutal ways while the Act has been in effect. However, the Wild Horse Management Plan made under the Act, and its target of retaining a population of 3,000 horses in the park, is the only thing giving the very small number of brumbies left any level of protection. It is the only thing standing between those remaining brumbies and a mass killing.

I am deeply concerned that, if this repeal bill passes, the New South Wales Government will cease any humane methods of control, including rehoming, or any exploration of fertility control. It will simply wipe out the remaining brumbies. From claiming it was opposed to aerial shooting to going on a killing spree as soon as it was in government, and from saying it supported keeping a population of 3,000 brumbies to now repealing the Act that enables the protection of that population, the Labor Government has backflipped and broken promises about brumbies time and again. Labor has lied to the community over and over again when it comes to brumbies, so it should forgive us for no longer trusting it. The reality is that, if the brumbies do not have any legislative protections, they are at serious risk.

When we get to the Committee stage, I will move a number of amendments to provide some protections for those animals, both during the transition period and any future management plans. I know that many members justify their support for this repeal bill by referring to the impact of brumbies on threatened native animals and the environment in Kosciuszko. I assure members that the Animal Justice Party wants to see all animals protected,

including native and threatened animals, and give all sentient beings the best chance to thrive and live good lives. We do not want to see any animals become extinct. We must find the right balance instead of moving to knee-jerk reactions like aerial killing when the evidence simply does not back them up. It is an ongoing source of frustration that there is such intense scrutiny on the impact of horses on the environment in Kosciuszko, yet complete silence on the main causes of harm. For example, there is no discussion about the impact of diseases like chytrid fungus and how they impact the native frog populations, in particular the corroboree frog. All the blame is put on the horses.

If the Government is serious about protecting the environment and native animals, it needs to tackle the real problems. We are in the midst of a climate crisis that threatens our natural environment and the lives of every human and animal on this planet for generations to come. Why is the focus not on addressing the climate emergency and its impact on Kosciuszko, or on stopping the huge overdevelopment in the park? There is silence on the real threats and a convenient blaming of one species, instead of addressing the real issues threatening native animals and the environment.

It is deeply disappointing to look around this Parliament and see such a willingness amongst so many members to endorse the killing of sentient animals. I have spoken previously about my concerns regarding The Greens' position on horses, which goes against animal welfare, ignores humane alternatives and gives the Government an easy win to avoid addressing the real causes of harm to native animals and the environment. By supporting the vilification of animals, The Greens have actively turned their backs on genuine environmental change and species protection. They back cheap and ineffective ways to deal with those issues, instead of joining with us to insist that the Government focus instead on the real issues destroying our environment and threatening native animals.

I am also very frustrated that the Liberals have chosen to turn their back on an Act passed by their own Coalition Government and to allow for a bloodbath on the brumbies. Many Liberal voters care deeply about animal welfare and will be very disappointed by their decision to split from their Nationals colleagues. I will also watch very closely to see how the Shooters vote on the bill today. Many Shooters party members are strongly opposed to aerial shooting and were disturbed by their representatives' decision to backflip and support aerial shooting, both in the report by the Animal Welfare Committee inquiry and in a motion voted on in this House. Given recent events, I would not be surprised to see the Shooters betray their members again.

No-one can bury the truth. The treatment of the brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park has been utterly inhumane. The deaths of those horses will sit on the shoulders of every member who supports the bill despite knowing there are humane alternatives available. I will never accept the aerial shooting bloodbath of any animal. No species of animal is planning an invasion. They have no evil intent. The wild horses currently residing at Kosciuszko did not ask to be brought here. A wild horse has the same capacity to feel pain and fear as a native animal, and their lives deserve the same level of dignity and respect. We must protect both native animals and the horses residing in the park. In fact, we have a duty to do so.

People often ask me this: If non-lethal options exist and work, why would governments not use them? It is the right question. When leaders reach for guns or helicopters as their first solution, we should all be alarmed. The routine killing of animals—whether for profit, convenience or policy—normalises a brutal mindset that sees life as expendable and violence as a form of control. The mindset does not stop with animals. There is strong evidence linking animal abuse and domestic violence. Abusers hurt animals to terrorise partners and trap them in dangerous situations. When cruelty becomes government policy, it sends a dangerous message that power is exercised through harm. Strength is not found in how quickly people can shoot or how coldly they can kill; it is in how fiercely they can protect and how courageously they dare to care. I have fought for many years to protect the brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park from harm. I will continue to fight every day to protect those animals.

Mark my words: This is not over. The aerial shooting of brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park is not justified and can never be justified. The evidence we heard at the inquiry was clear: Brumbies have suffered, and will continue to suffer, enormous cruelty as a result of the Labor Government's misguided killing program. The inquiry also heard about the inaccuracies and flaws in the Government's population count methodology and the lack of regard it has given to humane alternatives such as rehoming and fertility control. The horses will continue to be the victims of those injustices if the bill passes. As I have said previously in this debate, one day Parliament will have a genuine discussion about true inter-species justice rather than ignoring the truth about humanity and kindness. To pretend that those animals do not suffer or feel pain is not a political position; it is cowardice, and what a week it is to remind myself of that. I urge all honourable members to join me in doing what is right and opposing the bill.

Debate adjourned.

*Adjournment Debate***ADJOURNMENT**

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

ANTI-IMMIGRATION PROTESTS

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (21:44): I speak about the so-called March for Australia, which was held on Sunday 19 October, and its links to Nazis and other far-right extremist groups. I repeat the sentiment that I have expressed before in this place: There is no place in our community or political life for Nazis, fascists or other far-right extremists and their violent, hateful politics. I will always stand up against those groups. But some, including the Hon. John Ruddick, claim that they are not extremist marches—that there is no white supremacist agenda, but instead simply a genuine expression of concern about the cost of living and access to housing for ordinary Australians. To those people I say let us look at the facts. The rallies were organised by, were attended by and platformed open Nazis and far-right groups, including the National Socialist Network [NSN] and its close associates.

Those individuals and groups have a long history of involvement in extremist far-right politics, including propagating the white supremacist "great replacement" theory, hosting a meeting where the Nazi salute was performed to cheers and promoting Nazi material online. For those doubting the white supremacist credentials, I refer you to the comments key organiser Bec Walker—also known by her alias, Bec Freedom—made prior to the August march. As reported by the ABC, she said, "Protect Australian heritage. The next step is protect white heritage. So it all means the same thing." She went on to admit that the use of terminology like "protecting Australian culture" was a tactic to prevent the media calling the march a Nazi rally. The ABC has also revealed video of Ms Walker coordinating directly with self-identified neo-Nazi and NSN member Joel Davis at the rally held in August. Ms Walker has also praised NSN members who acted as marshals at that rally, calling them "great".

The examples of Nazi, fascist and white supremacist involvement and rhetoric at those rallies are so numerous that it would be impossible to catalogue them fully in this speech. I will, however, turn to an instructive example provided by the Hon. John Ruddick when he spoke at the March for Australia rally in Sydney this past Sunday. The honourable member asked the crowd, "If you are here and you're not a Nazi, please put up your hand." After a pause he said, "Well, that's pretty much everybody"—but not everybody. A number of people in attendance at that rally who did not raise their hand can only be assumed to be self-identified Nazis.

It seems the honourable member could not make it through his speech without making a joke at the expense of those who were killed and oppressed by the Nazis of the Third Reich. After asking attendees to raise their hands, he said, "You better put up your left hand, not your right hand," an allusion to the raised arm used in the Nazi salute. The crowd laughed. In a video of the event posted online, a person whose raised arms can be seen by the camera proceeds to alternate raising each arm in a swinging motion, building on the so-called joke by implying that they are performing a Nazi salute.

There was no repudiation and no criticism from Mr Ruddick of those who identified themselves as Nazis, let alone a request to leave. Those who attend those rallies no longer have the right to plead ignorance. It has been made perfectly clear in the media and through explicit demonstrations at the rallies that Nazis and white supremacists are involved, organised and running these events. Those who do not share their views must publicly disassociate themselves from the March for Australia and condemn these events for what they are or accept that they are, in fact, supporting Nazis.

HEMP INDUSTRY

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (21:49): In September I had the opportunity to travel to Moree with the Minister for Agriculture to tour Keytah, the exceptional property run by David and Danielle Statham. The visit was arranged by Jaimie Milling, president of iHemp and member of the Australian Hemp Council. They are building an internationally competitive sustainable processing and supply chain at the farm for Australian-grown hemp and flax fibre. Emily Coles and Alison Treloar from the regional economic development division of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development are supporting the growth of the hemp industry as part of their work.

The plan is to recommission the original cotton gin at Gunnedah and transition it to a state-of-the-art processing facility for hemp and flax fibres with a projected processing capacity of more than 300 tonnes per day. This facility would not only be one of the largest of its kind globally but also a landmark achievement for the Australian natural fibre industry. This initiative and related investments in capital and technology will help

transform the Gunnedah region into a central processing hub and provide significant employment opportunities while revitalising the rural economy.

Keytah currently has fibre supply contracts in China; Terra Tech Fibre is positioned to meet a 30,000-tonne fibre demand annually. This will require the planting of approximately 12,000 hectares of industrial hemp and will unlock the hemp industry in New South Wales. This scale not only enables reliable export capacity but also supports domestic value chains and environmental stewardship. For context, such a crop could sequester approximately 264,000 tonnes of CO₂ per annum, which would be a significant contribution to Australia's carbon reduction goals. Potential carbon credit returns could exceed \$26 million at current market values.

The Gunnedah site demonstrates the powerful dual impact of hemp. It drives rural economic growth and contributes meaningfully to Australia achieving its global net zero targets. Industrial hemp is uniquely positioned to become the cornerstone to climate-positive Australian agriculture. Keytah's potential hemp contracts in China could also see it produce a substantial amount of hemp hurd as a by-product, which will make a strong contribution to both solving and relieving the pressures on forestry and the timber supply in New South Wales. Hemp hurd is key to a sustainable, carbon-positive building-product industry which includes walls, flooring, roofing, insulation and composite panels. It is also a replacement for woodchips.

Recommissioning the cotton gin also enables Terra Tech Fibre to leverage the extensive infrastructure and best management practices it has developed over decades in the cotton industry, including fibre testing at baling, established logistics chains, weighbridges, storage, machinery, power infrastructure and access to both domestic and international freight networks. Adapting and building upon these proven systems will create a seamless and efficient transition into large-scale natural fibre processing. New South Wales is in a position to lead the nation in industrial hemp development. I commend the Minister for Agriculture for her vision, efforts and drive to get the New South Wales hemp industry off the ground and for working with farmers to develop what could be a boon for regional economies.

COMMERCIAL SURROGACY

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (21:53): As the Attorney General reminded us at budget estimates earlier this year, commercial surrogacy is illegal in New South Wales. However, we know it occurs. We know from evidence given by the Anti-slavery Commissioner at those same estimates hearings that overseas commercial surrogacy often involves slavery, and yet it continues. Many feminist authors have raised issues about the commodification of women through surrogacy, and not just in slavery. Interestingly, the commentary around surrogacy has been very adult centred to date. It has focused on the intending parents and their desire for a family or on the surrogate woman and whether or not her bodily autonomy is being respected.

The child in these discussions has largely been a legal problem to be solved. What is the pathway to citizenship for a child born of a surrogate mother outside of Australia? How should appropriate parenting arrangements be made for children born of surrogacy—commercial or altruistic? I have always found that troubling because, surely, children are at the heart of any surrogacy arrangement. But that tracks, to a certain extent, our public discussions about both adoption and donor conception through IVF. Adoption was originally seen as a way to care for parentless children, but also very much a way to allow childless couples to select their family from the orphanage.

It was assumed that children would always be better off, and the focus was largely on adults. Then we began to talk to children, and adults who had been adopted as children. We began to understand some of the issues for children that arose. We changed many of our practices, moving from an adopter-centred approach to a child-centred approach. The Adoption Act 2000 is a case in point because it outlined that the following principles must now be applied by those making decisions about the adoption of a child:

- (a) to emphasise that the best interests of the child concerned, both in childhood and later life, must be the paramount consideration in adoption law and practice,
- (b) to make it clear that adoption is to be regarded as a service for the child concerned ...

That is a healthy approach, with which we would agree. But there is still much work to be done on the impact on children of other methods of family formation. I am not aware of any studies yet that look at the experience of children in surrogacy. But, happily, we are now starting to see studies of donor conception through IVF. Of course, that relates closely, and is usually a part of, surrogacy. *My Daddy's Name is Donor* is a report released under the auspices of the Commissioner on Parenthood's Future, a New York-based think tank. I acknowledge that this is United States research, but there are no reasons to believe it cannot assist our understanding in Australia. The study is the first effort to learn about the identity, kinship, wellbeing and social justice experiences of young adults who were conceived through sperm donation.

It developed a representative sample from a web-based survey of more than a million households across the United States and studied in detail some 485 adults whose mother used a sperm donor, and two comparison groups of a similar size of young adults adopted as infants and young adults who were raised by their biological parents. The report indicated that young adults conceived through sperm donation experienced profound struggles with their origins and identities. That is not dissimilar to adoption studies. Some 42 per cent of donor offspring agreed "it is wrong for people to provide their sperm or eggs for a fee to others who wish to have children". That is compared to 24 per cent of those who were adopted and 21 per cent who were raised by their biological parents, which speaks strongly to the issue of commercial surrogacy. The report also found:

On average, young adults conceived through sperm donation are hurting more, are more confused, and feel more isolated from their families. They fare worse than their peers ... on important outcomes such as depression, delinquency and substance abuse.

Compared to those who were raised by their biological parents, donor offspring were 1½ times more likely to report mental health problems, twice as likely to report substance abuse problems and, along with adopted children, twice as likely to have problems with the law before the age of 25. That study is far from definitive, but it is a reminder that we need to think about children in family formation, not just adults.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (21:58): In 2015 international politicians, indigenous leaders and climate campaigners gathered together in Paris to limit global heating to 1.5 degrees. That was meant to be a call to action, a safety limit for climate change, a threshold to be avoided, because beyond that point the climate risks begin to spiral out of control. That target of 1.5 degrees was based on the best available science and agreed to by the world's governments. There has been a change in behaviour and awareness about the dangers posed by a rapidly heating planet. Investment in clean technologies has accelerated, and renewable energy is the cheapest form of energy available on the market—not just now, but the cheapest form of energy humanity has ever known. But despite those moves, the simple truth is that it is not enough. It is not ambitious enough; it is not fast enough. The cuts to emissions are not deep enough. While green technologies are increasingly in use, the use of fossil fuels is at record highs. The Earth is spiralling towards a doom loop of disastrous negative feedback loops and ecological breakdown.

The year 2024 was the first full year in which the global temperature began breaching 1½ degrees. The climate is changing faster than the models predicted. The effects are more intense and unpredictable and destructive. We are beginning to overshoot the 1½-degree safety limit, and we are entering into a storm of intense climate change. It is a world in which uncertainty and risk rules the day, and where the stakes have never been higher. It is a world where sea levels rise, and drought, fire and storms become an existential threat felt everywhere around the world but most acutely by certain countries and by certain communities. The impacts are not fairly distributed. The heaviest and most devastating impacts are borne most heavily by those who did little to cause them and by those with the fewest resources and least capacity to respond and cope. Those losses will be real; they will be profound. They will not just be buildings knocked over that can be rebuilt. The world will feel permanent losses to ecosystems, culture and communities, and the changes in many cases will be irreversible, at least in any reasonable estimation of future generations.

The moral, social and economic case for action and for urgency is devastatingly clear. We are looking down the barrel of an existential threat. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports tell us there is a very real and material difference between 1½ degrees of warming and two degrees, because every bit of extra warming makes a difference. Every action taken or not taken sends us on a slightly different path. Do we bend the curve or topple over the edge? It is a ratcheting series of losses. There are millions and billions of moments for opportunity or tragedy and the potential for ecosystems, communities and lives to be lost. Every increment of warming matters. Every tonne of carbon released into the atmosphere is grinding us towards the coming storm.

It is in that context that the other target used in climate conversations emerges. If 1½ degrees was the threshold to be avoided, then net zero was the mechanism by which it would be preserved. Net zero emissions is the point where we stop making it worse. We were accelerating towards disaster. We are now curbing our emissions, with a greater and greater share of our energy coming from renewable sources. But, by definition, when we are short of net zero, it means we are increasing the amount of carbon in the atmosphere. A net zero target by 2050 means we are going to continue making the problem worse for another 25 years. In 25 years, it will be at its worst. From there, maybe we can begin the process of drawdown and repair. But in 25 years time, will the conditions even be suitable for adaptation and repair? Will the climate systems be able to support the hard work of recovery and resilience?

It remains unclear whether we will be able to skirt just below the threshold or whether we will overshoot and have to navigate the uncertain world that that entails. On our current trajectory, it is all but certain we are in the territory of overshoot. That will be the new climate reality. We are already there in many respects. Today was

the hottest October day ever. We are staring down the barrel of a disastrous bushfire season. It is not getting better. It is going to keep getting worse, so we need to work harder, work better together and demand more. We need to overcome vested interests and those who profit from delay, put their head in the sand, resist climate justice and drag us closer towards disaster. The coming years and decades are going to be hard. We do not need to make it harder. We can still turn this ship around. But on our current course, with our current governments and with the current economic ideology and entanglements, with those who are doing the most damage, with donations and promises of post-politics careers dictating their decisions, we will fall tragically short and suffer the consequences. A more democratic, just and safe world is possible, but it will not emerge without a struggle. I believe it is a struggle worth having.

HOUSING SUPPLY

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (22:03): The Parliamentary Research Service puts together a series of very interesting research papers for the benefit of members and the broader community. One recent paper of interest is a data brief on housing supply estimates for New South Wales over 2024 to 2025, and the report provides some interesting reading for all members. There is a tale it tells over time. Building approvals are down over the series, and the average cost to development across New South Wales increased from \$325,000 in June of 2016 to \$595,000 in June of 2025. That is an increase of 80 per cent in under a decade, well outstripping inflation, and that is a key component of our housing affordability crisis in this State. Over that time series, we have also seen the average time between approval and commencement increase from 2013-14 by 3.4 months, to 7.8 months for apartments today. With townhouses, that has increased from 2.4 to 4.3 months. The biggest jumps have occurred since this Government was elected, between 2022-23 and now.

The information also shows building approval estimates by New South Wales electorate. The clear demarcation between the lifters and the leaners when it comes to additional housing and their localities is surprising. The average New South Wales electorate approves 511 homes a year, which includes 165 apartments, 232 houses and 113 semidetached houses. The biggest lifter by far is the electorate of Castle Hill, represented by the shadow Assistant Minister for Planning and Public Spaces in the other place, Mr Mark Hodges, which delivered 2,068 approvals. That electorate covers the Hills Shire Council and a portion of Hornsby Shire Council. The Hills Shire Council has the State's largest housing target, and this area is clearly delivering more homes. But the members whose electorates the council spans—the member for Castle Hill, the member for Hawkesbury, the member for Kellyville and the member for Winston Hills—will tell you they need more infrastructure support from the State Government to support this growth.

Just last month in the other place, a petition signed by more than 20,000 persons calling for a fairer future for the Hills was debated. This Government continues to ignore this call, treating the residents of the Hills with disdain. By comparison, the electorate that has delivered the least number of approvals is Sydney, where members are today, where only 17 approvals were delivered in 2024-2025 at an average value of \$1.8 million per dwelling. We must do more to deliver more housing in Sydney's CBD. While the north of Melbourne's CBD is the highest density-ranked statistical area two in Australia, with 38,401 residents per square kilometre, the highest population in Sydney's CBD, in Haymarket, has only around half that, with a density of 20,956 residents per square kilometre.

Other inner-city electorates are also low on the list, with Summer Hill at 98, delivering 111 approvals, and Newtown at 85, delivering 157 approvals. The electorate of Heffron, to its credit, was the second highest, delivering 1,838 approvals. Onya, Ron! With work from home here to stay in one way or another, Sydney CBD weekly office attendance at the end of last year was at 76 per cent of pre-COVID levels and office vacancy rates are at 12.8 per cent, compared with 3.7 per cent pre-COVID. We have an opportunity to help the Sydney CBD and its surrounds thrive and survive with a larger residential population. Cities around the world, particularly since COVID, are growing their CBD populations by converting offices into residential dwellings. This helps businesses grow and improves the vibrancy of a city. It has happened in Manhattan and elsewhere around the world, and we should make sure it happens in Sydney too.

AVIATION WORKERS

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (22:07): On 21 October 2025, more than 50 aviation workers gathered at Sydney airport's international terminal to protest the airport's refusal to guarantee job security for workers employed by Certis whose contracts are set to expire in 2026. The demonstration was led by Transport Workers Union [TWU] New South Wales Branch Secretary Richard Olsen and National Secretary Michael Kaine. Despite Certis maintaining a relationship with Sydney airport that has spanned over five decades, job insecurity across the aviation sector has reached crisis levels. Contracts are increasingly awarded to the lowest bidders, often at the expense of worker protections.

A stark example of this was the illegal sacking and then outsourcing of more than 1,800 workers by Qantas to companies like Swissport, which had been criticised for its very poor record on safety, pay and working

conditions. Members will recall that thanks to the great work of the TWU and its members, a compensation package to the tune of \$120 million was dealt out by the courts and Qantas was fined \$90 million. Workers fear they will either lose their jobs entirely or be forced to accept significantly worse employment terms. Richard Olsen notably commented that:

Sydney Airport has a responsibility here to ensure that there are good, secure jobs for security workers. A whole-of-supply-chain effort is needed to reverse the damage done by decades of cuts and fragmentation in this industry.

The TWU is demanding that Sydney Airport provide explicit assurances to Certis workers that their job security, pay and conditions will be protected, regardless of any future contract changes. The union is also advocating for the establishment of a "safe and secure skies" commission to set enforceable minimum standards across the entire aviation industry. The standards would cover all critical roles, including cabin crew, security staff, ground handlers, cleaners, caterers, pilots and refuellers.

The aviation workforce has been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with thousands of skilled workers driven from the industry due to inadequate support and protection. Yet airports, airlines, shareholders, and senior executives have continued to generate substantial profits while workers face stagnant wages, deteriorating conditions and persistent outsourcing practices. The proposed commission would address those systemic issues by retaining skilled workers in stable employment, holding airports and airlines accountable for their labour practices, ensuring "same job, same pay" standards across contractors, capping excessive executive compensation and bonuses, and redirecting profits towards investment in the workforce.

The TWU argues that such reforms are essential not only for worker welfare but also for the long-term safety and sustainability of Australia's aviation industry. I commend Transport Workers' Union New South Wales branch secretary, Richard Olsen; the national secretary, Michael Kaine; and all aviation workers and all those involved in this action and the broader ongoing fight to improve workers' rights in the aviation industry. This is a longstanding problem, not just in the aviation industry but right across the workforce. Companies engage contracting-out methods to undercut the wages and conditions of their workforce by creating a lowest common denominator effect whereby the companies that bid down wages and conditions win the contract.

The way to fix that is to fix the supply chain from the top and ensure that those at the top of the tree—in this particular case, Sydney Airport—are letting contracts that adequately recompense workers for their efforts so that we do not have the lowest common denominator effect and bid down wages and conditions. I commend the TWU for its work in this area, and wish its members and leaders all the best in the campaign to make sure that workers are properly recompensed.

NETBALL AUSTRALIA

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (22:12): I take this opportunity to draw to the attention of the House the immense honour provided to members of New South Wales Parliament to meet with representatives of Netball Australia who visited the Parliament. They brought along a net and many members of Parliament unsuccessfully attempted to score goals. It was a wonderful event, but the importance of it was promoting the ability of Netball Australia to participate in the 2032 Olympics in Brisbane on home soil, in a sport that is enjoyed by so many young Australians, particularly women. It will be a wonderful opportunity to have the Olympics as the showcase of netball as an Olympic sport. It is something the entire Parliament should get behind. I thank the Netball Australia representatives for coming to Parliament House, and I enthusiastically support their campaign.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): The question is that this House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 22:13 until Thursday 23 October 2025 at 10:00.