

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday 27 September 2007

The President (The Hon. Peter Thomas Primrose) took the chair at 11.00 a.m.

The President offered the Prayers.

LIQUOR AMENDMENT (SPECIAL EVENTS HOTEL TRADING) BILL 2007

Message received from the Legislative Assembly agreeing to the Legislative Council's amendments.

CHRISTIAN ISRAELITE CHURCH PROPERTY TRUST 2007

STANDARD TIME AMENDMENT (DAYLIGHT SAVING) BILL 2007

Bills received from the Legislative Assembly.

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

Motion, by leave, by the Hon. John Della Bosca agreed to:

That the bills be read a first time and printed, standing orders be suspended on contingent notice for remaining stages and the second readings be set down as orders of the day for a later hour.

Bills read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Second readings set down as orders of the day for a later hour.

BURMA

Motion by Dr John Kaye agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) the people of Burma have suffered for decades under a brutal and repressive military regime that has used violence, arbitrary arrest, detention and torture to subvert moves to democracy,
 - (b) the democratically elected parliament of Burma has never been allowed to sit, and that the leader of the National League for Democracy Aung San Suu Kyi continues to be illegally held under house arrest, and
 - (c) demonstrators taking to the streets of the cities and towns of Burma, including tens of thousands of monks, are protesting against the economic incompetence and corruption of the regime, the frustration of democracy and the abuse of human rights.
2. That this House:
 - (a) calls on the military government of Burma to recognise and respect the fundamental right of citizens to peacefully protest, exercise restraint in responding to protests and avoid the use of violence, arbitrary arrest and torture, and
 - (b) calls for the immediate release of Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest, the end of human rights abuses and the restoration of democracy in Burma.

PETITIONS

Killalea State Park

Petition objecting to multiple parts of Killalea State Park being leased to private interests for 52 years to undertake a major accommodation development, received from **Ms Sylvia Hale**.

Queanbeyan Showground

Petition objecting to a plan to turn Queanbeyan Showground into a car park for the State Government office block, received from **the Hon. Melinda Pavey**.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Postponement of Business**

Private Members' Business item No. 1 in the Order of Precedence postponed on motion by Dr John Kaye.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business****Motion by the Hon. Christine Robertson agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that Private Members' Business item No. 73 outside the Order of Precedence, relating to Report No. 32 of the Standing Committee on Law and Justice, entitled "Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts", dated November 2006, called on forthwith.

Order of Business**Motion by the Hon. Christine Robertson agreed to:**

That Private Members' Business item No. 73 outside the Order of Precedence be called on forthwith.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LAW AND JUSTICE**Report: Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts**

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON [11.08 a.m.]: I move:

That the House take note of Report No. 32 of the Standing Committee on Law and Justice, entitled "Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts", dated November 2006.

Debate adjourned on motion by the Hon. Christine Robertson and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

**ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS TRIBUNAL AMENDMENT (CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS)
BILL 2007****Second Reading**

Debate resumed from 21 June 2007.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA [11.10 a.m.]: The Administrative Decisions Tribunal Amendment (Confidential Documents) Bill seeks to amend section 75 (2) (d) of the Administrative Decisions Tribunal Act 1997 to enable the legal representative of any party to the proceedings heard by the Administrative Decisions Tribunal to see and challenge otherwise confidential documentary evidence. For the purpose of legislative consistency, this may also necessitate the amendment of relevant sections of the Firearms Act 1996 and the Security Industry Act 1997. The bill will still enable the tribunal to make an order restricting the disclosure of confidential documents to anyone other than a party to the proceedings and their legal representatives. The Opposition supports the bill.

Section 75 of the Administrative Decisions Tribunal Act 1997 currently states that hearings are to be open to the public, except in circumstances when the tribunal deems it appropriate, because of the confidential nature of any evidence, that a suppression order is to be placed on the hearing.

Section 76 of the Act allows the tribunal to dispense with proceedings by considering the documents or other material lodged with or provided to the tribunal and without holding a hearing if it appears to the tribunal

that the issues for determination can be adequately determined in the absence of the parties. When considered with section 75 (2) (d) of the Act in mind, the tribunal could, based on the current construction of the Act, dispense proceedings without having disclosed that evidence to any or all of the parties because it was deemed to be confidential in nature.

The potential for such an outcome may well be perceived as contrary to the principles of natural justice, and may well strike at the heart of our judicial system. Some will argue that it is an affront to the principles of procedural fairness that a hearing can be conducted without transparency and proper disclosure, and without legitimate mechanisms by which to challenge prohibited or restricted evidence, yet still be deemed fair and reasonable. The view of the New South Wales Law Society on the proposed amendment is that the provisions of section 75 (2) (d) are rarely used but may nevertheless be required in certain circumstances, such as for the protection of one of the parties or a third party to the case. It is for this reason that the Law Society does not support the bill.

However, the proposed amendment seeks to redress the current imbalance between transparency and due process on one hand and the needs of particular individuals on the other hand. While we accept that the tribunal must have regard for the safety of witnesses, the needs of such individuals must, in the interests of open justice, be accommodated only to the extent that it does not encroach on the bounds of procedural fairness. It cannot be said that section 75 (2) (d) currently provides a just balance in this regard. The Federal Administrative Appeals Tribunal used the equivalent section to withhold information to protect the identity of witnesses in an immigration matter. However, this can still be achieved by use, for example, by way of a suppression order or an assumed name.

Although courts can refuse access to documents on public interest immunity or other grounds of privilege, this does not permit the successful party to have privileged documents received into evidence. The current provision therefore creates lopsided justice in that the opposing party is prevented from testing the document and the credibility of the source. The motives of an informer may be entirely false and malicious, despite appearing credible on their face. I direct the attention of honourable members to the cases of *Khalil v Commissioner of Police* [2007] and *Aubrey v Commissioner of Police* [2005], which clearly illustrate the difficulty of reconciling the provisions of section 75 (2) (d) with the principles of natural justice. These cases concern appeals to the Administrative Decisions Tribunal against decisions by the Commissioner of Police to refuse to approve an application for a security licence and the revocation of a firearms licence respectively. In both instances the tribunal placed weight on the confidential evidence that could not be challenged or tested for accuracy.

To deny parties to the same proceedings access to all evidentiary material before the tribunal is essentially to subvert their right to a fair trial. The presumption of innocence is a tenet of our judicial system, yet the value judgement inherent in section 75 (2) (d) dictates, as Judge Brennan observed in the Commonwealth Administrative Appeals Tribunal Act, that the free flow of information to the tribunal and the preservation of the proper confidentiality of information justifies the curtailment of the right of persons appearing before the tribunal to negative all evidence brought against them and so prove their innocence. Finally, I direct the attention of honourable members to an address made by the Chief Justice of New South Wales, Justice Spigelman, in 2005 in which His Honour quoted Lord Chief Justice Hewart from his Lordship's judgement in *R v Sussex Justices Ex Parte Macarthy*:

It is not merely of some importance but is of fundamental importance that justice should not only be done, but should manifestly and undoubtedly be seen to be done.

For those reasons the Opposition supports the bill.

Debate adjourned on motion by the Hon. John Ajaka and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

SECURITY INDUSTRY AMENDMENT (PATRON PROTECTION) BILL 2007

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 21 June 2007.

Ms SYLVIA HALE [11.16 a.m.]: The Greens support the Security Industry Amendment (Patron Protection) Bill, which was introduced by Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes. The bill introduces new

measures to the security industry, including drug and alcohol testing. The Greens understand that the proposer of this legislation has consulted with the relevant industry groups. Police, bus, taxi and ferry drivers, doctors and other people in positions of authority and control are not allowed to be intoxicated on the job. We simply ask: why should a similar situation not apply also to security personnel? Members may recall that, despite my Greens colleague Ms Lee Rhiannon's best efforts to lay down similar rules for us in this place while we are legislating, parliamentarians are still able to turn up here intoxicated and under the influence of whatever drug, legal or illegal, they choose. We have seen the occasional poor behaviour in the other place and in the Senate as a result of someone who has had too much to drink, and it is not a particularly edifying spectacle. However, I digress.

Bouncers in clubs are required to deal with intoxicated and sometimes violent people. Ideally, they should not themselves be intoxicated with alcohol or as a result of using other drugs—I say "other drugs" because alcohol is a legalised drug—which may impair their ability to do their crowd control job. Like police, drug and alcohol use should also be prohibited for those undertaking crowd control roles, because crowd controllers often find themselves in physical situations with aggressive or intoxicated patrons. We do not want an aggressive, intoxicated bouncer as the person dealing with an aggressive and intoxicated patron. That is a recipe for violence, injury and even death.

We know, for example, that amphetamines, especially ice, can make people both very awake and very aggressive. Of course, alcohol is a well-known contributor to violence—the drug that is the biggest contributor to violence in our society. This Government likes to pretend that alcohol, cigarettes and gambling are not drugs, but that is another story. We saw the cost of that to the community and in terms of police time and resources outlined in the recent Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research report. Some drugs decrease the propensity to violence, when compared to alcohol. So it is a more complex picture than the shock jocks like to paint.

In his second reading speech last session Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes pointed out that there are more security officers and crowd controllers than police in New South Wales by a factor of four to one, and many of these people are armed. Surely part of the skill of being a good crowd controller is to be firm, polite and have the ability to diffuse tension where possible and use reasonable force only when absolutely necessary. We have probably all come across particularly nasty, rather large and menacing bouncers who seem to enjoy being overly controlling. A very small minority may enjoy inflicting violence and may use excessive force, and these people should not be in the industry. Given their authority and the ability to use physical force, security guards and crowd controllers need to be responsible and to be accountable while working.

The bill introduced by Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes is similar to legislation already in place in Western Australia and South Australia. The latter requires that testing for drugs and alcohol and psychological tests be performed. Referring to the specifics of the bill, the key points are as follows. Applicants must disclose any known physical or psychological conditions when applying for a licence and furnish a relevant medical certificate. The registry must be able to collect relevant information about an applicant from the Office of Fair Trading in addition to any criminal intelligence regarding the applicant. A person can have a licence revoked for failing a drug or alcohol test administered by a police officer. The procedure for testing is detailed in part 2, proposed division 3A. These provisions are based on those pertaining to police officers. Persons must display their identification and licence in a way that makes it easy to read and presumably they must be required to carry and display that identification at all times, unlike some members of the NSW Police Force.

The Greens note that the case for drug testing of employees or people working in a particular industry needs to be evidence based and proportionate to the risk. We do not wish to see drug testing extended throughout society into many jobs just because the *Daily Telegraph* whips up hysteria about the issue. Given the nature of the industry, the role of crowd controllers and security guards and the potential harm to patrons, the Greens believe that this bill is appropriate and we support it.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL (Minister for Roads, and Minister for Commerce) [11.22 a.m.]: The Government does not oppose the principle behind the Security Industry Amendment (Patron Protection) Bill, which was introduced by Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes. We understand his intention to better protect the safety and security of the community and to raise the professional standards of the security industry. That is why the New South Wales Government is closely watching the experience of other jurisdictions that already have drug and alcohol testing regimes in place to determine their applicability here. However, we cannot jump the gun and introduce a drug and alcohol-testing regime without resolving the many questions it poses.

Approximately 36,600 persons are authorised by a licence to undertake crowd or venue control, or so-called bouncer activities, in New South Wales. To test even a targeted proportion of these crowd controllers

or bouncers comes at a cost. But who will pay? Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes pointed to the Western Australian experience where the introduction of a presumptive drug-testing regime has considerably reduced the cost of each test to approximately \$20. But presumptive testing only indicates the presence of drugs in a person's system. If drugs are found to be present, a full gas chromatography mass spectrometry analysis is undertaken, which becomes the official result.

If a government intends to revoke a person's licence and restrict his or her access to employment on the basis of drug or alcohol use, it is imperative that an official result be obtained. However, this increases the cost dramatically—up to \$300 per sample. Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes indicated his concerns about steroids, but because steroids are naturally occurring in the body the presumptive test does not identify their presence. So if steroids are suspected the cost increases again as the test becomes more technically complicated. Drug use is a problem for the security industry and it is a concern for many employees in many industries and for the community in general.

As at 1 June 2007, 973 tests had been performed in Western Australia, of which 163 tests returned positive results, which is just over 16 per cent. However, if police are to be involved in the drug and alcohol testing of security guards, we need seriously to consider the time and resource burden that this would create for the Police Force. Aside from the cost implications, a number of additional issues would also need to be addressed, such as the classes of licensees who should be subjected to drug testing, whether testing should be limited to crowd controllers and bouncers, or whether it should be extended to other high-risk sectors of the industry such as armed guards.

New South Wales already has the toughest regulatory regime covering the security industry. If someone is convicted of a drug offence he or she cannot get a security licence in New South Wales. We recently introduced even tougher requirements that commenced on 1 September. There are additional mandatory exclusions, so if someone is convicted of violent offences such as stalking and intimidation, riot and affray, and terrorism, he or she will not be able to get a licence in New South Wales. As part of our recent reforms we now require all employers to have a fitness-for-work policy, which must include the management of issues such as alcohol and drugs in the workplace.

Together with occupational health and safety laws in New South Wales, the Government believes that its tough security regime is addressing issues raised in the honourable member's bill. As to other amendments proposed by Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes, the current form of licence is determined by the requirements of the Roads and Traffic Authority photographic licence system, which is based on Australian design standards. To record licence classes, bearing in mind that licensees may have multiple licence subclasses and licence numbers, will dramatically change the size of the licence. It would also make its display on the licence very cumbersome.

As part of our recent reforms we have clarified the way in which a licence must be displayed, requiring, amongst other things, that the licence is attached to the person's outer clothing at or above the level of the person's waist, and that the face of the licence is clearly visible and not obscured by clothing or other material. Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes also proposed that the commissioner be authorised to use information obtained through a sharing arrangement under section 9A of the Fair Trading Act 1987 to determine the suitability of licence applicants. While on its face the proposal appears to have merit, the cost involved in developing data exchange systems, obtaining the relevant data in each case and training persons has not been addressed.

New South Wales is at the forefront of security industry regulatory reforms. This Government has implemented the toughest licensing laws to ensure that people working within the industry are the right people with the right skills. The Security Industry Act 1997 was instrumental in helping to change the culture in the industry and to get rid of bad elements. Since then there have been four further reform programs, including the recent reforms that commenced on 1 September. Prior to that, in 2002 legislation was introduced to require the mandatory fingerprinting of all security licence applicants, the granting of a security industry licence only to Australian citizens or to permanent residents, the ballistic testing of all security industry firearms and the mandatory revocation of firearm licences for security guards who fail to undertake required firearm safety training.

In 2003 changes were made to limit the opportunity for the security industry to become a soft target for criminals seeking access to firearms by banning guns in sectors of the industry that could not demonstrate a need to be armed, increasing safe storage requirements, restricting the calibre of security industry handguns, and

increasing security firm audits by the Firearms and Regulated Industries Crime Squad. The Security Industry Amendment Act 2005 and the Security Industry Regulation 2007 continue the Government's program of reforms for the security industry. I have already mentioned some of the new requirements, but other clear reforms include introducing a provisional licensing system.

All new licence holders will now need to be on a provisional licence for a year, during which time they will need to be closely supervised by an experienced security guard. Improved supervision and training will help security guards better handle the difficult situations that they are encountering and might sometimes encounter. While we support moves to improve the professionalism of the security industry and we agree with Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes' intentions, we cannot support the bill in its current form. Further work is required on many important questions posed by Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes' proposal.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER (Leader of the Opposition) [11.29 a.m.]: On behalf of the Opposition I indicate our support for the bill introduced by Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes. This House should congratulate Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes on bringing forward very sensible legislation. I place on the record also my sheer disappointment that such legislation has to be brought forward for debate by a member other than a government member. Listening to the contribution of the Minister for Roads it is quite clear that the Government is sitting on its hands in relation to problems involving bouncers in the security industry. This bill gives me an opportunity to place on the record some matters that I hope the Government will take into consideration in identifying its ineptitude and addressing these problems.

Again I congratulate Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes on introducing this bill. It has been some time in its preparation: the first draft was prepared back in 2006. It is a bit rich for the Government to suggest today that somehow this is a work in progress or that we are waiting for another review when this issue has been on the deck since 2006. Earlier the Minister said that this bill jumps the gun. That is laughable and again highlights the sheer incompetence of this Government. One has only to look at the shootings in recent months at the Gas Light Nightclub in Sydney and, of course, at DCM when the offender stood in the middle of Oxford Street at night and unloaded a clip of bullets, up to 20 rounds and possibly even more, firing blindly into the street. The incident involved bikies and the subterranean wars they wage throughout the Sydney metropolitan area.

The Government is surprised to hear those details because it does not want to hear them. There is a direct link between some bouncers working in the security industry and bikie clubs and their drug wars on the streets of Sydney. The Government talks about jumping the gun. The gun has been fired already! It will take the killing of an innocent person in Oxford Street or outside the Gas Light Nightclub or somewhere else before the Government actually starts to talk tough. It is interesting that on the day we are debating this bill the Minister for Police is out there somewhere holding a press conference, with the police standing behind him making him look tough yet again, and outlining what he is doing to take the fight to the bikies in Sydney. As we speak the Minister is conducting a press conference about what the Government has done in tackling bikies and the drug trade when, in fact, this legislation will give the police an opportunity to take off the gloves when dealing with this criminal element in this industry. It will give police the ability to target them.

This is very substantial and sensible legislation, but what do we hear from the Government? "Oh, look, we don't want to support it at this time." The Government has been caught out again. It would love to support this bill; it knows that this is what the police need to take off the gloves when dealing with these criminals, but the Government will not support it because it is not one of its bills. It does not want to give credit to Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes for bringing forward sensible legislation. We hear the Minister for Roads utter the silly words that have been prepared by the bureaucrats, "jump the gun". We are told that we are going to wait for the other States, but wait for what? In other States outlaw motorcycle gangs are infiltrating crowd control security.

A direct link between motorcycle gangs and the security industry has been identified by the security industry and is well known by members of the NSW Police Force and, indeed, in other jurisdictions. But this Government wants to sit back and watch what is happening while we have shootings in the city, shootings at nightclubs and the burning down of bikie premises in Newcastle and Sydney. There is a direct correlation between some players in the security industry and outlaw motorcycle gangs, but the Government wants to sit on its hands yet again. The Minister for Roads started to outline some reforms, but they are nothing more than a bureaucratic approach to an industry that affects only law-abiding citizens.

The Government's attitude to the security industry is similar to its attitude to the shooting community: "We're cracking down, we're getting tough. We're going to do all of these wonderful things," but all it does is

affect law-abiding citizens and make it more difficult for them by presenting more challenges. Crooks do not care about the bureaucracy with which the Government approaches this problem. Quite simply, the Government either does not have a plan or it has no idea that there is a problem. It cannot be any other way. Today we heard that the Government's plan is to sit back and watch the other States! The information I have from my contacts within the industry and from within the Police Force is that problems with bouncers in clubs in other States are rife. The relationship between outlaw motorcycle gangs and many organisations that employ bouncers for clubs is rife with problems.

I will not put names on the record, but members of the security industry are equally concerned about this problem and the infiltration of their industry. People ask why bikies would want to become involved in the security industry. The answer is very simple: It gives them an opportunity to wash the black money they obtain from selling drugs and other pursuits in which they are involved, such as the theft of luxury motor vehicles and the like. There is a slow and tenacious infiltration of other areas, such as the liquor industry, nightclubs, cafes, restaurants et cetera.

The police believe that it is very simple mathematics: If you can control the crowd outside the nightclub, you therefore control what goes on inside the nightclub. What does that mean? If you have your affiliated outlaw motorcycle gang-approved bouncer standing out the front of your nightclub, another drug dealer who is not approved by that outlaw motorcycle gang will not work inside that nightclub. Therefore, what they lose on the front by having to pay for the security for many of these nightclubs, they make up for on the dance floors and around bars by actually having their own sponsored drug distribution network in place.

What happens when police turn up at these nightclubs that, in the main, are quite heavily fortified at the front and have limited access? The first thing the police have to do when they turn up is serve a search warrant on the bouncer or on the person who owns the premises. By the time they get in through the front door, the call has been made and many police will tell you that when they walk into the club drugs are lying all over the floor because the people distributing the drugs in the nightclub have been given the nod that the police are on their way through the front door and the drugs are dropped on to the ground. It is highly organised and highly effective, but it is highly offensive that this Government does not recognise that it has a problem when only a few short months ago, as I have already indicated, people were brazen enough to get out of a motor vehicle in the middle of Oxford Street only a couple of hundred metres around the corner from the Sydney Police Centre and unload firearms down the main street as if they were in some wild west movie.

What is this Government's response? "We will just sit back and wait. We will have a look and see what is happening in other States. There is not a problem. Everything is fine." Garbage! The Government has no idea what is going on and the quicker it gets its head out of the sand, the quicker it might actually start to save people's lives. When police possess intelligence that shows a correlation between bikies and this aspect of the security industry—bouncer crowd control—the legislation will give them the opportunity to target offenders and infiltrate clandestine organisations that operate around these outlaw motorcycle gangs to break them down.

This bill gives police the opportunity to conduct random alcohol and drug testing of bouncers. I do not believe too many people in this Chamber would oppose that. At the end of the day we are quite happy to have random alcohol and drug testing of police officers, train drivers and others involved in public transport and service. Such testing continues to spread. The Greens want random alcohol and drug testing of members of Parliament to be introduced!

Bouncers and others involved in the security industry have a very significant responsibility to ensure the safety of those who attend public venues. How many times have we seen or heard reports of a fire in a nightclub, not only in this country but also in other countries throughout the world and not always in Third World nations? We also hear about criminal activity such as somebody emptying a firearm into a crowd in a nightclub causing panic and resulting in people suffering injuries or being killed. Bouncers and security personnel who work at the door or inside a nightclub have a responsibility for the safety of a nightclub's patrons.

It is quite a sensible and reasoned proposition by Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes to ensure that police will have powers to carry out random alcohol and drug testing. This legislation also provides the Commissioner of Police with powers to assess the psychological and physical ability of applicants to carry out work in the security industry. Both are reasonable suggestions. However, it is disappointing that the Minister in charge of this important legislation yet again spent approximately a nanosecond making his second reading speech and then left the Chamber. The Government will shed many tears and bear the brunt of great concern if this State is unfortunate enough to have an incident involving serious injury or death as a result of criminal activity associated with nightclubs and other public venues.

I do not know how much longer it will take for the Government to recognise that New South Wales is one of the last bastions of organised criminal activity. Offenders buy nightclubs or other businesses that make a turnover from the sale of liquor or food and they engage in money laundering through licensed premises. Later they invest the profits in other businesses. Interestingly when a shooting occurred in Sydney recently, everyone focused on a nightclub at the scene, but people might be surprised to know that the criminals were aiming not at the nightclub but rather at the cafe next door, which is a legitimate business and which also is owned by the motorcycle gang that owns the nightclub. Organised crime is branching out and there are concerns about that throughout the security industry.

The Government should become a leader in the security industry rather than a follower. The New South Wales Government reacts to issues—for example, matters associated with the security industry, the Royal North Shore Hospital and roads—after the event. This begs the question: When has the Government ever identified a potential problem and acted before something disastrous happened? In all fairness, I cannot remember an occasion when the Government has done that. I am well aware of the Government acting on trivialities and bureaucratic matters associated with this and similar legislation, but when was the last time the Government identified potential risk in an industry, a portfolio or sector, or the potential for a real issue to develop at some time in the future? When was the last time a member of the Government said that the Government would take some significant measures to ensure that harmful events do not occur in the future and to protect members of the public?

I have complete contempt for this Government's approach to politics. Its actions are always after the event. The Government continues to ignore problems that are occurring in the crowd control aspects of the security industry. The security industry is incredibly broad, but most people come into contact with it only through bouncers or security personnel who work outside a nightclub, a hotel, a bank or a jewellery shop. The main focus of the public on the security industry is limited to casual contact, but beyond that the security industry is huge and employs hundreds of thousands of people in this State. It is also a major contributor to the State's economy. Throughout the years of my involvement with the security industry in its various sectors, ranging from the manufacturing of security doors and screens, home security, and professional and business security to bouncers, I have found that many of the individuals working in that industry are outstanding people. The Coalition recognises that they are ordinary Australians who generally have opened a small business and are doing their best to provide a good, quality service to the public.

Unfortunately, the Government focuses on adopting a bureaucratic approach and making it tough for business people to operate while completely taking its eye off the main game, which is the very small but significant criminal element in the industry. Unfortunately the criminal element exists in a framework that leads most people to come into contact with it. The Greens have relayed the stories of bouncers doing the wrong thing by patrons and people being belted or even killed. I will always remember when I was a teenager that a young fellow was hit by a bouncer in a pub near where I lived, and the young fellow subsequently died. Similar stories are heard time and time again. It is well known that there are problems with that aspect of the industry, and we know also that the Government simply does not understand the problem, or does not know what to do.

I commend Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes for introducing this legislation, which is a step forward. I give credit to organisations such as the Australian Security Industry Association Limited [ASIAL], the Australian Hotels Association [AHA] and others involved in the security industry who invest heavily in education and training as well as in the assessment of probity issues concerning personnel. In the main, many of those organisations support this legislation as an advancement in identifying criminal elements within the industry and as a means of ensuring that those who are simply unsuitable for the industry are encouraged to find occupations elsewhere. However, the Parliament could take more substantive action, such as involving the New South Wales Crime Commission, and adopt a serious approach to addressing criminal elements that exist in the security industry.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE [11.46 a.m.]: I support the Security Industry Amendment (Patron Protection) Bill 2007 introduced by my colleague Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes. I compliment him on his initiative in introducing this historical bill that deals with a matter that has not previously been debated by this House. The bill will introduce a number of measures that are designed to enhance the safety of patrons in licensed venues and to reduce the number of incidents of violence in and around licensed venues.

Media reports make it plain that there have been many occasions on which bouncers have been out of control and have injured patrons or caused death by adopting heavy-handed tactics. Some of the people who work in the security industry are not suitable and should never have become involved in it. As the member who

preceded me in this debate has pointed out, some bouncers have criminal backgrounds, yet seem to have evaded employment checks, and others have been accused of being involved in drug dealing. Obviously a tightening of regulations applying to bouncers is required in the security industry in New South Wales.

The bill will provide for random alcohol and drug testing of bouncers and persons acting as venue and crowd controllers while they are on duty. It will enable the Commissioner of Police to revoke a bouncer's security industry licence if the bouncer fails a breath test or a drug test. I note that the Minister was critical of the bill and expressed fears that the legislation is not workable because it will be very expensive to implement, but I point out that the alcohol and drug testing will be conducted randomly. Expenditure will be easy to control because not everybody will be tested at once, and the test will be conducted without notice. As is the case with sports men and women, bouncers will not know when random drug and alcohol testing will occur. The risk of detection will be so high from random alcohol drug testing procedures that bouncers will be deterred from drinking alcohol excessively or from taking drugs. Cost should not deter members from passing the bill.

I have always believed alcohol and drug testing should be conducted wherever possible. It has been introduced for bus drivers and train drivers and testing should be extended to taxi drivers and pilots. I have also long believed that members of Parliament should be subject to random drug and alcohol testing. We should not introduce and pass laws that apply to others, including the New South Wales police, but from which we are exempt. That is inconsistent and hypocritical. The same regimes should apply to members of Parliament. Parliament House is our workplace and it could be argued that under occupational health and safety regulations there should be no liquor or drugs on the premises. Members of Parliament should not imbibe alcohol and certainly should not inject drugs, sniff cocaine or smoke marijuana. Sadly, tests conducted in the toilets of Parliament House have revealed signs of cocaine use.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: On level 10.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Whatever level it was; it would not have been level 11. This raised concerns that some members of Parliament should be subject to random drug testing, which should deter people from using drugs in this place. I wish people would not use drugs anywhere—even in their own home—but they certainly should not use them in Parliament House.

The bill also contains a provision to prevent an applicant from being licensed as a bouncer if the applicant fails to provide a statement from a medical practitioner certifying that the applicant is physically and psychologically fit to carry on his work as a bouncer. Bouncers are usually big, muscular males. Unfortunately, many use steroids in order to develop and maintain their muscles and it is well known that steroid use causes psychological damage and gives rise to violent tendencies. So this is an important provision. I am pleased to support the bill, which was introduced by my colleague Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes.

Debate adjourned on motion by Hon. Greg Donnelly and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

Debate resumed from 21 June 2007.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN [11.53 a.m.]: In conclusion, it will be a sad day for Australia if the unions are elected at the next Federal election. That will send a shiver down the spine of every small businessman and every small business in this country. I warn people against voting for Labor at the Federal election.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO [11.53 a.m.]: I note that the Hon. Charlie Lynn does not think businesswomen will be scared by the election of a Federal Labor Government. I have great pleasure in speaking in support of the motion moved by the Hon. Ian West regarding the refurbishment of Sydney Trades Hall. The refurbished Trades Hall is now a wonderful building. It always had great potential but over the years it was partitioned off and became a bit of a rabbit warren. I have been attending meetings at Trades Hall for about 30 years during which time people would often say to me, "This must have been a lovely building once." I am particularly pleased that the redevelopment has returned Trades Hall to its original purpose. Many historically listed buildings in Sydney are redeveloped and adapted to a completely new purpose.

Labor members and those on the crossbenches who support the trade union movement derive particular pleasure from the fact that Trades Hall is once again the hub of the trade union movement in New South Wales.

It is great that Unions New South Wales has moved into Trades Hall and that the rooms are once again available for union meetings. It is great to see this historic building adapted successfully to meet the needs of the contemporary union movement. The trade union movement in New South Wales has a magnificent history. Over the years it has done a great job representing the needs and desires of working men and women. We should stop and think about the conditions that those working men and women endured when Trades Hall was opened. Campaigns such as the campaign for the eight-hour day were fundamental to the development of the union movement. The wonderful banners that the trade unions used in their particular campaigns over the years reveal the role that the union movement has played in the history of New South Wales. There have been publications about these union banners, which are now fittingly displayed in the refurbished Trades Hall.

The motion moved by the Hon. Ian West notes that the refurbishment and the reopening of the Trades Hall were events so significant to the fabric of New South Wales society that the Governor attended the official opening. That is public recognition of the great work of the union movement. I know that many members in this place have some philosophical difficulties with unions. They believe all employees should be able to negotiate equally with their employer regardless of their level of education, their age, their status in the workforce and their literacy levels. But we all know that is complete nonsense. The only way that workers in this country, particularly in New South Wales, have got a fair deal is through the efforts of organisations such as the Trades and Labour Council of New South Wales, which is now Unions New South Wales.

When one considers the history that is embodied in Trades Hall one must admit that the union movement has done a wonderful job. It continues to do great work in the face of what must be described as a concerted campaign not only to smash the union movement but also to smash the nexus between the Australian Labor Party and the trade union movement. Labor members never forget the fact that the Labor Party came about because of the collective activism of workers and the formation of trade unions. We are very proud of the fact that our party came from organised labour. We recognise that fact constantly and we oppose any weakening of the nexus between the trade union movement and the Labor Party. When union representation at Labor Party conferences was reduced nationally from 60 per cent to 50 per cent delegates from New South Wales—from both factions of the party—constituted a bastion of support for retaining the 60:40 ratio. It is important to acknowledge that.

We have accepted the change but in New South Wales we will never accept any severing of the link between the union movement and the Labor Party. That is because we know that nobody else will stand up and speak for the disadvantaged, the poor and for those who have fewer opportunities in life—whether in the workforce, education or any other sphere of society. Those who claim that individualism is the only way to go and that everybody should be able to stand up for themselves—

The Hon. Duncan Gay: I've never heard a bigger load of rubbish and lies in my life!

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: So you should; I'd be disappointed if you didn't.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to order for the second time.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: They should be ashamed of themselves. We must recognise that not everybody in society is born with equal opportunities and not everybody in society will be offered the same chances as they grow, are educated and develop their skills. Governments should adopt a caring attitude and ensure that people enjoy equal opportunities. That is what Labor stands for because the Labor Party came from the trade union movement.

That is why we are so passionate about the trade union movement; that is why we are so proud of the refurbished Trades Hall in Sydney, because it is an icon for the Labor movement in New South Wales, and I will acknowledge the fact that the former secretary of the Labor Council in New South Wales, the Hon. Michael Costa, was instrumental in planning and funding the development of the refurbishment of Trades Hall to make it again the most proud centre of trade union activism in this State. We are looking forward to having a really strong trade union movement into the future. We will stand up against the attempts of the Howard-Vaile Government to smash the trade union movement.

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The PRESIDENT: I welcome to the President's gallery three legal officers from the House of Representatives of the Kingdom of Thailand who are here on a study tour.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

SOMERSBY SAND MINE

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Education and Training, and Minister for the Central Coast. Does the Minister recall this House yesterday moved unopposed to support my motion relating to community opposition to the proposed Somersby sand mine, which also congratulated the Somersby community on its campaign and endorsed the approaches of the members for Robertson and Gosford to the proposal? As the Minister for the Central Coast and Leader of the Government in this House, would the Minister now indicate to the Somersby residents what action he has taken and will take to prevent this mine going ahead?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I share the local community's concerns regarding the proposed sand mine on land adjoining the Somersby public school. The Iemma Government is committed to providing a safe and enjoyable learning environment for all students and the Department of Education and Training has written a submission to the Department of Planning outlining the concerns of the school community and the department in recommending strict conditions regarding dust conditions, noise pollution, transport and the protection of water tables. The department will continue to seek assurances that the health of staff and students at Somersby public school will be safeguarded if the mine were to eventually open. I can assure that my department will continue to assist the school community throughout this process.

BIOFUEL

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Development. Can the Minister provide the House with an update on the Iemma Government's drive to get more biofuel in to New South Wales?

The Hon. Michael Costa: What is the price of wheat?

The Hon. TONY KELLY: In response to the interjection by the Treasurer, the price of wheat is about \$450, about double, and the main reason for that is the wet weather in Europe and the drought here.

The House will recall from last session the passing of the Biofuel (Ethanol Content) Act, an historic moment and one that demonstrated the Iemma Government's leadership role when it comes to biofuel in Australia. At the heart of the legislation was the first-ever statewide mandate for ethanol requiring from 1 October that at least 2 per cent of all petrol sold in New South Wales be ethanol. The legislation puts New South Wales in the driving seat when it comes to capturing the benefits and opportunities of the emerging biofuel revolution.

Over the past few months we have seen some very positive signals that the mandate is working. I am pleased to report to the House that all of the majors, as well as many of the independents, are now offering ethanol blends to New South Wales motorists. Milestones since the end of June include Caltex opening its 100th station offering E10 and BP launching its new unleaded fuel with 10 per cent ethanol in Sydney, Newcastle and the central coast. By the way, at each of the stations where it offers ethanol, BP gets rid of an existing 91 unleaded, so it replaces it as opposed to offering an additional E10. Mobil has launched its first E10 site in Sydney at Bankstown and only last week I had the pleasure of launching Shell's new ethanol storage and blending facilities at its Parramatta terminal. By the end of this year it is expected that there will be at least 500 service stations offering ethanol blended fuel to New South Wales motorists. It is a clear signal that ethanol blended fuel is steadily becoming part of the mainstream when it comes to filling up your tank.

From 1 October, next Monday, the Iemma Government's ethanol mandate will become law. It is an historic day and one that I am sure will be looked back on as a significant milestone on the road to promoting the broad use of biofuel in Australia. The Government is also getting behind this important industry with a

media campaign commencing this weekend backed up by the launch of the New South Wales Government biofuel website: www.biofuels.nsw.gov.au. This site will be a gateway to an array of information on ethanol and biofuels, which will educate motorists about biofuels generally and encourage them to make the switch.

It beggars belief that, despite all these efforts by the States, the fuel industry, the ethanol producers and motorists themselves, we still have the Howard Government stifling the growth of this important domestic biofuel industry. The Federal Government is sticking to its "she'll be right" story that nothing needs to be done for the domestic ethanol industry. John Howard has failed to introduce a national mandate despite the broad consensus that it was the right thing to do. Under pressure from the Iemma Government they eventually agreed to extend the ethanol tank conversation subsidy scheme for a further six months, but they still refuse to budge on their plan to rip the heart out of the domestic biofuel industry by removing the current protections for locally made ethanol from imports and slash current tax rebates for domestic producers. They have not supported the recent call by the Labor regional development Ministers, meeting in Cairns, to extend current protections for at least a further five years. This dithering approach by the Howard Government has held back the development of a domestic ethanol industry that clearly needs more time to find its feet.

What about our friends sitting opposite? What lobbying have they done to their colleagues in Canberra to support biofuel? What is the Opposition's plan to support this developing industry? Where are their ideas to support the jobs and opportunities that it will create in the bush? They have done nothing; they have no plan. The Opposition has given up supporting people that live in the bush.

SCHOOL ZONE FLASHING LIGHTS AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads. How can the Minister's announcement of the program to install flashing lights in 100 school zones per year for four years be considered a statewide safety achievement when simple arithmetic shows that, with 11,000 school zones in New South Wales, it would take 110 years to install flashing lights in all school zones across the State? Can the Minister explain to the House how this announcement is about road safety rather than continuing the ability to revenue-raise?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I thank the honourable member for his question and interest in this important matter. The Premier yesterday announced a \$46.5 million program to improve the safety of students in school zones. New generation flashing light technology will be installed in a further 400 school zones across New South Wales. This roll-out will begin immediately. One hundred systems will be installed every year over the next four years. The Iemma Government is delivering on its commitment to improve road safety around schools. These are not just orange globes on a pole; this is new generation state-of-the-art technology, which is highly visible, reliable and doing a good job of slowing down motorists.

These new generation flashing lights have been assessed after 100 were installed in time for the start of the 2007 school year. That assessment of 100 sites involves a \$7.2 million commitment made before the election and delivered before the election. I am advised that the assessment found that the state-of-the-art technology reduced speeding in school zones with the vast majority of motorists sticking to the 40 kilometres per hour speed limit. This four-year school zone safety program will be fully funded by revenue from speed cameras installed in school zones. So unlike the Opposition, which of course made unfunded promises before the election for the old wrong technology, we have a fully funded program over the next four years at a value of \$46.5 million.

The Government's policy is for high-visibility fixed speed camera enforcement in school zones. The latest figures show that more than 99 per cent of motorists going past the new school zone speed cameras are doing the right thing. Fewer than 1 per cent of the 37.5 million vehicle movements through these zones have resulted in the imposition of fines. Every school zone with a speed camera also has the flashing light technology. I am advised that the Roads and Traffic Authority has inspected the 40 kilometres an hour school zones to ensure that they are all properly signposted. The question from the Opposition demonstrates a complete failure to understand the extensive school zone safety package that this Labor Government has delivered. Members opposite do not understand that we have a 40 kilometres an hour speed limit around all our schools.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: You don't understand—there are 11,000 schools.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Yes, and some 3,000 schools have multiple school zones. Every school has its own unique environment. That is why we also provide pedestrian overpasses, employ more than

1,000 lollypop personnel to supervise crossings, have signalised traffic lights, install pedestrian fencing to ensure that people cross at the right place and install wombat crossings. The school zone safety package is an overall approach to ensure that we get the right environment to protect children around schools. Clearly it makes sense to prioritise those schools that are close to busy roads or roads with higher speed limits. We ensure that we get the right treatment to ensure the safety of schoolchildren in the right environment. The difference is that our plan is fully funded and paid for from the revenue generated from people who speed through school zones. It makes sense that those who speed through school zones and are fined pay for the rollout of this important \$46.5 million initiative to make school zones safer for schoolchildren throughout the State.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I ask a supplementary question. In light of that answer, will the Minister inform the House of the name of the successful company that will install the flashing lights under this \$46 million program?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: The Opposition should be well aware that the testing of technology involved a number of organisations. I am not aware of which organisations were successful. I am happy to get that information from the Roads and Traffic Authority for the honourable member.

TAFE FEES

Dr JOHN KAYE: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Education and Training. Is it true that in 2004, when TAFE fees were first introduced, the Minister's predecessor, Dr Andrew Refshauge, made a commitment that further TAFE fee increases would not exceed the consumer price index increase? Is it also true that a large number of TAFE courses offered by TAFE New South Wales have had fee hikes well in excess of inflation, including certificate three and four diplomas, advanced diplomas and apprenticeship courses? Is it also true that graduate certificate and graduate diploma courses will now be offered on a fully commercial basis, along with most professional career development and language courses? Is the latest set of fee hikes and commercialisations well above the inflation rate the next step in the privatisation of TAFE? Has TAFE joined electricity, ferries and rail maintenance on the Treasurer's hit list of privatisation targets?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: To deal with the final piece of nonsense, no, the Iemma Government is absolutely opposed to the privatisation of the TAFE system. The Premier, the Treasurer and I have repeatedly made that clear. TAFE New South Wales, like all TAFE systems in all the States, charges fees. In 2008 the annual fees for mainstream TAFE courses will range from a little over \$400 to about \$1,400. TAFE fees do not attempt to cover the true cost of a student's education, but represent a small contribution of about 5 per cent of the overall cost. I emphasise: 5 per cent of the overall cost. Fees contribute to a range of services including access to facilities, libraries and counsellors, as well as the training itself.

TAFE fees for 2008 remain nationally competitive compared with other public and private providers of vocational education and training. TAFE New South Wales will continue to cap fees for all apprentices and trainees, regardless of the level of qualification. This cap maintains our strong commitment to addressing skill shortages in New South Wales. Apprentices in general will continue to pay significantly less than students enrolling in a standard Certificate 3 course. Many apprentices will be eligible for a full rebate of their fees, and those who are not eligible for the rebate will pay \$394 per year—an increase of just \$10. Fourth year apprentices do not pay any fees.

Existing worker and school-based trainees do not currently pay the TAFE New South Wales fee, and this will continue. In 2008 we will continue to apply our policy of affordable access to training for the most financially disadvantaged groups in New South Wales by maintaining full fee exemptions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and for all students enrolled in special access courses. We have also introduced a \$50 concession fee for Centrelink benefit holders, which they can access regardless of the number of courses they undertake. We anticipate that many benefit providers will be able to claim a rebate from their job network provider. Students with a disability will continue to be exempt from any fees for one course each year, and will pay only the concession fee for subsequent enrolments. TAFE institute directors will continue to be able to fully waive TAFE fees in cases of severe hardship.

The Iemma Government is investing a record \$1.7 billion in TAFE this year to ensure that we can continue to offer high quality, publicly delivered, career-focused qualifications for the people of New South Wales. Discussions about a new funding agreement for TAFE have commenced in the usual way, which is a threat from the Commonwealth to cut TAFE funding for the very purposes that Dr John Kaye talked about. As ever, the first thing we hear is a threat from the Commonwealth Government delivered in the customary way—

not by correspondence and not at a face-to-face meeting but via the pages of a national newspaper. Last time the Commonwealth demanded that we introduce Australian workplace agreements for all TAFE staff; this time it is putting a series of demands around the governance of TAFE colleges. So it is all about ideology, provocation and bullying, and nothing to do with addressing the real national skills shortage.

CLEAN COAL

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Mineral Resources. Will the Minister update the House on the development of new clean coal projects in New South Wales?

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: The development of new clean coal projects is vital to the future of New South Wales. There is no doubt that burning coal without adding to global carbon dioxide levels is a major technological challenge that must be addressed by most nations, which is why the New South Wales Government is focusing on this important area. Coal is the world's most abundant and widely distributed fossil fuel source. In New South Wales alone about 90 per cent of our electricity needs are met from coal-fired power stations. It is important to acknowledge that the New South Wales endowment of low-cost coal resources and availability of proven and mature coal-fired generation technology has provided reliable, low-cost, baseload electricity to this State.

Although the greenhouse emission rate from coal-fired generation technology is improving, capture and sequestration of carbon dioxide emissions are necessary to achieve deep emission cuts. Post-combustion capture [PCC], a process that captures CO₂ from power station flue gases, is a key technology with the potential to reduce substantially the greenhouse gas intensity of existing and future coal power stations. Carbon capture and storage have been recognised by Al Gore, the Stern report and the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's third report as the most practical solution to reducing greenhouse gases in the short to medium term, having the ability to make large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

[Interruption]

In fact, I have met the person who wrote the chapter. The Lemma Government recognises that we need a combination of measures to address climate change. That is why we have proposed a renewable energy target to encourage renewable technologies, such as wind and solar, and a broader emissions trading scheme to encourage a broader range of greenhouse reductions such as clean coal. We want to keep the lights on and protect our jobs while at the same time cutting greenhouse gas emissions. The New South Wales Government is working with industry to meet this challenge. To this end I welcome the coal industry's commitment, from the Coal 21 Fund, of \$400 million to the development of clean coal technologies in this State.

Today I inform the House about a move by Delta Electricity and the CSIRO to develop a \$5 million carbon capture pilot plant at the Munmorah power station on the Central Coast. The research scale pilot facility, using an ammonia absorption process for post-combustion capture, is expected to be operational by mid-2008. It will undertake a range of experimental trials to determine the potential to adapt the technology to New South Wales coal and power station conditions, capturing up to 5,000 tonnes of CO₂ a year. Research and development of post-combustion capture fills a gap in the range of technologies under investigation for carbon abatement from coal in Australia. It can be adapted to existing power stations as well as new power plants, and is complementary to other carbon capture and storage demonstration projects under development.

Another advantage is that this novel technology may be exported in the future. It is hoped that this project, in conjunction with the search for carbon geo-sequestration sites by the Department of Primary Industries, will provide the base for a \$150 million demonstration scale carbon capture and storage project in New South Wales by 2013. When coupled with CO₂ sequestration, post-combustion carbon capture offers the potential for an 80 per cent to 90 per cent reduction in carbon emissions from power stations—a great objective indeed. The development of clean coal technology and knowledge supports the continuation of an industry that provides enormous economic benefits for New South Wales and will continue to make sure New South Wales stays open for business.

STATE TAXATION SYSTEM REVIEW

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: My question is directed to the Treasurer, Minister for Infrastructure, and Minister for the Hunter. What outcomes does he expect to achieve as a result of the inquiry into State taxes and revenues announced in August and to be conducted by his friend Neil Warren?

The Hon. MICHAEL COSTA: I am happy to answer the honourable member's question, but Neil Warren was the bloke who put together the Fightback! package for Dr Hewson when he ran, unsuccessfully, against Paul Keating in the unwinnable election. Does the Hon. Greg Pearce know that? Neil Warren, a highly respected academic in these areas, has done a lot of work.

The Hon. Melinda Pavey: Ha, ha!

The Hon. MICHAEL COSTA: He has. He has done a lot of work on tax policy and he is highly regarded across the political divide, which is why I am sure Dr Hewson used him for his Fightback! package.

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: But he is still a friend of yours.

The Hon. MICHAEL COSTA: No, I have met him on about four occasions. He is not a friend of mine. He is somebody we have engaged in a professional—

The Hon. Charlie Lynn: You must have a friend somewhere.

The Hon. MICHAEL COSTA: I do not have friends. They are very difficult to manage.

The Hon. John Della Bosca: You think he is joking!

The Hon. MICHAEL COSTA: Opposition members think I am joking. Neil Warren, who is highly regarded, has an international reputation in matters to do with fiscal or financial arrangements, which is why we have engaged him to follow up his first report. We showed very clearly that, under our current Federation, New South Wales gets a very raw deal in fiscal arrangements. For those who forget the figures, the Commonwealth raises about 80 per cent of the national tax take and it spends about 50 per cent of that. Most of that expenditure is on transfer payments in the social welfare area. Conversely, the States raise about 16 per cent of national tax and they are responsible for 40 per cent of front-line expenditure, that is, in areas such as hospitals, schools and health.

The Hon. Melinda Pavey: And police.

The Hon. MICHAEL COSTA: And police, and disabilities, and every other thing that State governments are required to provide. So, clearly, at the moment the system is very inefficient. It is particularly inefficient for States such as New South Wales that are continuing to subsidise resource-rich States such as Queensland. It is certainly not a fair system and it is something that we will seek to address. One thing that is important—

The Hon. Melinda Pavey: What does Kevin say?

The Hon. MICHAEL COSTA: I am glad that the honourable member asked, "What does Kevin say?" Kevin says that we ought to fix the system. Part of the reason we are putting this report together is to provide a model on what a sensible system should look like. The Federation has been well served by our system of federalism for 100 years. It needs to be recast so that it can operate in the twenty-first century. That is what Labor is about. It is about the future, not the past. It certainly will not be sitting around with billions and billions of dollars of surplus, not providing essential funding for front-line State services.

What is going on in Canberra at the moment is an absolute disgrace. The Federal Government is prepared to fund a hospital in a Tasmanian marginal seat but it is not prepared to put decent resources into the New South Wales hospital system and other State hospital systems as part of a sensible package to reform health care. The pork barrelling that is going on at the moment is not only a sign of desperation; it is also a sign of a government that has lost its reform initiative.

The Hon. Charlie Lynn: Why don't you talk about the Federal Government?

The Hon. MICHAEL COSTA: I am talking about the Federal Government. I am also talking about the last remaining Coalition Government, which will not be there after the Federal election.

WELLINGTON CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Justice. What is the latest information about the new correctional centre at Wellington?

The Hon. JOHN HATZISTERGOS: On Thursday 13 September I had the pleasure of visiting Wellington to open the State's newest \$125 million, 600-bed correctional centre. My colleague the Hon. Tony Kelly who did so much to secure this important project when he was the justice Minister joined me at the opening. The hardworking member for Dubbo, Dawn Fardell, also joined me. I want to acknowledge the support and collaboration of Wellington council and the people of Wellington. Without their support the centre may well have been built in another part of the State. It would have been nice if Opposition members had lent their support to the project instead of the attacks that have been continually levelled at it, in particular, by the former justice spokesman Mr Andrew Humpherson who indicated at various stages—

The Hon. John Della Bosca: What is he doing?

The Hon. JOHN HATZISTERGOS: I think he is a consultant for the people in charge of the nuclear reactor at Sutherland. Mr Humpherson asserted that the plans for Wellington had disappeared off the radar, that not a sod had been turned, and that it was a hoax. Of course, all that has been put to rest with the construction and the opening of this centre. I think Opposition members were well served by the decision that they made not to re-endorse him for the seat of Davidson.

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: That is terrible!

The Hon. Duncan Gay: That's a disgrace.

The Hon. JOHN HATZISTERGOS: What was a disgrace was the statement he made that the Government's commitment to Wellington was in doubt because he claimed that millions of dollars were being pulled from the project. I do not believe that these sorts of inaccuracies would have played well in his pursuit for re-endorsement for the seat of Davidson. But let me not be distracted. At the official opening I welcomed 60 new correctional centre officers and overseers. Over 55 per cent of staff at Wellington Correctional Centre are from the local area.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: He can't respond because he is not here.

The Hon. JOHN HATZISTERGOS: You were one of his few friends. I pay tribute to the hardworking correctional officers, both men and women, who displayed their training dedication to their new career. I am advised that currently there are 140 inmates at the centre and 100 staff employed. Correctional centres provide a major contribution to the economy of country and regional centres. When fully commissioned Wellington Correctional Centre will employ a total of 200 staff with an estimated \$14 million a year in salaries and operational costs contributed back to the local economy.

During construction 70 per cent of the workers were local, the majority of materials used were local, and a former residential property has been converted to allow SHINE for Kids to provide support for the children of offenders. As honourable members will be aware, community safety is a highest priority. That is why security at the correctional centre includes 24-hour electronic surveillance and is amongst the most advanced that we have in Australia. Iris eye scanning has also been installed in the visitors' section for those visitors entering and leaving.

The rehabilitation of inmates is also very important. Offender programs and work opportunities reduce the risk of inmates reoffending. Since the first intake arrived at Wellington Correctional Centre inmates have been working in various industries, including the laundry, the print shop, food manufacture and horticulture. Offenders are also offered a range of programs and support, including alcohol and other drugs, anger management, responsible lifestyle, and sober driving. If honourable members want to know how well the Wellington Correctional Centre has been received they have only to look at the open days that were conducted in February and July this year when some 15,000 people took the opportunity to visit the correctional centre. I look forward to providing the House with further information on this new correctional centre in the near future.

GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS REQUIREMENTS

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I direct my question to the Minister for Commerce. Can the Minister confirm that the Industrial Relations Requirements of NSW Government Procurement Policy is still in a pilot stage and

restricted to courier services? Given the Government's stated opposition to WorkChoices, why has the Minister not moved to extend the application of this policy beyond courier services? Does the Minister agree that the longer the New South Wales Government drags its feet on rolling out this policy, the more Australian workplace agreements [AWAs] will be coming into government procurement contracts and, in turn, undermining wages and conditions in New South Wales?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: The Government always ensures that it maintains the appropriate standards in terms of procurement in this State and it will continue to do so.

EQUINE INFLUENZA ASSISTANCE

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: My question is directed to the Treasurer. Is the Treasurer aware that the Queensland Premier has declared the equine influenza outbreak a natural disaster and announced an emergency relief package for people directly involved in the horse industry in Queensland? Has the Treasurer's friend, the Minister for Primary Industries, requested funding for assistance to the racing industry in light of the situation in New South Wales? Why has the Treasurer refused the request of his friend the Minister for Primary Industries? When will the Treasurer agree to financially assist the people devastated by this disease in New South Wales?

The Hon. MICHAEL COSTA: The answer to the first question is yes. With regard to the second question, I refer the member to my previous answer relating to friends. The answer to the third question is that certainly I have had representations from the Minister for Primary Industries.

TAFE NEW GOVERNANCE

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: My question is addressed to the Minister for Education and Training. Can the Minister advise the House about TAFE New South Wales and proposed changes to its governance?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I thank the member for her question and commend her for her ongoing interest in issues relating to vocational education and training. The Iemma Government is investing a record \$1.7 billion in TAFE this year, providing high-quality, career-focused qualifications for young people and those seeking to update their skills or to change careers. Discussions about new funding arrangements for TAFE commenced in the usual way—as I stated in answer to a question from the Dr John Kaye—by a threat from the Commonwealth to cut funding, delivered in the customary way by the pages of a national newspaper.

The last occasion the Commonwealth demanded that Australian workplace agreements be offered to staff and insisted on an industrial relations approach was comprehensively rejected by New South Wales families, by TAFE staff and, as all members know, by families at the March State election. One would think that with a national skills shortage the Commonwealth Minister for Training would have something to say about training. Instead, the Commonwealth continues its disastrous obsession with industrial relations and micromanaging areas of policy for which it has no legislative responsibility, no capacity and no record of success.

The Commonwealth Minister now is fascinated by the governance arrangements of TAFE New South Wales. According to the Minister, autonomous TAFEs are inherently closer to industry than those that are part of a statewide network. Does this assertion stand up to any intelligent scrutiny? Is it anything that anyone practically involved in training or business subscribes to? In December 2006 the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal considered whether it was necessary to further decentralise TAFE New South Wales decision-making and provide individual institutes with more so-called autonomy. The tribunal concluded that it was not; that flexibility and responsiveness is not contingent on more autonomy.

All 10 TAFE New South Wales institutes have their own advisory councils where business people—that is, real business people who actually run businesses; not the spivs from industry associations—provide an oversight of the institute's provision for the local economy, labour market and community. The partnership between the Western Sydney Institute and the Heartland Holden Group—and there are countless others—provides tailored workplace training for apprentices at Heartland's dealerships, resulting in improved retention rates and reducing the length of apprenticeships. I refer also to the 10-year alliance between the Illawarra Institute and Bega Cheese to train the company's workers on the job, and the Western Institute's partnership with Northparkes Mine, delivering training and assessment on underground mining, working in confined spaces, management skills, and computers specialised for mines work.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research found that TAFE New South Wales has the highest level of employer satisfaction in Australia with 96 per cent of employers—that is, real employers; those who actually employ people—were satisfied. Figures released this morning by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research show that New South Wales is the State training the nation. In this State apprenticeships and traineeships are up 4.6 per cent; nationally they are up by 0.2 per cent. The Commonwealth Minister might be better off turning his attention to the autonomous so-called Australian technical colleges, which have been an abject failure and a monumental waste of taxpayers' money. After an entire term of Commonwealth Government and at a cost of \$61 million, in New South Wales there are fewer than 500 students at only four Australian technical colleges, two of which were previously private schools. One of those schools, the Illawarra Australian Technical College, contracts TAFE to do all its vocational training.

How effective are these autonomous colleges at finding apprentices? According to a teenage student at the Illawarra Australian Technical College who was named and quoted in the *Illawarra Mercury* on 10 August, "I have talked to the teachers but they just cannot find any apprenticeships." The Commonwealth should butt out of areas for which it has no responsibility, no record of success, no capacity and no ideas.

SECURITY GUARD FIREARMS

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Roads, representing the Minister for Police. Is the Minister aware of a series of 11 armed robberies, including three early this July, in which armed security guards refilling automatic teller machines in western Sydney have been held hostage, their vans robbed and their guns stolen? Is the Minister aware that section 12 (2) of the Firearms Act 1996 provides that people, including security guards, are forbidden from having a firearm licence for personal protection or for the protection of any other person? Is the Minister aware of reports that indicate that armed guards are trained never to draw their weapons when threatened, and to hand over their weapons if confronted, thus empowering the gangs to run amok with the safety and welfare of security guards in jeopardy?

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: So you want them to be instructed to shoot?

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: I want the Minister to answer the question.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I thank the honourable member for his question. I will pass it on to the Minister for an appropriate response.

HUNTER COMMUNITY ECONOMIC GROWTH

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: My question is addressed to the Minister for Lands, and Minister for Regional Development. Can the Minister advise the House how the Iemma Government is working with the Hunter community to drive jobs and greater economic growth?

The Hon. Michael Costa: The unemployment rate is down to 3.5 per cent.

The Hon. TONY KELLY: That is right. I acknowledge the interjection of the Minister for the Hunter. There has been a dramatic reduction in the unemployment rate in the Hunter in the past few years.

The Hon. Greg Pearce: Thanks to the Howard Government.

The Hon. TONY KELLY: Thanks to the Iemma Government, which is committed to achieving the goals set out in the New South Wales State Plan. We are promoting investment in port and recreational infrastructure to encourage jobs, tourism and economic growth across regional New South Wales. The Hunter region of New South Wales is booming and the Government is working hard to address the challenges and harness the opportunities this presents. Recently I visited the Hunter and announced a number of initiatives aimed at fostering growth and meeting a number of environmental, recreational and community needs. The sustainable management of Crown land is key to many of these announcements.

First, at the Walka Water Works, the Iemma Government provided \$215,000 to secure the future of a fantastic industrial heritage site and to enhance its tourism and recreational potential. Recently it handed over the reserve trusteeship to the Maitland Council. In Newcastle, one of Australia's greatest cities, I had the pleasure of making some announcements to secure some of the city's best -known coastal icons. There is a

positive mood in Newcastle and the Iemma Government is working hard with the community in reshaping the city's future and in reducing unemployment.

Leading the way are a number of Newcastle's dynamic State members of Parliament: my friend the Minister for the Hunter, and the member for Newcastle, Jodi McKay. During my recent visit to Newcastle I had the pleasure of announcing a plan of management for the former Newcastle Bowling Club site. The plan will improve public access, including disabled access, and provide more open space as well as improving parking and facilities for families who come to enjoy a walk or picnic in nearby King Edward Park. It proposes also to incorporate a much-needed function facility.

A little further along the coast I was able to initiate the Iemma Government's long-term vision for the Merewether Beach precinct—an iconic strip of beachfront that includes the old Merewether Surf House site, a disused bathing pavilion that was built in the 1930s. Surf House was severely damaged in the Newcastle earthquake and is now in a dilapidated, unsafe condition. It has been fenced off from public access. The Department of Lands and council have signed a memorandum of understanding and an expression of interest has been released inviting proposals to revitalise this great site. During my visit I announced also the establishment of a steering committee to shape a draft plan of management for the Merewether beach precinct, which includes Surf House. The committee will comprise representatives from the Department of Lands and the Newcastle City Council as well as four local representatives, including four-time world surfing champion Mark Richards.

At Port Stephens, which is another booming community in the lower Hunter, I recently announced a draft plan of management for the Nelson Bay foreshore. The draft plan is open to community input and includes joint initiatives by the Department of Lands and the Port Stephens Council for the revitalisation of the harbour and surrounding areas. The plan will seek to realise the potential of the harbour and foreshore to create a cleaner environment, growth, jobs and investment in this important regional location.

The Iemma Government, by working through the State Plan, is getting on with the job of working with the community to maintain a climate of economic growth that is backed up with the provision of infrastructure and facilities needed to drive growth in jobs creation. The Hunter is leading the way.

KOKODA TRACK SCHOOL EXCURSION

The Hon. JENNIFER GARDINER: My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Training. Is he aware that many groups of private school students walk the historical Kokoda Track, almost as a matter of course? Why is a plan by Kingscliff High School students and their parents to follow in those footsteps next year being blocked by the Department of Education and Training's red tape? Is the Minister aware that funds for the project have been raised through the school community's fundraising efforts, and that a case officer from the Australian High Commission in Papua New Guinea can be assigned to assist this important school project? Will he break down the barriers preventing Government school students from having the same opportunity to walk the Kokoda Track as do those attending many non-government schools?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: First of all, the last part of the question asked by the member is based on a false premise—that there are barriers preventing public school students walking the Kokoda Track. As the Minister for Education and Training, the safety and security of students and teachers must be my highest priority. The Department of Education and Training needs to ensure that students on school excursions are as safe on a school excursion as they would otherwise be in normal class activities. The department simply cannot endorse a school excursion to the Kokoda Track if it places students and staff at risk.

Current travel advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade recommends that a high degree of caution be exercised for travel to Papua New Guinea in general, and to the Kokoda Track specifically. Recently a number of incidents have been reported relating to the Kokoda Track, including two deaths. I understand why school students, like many other Australians, are drawn to walk the Kokoda Track. It is an important and moving part of our history and New South Wales is the only State that teaches it in the school curriculum.

The Hon. Rick Colless: Are you going to walk it, Minister?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I already have had talks with the Hon. Charlie Lynn about that. The department's advice is that any students who want to walk the Kokoda Track should go with an accredited group and with experienced guides who can manage the safety risks.

The Hon. Michael Costa: The Hon. Charlie Lynn could do that.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: He is one who could. I am advised that a group comprising year 9 to year 11 students from the Batemans Bay, Bega, Eden and Moruya high schools recently travelled to Papua New Guinea and completed the 96-kilometre trek. I am advised that the trip was neither organised by the school nor part of any school activity.

ROYAL NORTH SHORE HOSPITAL PATIENT CARE

HOSPITAL EMERGENCY OBSTETRIC TREATMENT PROTOCOLS

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I ask a question without notice of the Attorney General, representing the Minister for Health. Is it a fact that a recent tragedy occurred at Royal North Shore Hospital whereby a distressed pregnant mother, with symptoms of a potential miscarriage, was left to wait for some hours in the emergency department? Is it also a fact that the mother had a miscarriage in the toilets of the emergency department and was found by her distressed husband holding her live 14-week-old baby? What are the protocols or procedures at New South Wales public hospitals when a pregnant mother with symptoms of a miscarriage seeks urgent medical care and, if necessary, treatment? Will every urgent action be taken to save such babies, if possible?

The Hon. JOHN HATZISTERGOS: I am aware of the details of this case that have been reported in the media. Of course my thoughts go out to the family concerned at this time of tragic loss. The Minister for Health has ordered an investigation into the incident. No doubt that will deal with some of the issues referred to in the honourable member's question. But to the extent that the question raises other issues, I will refer them to the Minister.

WORKDIRECTIONS UK STANDARDS AND STAFF UNDERPAYMENT

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: My question is directed to the Minister for Education and Training, and Minister for Industrial Relations. Is he aware of a report in the British *Guardian* newspaper referring to the award of a \$196 million contract to the Ingeus group, which states:

Unions and charities are furious that Mr Hain (the British work and pensions secretary) has handed over the lion's share of the first tranche of privatised services to the Ingeus group under a deal which will not include union recognition and will safeguard jobs on the same conditions as in Whitehall.

Is he aware that Ingeus is part of WorkDirections UK, which is a multinational corporation run by Mrs Theresa Rein, the multimillionaire wife of Labor's Federal Leader of the Opposition, Kevin Rudd? Is he able to confirm that WorkDirections Australia, which is also owned and run by Mrs Rein, had underpaid its workers by up to \$4,000 by shifting them from awards to common law contracts? Is he also able to confirm that the very same company sacked up to 400 of its employees after failing to meet the standards required by the Australian Government for employment agencies? What action will he take to rein in Australian companies that unashamedly exploit employees who work with disadvantaged people?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I am fascinated by the dread of excitement in the Hon. Charlie Lynn's question. Clearly, if I were the Federal Minister for Immigration, the Federal Treasurer, or even one of a number of Federal Ministers, I could deal with the last part of his question. The question shows the extent of the desperation of the Coalition. At the last State election, the Coalition went down the drain because of WorkChoices and because it wanted to cut out basic services for New South Wales families. That is why Coalition members went down the drain—apart from the fact that they were being led by a dill, whereas Labor had an outstanding leader.

The fundamental issue is that the Coalition has nothing to offer New South Wales families in the context of the Commonwealth Coalition's changes to industrial relations. The very same election fate as suffered by the New South Wales Coalition awaits the Commonwealth Coalition. The New South Wales Coalition is probably not too upset about that because, just as the Federal Coalition's policies lost the New South Wales Coalition the State election, those same policies will cost the Federal Coalition the forthcoming Federal election.

The State Coalition arranged for its regular bomb thrower, the Hon. Charlie Lynn, to ask a nasty and bitchy little question in an attempt to introduce issues that are extraneous to my capacity as the Minister for Industrial Relations and that relate to matters that are not only outside my control and outside the New South

Wales jurisdiction but are also outside the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth of Australia. Dutifully, the Hon. Charlie Lynn gets himself worked up, goes purple, and purports to be upset—he looks as though he has just sprinted up the Kokoda Track—and asks his absurd and nasty little question.

What this is really all about is that the State Coalition and the Federal Coalition have undermined the basic lifestyle of Australians. The Howard Government has destroyed an important part of the Australian identity with the WorkChoices regime. As a result of the work of the State Coalition and its Federal colleagues, members of the Coalition now no longer dare to speak about WorkChoices. I defy any member of the Coalition in this House to say the term "WorkChoices" on the record. All Coalition members have been told by Brian Loughnane and John Howard's office to stop saying it. Bring on the Federal election! Let us find out what the people think is important! Let us find out whether they think their lifestyle and basic Australian destiny have been destroyed. Let us not be distracted by some trivia that that clown, the Hon. Charlie Lynn, brings into this House.

CENTRAL COAST AND HUNTER REGIONS ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: My question is addressed to the Minister for Energy. Will he inform the House of plans to improve the supply of power for families and businesses across the Central Coast and Hunter regions?

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: I thank the Hon. Greg Donnelly for his question. Only three months ago the electricity network across the Central Coast and Hunter regions lay in ruins. The worst storm in more than 30 years caused unprecedented and widespread damage to our network of substations, poles and wires across these regions.

EnergyAustralia crews, with assistance from Integral, Country Energy and interstate workers, fixed damaged wires and poles at more than 8,000 locations and repaired more than 280 high-voltage cables while call centre staff handled 140,000 calls. Despite the truly massive task confronting them, the crews restored power to more than 190,000 homes and businesses after just three days over the June long weekend. The remaining 10,000 customers had their power restored by the following Friday—just one week later.

The Central Coast and Hunter regions are experiencing increased demand for electricity and the demand for power is increasing by approximately 5.8 per cent a year. New substations and wires have already been installed to cater for existing growth, including two major substations that were recently commissioned in the Hunter. The \$15 million Croudace Bay zone substation and power lines will assist in delivering more power to homes and businesses in north-east Lake Macquarie. In Rothbury, in the booming wine tourism region of the Hunter, EnergyAustralia now has fully commissioned a \$19 million substation.

In the coming months Energy Australia also expects to commission its \$22-million Newcastle central business district zone substation in inner city Newcastle. This work is continuing, with planning under way for a new \$22-million substation at Scone. Planning is also continuing on a \$60-million package of works to upgrade the electricity network serving Newcastle's industrial heartland of Mayfield, Steel River and Kooragang Island. Work is continuing on the \$75-million Argenton sub-transmission substation and zone substation project, which is the largest ever undertaken by EnergyAustralia in the Hunter. Once it is commissioned late next year it will supply electricity to 34,000 homes and businesses across about 40 suburbs.

This is all part of a \$720-million program of work to improve electrical infrastructure across the Hunter. At the same time more than \$320 million is being spent to improve the supply network on the Central Coast. EnergyAustralia recently started civil works at its \$23-million Berkeley Vale zone substation. Construction has also begun on EnergyAustralia's \$50-million Wamberal zone substation. A \$40-million upgrade of EnergyAustralia's bulk supply point at Ourimbah is also in the planning stages. Meanwhile, a \$14-million project involving the Woy Woy and Umina zone substations has also begun that will secure supply along the peninsula for at least the next 25 years.

This program of work is also driving record investment in local jobs. In fact, earlier this year EnergyAustralia employed 58 electrical apprentices from the Central Coast and Hunter regions. That is in addition to the team of 61 apprentices from these regions who were employed the year before. Another 1,700 hopefuls sat EnergyAustralia's apprenticeship recruitment exams last month, so we can expect another strong intake of Central Coast and Hunter electrical workers. The Government is delivering on its commitments and providing better services and new infrastructure for the people of New South Wales. I congratulate all the staff who worked during the horrendous period following the storms to sort out everyone's power.

CARLSON WAGONLIT GOVERNMENT TRAVEL MANAGEMENT SERVICES CONTRACT

Ms SYLVIA HALE: My question is directed to the Minister for Commerce. Carlson Wagonlit charges members of Parliament and parliamentary staff a travel booking fee of \$31 per booking and \$195 per international booking, and a \$25 surcharge for after-hours bookings. How much has the New South Wales Parliament paid Carlson Wagonlit in booking fees since the commencement of the contract? How much was paid to the previous contractor for the equivalent period? Why are members and staff not able to avail themselves of fee-free booking transactions, such as those available via the Internet? Are the people of New South Wales, who ultimately pay these fees, being ripped off by this contract?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Ms Sylvia Hale should have put this question on notice. Although that course of action would have been more appropriate I will endeavour to respond now. The government travel management services contract commenced on 1 December 2005. The contract provides a full range of travel management services, including air travel. I am advised that in the first calendar year of the contract—2006—the Government saved approximately \$22 million on travel costs due to the success of increasing the use of discounted fares versus full economy fares. I am advised that these savings have continued in 2007. In the first six months—

The Hon. Duncan Gay: We can save you money by not using this contract.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition could resign and save the Parliament money! In the first six months of this year the Government has saved a further \$13.5 million on air travel, and this amounts to a 28.5 per cent improvement in savings compared with the corresponding period in 2006.

ROYAL NORTH SHORE HOSPITAL INQUIRY

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: My question is directed to the Attorney General. Is the Attorney prepared to refer the tragic death of the child of Jana Horska and Mark Dreyer to the New South Wales Coroner for inquiry?

The Hon. JOHN HATZISTERGOS: I will take the question on notice and provide an answer to the Hon. Trevor Khan.

RETAIL AND HOSPITALITY WORKERS AND WORKCHOICES LEGISLATION

The Hon. IAN WEST: My question is addressed to Minister for Industrial Relations. Will the Minister inform the House about any new research regarding retail and hospitality workers in New South Wales?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: New research by the University of Sydney clearly demonstrates that workers in the retail and hospitality industries are suffering under WorkChoices. The report, prepared by the university's Workplace Research Centre, compares agreements established under the first nine months of WorkChoices with the workplace agreements and awards that were in place immediately prior to the introduction of the Commonwealth's new workplace laws. "Lowering the Standard: From Awards to WorkChoices in Retail and Hospitality Collective Agreements" examined and compared a total of 339 agreements—and the results are simply alarming.

Retail workers on average were shown to have lost up to 18 per cent of earnings while hospitality workers on average lost 12 per cent of earnings. Some workers fared even worse than that. In liquor stores earnings lost ranged between about 12 per cent and 31 per cent. In fast food outlets earnings lost ranged between 13 per cent and 21 per cent. In bakeries earnings lost ranged between about 18 per cent and 25 per cent. These are real and significant losses by anyone's standards. The research shows clearly how WorkChoices has stripped away the working conditions that John Howard claimed would be protected by law. So-called "protected conditions" that have been lost in the WorkChoices agreements examined included Saturday and Sunday penalty rates, overtime rates and public holiday penalty rates.

Importantly, the study revealed the farcical nature of the Howard Government's so-called "fairness test" and its failure to adequately protect employees from losing their longstanding entitlements. These included severance pay, notice provisions for roster changes, and rights covering part-time work and time off after working extended hours. No matter how tricky the Howard Government tries to be, its fairness test simply

cannot compensate for these types of losses. It is not just about the money; it is about the devastating impact that unplanned hours have on working families and communities.

The University of Sydney study also exploded the myth peddled by the Howard Government that WorkChoices is all about flexibility and tailoring conditions to suit the needs of employees. The research revealed a high incidence of template agreements. Tellingly, six templates were used to make nearly half the agreements, with almost a quarter developed by one consultant working in the retail and hospitality areas. Despite mounting evidence from this and other studies of the damage that WorkChoices has inflicted, Mr Howard continues to maintain his stance that the laws are not fundamentally flawed. However, the results of this research show just how Australian workplace conditions are being systematically eroded by WorkChoices.

Unfortunately, the hardest hit are the most vulnerable—those working part-time or casual hours who need a little extra on weekends to make ends meet. It is little wonder they are struggling: Australian families are being crushed under interest rates that are now at their highest levels in more than 10 years. In fact, the interest rate rise in August was the fifth experienced by hardworking Australian families since the 2004 Federal election. A fair go is no longer an option for many families and workers, and they have only the Howard Government to thank as they get squeezed further under WorkChoices. The only way to remedy the damage being done to Australian families by WorkChoices is to oust John Howard and his Coalition Government at the Federal election and replace WorkChoices with a fair, transparent and equitable system that benefits families, workers and businesses.

FIREARMS SPORTS STORE ZONING LAWS

The Hon. ROY SMITH: My question is directed to Treasurer, Minister for Infrastructure, and Minister for the Hunter, representing the Minister for Planning. The Treasurer will be well aware of the recent overreaction by some Roseville residents regarding the opening of a legitimately approved sports store that intended to sell firearms. During the media frenzy that followed, the Minister for Planning expressed a willingness to consider reclassifying gun shops as restricted premises, thereby making it harder for them to receive council planning approval. Is the Treasurer aware that Kogarah Labor Councillor Mikelsons seems to have been buoyed by that statement and is considering banning the establishment of premises selling firearms near residential areas, schools, churches and other places of worship, childcare centres, premises selling alcohol, premises selling food, and other similar premises? That leaves very few places where shooting sports stores can be established. There is no evidence to suggest that sports stores that sell firearms pose any risk whatsoever to their local communities. What is the Government's current position on, and future intention in respect of, this matter?

The Hon. MICHAEL COSTA: This is clearly a question for the Minister for Planning. However, I recall the incident to which the Hon. Roy Smith referred. The initial response was that, provided prospective stores satisfied all relevant zoning provisions, the Government had very little scope to deal with the issue. I recall also that the Minister for Planning said that he would consider the matter further. So I will refer the question to him.

JIGAMY ABORIGINAL CULTURAL CENTRE ACCESS

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Roads, and Minister for Commerce. Is the Minister aware that the Jigamy Aboriginal Cultural Centre, near Pambula in the electorate of Bega, is in desperate need of improved road access from the Princes Highway in order to allow access for tourist coaches, particularly from cruise ships visiting the port of Eden? Is the Minister aware that the member for Bega, Mr Andrew Constance, has contacted his office to seek urgent funding for the necessary road works, which have been estimated to cost about \$360,000? Is the Minister aware that the proposed road upgrade is likely to result in jobs for local indigenous people and generate millions of dollars for the local community? When will the Minister respond to the local community and commit his Government to the upgrade of this road?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I am advised that the Roads and Traffic Authority is in discussion with the Jigamy Aboriginal Cultural Centre about access to the centre from the Princes Highway and is currently assessing its proposal for highway access. Earlier this year—I believe in January—the Roads and Traffic Authority gave the Jigamy Aboriginal Cultural Centre preliminary advice on a development application submitted by the centre to council. Now the authority is assessing a refined proposal recently submitted in light of this advice. The authority is paying particular attention to the potential traffic and road safety implications

involved with upgrading this highway access point. This is a 100 kilometres per hour zone on the highway. It is important that we take into account all the implications that this may have, and that is what the Roads and Traffic Authority does: It carefully looks at the traffic in an area, the speed limit and the crash history, to ensure that when it makes a determination—it is assessing a refined proposal at the moment—it is done in the most appropriate way to ensure the safety of the community and motorists.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I suggest that if honourable members have further questions, they place them on notice.

ROYAL NORTH SHORE HOSPITAL INQUIRY

The Hon. JOHN HATZISTERGOS: Earlier in question time I was asked a question about the prospect of referring the tragic incident involving Jana Horska's miscarriage at Royal North Shore hospital to the Coroner. I am able to provide the House with the following information: Under the law of New South Wales, the Coroner has jurisdiction to investigate the death of a person. The Coroner can deal only with the death of a child where it is of at least 20 weeks' gestation and born alive. When these criteria are not met, such as in the case that has been referred to in the question, the Coroner has no jurisdiction to investigate. The Minister for Health made a ministerial statement in the Legislative Assembly on 26 September 2007 regarding an independent review. She also tabled terms of reference for the review to be undertaken by Professor William Walters, the executive clinical director of the Royal Hospital for Women, and Professor Cliff Hughes of the Clinical Excellence Commission.

KING GEORGES ROAD, BEVERLY HILLS, SCHOOL ZONE

SCHOOL ZONE FLASHING LIGHTS AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Earlier today I was asked a question about school zones. I am aware that concerns have been raised in the community about a school zone on King Georges Road at Beverly Hills. Motorists entering King Georges Road from a side street who feel that they were not aware of the school zone are encouraged to write to the chief executive officer of the Roads and Traffic Authority for a review of any fines at PO Box K198, Haymarket, New South Wales, 1240. This is a matter of fairness and common sense. I am concerned to read reports in the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* on 25 September 2007 about a solicitor charging people \$110 to send simple form letters to the Government. The lawyer is quoted as saying:

We are charging a fee for people who want a personalised letter written to the Minister on their behalf. The number of people who have chosen to take that option is only just reaching 1,000.

That is \$110,000 for a simple mail merge form letter. If people want to write to me, they do not have to pay a solicitor \$110. They are welcome to write to me—and it is free. More importantly, as I said earlier, they can write to the head of the Roads and Traffic Authority for free as well. That is fair and that is sensible. I urge people to think twice about paying a solicitor at least \$110 to print a 75-word form letter. The vast majority of motorists are doing the right thing in school zones. School zones are there to keep our children safe. There is no excuse for speeding, especially through a school zone.

Questions without notice concluded.

[The President left the chair at 1.05 p.m. The House resumed at 2.30 p.m.]

PRESIDENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Presentation to the Governor

The PRESIDENT: I have to report that on Tuesday 25 September 2007 the Legislative Council went to Government House, where I informed the Governor that following a vacancy in the office of President, the Legislative Council, in the exercise of its lawful right, had proceeded to the election of its President and that the choice had fallen upon me as its independent and impartial representative. I presented myself to her Excellency as its President, and Her Excellency was pleased to offer to me her congratulations.

Then, in the name and on behalf of the House, I laid claim to all our undoubted rights and privileges, particularly to freedom of speech and debate, and to free access to Her Excellency when occasion should require, and asked that the most favourable construction should, on all occasions, be put upon our language and the proceedings, to all of which the Governor readily assented.

NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE AMENDMENT (LEASING AND LICENSING) BILL 2007

Bill received from the Legislative Assembly, and read a first time and ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Tony Kelly.

Motion by the Hon. Tony Kelly agreed to:

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.

Second reading set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO [2.33 p.m.]: As the Hon. Ian West said when he moved this motion, the foundation stone of Trades Hall was laid in 1888 by the then New South Wales Governor, Lord Carrington. By coincidence, last week I attended the 119th anniversary Carrington dinner at the Masonic Centre in New South Wales. Not only did Lord Carrington lay the foundation stone of Trades Hall but he was also the first Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales, which was on the verge of being inaugurated in 1888. Before his appointment to the governorship of the colony of New South Wales, Lord Carrington had been a personal friend of the royal family and had served as an aide-de-camp to the Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward VII, on his visit to India in 1875-76. In 1892 he was appointed Lord Chamberlain to Queen Victoria's household and became a progressive member of the London City Council.

He was the President of the Board of Agriculture in a Liberal Government from 1905 to 1911, and in 1911 he became Lord Privy Seal. He was subsequently created Marquess of Lincolnshire. As the representative of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales near the United Grand Lodge of England, Lord Carrington voiced the opinion of New South Wales freemasonry on several occasions, and jointly with Lord Jersey used his influence with the English Grand Lodge authorities to settle differences of view. At the peace celebrations in 1919 he was requested to attend as the grand representative of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales. As honourable members can see, Lord Carrington had a lot to do with establishing important organisations in the history of New South Wales, not only Trades Hall but also the Masonic movement.

The third part of the motion recognises the contribution of the trade union movement to the history of New South Wales. I shall advise honourable members a little more about the history of the union movement in New South Wales so that they will be well aware of just how important its work has been. Unions New South Wales was founded in 1871. Originally it was named the Trades and Labor Council of Sydney because it covered the craft unions or unions of skilled workers, as well as the newly emerging unions for bush labourers. Through the second half of the last century unions grew in numbers and influence. The eight-hour day push began with skilled tradespeople in the 1850s but other workers were not so lucky. The collective strength of a body such as the Labor Council enabled more workers to improve their rights, conditions and wages. It helped labourers to organise alongside the skilled trade unions. With the onset of the Depression in the early 1890s, unemployment increased and employers used this as an opportunity to provoke a confrontation with the unions.

The great strikes started in the maritime industry but quickly spread to encompass many other occupations. The employers gained the upper hand, largely because of the economic situation and the use of the powers of government, including the colonial police against the unionists. Following the strikes, union membership fell dramatically, forcing union leaders to rethink their approach. They recognised the need to have worker representatives in Parliament organised into a political party as those representatives whom they had previously supported were seen to have let them down. As I alluded to earlier, it was this action that led to the pledge that Labor members had to sign guaranteeing solidarity with the party.

Other union members were not so sure about the parliamentary approach and wanted workers to overthrow the parliamentary system. Labour organisations argued around this point for many years, with the Industrial Workers of the World and later the Communist Party of Australia becoming the leading organisations opposed to the parliamentary road. It is interesting to see that the offshoot of the Communist Party of Australia, the Greens, decided to take the parliamentary road. In the meantime, union membership recovered, along with the New South Wales economy. In 1908 the Trades and Labor Council of Sydney was renamed the Labor Council of New South Wales. In those early days the role of the Labor Council was to stimulate the growth of

trade unions. During the first 30 years, debates within the Labor Council were dominated by two major questions: How could it help influence government? What was the best means to settle industrial disputes?

One question led to the formation of the Australian Labor Party, through its parliamentary committee in 1891. I am proud to be a member of the oldest continuous political party in the country. The development of conciliation and arbitration was the way unions resolved the second question. Other broad labour organisations developed, notably the Australian Federation of Labour, but the Labor Council continued, with a key role in the building of a Trades Hall in Sydney, which we are talking about today, and remained a focal point for the labouring unions in their struggles for better pay and conditions. The Labor Council developed a negotiating role between these unions and employers and as a central lobbying agent for workers with various governments. This continues to be a major part of the function of the Labor Council. The council took the arbitration route, and New South Wales had an Industrial Arbitration Act from 1901.

The arbitration system moved in and out of favour with unions and the Labor Council, depending on the government of the day and the changes that were made to the Act. From 1908 it was significantly strengthened in its powers to arbitrate and was required to comply with those decisions. A commission and court system firmly entrenched the Labor Council's leading role in the settling of disputes. Communications issues were then a major part of Labor Council concerns. To this end a workers' voice was established with radio station 2KY. Earlier someone mentioned that the sale of that radio station enabled the refurbishment of Trades Hall to go ahead. In addition, at around this time the Labor Council developed pamphlets on many industrial and social issues.

In the 1930s, during the great Depression, there was disillusionment among unionists with the process of conciliation and arbitration as workers' wages and conditions deteriorated. Another major economic downturn from the late 1920s again had a severe impact on union membership. In New South Wales Australian Labor Party Premier Jack Lang struggled to oppose the financial forces ranged against him but that also undermined the alternative economic plans developed by the Federal Australian Labor Party leadership of Scullin and Theodore. Before long both were replaced by a conservative United Australia Party administration, which attacked wages and conditions and stopped funding for various public works programs that had helped workers to survive the downturn.

The Liberal Party, the party that followed the United Australia Party, is continuing to attack wages and conditions for workers and has continued to stop funding for various public work programs unless it can build it into one of its pork-barrelling programs in marginal seats. Unions and the Labor Council fought to ameliorate the worst effects of the Depression. This was a time of widespread disillusionment. In the search for alternatives, radical movements gained momentum. The Communist Party of Australia gained in strength but perhaps its influence on mainstream unionism declined. Recovery from the mid 1930s saw some improvements in wages and conditions.

Conservative governments realised that they needed to work with the Labor Council in developing the State's industries. The onset of war provided a great stimulus to manufacturing and also reduced male labour availability. With the cooperation of unions the Federal and State governments developed manpower programs. Women entered the workforce in great numbers, although they were paid at lower rates of pay. Cooperation between unions and the Federal Government developed significantly during World War II and the Government nominated unionists to sit on various wartime committees and boards. After 1945 the Labor Council set about the task of creating a new social order and a major campaign was launched for a 40-hour week.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Pursuant to Standing Order 186 (3), it being 15 minutes before the end of the time provided for consideration of the item I interrupt proceedings to allow the mover of the motion to speak in reply for not more than 10 minutes.

The Hon. IAN WEST [2.42 p.m.], in reply: I thank honourable members for their contributions to debate on this motion. The broad and historic contribution that the union movement has made and is making in New South Wales was evident during the debate. I thank the Hon. Kayee Griffin, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, Dr John Kaye, Ms Lee Rhiannon, Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile and the Hon. Amanda Fazio for their contributions to this debate. The Hon. Kayee Griffin, who has a long and proud history of life in the union movement, acknowledged the work of her union, the United Services Union [USU], in fighting for annual leave, long service leave, superannuation, health funds, the union's health fund in particular, and equal pay for women. She also mentioned the union's campaign against conscription at the time, a well-remembered campaign by that organisation.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe, who also has a proud history of life in the labour movement, mentioned the union movement's work in women's rights, Aboriginal rights, gay rights, industry superannuation funds, Members Equity bank and Australian People for Health Education and Development Abroad Incorporated [APHEDA]. She rightly concluded that the campaign against WorkChoices is a debate about the very foundations on which Australia stands. Dr John Kaye raised the broader societal achievements of the union movement and mentioned consumer affairs legislation and public education, in particular, public tertiary education. He said:

The trade union movement also has been the key to the success of our economy.

No doubt he is right in that regard. Collective agreements have been shown to increase productivity. Unions have encouraged and supported Australia's high-end economy in sectors such as education and specialist manufacturing. Unions have promoted more access to quality services such as health and education. The member also noted that WorkChoices would adversely affect people in country towns. Unfortunately, many businesses in the bush are coming to terms with Henry Ford's proposition that if you do not pay workers well they will not be able to spend money on the products that they produce. That adage holds as much sway today as it did when it was first said. Tourism is also affected in regional areas when employees have less annual leave and there is more casualisation of the work force.

Ms Lee Rhiannon spoke in her contribution about accountability. She noted that unions are one of the more accountable institutions in New South Wales. Unions had pushed for accountability of others in things such as the occupational health and safety industry and in cases such as the James Hardie asbestos issue—an important matter that the trade union movement took up. All honourable members would be well aware of the work that was done by various affiliates to UnionsNSW in ensuring that the appropriate piece of legislation was put before this House. The honourable member referred also to toughening employer negligence provisions in the Occupational Health and Safety Act. I have some pleasure in referring to the contribution of Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile who spoke about the Tolpuddle Martyrs and said:

Today we may think it very strange that a unionist or a worker standing up for his or her rights could suddenly be charged under the Mutiny Act 1797, or an 1817 Act forbidding the taking of unlawful oaths.

Today workers are being charged for standing up for their rights; it is no foreign concept in this country. In present day Australia workers can be charged under the Federal Government's so-called Building and Construction Industry Improvement Act 2005. In Western Australia 107 workers have each been fined \$28,000 under this Act for taking industrial action to support sacked union delegates. I acknowledge the point made by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile that WorkChoices has created division in our society. The honourable member is right to be concerned that the "great spirit of cooperation between employers and unions" is at risk under the Federal Government's laws.

I was interested to hear the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Michael Gallacher, who has told us on many occasions that he is a proud member of the Police Association. He told us a story about John Robertson offering him a lift in a big orange bus—a story that clearly illustrated he was quite pleased to receive a lift in the bus and not be left walking home in the cold. The honourable member commented that members on his side of the Chamber had been and are members of unions, which is correct. Obviously such membership is not limited to trade unions. I have indicated before in this House that it would include various associations and organisations, unions of employers and bosses, organisations such as the National Farmers Federation, the chamber of commerce and the business aligned Centre for Independent Studies—collective organisations and organisations that champion freedom of association. When one looks at the statistics one finds that about 96.2 per cent of members in this House are members of an appropriate collective organisation.

The Leader of the Opposition was indignant about what he called the myth that the conservative side of politics was somehow anti-union and anti-worker. The honourable member may like to take up this issue with his Federal colleagues. Their legislation has placed Australia in the 25 worst labour regimes in the world according to the United Nations agency the International Labour Organisation because it fails to promote collective bargaining and freedom of association. Predictably, the honourable member spoke also about union thugs. Bad behaviour and criminal activity is treated as such and I am offended that the honourable member would suggest that anyone could condone thuggish behaviour. I wonder if he would take the same attitude to thuggish behaviour by members of his own organisation.

I remind him that earlier this year Federal Liberal member of Parliament Wilson Tuckey boasted about threatening to run over a unionist. That same member of Parliament was given the nickname "Iron Bar" for

being convicted of assault on an Aboriginal man. I am sure that the conservative side of politics would abhor that particular thuggish behaviour just as much as we would. The Hon. Charlie Lynn must be thanked for his entertaining trip down memory lane. I know the honourable member, who has seen service in the Australian Army and who is a Vietnam veteran, would be well aware of comradeship and the dependence on his fellow comrades in arms. I am sure when one scratches the surface, the Hon. Charlie Lynn understands very much how important it is to have solidarity and to stick together. I know he would be well aware of that when one considers his previous Army history. I conclude by quoting from a report in the *Sunday Times* on the ceremony of the laying of the last brick of the Trades Hall in 1916. John West said:

If he were asked why men had sacrificed so much for unionism, he would point to the work that had been done.

Adult suffrage, liberalisation of the means of education, the opening of university to the children of workers, technical schools, all these were initiated by the workers and these and many other humanitarian movements were traceable to trade unionism and the labour movement.

[Time expired.]

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

PRINCES HIGHWAY UPGRADE

The Hon. DON HARWIN [2.52 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (a) condemns the State Government for its neglect of the Princes Highway south of Wollongong during its 12 years in office,
- (b) notes that the Oak Flats to Dunmore upgrade project was approved and ready to proceed in 1997 but that the State Government has failed to give it priority with the expected completion date for this five-kilometre section of road some 12 years after plans were originally finalised and approved,
- (c) notes that the Kiama Ramps project was an integral part of the North Kiama Bypass project but it has also been delayed,
- (d) expresses its concern about the delay in commencing construction of the Berry Bypass resulting from the State Government's unnecessarily lengthy investigation of how to upgrade the Princes Highway between Gerrongong and Bomaderry,
- (e) notes that despite funding being provided by the Federal Government three years ago, the upgrade of the highway between South Nowra and the Jervis Bay turn-off has been delayed because of the Roads and Traffic Authority's failure to award a tender for construction until a few weeks before the recent State election, and
- (f) calls on the State Government to allocate significant funds to enable upgrades to commence on dangerous sections of the Princes Highway between Nowra and the Victorian border.

I shall address each of the six paragraphs of the motion individually, but in my 8½ years as a member of this Chamber I do not believe that there has been any other subject on which I have spoken more than the state of the Princes Highway. On this, the very first occasion on which I have lucked out and got something out of chook lotto, I am delighted that this is the subject I will talk about. The motion begins with a condemnation of the State Government's record on the Princes Highway south of Wollongong.

For the past 12 years the Carr-Iemma State Government has neglected the Princes Highway south of Wollongong. Successive budgets have failed to properly fund route upgrades on a par with the Pacific Highway and poor planning has seen major projects unnecessarily delayed. The Princes Highway between Wollongong and the Victorian State border is a major transportation link for nearly half a million people, yet the State Government spends only slightly over 1 per cent of its annual road budget on the Princes Highway. As at 30 May this year a total of \$505 million had been spent since the 1994-95 financial year, but how much of that had gone to the route south of the town of Kiama? The Government's so-called \$380 million over 12 years spending package pales in comparison to its \$1.6 billion over 10 years for the Pacific Highway.

It is quite inadequate for the Government to spend on the Princes Highway only 20 per cent of its total expenditure on the Pacific Highway, especially when the difference between the population serviced by the two routes, while different, is not nearly so pronounced as the differential would suggest. This prolonged lack of funding, combined with poor forward planning has resulted—

The Hon. Eric Roozendaal: What about your Federal mates? Tell us what they did. Where is the Federal Government's money?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I am certainly coming to that; do not worry about that. This has resulted in the failure to deliver projects that first received planning approval years and years ago. The Oak Flats to Dunmore upgrade is a good example. The Roads and Traffic Authority and then the Minister for Roads approved the project back in 1997, but construction has barely commenced. The State Government's 12 years of neglect have also resulted in a deterioration of the route and a gradual worsening of its safety record. An analysis of the highway released in October 2004 found that "there has been a general increase in recorded crashes since the mid 1990s," which is the period since the election of the current State Government.

The last NRMA audit of the route found that the pavement condition had deteriorated in the three years since the previous audit. It concluded also that, "generally the route has a poor vertical and horizontal alignment with insufficient overtaking opportunities." This view concurred with the Roads and Traffic Authority assessment, which highlighted the need for realignment works given that 45 per cent of fatal crashes on the highway occurred on curves. With a major regional highway found to have a deteriorating surface and a generally poor alignment, one would expect the Government to have made its upgrade a greater priority—but that is not the case. Funding remains inadequate and the planning sluggish.

The second part of the motion deals with the Oak Flats to Dunmore upgrade project. The five-kilometre stretch of the Princes Highway between Oak Flats and Dunmore is perhaps the worst example of the State Government's prolonged neglect of the corridor. For 12 years the project to upgrade this section of the route has been plagued by inadequate funding, poor planning and repeated delays. The existing road was constructed 70 years ago and the need for an upgrade to meet increased traffic flows was recognised in the 1980s. The new road corridor was identified and land was set aside back in 1986. Under the Greiner-Fahey Coalition Government an environmental impact study was prepared in late 1993 and exhibited early the following year.

In 1997 the Roads and Traffic Authority and the then the Minister for Roads approved the project. At the same time approval was given also for the North Kiama bypass. Rather than proceed with both projects simultaneously, the Carr Government decided to commence work on the bypass first and undertake concept planning and land acquisition for the upgrade project so that it could commence immediately after completion of the bypass. However, construction on both projects was delayed for several years. At budget estimates hearings in September 2003 the then Minister for Roads, Carl Scully, confirmed that construction on the upgrade project would begin soon after the completion of the bypass, which was being built at that time and scheduled for completion in late 2005.

However, typically, the Government's forward planning was poorly managed. When construction of the bypass was completed in November 2005, the Government was not ready to proceed with the Oak Flats to Dunmore upgrade project. At the time, Matt Brown, the member for Kiama, said that the upgrade was his "priority No. 1", but the truth was that the Government was not ready. Planning work simply had not been completed and funds had not been allocated. Preliminary work, such as the relocation away from the new highway route of the Oak Flats to Kiama water main, should have been completed concurrent with the building of the North Kiama bypass. Instead, that was not undertaken until early 2006.

It was a full 12 months after the completion of the North Kiama bypass before the State Government even called for tenders for the Oak Flats to Dunmore upgrade. Such an unnecessary delay puts the lie to any suggestion that the Government considers major works on the route to be a priority. Work barely has commenced. The State Government's neglect over the past 12 years of this part of the Princes Highway is shameful. The Oak Flats to Dunmore section is a winding, five-kilometre road that the NRMA has identified as one of the worst parts of the entire Princes Highway corridor. The section has a crash rate that is 60 per cent higher than the route average. The people of the South Coast had been waiting for more than a decade for the State Government to complete this project. While the Government continues to neglect the Princes Highway and refuses to prioritise and fast-track its upgrade in State budgets, they will wait even longer.

To the end of the 2006-07 financial year, the Government is expecting to have spent \$17.2 million on the project, or just 13.5 per cent of the estimated total cost. In the budget papers released in June, the project is listed as having a completion date of 2009. However, in the lead-up to the election, the member for Kiama stated that it would be finished "by 2010". Given the Government's track record on budget blow-outs and completion deadline extensions, it will be interesting to see whether the project's completion date is pushed back again in the next 12 months.

The third part of the motion deals with the Kiama ramps project, which is another shameful example of the State Government's underfunding and poor project management of the Princes Highway. A northbound on-ramp from Bland Street and a southbound off-ramp to South Kiama Drive at Munna Munnora Creek have long been planned to reduce congestion in the town centre and provide access to the bypass for future residential development south-west of Bland Street. The additional ramps were originally an integral part of the North Kiama bypass project, but were later separated into a distinct project.

Construction of the ramps was an election promise by the candidate for Kiama in the 2003 campaign. At that time Matt Brown committed to a completion date of 2007 for the two ramps. However, again, poor forward planning has resulted in the promised end dates being pushed back a year at least, and maybe two. Options for the ramp routes were displayed to the public in May 2005. It was a staggering 14 months later before the plans for the ramps were finalised. This extraordinary delay in completing the planning process resulted in the Government pushing back the commencement date for the project. The budget for that year allocated \$2.5 million for the project, which was obviously meant to cover the initial construction works. Instead, only \$480,000 was spent, and the work did not begin.

Somewhat surprisingly, in November last year the Government announced that work on the ramps would have to be delayed further because the Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council identified the site of the southbound off-ramp at Munna Munnora Creek as holding possible significance for indigenous people. The Government is yet to explain why the possible significance of the site was not identified six months earlier when the Roads and Traffic Authority conducted its environmental, social, land use, traffic and engineering conditions assessment. It was a further five months before the Roads and Traffic Authority commenced archaeological excavations to determine the significance of the site.

The Government's poor forward planning and delayed investigation of the Munna Munnora Creek site have threatened the viability of the project's ostensible 2008 completion date. The member for Kiama recently stated it was hoped that construction would be finished during next year, clearly leaving open the possibility that it will be early 2009 before the ramps are finally finished. On 30 May during question time in this place the Minister for Roads had the opportunity to confirm whether construction of the project would begin this year and to provide guidance to the residence of South Coast of the current expected completion date to which the Roads and Traffic Authority is currently working. Regrettably, the Minister declined to give Princes Highway motorists either confirmation of a commencement schedule or guidance as to a completion date in his centre on that date. His general remarks referred mainly to the levels of State and Federal Government funding for the Princes Highway.

More recently the Roads and Traffic Authority has given the local council informal advice that some artefacts had been discovered at the Munna Munnora Creek but that work was anticipated to commence in October: I hope that will be the case. The delay to the project because of the issues amounts to a full year. At the time I wrote this speech a completion date was yet to be made public. Honourable members should not forget that the ramps were an integral part of the North Kiama bypass project. The fact that approximately two years after the opening of the bypass they are still not completed is a disgrace.

The fourth part of the motion deals with the construction of the Berry bypass and upgrading of the highway between Gerringong and Bomaderry. Yet another long-delayed project along the route of the Princes Highway is the Gerringong to Bomaderry upgrade, which includes bypassing the town of Berry. This section of the highway carries an average of 11,000 vehicles per day, an increasing number of which are heavy vehicles carrying freight. During holiday periods this freight traffic competes with large numbers of family vehicles. Vehicles are using a long section of winding single carriageway that is almost entirely a single lane in each direction. The nature of the road and the levels of traffic now utilising it have made the Gerringong to Bomaderry stretch of the Princes Highway one of major concern.

In a five-year period from July 2000 to June 2005 there were 230 reported crashes and nine fatalities between Fern Street, Gerringong, and Cambewarra Road, Bomaderry. The 2005 NRMA Princes Highway audit identified the intersections of the Princes Highway with Belinda Street, Gerringong, and the Princes Highway with Merroo Road, Bomaderry, as among the five worst black spots along the whole of the Princes Highway corridor. The importance of upgrading the route has been recognised for more than 15 years. As with the Oak Flats to Dunmore upgrade, the Greiner-Fahey Coalition government initiated plans for a realignment and upgrade between Gerringong and Bomaderry and conducted an evaluation assessment in 1991.

However, rather than proceeding with the route improvement agenda of the last Coalition Government, the Carr-Iemma Government has commenced the process again, resulting in excessive and unnecessary delays.

Just as it did with the Oak Flats to Dunmore section, the State Labor Government has failed to make the Gerringong to Bomaderry works a priority. Successive budgets have failed to allocate the required level of funding, and the necessary investigation and planning phases have been delayed, drawn out and duplicated.

The Carr Government conducted an environmental impact study for a North Street, Berry, bypass corridor in 1997 but did not pursue the matter and failed to make an investigation of the whole Gerringong to Bomaderry section. Once again that highlights the Government's poor track record of managing the planning of infrastructure projects. Assessment and planning for the Gerringong to Bomaderry works were not conducted concurrently with the building of the Kiama bypass. It is poor forward planning by the Government to wait until one project is completed before planning begins for the next.

In December 2005 the member for Kiama stated that the Gerringong to Bomaderry upgrade project was No. 2 on his priority list. He told residents that an announcement on the preferred route of the Roads and Traffic Authority could be expected during 2006 and that the proposal would include options for the Berry bypass about which the community would be consulted. In the 22 months that have passed since, the Roads and Traffic Authority has yet to produce a preferred route or any plans with options for the community to consider.

Obviously the route was deemed too politically sensitive to make a decision on it so close to an election. The project appeared as a line item in the budget papers for the first time this year, although they offer no estimated total cost or expected completion date. The latest advice from the Roads and Traffic Authority distributed to residents in July states that, while route options will be revealed towards the end of this year, a preferred route might not be identified until the middle of next year. Only then will the lengthy and complicated approvals process even begin.

At the current rate of planning construction on this project, which is supposedly one of the Government's two main priorities for the Princes Highway, may not—in fact, I am convinced it definitely will not—commence during this parliamentary term. The Labor Government is clearly not serious about upgrading the route between Gerringong and Bomaderry. That is a major concern to residents of the Shoalhaven and the local government areas to the south. The fifth part of the motion refers to an issue that is very close to my heart: the highway between South Nowra and the Jervis Bay turn-off. The motion notes:

... despite funding being provided by the Federal Government three years ago, the upgrade of the highway between South Nowra and the Jervis Bay turn-off has been delayed because of the Roads and Traffic Authority's failure to award a tender for construction until a few weeks before the recent State Election ...

That is a long time after the initial grants were made. It is a source of great frustration to the people of the Shoalhaven and the far South Coast that the State Government attempts to hide its underfunding and planning mismanagement of the Princes Highway and criticises constantly the level of funding that the Federal Government has made available for the road corridor.

The Princes Highway has always been a responsibility of the New South Wales Government. It is the role of the State Government to secure funding for its upgrading and to make this a priority in the State budget. It is also the role and responsibility of the New South Wales Government to apply for supplemental funding from those national funding schemes for which the highway could qualify. Unfortunately, the State Government and the Roads and Traffic Authority failed to pursue the inclusion of the Princes Highway south of Wollongong in the Federal Government's AusLink funding program and also failed to provide the detailed data on the link needed to justify its inclusion.

The Roads and Traffic Authority has identified the Princes Highway as a corridor of critical importance for regional economic growth and development. However, when the Federal Parliament Standing Committee on Transport indicated in June 2003 that neither the Sydney to Dubbo link nor the Princes Highway south of Wollongong was under consideration at that time the Roads and Traffic Authority requested that the committee reconsider only the Sydney to Dubbo link. As a result the Sydney to Dubbo link was subsequently included in consideration for AusLink funding from that early stage. The Princes Highway south of Wollongong was not. Fortunately, through the efforts of the Federal member for Gilmore the Princes Highway south of Wollongong has now received some AusLink funding from the Federal Government—contrary to the assertion made by the Minister for Roads during question time on 30 May.

At the end of last year the State and Federal governments announced \$10 million contributions to the realignment of the notorious 2.34 kilometre stretch of the highway known as the Conjola Bends. This Federal money will allow the straightening of this dangerous section of the highway. However, this year's budget papers

reveal that the cost of the project has already blown out to more than double the original estimate. While the scope of the work has been broadened slightly, the cost is now estimated at \$45 million. Clearly the original costings for the work drawn up during the planning stage were woefully inadequate. The budget papers refer also to a 2009 completion date. I certainly hope that will be met.

As to the section of highway between South Nowra and the Jervis Bay turn-off, nearly three years ago the Federal Government approved a funding allocation for upgrading this part of the route, citing particularly the need to duplicate the bridge over Currumbene Creek. Despite the availability of these Federal funds, the State Government closed tenders for the relevant projects only just before this year's State election. Once again, if the State Government were serious about the Princes Highway it would have managed the planning of these projects more expeditiously, accessed the available Federal moneys sooner and fast-tracked the upgrade works for the benefit of residents and motorists.

As it is, mainly the Federal Government will fund the project. The safety works will total \$19 million. The Federal Government is providing \$15 million and the State Government is providing only \$4 million. The delays by the Roads and Traffic Authority and the State Government have pushed back the completion date of this project unnecessarily, and it is proceeding now only because substantial Federal funding has been made available. The final part of the motion before the House calls on the State Government:

... to allocate significant funds to enable upgrades to commence on dangerous sections of the Princes Highway between Nowra and the Victorian border.

Other sections of the Princes Highway between Nowra and the border just south of Eden remain particularly dangerous. Each one is in urgent need of upgrading and should be prioritised. In 2005 the NRMA released the key findings of its Princes Highway audit. It found that the risk of being injured due to a crash was consistently high from Yallah to Bega; pavement condition had deteriorated from 95 per cent good to 92 per cent good; and that generally the route had a poor vertical and horizontal alignment with insufficient overtaking opportunities.

According to the NRMA audit, the top five black spots based on the New South Wales definition were the intersection of the Princes Highway and the Snowy Mountains Highway at Bega, the intersection of Belinda Street, Gerringong and the Princes Highway, the intersection of Island Point Road, Tomerong and the Princes Highway, the intersection of Meroo Road, Bomaderry and the Princes Highway, and the Sussex Inlet Road intersection at Wandandian—which I am pleased to say has now received the work. During the recent State election campaign the Coalition made a detailed commitment of more than \$150 million to improve road safety on the Princes Highway south of Nowra. These commitments included the construction of a complete dual carriageway from Browns Hill at South Nowra to the Jervis Bay Road intersection, at a cost of \$50 million; the Tomerong to Wandandian route realignment and the widening of the narrow bridge at Condies Creek, at a cost of \$8 million; and the Ulladulla bypass, at a cost of \$30 million.

We also proposed the Ulladulla to the Victorian border road safety improvements program, which would cost about \$65 million. It would include a feasibility study on the Clyde River Bridge duplication at Batemans Bay, realignment of the northern approaches to the Wagonga Inlet Bridge at Narooma, route realignment south of Narooma at Victoria Creek, route realignment around Dignams Creek, strengthening the Brogo River Bridge, and completing the Bega bypass. In addition to these projects along the Shoalhaven and far South Coast sections of the Princes Highway, the Coalition also proposed a \$60 million black spots program to address particularly dangerous sections of the road, including the Forest Road intersection at Falls Creek, the Island Point Road intersection at Tomerong, the S-bends and Heggos Corner at Jerrawangala, and the pedestrian walkway at Tabourie Lake Bridge.

Early next year the Deputy State Coroner, Carl Milovanovich, will conduct a technical investigation of the highway and the role that it may have played in 21 fatal accidents. This inquiry—which is most welcome—was instigated by the member for Bega and is enormously important to the communities of the South Coast and the far South Coast. I hope that the Government will carefully examine the NRMA audit and the Deputy State Coroner's forthcoming findings and make a more concerted effort to address safety along the Princes Highway corridor. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Parliamentary Secretary) [3.18 p.m.]: One would infer from the Hon. Don Harwin's contribution that the Iemma Government is doing nothing to upgrade the Princes Highway. That is wrong. The Iemma Government is meeting its commitments and investing in the Princes Highway. In contrast, the Opposition has made tooth fairy promises. In the record Roads budget for 2007-08 the Princes Highway will receive \$142.8 million. This funding is delivering on our commitment to spend \$380 million over

12 years to upgrade the Princes Highway. The 7.6 kilometre North Kiama bypass extends from Shellharbour Road at Dunmore to Spring Creek Drive at North Kiama, bypassing the Minnamurra Bends and Bombo Hill. The New South Wales Government funded the \$179 million bypass, with a \$34 million contribution from the Federal Government. According to Roads and Traffic Authority traffic figures, the North Kiama bypass has proved its value to both the local community and passing traffic since it opened 18 months ago.

The Roads and Traffic Authority reports that average traffic counts of more than 23,000 vehicles—more than 2,500 of which are heavy vehicles—are using the North Kiama bypass each day. Hundreds of thousands of motorists have enjoyed using this new section of the Princes Highway and are enjoying the safer, smoother and quicker journey. The North Kiama bypass has reduced travel time significantly since it opened—another real bonus for motorists. Residents of Minnamurra and North Kiama are also enjoying safer local roads, thanks to the bypass, with thousands of vehicles—many of them heavy vehicles—taken off their roads.

Motorists will have better access to Kiama township from the Princes Highway with the new southern and northern access ramp locations to the Kiama bypass. The new access ramps will reduce congestion on Gipps Street and the main thoroughfare of Terralong Street in the Kiama town centre. The ramps will also accommodate future residential growth west of the bypass. An amount of \$8 million has been allocated towards the Kiama ramps in the 2007-08 road budget. Over \$2 million was invested in 2006-07 to acquire property, finalise investigations, commence detailed designs and design utility adjustments for the Kiama access ramps. Work is due to begin this month on the northbound on-ramp, which will link Bland Street to the Princes Highway. Work is then scheduled to start later this year on the southbound off-load ramp linking the Princes Highway and South Kiama Drive. The preferred ramp locations were selected in consultation with the community, Kiama council and emergency services, and followed a public display of options throughout April and May 2005.

The Pambula Bridge provides an example of how useful it has been to get the Howard Government to come to the party with funding for the Princes Highway. Work on the new Pambula Bridge on the Princes Highway started in April. The \$17 million project is being funded by the New South Wales Government with a \$5 million contribution from the Australian Government—which incidentally refused to match the contribution of the New South Wales Government, which will contribute \$9 million towards the project in its 2007-08 record roads budget.

The entire project extends for 1.7 kilometres and includes a new bridge crossing of the Pambula River adjacent to the existing bridge and new approaches, including improvements to the curves on the southern approach. The new bridge will be constructed above the forecast one in 100 year flood level, and the road approaches will be built above the one in 20 year flood level. The bridge and culverts are being constructed on a new alignment alongside the existing road to minimise impact on agricultural land and other properties. The realignment of the southern approaches to the bridge was completed in 2006 and completion of the entire project is expected by mid-2008. As I said in my opening remarks, the Iemma Government is investing in the Princes Highway and is meeting its commitments in that regard.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA [3.22 p.m.]: I speak in this important debate as Liberal representative for the St George-Illawarra province and as an extremely frustrated frequent user of the Princes Highway. In my view the Princes Highway is the most important road in our State, and I am saddened that the State Government has neglected this important piece of infrastructure for 12 long years. The neglect is particularly hard felt by residents living south of Wollongong. They have been victims of the Government's inability to deliver essential infrastructure on budget and on time. Rather than the Minister for Roads attempting to blame the Australian Government for the State's neglect of the Princes Highway south of Wollongong—this Government's answer to everything seems to be "Let the Federal Government take care of it"—

The Hon. Eric Roozendaal: The Federal Government only has a budget of \$20 billion!

The Hon. Don Harwin: Would you rather it had a \$20 billion deficit?

The PRESIDENT: Order! I ask members on both sides of the Chamber to cease interjecting and allow the Hon. John Ajaka to proceed.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: There is no doubt that the John Howard Federal Government is able to run its projects on time, and there may be something that this Government can learn from that. I wish to draw the

attention of the House to comments made by Martin Ferguson, the Federal member for Batman, and the Federal Labor shadow Minister for Roads, on Radio ABC Illawarra on 3 March 2004, when he said:

The Princes Highway is the ongoing responsibility of the New South Wales Government. It is the view of the Opposition. The last thing we need is people playing games, politics, with respect to their responsibilities.

It is clear to all that the State Government bears the responsibility for the neglect of the Princes Highway. The lives of thousands of motorists are being put at risk every day because of the highway's chronic neglect, which has extended for 12 years. The New South Wales Government has failed the residents who rely on the highway.

In 1997 the Carr Government offered some hope that some important upgrades would be undertaken between Oaks Flat and Dunmore. Ten years ago the State Government approved the upgrades and it was ready to proceed. As 10 years has passed everyone would be entitled to expect that the upgrades would have been completed, and rightly so. Unfortunately, as seems to be the norm for this Government, the reality is completely different picture. Local residents have only just seen the commencement of construction. The Roads and Traffic Authority web site states that the works are expected to be completed by late 2009. Let's hope!

Not only do local mums and dads battle the traffic every day because of perpetual delays but local businesses suffer also. The traffic congestion during school holidays, on weekends and on public holidays is turning holiday makers away from this beautiful part of the world, and this, consequently, is costing the local economy substantial and essential money. As we travel farther south the delays and inability to deliver major infrastructure projects become even more evident.

A further example of Princes Highway neglect is, of course, the Kiama ramps project. In 2003 the member for Kiama, Matt Brown, promised that the Kiama ramps would be completed by 2007. On Wednesday 23 May 2007—more than four years after Mr Matt Brown promised that the Kiama ramps would be completed by this year—the *Kiama Independent* published a photograph of contractors for the Roads and Traffic Authority beginning excavation to ascertain whether there were any Aboriginal artefacts on the Munna Munnora Creek site for the Kiama bypass off-ramps. The photograph makes it clear to all that in no way will the Kiama ramps be completed by the end of the year. The recent budget confirmed the fears of Kiama's residents, with reference to a new completion date of 2008. I pray for the sake of local residents that 2008 does not become 2010, or even later. As I said earlier, this seems to be the norm for how the Government conducts its business.

It is, of course, very important that the Roads and Traffic Authority works with the Illawarra local Aboriginal land council to determine whether the site is of Aboriginal significance. That process should have taken place during the very lengthy and detailed environmental impact statement process. If the State Government were serious about properly managing this project, the process would have occurred more than 12 months ago. Had that been done, the *Kiama Independent* would have published a photograph of the completed project. Unfortunately, the reality is that local residents will be stuck in traffic on Gipps Street and Terralong Street in Kiama for a long time into the future.

Continuing further south along the Princes Highway, the next obvious example of Government failure is the delay in the commencement of construction of the Berry bypass. The existing Princes Highway between South Kiama and Nowra is primarily one lane in each direction and has a number of winding sections with limited overtaking opportunities. The section between Gerringong and Bomaderry is in desperate need of upgrading to meet the minimum required and expected road standards. Currently a study is being conducted to identify route options and then determine a preferred route for the upgrade. This study should have taken place years ago when it was recognised that there was a need to upgrade the Princes Highway between the two towns. For the community this simply again means more delay.

Local residents and businesses are sick and tired—I repeat: sick and tired—of the ongoing delays. They recognised the need for urgent road upgrades years ago and are trying now to understand why this Government failed to listen to their concerns. The bad news is that for residents and local businesses on the beautiful south coast of New South Wales this Government's lack of forward planning has resulted in unnecessary fatalities on a dangerous stretch of road, on which gridlock has become part of day-to-day life. Local businesses will continue to suffer.

It is time the Government showed the necessary vision and planning to deliver sufficient infrastructure. The commitment of long overdue funds in the recent budget to enable upgrades to commence on dangerous sections of the Princes Highway between Nowra and the Victorian border is only a start. Some essential upgrades on this section of the Princes Highway would include the Bega bypass, Ulladulla bypass and Milton

bypass. There is an expectation from local communities that the State Government will show foresight and upgrade these sections of the Princes Highway without delay. I urge the Government to undertake the upgrades on these dangerous sections of the highway without further delay. The State Government has neglected the Princes Highway for 12 long years, and I urge it to immediately address this neglect by commencing the desperately needed upgrades to which my colleague the Hon. Don Harwin referred today.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ [3.29 p.m.]: Like the Hon. John Ajaka, I often travel on the Princes Highway during the school holidays as it is one of the most spectacular parts of New South Wales. We know it as the Sapphire Coast and it is enjoyed by many people. That is why the Iemma Government, in the 2007-08 record roads budget, allocated \$3.4 million to continue the route options investigations for the Princes Highway upgrade from Gerringong to Bomaderry. This study for the Princes Highway between Gerringong and Bomaderry is now underway, and includes the concept of a Berry bypass. The study will include the generation of options, the identification of a preferred route, and a final concept design and environmental assessment. It is anticipated that options will be put on public display in late 2007.

I understand that the Roads and Traffic Authority has consulted with local communities to determine how they would like to be involved in the options and route selection study. Two rounds of community workshops were held in 2006 and 2007 at Berry, Gerringong and Bomaderry, together with supporting public displays. In July the Parliamentary Secretary for Roads announced the opening of the project office in Berry, with all the up-to-date information on the study process, including a number of constraint maps that have been developed following the initial field investigations and stakeholder consultation. A community issues map is also on display. This map highlights all the issues raised by the community through the consultation process since March 2006.

The Government is serious about this project. A tender has been awarded to undertake the massive amount of preliminary work involved in moving from the current stage through to being ready to take it to contract. Initial studies including traffic flow, flora and fauna, survey and aerial photography have commenced, and an Aboriginal focus group has been established. As for the Princes Highway upgrade between South Nowra and the Jervis Bay turn-off, on 22 June 2006 my colleague the Minister for Roads made a joint announcement with the Federal roads Minister, Jim Lloyd, that design details had been finalised for safety works for the stretch of the Princes Highway between Forest Road south of Nowra and the Jervis Bay turn-off. In one of its rare commitments to the Princes Highway, the Australian Government promised \$15 million for the works. The New South Wales Government also contributed a further \$4 million. Work started earlier this year and is progressing well.

This section of the Princes Highway varies from two to four lanes, and has reached the stage where an upgrade is necessary to improve traffic flow efficiency and road safety, particularly during the holiday season. That is why the two governments agreed on the design and scope of the project in June 2006 to get on with the job of this important upgrade. Other elements of the safety package announcement included three kilometres of duplication between Forest Road and Falls Road; a new two-lane bridge over Currumbene Creek, duplicating the existing bridge; intersection upgrades along the full length of the works, including Forest Road, Comberton Grange Road, Parma Road and Falls Road; instalment of wire rope safety barriers on the median strip between opposing lanes of traffic; and provision of U-turn facilities at Forest Road and Parma Road.

The concentration of improvements on the Princes Highway south of Nowra recognised the inter-regional transport links between Nowra and the fast-growing areas at Jervis Bay. Extending the length of the existing four-lane, two-way carriageway will provide extra overtaking opportunities for the 20,000 vehicles that use this section of the highway every day. With this number expected to increase by nearly 50 per cent in the next 20 years, it is good to see both governments working cooperatively to address safety for motorists now and into the future. In the five years between January 2001 and December 2005, 63 crashes were reported on the Princes Highway between Warra Warra Road and Jervis Bay Road, resulting tragically in two deaths and 43 injuries. The Government acted quickly to address the safety concerns by upgrading the intersection of the Princes Highway and Jervis Bay Road in December 2005.

The new works announced in June 2006 will provide four-lane highway conditions along a heavily trafficked section of the highway. Concept design work followed a workshop held in 2004 to identify the priority safety works. This was nearing completion about December 2005 when Shoalhaven City Council advised the Roads and Traffic Authority of plans for the Shoalin Temple east of the highway at Comberton Grange Road. In light of this, the intersection design for Comberton Grange Road had to be reconfigured so that it could be upgraded in future to manage some of the extra traffic resulting from the temple development.

Tenders were called on 6 November 2006 for work that included the duplication of Currumbene Creek Bridge and the provision of four lanes between Forest Road and Falls Road. The major contract was awarded to Reed Construction Pty Limited in February this year and work has commenced. This motion is nothing more than an attempt by the Opposition to somehow deflect blame for its inability to secure funding from the Howard Government in Canberra for the Princes Highway south of Wollongong.

The Hon. Don Harwin: These projects are only going ahead because of Federal Government funding.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: We put \$142 million into the Princes Highway. How much has the Federal Government put into it? What is the Federal Government's commitment?

The Hon. Don Harwin: It is a State road.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Once again we are getting the blame game from Canberra, "It is a State road."

The Hon. Don Harwin: You were the ones who didn't accept Federal funding.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: No. The Federal Government has not made a commitment to the South Coast, which is one of our major tourism destinations in New South Wales. This project is bringing jobs to regional New South Wales. But that is all right, so long as the Opposition can blame the State Government, as it always does. By contrast, the Iemma Labor Government will continue to build on the significant achievements already made when it comes to upgrading this important highway. As I said, in the Treasurer's record 2007-08 roads budget the Princes Highway will receive \$142.8 million in funding. This year's record roads budget shows the Iemma Government's commitment to New South Wales, in particular regional New South Wales. That fact has been recognised by the NRMA, which stated:

The NSW Government's record Roads Budget will make the NSW economy more competitive and make regional roads safer.

I urge members opposite to stand up to the Federal Government and convince it to match our massive investment in the Princes Highway.

Ms LEE RHIANNON [3.36 p.m.]: This motion is disappointing—that is not surprising—because it fails to address the key transport needs of the South Coast. We know that some road upgrades will be necessary in the future, but the era of massive highways is over. The Coalition and Labor are having trouble catching up with this reality, but if they are serious in government that is what they will need to address. We must advance that type of policy because we are in the era of climate change. People are coming to understand the meaning of peak oil, which has enormous implications for the transport needs of the South Coast. I shall illustrate a couple of problems with this motion.

The Toolijooa area is a prime farming area near the coast and east of the current highway. The Toolijooa and Harley Hill Action Group formed 13 years ago when the Roads and Traffic Authority wanted to put an upgraded highway through this beautiful farming land. I have heard from local Greens members in the area and I have some information from a spokesperson for the Toolijooa and Harley Hill Action Group. The work of these people reminds us of how this motion does not come to grips with the transport needs of the South Coast. The motion fails to challenge the Roads and Traffic Authority mindset of bulldozing all that lies in the way; community opinion, scarce farmland—they are all cheap options when it comes to pushing ahead with what one wants.

Stephen Carr, spokesperson for the Toolijooa and Harley Hill Action group, and local residents have been working on this issue and trying to get some sense into some of the upgrades. Local residents have grave fears that up to 13 houses could be lost if the Roads and Traffic Authority decides to build the new Gerringong to Bomaderry link road through their township. Mr Carr has spoken about this unique agricultural based area. These are some of his comments:

The social and economic costs of running the highway through here far outweigh the benefits. This community is totally irreplaceable ... People do not want to drive through these areas and see nothing. They come through here to see the undulating hills and big black and white cows. We are going to keep chipping away to make sure we do not lose it.

In the interview Mr Carr went on to talk about two wetland areas found in Toolijooa, which represent 90 per cent of New South Wales freshwater wetlands. This is the second time that Toolijooa residents have had

to take on the Roads and Traffic Authority. Back in 1990 residents stopped Roads and Traffic Authority madness, and they are again working hard to keep the Roads and Traffic Authority at bay. Anyone reading this motion would have to say that they would achieve this with little help from the Coalition. Another problem that is highlighted in this motion relates to the strip of highway along the Shoalhaven River. The upgrade will increase bottlenecks on the Princes Highway at Shoalhaven River.

There is already major congestion around Shoalhaven Bridge. Shoalhaven council, in an attempt to relieve traffic, is proposing to put a road across Bomaderry Creek Regional Park. That is no solution at all. I understand that Mr Matt Brown, the local member, has also stumbled in his attempt to handle the issue. He is working with council to put forward a solution. When we have these major upgrades we end up moving the bottleneck or traffic jam from one point to another. Public transport must be given more consideration.

It is extraordinary that the rail line between Kiama and Bomaderry has still not been electrified. How long have we been waiting for that electrification? There is no mention of it in the motion but that campaign has been running for a long time. The plan to extend heavy rail past Bomaderry should be discussed. I emphasise the need to do this in the context of the challenge to peak oil. We need public transport—a responsible solution—in the light of the rising petroleum product costs. Many people are not too sure about peak oil. The Greens are not saying that it is about to hit us and that it is all doom and gloom—which is the way in which people have tried to present the Greens' policies. We are talking about global oil output failing to meet global demand. Many people have argued—and again it is not just the Greens or academics who might work in this area saying this; some of the big oil companies such as Shell and Chevron made interesting statements about it this week—that demand is outstripping supply.

Any party that wants to win government next time around should look at the vulnerability of our oil supplies in New South Wales and come forward with plans to address it. The Greens would like to see an extension of public transport, in particular along the coast, and the safeguarding of oil supplies, in particular for rural areas, as it will take a long time, if ever, for rural areas to receive public transport. We must weigh up that approach in these difficult times. I believe that the Coalition would have gained much more credibility with this motion had it put forward a plan to expand public transport on the New South Wales South Coast and did not put all its eggs in the usual bigger basket of roadway projects.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI [3.43 p.m.]: The Iemma Government is committed to upgrading and improving safety on the Princes Highway. In 2004 the State Government announced that more than \$30 million worth of road safety improvements would be carried out on the Princes Highway over the three years from 2004 to 2006. The three-year program has successfully delivered a number of major projects, including the \$2 million curve realignment south of Deep Creek, south of Batemans Bay, and the \$1.1 million project to develop a northbound overtaking lane just north of Victoria Creek and south of Mystery Bay turn-off.

More than \$30 million worth of road safety improvements continue this year, including realignment of the southern curves at Pambula, which is now completed; construction of an overtaking lane north of Croobyar Creek; construction of an overtaking lane north of Mystery Bay Road; and shoulder widening and median turning lane installation at Bewong to Wandandian. That is not all. Work is under way on a jointly funded \$90 million project to improve safety on the Princes Highway at South Nowra. Reed Constructions Australia was awarded the contract to update the three-kilometre length of the Princes Highway between Forest Road and Falls Road.

The upgrade will involve widening the highway to four lanes between just south of Forest Road to Falls Road, including a duplicate two-lane bridge over Currumbene Creek; installing a wire rope safety barrier in the median strip between opposing lanes of traffic; upgrading highway intersections with Comberton Grange Road, Parma Road and Falls Road; providing U-turn facilities in Forest Road and Parma Road to allow landholders directly fronting the highway to have safe access in all directions; and repaving the road surface of bus bays and existing stopping areas opposite Parma Road and on each side of the highway near Falls Road. This work will provide four-lane highway conditions from just south of Forest Road to Falls Road, a heavily trafficked section of the highway.

The installation of wire rope safety barriers in the median strip will significantly add to the safety of the road. Construction is expected to be completed mid-2008, weather permitting. On 22 June 2007 the member for Kiama, Matt Brown, announced that the New South Wales Government would contribute \$500,000 towards the road safety upgrade at the intersection of Princes Highway and Island Point Road. The Road and Traffic Authority is currently in the planning phase for junction improvements at Island Point Road. Additional funding has been secured for construction of improvements under the AusLink and State black spot programs.

Detail design of an improved left turn into Island Point Road providing greater separation from the junction is currently underway. Earlier this year a special road safety camera, or crashcam, was also installed at the intersection. Data collected by this crashcam over a six-month period will also be used to help develop proposed treatment at the intersection. The intersection of Island Point Road and the Princes Highway at Tomerong is one of several priority road safety sites along the highway. The preferred option has been designed to separate southbound through traffic and left-turning traffic in order to minimise traffic conflict at the junction.

On 4 September 2007 the Parliamentary Secretary for Roads, Michael Daley, announced that the \$1.9 million safety improvements at Wandandian were complete. This work at Wandandian is part of the State Government's \$30 million road safety strategy for improvements to the Princes Highway. These important safety works are located on a 1.4-kilometre section of the Princes Highway south of Nowra. The project involved the construction of an additional southbound lane on the highway to Wandandian. The additional southbound lane will allow the existing southbound lane to be used as a two-way right-turn lane, providing safer access on and off the highway for local residents and businesses. The safety works also involved laying new sections of road surface, installation of concrete islands and a lighting upgrade to comply with the current lighting standards.

Pedestrian safety has also been enhanced with a pedestrian refuge included as part of this important road safety upgrade. These important safety works, together with the ongoing new and improved highway infrastructure, should be a fair indication to those opposite that this Government is committed to the upgrade of the Princes Highway. Remember that for every \$1 the Federal Government spends on the Princes Highway, the New South Wales Government spends \$12. In the 2007-08 Roads budget the Princes Highway will receive \$142.8 million in funding from the Iemma Government.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE [3.49 p.m.]: The motion moved by the Hon. Don Harwin condemns the State Government for its neglect of the Princes Highway south of Wollongong during its 12 years in office. The motion then notes some particular projects involving that road from south of Wollongong to the Victorian border. As I reside at Gerroa I make frequent use of the Princes Highway to travel to Parliament House. I am well experienced with its problems. As I have stated before in these debates, I feel somewhat uncomfortable when a motion contains the word "condemns" or otherwise is a no confidence motion. I believe it is more constructive to deal with the problems rather than to make the motion political by the use of those words.

We all know that the policy of the State Government under former Treasurer, the Hon. Michael Egan, restricted the development of infrastructure, which obviously included roads. That policy was "no borrowing, no debt" and, therefore, there would be surpluses. During the budget debate I supported that approach as I thought it was a responsible way to conduct government, which is now happening with the Federal Coalition Government. Of course, the negative side is that the funds are not available to develop new infrastructure or upgrade existing infrastructure. Therefore, over those years of governing that approach obviously led to neglect of infrastructure. It led also to priority choices on where the money would be spent from the funds that were available. Hopefully, under this State Government and this Treasurer all of that has changed. We now know that billions of dollars have either been borrowed or at least are available for infrastructure development. A special infrastructure task force led by Dr Richmond is giving top priority to determine those areas of infrastructure neglect. I believe that those projects will be undertaken or are already in progress.

As someone who regularly travels along the Princes Highway, I am pleased that the north Kiama bypass has been finalised because it takes almost 20 minutes off the travelling time from my home to Parliament House. It means also that drivers can travel at 100 kilometres an hour for a very lengthy section of that bypass road, including the section through Kiama and then through to Gerringong. The construction of that bypass has resulted in a tremendous improvement in travelling time and in safety. Therefore, I do not see that as something to criticise; rather, we should be pleased about it. I am pleased that that bypass has been completed. In the past few weeks, or perhaps even longer, it has become visually obvious that the Oak Flats to Dunmore upgrade project is well under way. I am not sure of its completion date, but certainly a great deal of work is being done. The outline of the bypass upgrade can be seen as one travels along the current road—a very dangerous single-lane road that is not appropriate for a highway. Honourable members who have driven along that road would know it has very many dangerous curves. The completion of this project will improve this highway tremendously.

Other speakers have referred to the fact that funding has been provided in the budget to finalise the construction of the Kiama ramps. I am aware that those ramps are part of the upgrade project because I drive through that area. I suppose the construction of those ramps is not critical to those who just use the highway, but

I am sure the ramps are critical for those who reside in Kiama. I consider those ramps to be important, but somewhat of secondary importance to completing the bypass.

Paragraph (d) of the motion refers to the Gerringong to Bomaderry project, known as the Berry bypass. As a resident who will be affected by this project I advise the House that we are being consulted. A few weeks ago, perhaps even a month or so ago, we received a plan from the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] asking for our views on the proposed bypass. It is a terribly complicated procedure providing three alternatives. Lay people are trying to make assessments of the project and provide opinions to the authority on the best route and so on. The motion condemns the Government for the delay of these projects, but the Greens have spelled out the reason for the delay. The Greens have been very active in promoting the delay through residents groups opposing any improvement to the road. Whenever the Roads and Traffic Authority says it will put the road through a certain section, a group protests; when it then chooses another location, another group protests.

That is one of the reasons for the delay. It could be said that the Coalition motion should condemn the Greens for delaying the commencement of the construction of the Berry bypass. Obviously, every road that is built must go through land; it has to go somewhere. As I use the four-lane Princes Highway to drive to Parliament House I often think that if the Greens had been active when that project was contemplated, they would have stopped it and we would not have that four-lane highway. It goes through a national park. It is essential for people to have access between major populated areas with a modern highway. We have to balance caring for the environment and national parks with providing safe access for residents.

As the Greens have said, 12 residents will try to stop the construction of the Berry bypass and, if they succeed, another route will have to be found. This is the dilemma governments face, whether they be Coalition or Labor: how to get through all the environmental legislation or the green tape that has been introduced over many years. The best route will be found and all the residents will agree, but then the habitat of some obscure little animal will be found in the middle of where the road is intended to be built. So another delay will result while it is argued whether the road can still be built without affecting that fauna.

I sympathise with governments attempting to build anything today in an environment where so many provisions are available for people to make objections. I accept that that is part of democracy, but I do not believe that it should be excessive. We have seen on the North Coast with coal line projects that one student almost has the ability to challenge that whole industry. The question must be asked: Is that good policy? But that is the policy and the legislation. The same thing is happening with trying to improve the Princes Highway on the South Coast. Therefore, I am reluctant to condemn the Government with the wording of the motion, but I note the various delays. As I have said, I believe those delays can be explained. In relation to paragraphs (e) and (f), further development needs to take place between Nowra and the Victorian border in much the same way as they are occurring on the North Coast through to Queensland. Hopefully, in due course, those areas will also be upgraded.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO [3.59 p.m.]: Before I embark upon my substantive comments on the motion, I will make a few observations about contributions made during the debate, particularly the comments made by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile regarding protest groups delaying road projects. As some honourable members may be aware, in the previous Parliament I was a member of General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4 which inquired into the upgrade of the Pacific Highway. During the process I spoke to a Greens representative and noted how pleasing it was that some sections of the proposed upgrade for the Pacific Highway, albeit not the northern part, seemed to be proceeding without any objections from local residents. I said how good it was that everybody seemed to be happy with the preferred route option. The comment was, "They are happy now because we haven't started our activism campaign."

All the people involved in the consultation process with the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] were people who lived in the area and owned property in the area as well as the usual community groups, including the local Aboriginal communities. All the genuine participants in the consultation process had been approached and they were happy with the outcome—yet that was not regarded as good enough. I sometimes wonder whether there are people capturing small endangered animals, birds and reptiles to release them in different areas just so that they can say, "We found one of this species. Therefore the whole consultation process has to be thrown out, and we need to start looking again at this issue."

In relation to comments made by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile on the upgrading of the Pacific Highway as opposed to the Princes Highway, it is particularly interesting to note that The Nationals go great guns about the upgrading of the Pacific Highway, yet only the Liberal Party seems to talk about the upgrading of the

Princes Highway. I point out that the money has to come out of the same Roads budget to do both projects. Instead of previously condemning the Government about the Pacific Highway and now, as the Hon. Don Harwin has, moving a motion to condemn the Government over the Princes Highway, it would be better if in the Coalition's party room members worked out which is the true priority for the Coalition and made a concerted effort to advance the cause of one project, rather than pushed competing projects.

The Hon. Don Harwin stated that the Coalition had gone to the electorate before this year's State election with a promise of \$150 million to upgrade the Princes Highway. As pointed out in response to an injection by the Minister for Roads, no adequate costings were undertaken for any of the Coalition promises in the lead-up to the State election. The private accountancy firm that signed off on the Coalition's multibillion-dollar expenditure commitments would not concur that the figures were okay. The firm would give public advice to indicate only that the mathematics were accurate. The firm did not give any commitment as to the affordability of the promises. When it came to the commonsense of the good people of New South Wales in the March 2007 State election, they decided to trust the economic record of the Iemma Government rather than the unfunded promises of the Coalition.

The Hon. Don Harwin suggests that that was not the case in the South Coast and Bega electorates. It is true that the Coalition retained those seats, but obviously not many other people in New South Wales thought much of the Coalition's commitments because the Coalition did not really achieve widespread electoral success. The Coalition was not the overall State election winner: in fact, the Coalition did not gain much ground at all. I turn now to address the specific issue of the Princes Highway. The New South Wales Government recognises the importance of the Princes Highway as a major road transport corridor of New South Wales. The development of the Princes Highway is the highest road priority for the Government in the Illawarra-South Coast region.

State funding for the Princes Highway received a massive boost with \$142.8 million allocated as part of this year's State budget. Projects underway include \$45 million to continue the construction of a four-lane dual carriageway deviation of the highway between Oak Flats and Dunmore, which will complete a four-lane carriageway to Kiama; \$30 million to extend the northern distributor from Bellambi on the Princes Highway at Bulli, for which major construction began in April 2008 with the project expected to be opened to traffic in 2009; \$14.3 million, which includes Federal Strategic Regional road funding, for safety improvements and construction of four lanes between Forest Road and Falls Road; \$9 million for the construction of a new bridge at Pambula on the highway for which roadworks began in late 2006 and bridge works commenced in April 2007; \$8 million to begin construction of Kiama ramps to provide better access between Kiama and the Princes Highway; \$7.5 million to commence the construction of a new bridge at Conjola Creek in conjunction with the realignment of the highway at Conjola Mountain; \$3.4 million to continue route option investigations for the future upgrade of the highway between Gerringong and Bombaderry; and \$2 million for planning and preconstruction for the upgrade of the highway and the Lawrence Hardgrave Drive intersection at the foot of Bulli Pass.

The Federal Government's failure to include the Princes Highway south of Wollongong in the AusLink agreement is an insult to the people of Illawarra, Shoalhaven and the South Coast. I take a particular interest in the South Coast because it is one of my duty electorates. It must be said that the usual lament coming from the Opposition benches whenever we discuss the Federal Government's inadequate funding for the Princes Highway and the Pacific Highway is that they are State roads and we should be grateful for any promise that the Federal Government throws in our direction. The Coalition's attitude is just appalling. They should be lobbying and arguing with their Federal colleagues to facilitate allocations of Federal funding for these important road projects.

The whole point is that we never hear anything from the Opposition about their efforts to obtain more money for roads from the Federal Government to benefit their constituents, but they could do that if they wanted to. For example, during the Pacific Highway inquiry when I spoke to Luke Hartsuyker, the Federal member for Cowper, I asked him why he had not been to see Jim Lloyd, the Federal Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads, to obtain funding for the upgrade of the Pacific Highway. He said, "I can see Jim Lloyd any time." I then said, "Yes, but has he ever given you any money?" Of course he had no answer to that because the answer is that he might be able to have a drink with the Federal Minister and have a chat with him, but quite simply he cannot get any money out of the Federal Government because New South Wales Coalition members are so ineffectual.

The Hon. Don Harwin: What about the Currumbene Creek bridge? That was only built because of Federal Government money that we asked for.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: I am not saying that the Federal Government has contributed nothing. I have acknowledged already \$14.3 million in safety improvements in the construction of four lanes between Forest Road and Falls Road, which includes Federal Strategic Regional funding. But what I am saying is something that we have heard in this Chamber many times—something that members of the Coalition should listen to and do something about. Every year we are duded \$3 billion in the GST distribution. If that money was made available and if Coalition members had the decency to lobby their Federal colleagues, it could go toward improving roads, hospitals and all sorts of other State infrastructure, but they do nothing. I would not be surprised if Coalition members lobby their Federal colleagues to provide even less funding than that for New South Wales, simply to try to bolster their own pathetic and completely unsuccessful attempts over the past 12 years to be elected to govern.

As at the end of 2006-07, the New South Wales Government spent more than \$586 million since 1994-95 compared to \$44.5 million to date by the Federal Government over the very same period. It is important to reiterate that for every \$1 spent by the Federal Government on the Princes Highway, the New South Wales Government has spent almost \$12. It makes me wonder what lazy and incompetent Federal members of Parliament are doing, such as the member for Eden-Monaro. Obviously, they are not representing their constituents' needs. But, then again, we can only expect poor performance from Gary Nairn and his chief of staff, who appeared at a community meeting in Queanbeyan and insulted Federal Labor candidate Colonel Mike Kelly by comparing his military service in Iraq to that of Nazi guards at the Belsen concentration camp. What was the response from Gary Nairn, the member for Eden-Monaro, to this appalling slur? He said:

I think it's only appropriate that individuals in their own private capacity, when invited to attend a forum, goes along to that forum and participates in the debate.

It is outrageous that this man, who is chief of staff to a Federal Minister, has not been sacked for making a gutless slur against an internationally renowned serviceman. I would expect Hon. Charlie Lynn to stand up for a fellow serviceman—in fact, I am surprised by his silence on the matter—who was willing to put his life on the line in a foreign military conflict. Gary Nairn has allowed his staff member to spit on the record of all servicemen and to make jokes about Nazi war atrocities for political gain. That is just another example of desperate gutter politics from a government that is facing electoral oblivion.

Gary Nairn's chief of staff should have been trying to secure more money to improve the Princes Highway. It is the responsibility of every member of Parliament to do his or her bit to attract funding from any source to improve services for his or her constituents. The problem is that the Federal Coalition Government is doing its best to starve the New South Wales Government of funds in an attempt to bolster the electoral chances of the Coalition in this State. That tactic has failed miserably. It is about time the Federal Government started to give the taxpayers of New South Wales their fair share so that this Government can prioritise and fund the State's competing roads projects.

Opposition members remind us constantly that the New England Highway is the State's national highway. But it is not receiving its fair share of funding either. I notice that the Hon. Rick Colless is deathly quiet on that issue. He knows that the Federal Government is running down the New England Highway. The Federal Government gives us no money for the designated national highway, virtually nothing for the Pacific Highway and only \$1 for every \$12 that the State Government spends on the Princes Highway. That is outstandingly poor. The South Coast is the Hon. Don Harwin's duty area and I know that he must look after it by propping up lazy local members such as Shelley Hancock. He attacked the State Government for failing to fund the Princes Highway but Labor members have described the range of projects that are upgrading safety standards on the Princes Highway. The Hon. Don Harwin's claims are absolutely outrageous.

I understand that sometimes members must run dud lines of argument in this place because that is what their party asks of them. So I guess the Hon. Don Harwin's comments should not reflect too badly upon him. But it is time that we got a decent deal for the Princes Highway. The Federal Government should contribute its fair share. A funding ratio of 1:12 is simply not good enough. It is stifling economic development on the South Coast, putting the area's tourism at risk and creating difficulties for motorists who use the Princes Highway regularly. It is about time those opposites stopped claiming that only the State Government can solve this problem. If the Federal Government were to contribute more money the State Government would accept it happily and work cooperatively. But the simple fact is that the Federal Government's approach is divisive. It is determined to make the State Government look bad and has made no genuine attempt to work cooperatively to upgrade the major highways in New South Wales. That is a real shame.

If the Federal Government and the State Government worked cooperatively, we could deliver better and safer roads for the motorists—commuters, holidaymakers or transport operators—of New South Wales. But

we simply do not get a fair shake. It is a loaves-and-fishes situation: We cannot make five fishes feed 5,000 people and we cannot upgrade the Princes Highway using the money that is available to us. The Roads budget is stretched and stretched. The State Government is committed to tackling black spots on our roads because safety must be our ultimate priority. We have resolved black spots on the Pacific Highway and we are trying to do the same on the Princes Highway. But we simply cannot stretch existing funds any further. We simply cannot take money from one project in order to fund another. We must plan and work strategically. If New South Wales received its fair share of the goods and services tax take and got some cooperation from the Federal Government we could fund road projects and satisfy the needs of residents on the South Coast, people who live along the Pacific Highway and transport operators who use the Dubbo transport hub. But we simply cannot stretch the available funds any further.

When it comes to upgrading the Princes Highway the New South Wales Government is front and centre. The same cannot be said of the Federal Government—I wish it could. I wish that the Federal Government would cooperate. The State Government does not want to delay road projects unnecessarily, or even cancel them, because of lack of funding. But we simply cannot find the money. If Coalition members are serious about these issues they will lobby their Federal colleagues to secure additional funding. We know that plenty of extra money is floating around at a Federal level. The Federal Government budget surplus seems to vary between \$17 billion and \$20 billion. The Federal Government can find the money to fund special projects in critical electorates when it wants to. For example, it has propped up a hospital that the Tasmanian health system had deemed unviable.

If the member for Gilmore, Joanna Gash, and the member for Eden-Monaro, Gary Nairn, worked hard they could secure funding for their electorates. The fact is that their seats are not marginal, they are not effective and they cannot get the money needed to fix the roads in their electorates. That is a pretty poor result. They are not performing for their constituents.

The Hon. Don Harwin: Over \$100 million in Federal Government money on roads in Gilmore.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: I acknowledge that some electorates have received a lot of money, but it was spent on projects that nobody wanted. That is amazing. When Labor members represented electorates on the South Coast they waited for money from the Federal Government to upgrade the Princes Highway. But instead the Federal Government funded some arterial road to Canberra. Everyone asked why it had been funded but we could not find the reason. That money could have been spent on the Princes Highway but the Federal Government allocated it elsewhere as part of some bizarre vote-buying scheme.

It is time the Federal Government started funding roads on the basis of need not pork-barrelling. It should work cooperatively with State governments. There has been enough hostility. The Federal Government must start spending money on New South Wales roads. This State injects an enormous amount of goods and services tax money into the Federal economy and we should get our fair share of it back. When that occurs—when the Federal Government steps up to the plate, does the right thing by the citizens of New South Wales and provides funding to upgrade the Princes Highway—we will be happy. But that is just not happening at present. It is pretty poor for the Hon. Don Harwin to condemn the State Government for its funding of the Princes Highway. We have done a lot of work on the Princes Highway and we would love to do more but the Federal Government is too stingy to give us the necessary funds.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.20 p.m.]: The Hon. Amanda Fazio says that the State budget is stretched. I have to say that it is not the only thing that is stretched. She has once again stretched the truth to the extent that she has misled the House and, as Mr Andrew Stoner indicated in the other place not 20 minutes ago, she lied to the Parliament yesterday in her contribution to defend the indefensible. There is nothing she will not do for the Sussex Street push. She has been embarrassed in her contribution and she has come to this Chamber to defend the indefensible.

The Hon. Eric Roozendaal is the most incompetent Minister this State has ever seen. We have seen some doozies, but he takes the record. He came to this Chamber today and, having made an announcement yesterday about allocating \$46 million to install flashing lights at school crossings, he could not name the company that won the tender. He went to his House file—any competent Minister with competent staff would have a House file on this subject—but the answer was not there. We went a further 40 minutes through question time and still the answer was not forthcoming. The Hon. Eric Roozendaal sat there, his gaze set, looking across to somewhere, but no-one knows where.

We know that an awful lot of companies were bidding for that contract, but we still do not know which company won it. The Minister failed to understand the simple arithmetic that a fifth grade student could have worked out: \$46 million to install 400 sets of lights over four years is 100 schools a year. The Assistant Deputy-President could instantly tell me that there are 11,000 schools in New South Wales. If we ran the Cuisenaire rods over that we would come up with a total of 110 years to make safe the schools in New South Wales, which tells us that the Hon. Eric Roozendaal does not care about safety, he cares about announcing a \$46 million contract that some very lucky company or companies has won. It is a huge amount of money for flashing lights in school zones. He does not care about safety; he is more interested in perpetuating the revenue raising that comes from not detailing where these school zones are.

The Government is not protecting the kids: it is deliberately entrapping motorists. That is what the New South Wales Right, the former Secretary of the Australian Labor Party, the Hon. Eric Roozendaal, and his favourite henchman, the Hon. Amanda Fazio, sitting right beside him, are doing. All we need now is the Hon. John Della Bosca and another and we will have the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. They would charge through this State, creating chaos wherever they go. We have mentioned the Princes Highway, which of course we have heard the Minister call on many occasions the "Princess" highway. He obviously has never travelled on the road. Anyone who lives locally or who has travelled the road can read the sign and see that it is the Princes Highway, not the "Princess" highway.

A large part of the road that needs work is at Oxley Grove. The Federal Government has contributed \$100 million, as my earnest colleague the Hon. Don Harwin tells me. But, as everyone knows, parts of that highway are a State road. Some roads are the responsibility of the Federal Government, some are the responsibility of the State Government and some are the responsibility of local government. The road to which I am referring is a State road, which means the State Government has responsibility for it. The Federal Government has offered \$22.3 million for the whole of the Commonwealth provided the States put in their submissions. The Labor Government in Victoria put in its submission; the Labor Government in Queensland put in its submission; the Labor Government in South Australia put in its submission—

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: Where is Eric's submission?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I am getting there. The Labor Government in Tasmania, the Labor Government in Western Australia and the Northern Territory put in their submissions. They did not have any problem with the process: \$22.3 billion and the best submissions get first dibs on the most amount of money. Eric said, "I don't know how much money I'm bidding for". So New South Wales has no submission to acquire part of the \$22.3 billion. The Hon. Eric Roozendaal has failed the people of New South Wales. He is the most incompetent roads Minister we have had for a long while, and that includes Joe Tripodi. He makes Joe Tripodi look like a star, an absolute star. I saw Joe the other day and I said, "Mate, you're looking better every day. Eric is making you look just fantastic." The Minister missed out on this money. In fact, the Federal Government went ahead without a submission and put some money into the widening of the F5. All honourable members know the F5 out near Campbelltown.

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: No, that's out west of Sydney!

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I am sorry, the western suburbs. It is like Wollongong and Newcastle and the western suburbs. Those opposite expect people in Western Sydney to vote for them, but they never do anything to help them. The F5 then goes into that hazy crazy tunnel just before the bridge. The Hon. Eric Roozendaal did nothing to help them. The Federal Government had to do it all by itself. One might think, well, that is Sydney; the Government probably has been terrific in regional New South Wales.

The Hon. Rick Colless: Wrong!

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Exactly. Wrong. One only has to go past Windsor to the Blue Mountains to see that is wrong. The Federal Government, this Government that those opposite want to bag all the time, pledged \$10 million for a study into the Bells Line Freeway. It asked the State Government whether it could match the funding.

The Hon. Eric Roozendaal: It's not a freeway. You don't know what you're talking about.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Motorway. Fine. Thank you.

The Hon. Eric Roozendaal: Well, get it right.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Marvellous. The Federal Government asked the State Government to match the funding. The State Government initially said no, but there was a lot of community pressure on the State Government to actually match this funding so that a proper study could be conducted to look at all the options and see whether we could interest someone in building the motorway. The community supported it. Even the wimpy member for Bathurst, Mr Gerard Martin—that fair-weather friend, the Bundy bear, the bloke who only jumps up and down each year when he misses out on getting into Cabinet—actually said something against the Government, but not for long. He recently questioned the privatisation of electricity, but that only lasted half a day as well. He is a big wuss: he is the biggest wuss. He said something and they got a bit scared. It was not so much because Gerard was frightening them in their boots; there was a Federal election and the former environment Minister—

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: What was his name?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Mr Debus.

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: I remember him.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Yes, him. He is standing for the seat of Calare in the Federal election. So all of a sudden it is not "no" anymore, it is "maybe", and it is "maybe" because the Government has not received a detailed letter from the Federal Government. The Government signed up for \$10 million on the Murray-Darling Basin Commission without a letter or anything—just waltzed into it. The Government signed off on the GST. Vroom-vroom Bob Carr was the first down the Hume Highway, beep-beep-beep all the way down the Federal Highway to Canberra. Bob Carr is one of the blokes who set up this present impasse between State and Federal. The State Government blames the Federal Government, but the State Government signed off and other State Labor Premiers will not help out. Our Federal colleagues have said, "Look, if you want to change the mix in the funding, we are happy for it to happen." The State Coalition said, "We will support you. All you have to do is get the other Labor States to change the funding." But no, that might be a bit hard. It is easier just to bag the Federal Government.

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: But if they won the election they would do it.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Yes, if they won the election.

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: If they won the election, yes.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: They would not change the mix. The Sussex Street mob have not seen a tax yet invented that they do not want to increase. Up, up, up! Bubble up straight away! That is what they would do. The contribution of the Hon. Amanda Fazio was very much like the contributions we hear from the Hon. Ian Macdonald. We have had the Federal Government—

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: Fair go! That is too much of an insult.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I accept the honourable member's pleadings. The arguments put forward by others are similar to those of the Hon. Ian Macdonald. On the drought, all he does is play politics with the Federal Government. The Federal Government has put nearly \$3 billion into drought assistance. The New South Wales Government—

The Hon. Eric Roozendaal: Point of order: I am listening intently to the theatrics of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, which are wide ranging and entertaining. However, the motion relates to important matters on the South Coast and roads in particular. Unfortunately the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who has clearly had an enjoyable day, is talking about the Minister for Primary Industries and drought funding.

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: Did you listen to her drivell?

The Hon. Eric Roozendaal: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition should sit down; I have not finished yet. I ask you to direct the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to be relevant to the motion before the House.

The Hon. Don Harwin: On the point of order: The Minister was not present during the remarks of the Hon. Amanda Fazio. I submit that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is merely taking his lead from the Hon. Amanda Fazio, whose comments were wide ranging. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is simply responding to the comments the Hon. Amanda Fazio made about the Federal Government.

The ASSISTANT DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile): Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition should speak to the substance of the Coalition's motion.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Many allegations have been made in this debate. The motion moved by the Hon. Don Harwin is a proper motion relating to the Princes Highway. The Hon. Amanda Fazio said that the Federal Government should fund State roads. Interestingly, I was present in the Chamber earlier today, as was the Hon. Trevor Khan, when the Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for the Central Coast, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Finance stood at the despatch box and said that the Federal Government should stay out of State matters. Indeed, he implicitly said that the Federal Government should stay away from TAFE and State areas of responsibility and look after its own areas of responsibility. Yet two hours later Government members, who are hypocrites, are saying that they want the Federal Government to step in and look after their position. These roads are State roads, which are the responsibility of the State Government.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio said that the delays and blow-outs are not the fault of the State Government, because it does not have the money. If the Government does not have the money, why is it promising to do things? It shows that, first, the Government cannot manage anything and, secondly, its promises are unfunded. The greatest problem is that the Minister for Roads, and Minister for Commerce could not manage a chook raffle.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN [4.34 p.m.]: For every \$12 the New South Wales Government spends on the Princes Highway, the Federal Government contributes just \$1. That is a disgrace for a road of national significance. But I shall refer to a couple of specific points made in the debate; one is the North Kiama bypass and the Kiama ramps. The 7.6 kilometre North Kiama bypass extends from Shellharbour Road at Dunmore to Spring Creek Drive at North Kiama. This bypasses the Minnamurra Bends and Bombo Hill. The New South Wales Government funded this, with a small contribution from the Federal Government. The North Kiama bypass has proven its value to both the local community and passing traffic, according to Roads and Traffic Authority figures. Roads and Traffic Authority traffic counts reveal that an average of more than 23,000 vehicles a day, many of which are heavy vehicles, are using the North Kiama bypass.

Hundreds of thousands of motorists have enjoyed using this new section of the Princes Highway, and are enjoying the safer, smoother and quicker journey it provides. The North Kiama bypass has reduced travel times significantly since opening, and this is a real bonus for motorists. Residents of Minnamurra and North Kiama are also enjoying safer local roads thanks to the bypass, with thousands of vehicles, many of them heavy vehicles, being taken off their local roads. Motorists will have better access to the Kiama township from the Princes Highway, with the new southern and northern access ramp locations to the Kiama bypass. The new access ramps will reduce congestion on Gipps Street and the main thoroughfare of Terralong Street in the Kiama town centre.

The ramps will also accommodate future residential growth west of the bypass. Some \$8 million in the 2007-08 roads budget has been allocated towards the Kiama ramps. More than \$2 million was invested in 2006-07 to purchase property, finalise investigations, commence detailed designs and design utility adjustments for the Kiama access ramps. The preferred ramp locations were selected in consultation with the community, Kiama council and emergency services, and followed a public display of options in April and May 2005. Work is due to begin this month on the northbound on-ramp, which will link Bland Street to the Princes Highway. Work is then scheduled to start later this year on the southbound off-load ramp linking the Princes Highway and South Kiama Drive.

The Pambula Bridge provides a useful example of how difficult it has been to get the Howard Government to come to the party regarding funding for the Princes Highway. Work on the new bridge on the Princes Highway started in April. The New South Wales Government is funding the \$17 million project, with a \$5 million contribution from the Australian Government. It is disgraceful that the Australian Government has refused to match the New South Wales Government's contribution to this project. The New South Wales Government will contribute \$9 million in the 2007-08 record roads budget towards the project. The entire project is 1.7 kilometres long and includes a new bridge crossing of the Pambula River adjacent to the existing bridge and new approaches, and includes improvements to the curves on the southern approach.

The new bridge will be constructed above the forecast one-in-100 year flood level, and the road approaches will be built above the one-in-20 year flood level. The bridge and culverts are being constructed on a new alignment alongside the existing road to minimise the impact on agricultural land and other properties.

Realignment of the southern approaches to the bridge was completed in 2006. Completion of the entire project is expected by mid 2008. The Iemma Government is investing in the Princes Highway and meeting our commitments on the Princes Highway. This funding is delivering on our commitment to spend \$380 million over 12 years to upgrade the Princes Highway.

Ms SYLVIA HALE [4.39 p.m.]: It is impossible to talk about the upgrade of any motorway in this State or in this country without putting it in the context of peak oil. Since we are talking about measures that will improve the access of cars it is important for me to expand on a topic mentioned by my colleague Ms Lee Rhiannon. Only today John Anderson was on ABC radio talking about food insecurity—yes, food shortages in Australia. At the moment we face two major problems. The first is climate change, which leads to drought, which leads to less water and which ultimately leads to less food. Second, we face the problem of the peaking of global oil production.

Peak oil is the theory that oil production has peaked or will peak, that is, oil extraction will at some point pass the highest point and start to decline. Today we are consuming four or five barrels of oil for every one that is found. Oil is a finite resource, geologically produced over millions of years. If we keep pumping it out of the ground, at some point it will eventually dwindle and run out. The peak is the halfway point at which oil supplies will start to decline rather than increase. There is debate about when that will occur. Some say that the global peak will be round about now; others say that it will be in 2030. Many of the pessimistic predictions come from geologists and former oil company experts, while the more optimistic predictions come from the oil companies themselves.

The person who predicted peak oil was M. King Hubbert, an American geophysicist. In 1956 he correctly predicted that the United States oil industry would peak in about 1970. He was right, even though no-one took him seriously at the time. Australia has been shielded from past oil shocks by our domestic oil production from Bass Strait. However, Bass Strait production has been declining since 1985 and, until now, other fields have filled the production gap. Reliable recent predictions by Geoscience Australia and Woodside indicate that Australia's oil and condensate production will fall substantially in the next decade. Australian imports of oil have been steadily growing. Global oil is predicted to peak between 2006 and 2015.

More optimistic scenarios from the oil industry place the peak some time around 2030. World oil discoveries peaked between 1950 and 1959 and they have been declining since. Although there may yet be undiscovered oil it is unlikely that the oil will be as accessible as the large oilfields already discovered. For example, United Kingdom oil in the North Sea is in decline. Gharwar, the largest oilfield in Saudi Arabia, is also in decline. The Greens see climate change, peak oil and water as three intertwined challenges facing all species. If oil production starts to decline that will prompt change, possibly in the direction of using more renewable energy and changing our lifestyles. But it could also cause economic recession and it might also cause ongoing wars, especially as the United States of America is desperate to secure its oil supplies.

The likely effects of oil decline will be rising petrol prices, rising production costs—oil, of course, is vital to agriculture, plastics, rubber and many other industries—and recession as energy inputs become more expensive. The Greens believe that the Government should get ready now to deal with the likely future that we face. This may mean investing a lot more into renewable energies, public transport, and rethinking how we design our cities. It may mean decentralisation of populations, smaller and more decentralised agricultural production and even rationing of oil and transport fuels. Biofuels are no real solution to the problem because they use as much energy to generate as they might potentially save in the use of coal.

Technological advances may assist oil companies in accessing harder to reach oils such as deep-sea oil, but new discoveries are trending downwards. The easiest oil to access may have been used first. Of course, this is the less expensive source of oil. It also takes energy, fuel, electricity, and so forth to find and extract oil. When more energy is expended in extracting the oil than can be used from the oil there is a negative energy cost. Extracting oil from tar sands and shale is possible but very expensive and environmentally damaging. Australia's shale oil industry was subsidised by the Government and collapsed in the 1950s. I do not know whether anyone has ever been to Joadja near Mittagong where shale oil was in production. When kerosene was being produced the petrol was a by-product that was washed down the creek, but that was in the 1870s and 1880s.

The Howard Government seems to think that coal to liquid will substitute for oil. That will not help greenhouse gas emissions at the tailpipe. Electric cars may play a part and battery technology is improving all the time but we must remember that to power electric cars we still need to produce electricity from somewhere.

We need to reduce our greenhouse gases. Many of Australia's greenhouse gases come from burning dirty coal. If everyone switched to electric cars and charged their batteries overnight there is considerable doubt whether our energy grid would be able to cope. Hydrogen is an energy carrier, not an energy producer. It takes more energy via electrolysis to produce the hydrogen than the hydrogen itself produces, which would mean greater electricity would be required to create hydrogen fuel. Hydrogen is also difficult to transport and store. While many people have taken to using biofuels—

The Hon. Charlie Lynn: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The motion relates to the Princes Highway. I am not sure what the oil price in Saudi Arabia has to do with that. Ms Sylvia Hale's speech is generating more greenhouse gas than that which is currently being generated by cars on the Princes Highway.

The Hon. Michael Veitch: To the point of order: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition took us on a rollicking journey across New South Wales and referred to every geographic region. There is no point of order.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: To the point of order: We are debating a matter of government policy, as it were, or the failure of the Government to act expeditiously in this matter. It is extraordinarily important for those policies to be put in a proper and broader context. It is no longer possible to see things in isolation from the broader factors that are threatening our existence.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The debate has been extremely wide ranging. Reference has been made to numerous geographical areas, both in New South Wales and throughout the world, including Saudi Arabia and other oil-producing countries. Consequently, the member is in order and may continue. However, I ask the member to bear in mind the subject matter of the motion before the House.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Mr President, thank you for your consideration, which I welcome indeed. We are debating the neglect of the Princes Highway south of Wollongong, so we are debating a road project. We are debating the Oak Flats to Dunmore upgrade project, which again is a road project. We are talking about the Kiama ramps projects. I believe it is wrong to consider the construction of roads, or the delay in the construction of roads, without considering the broader context. It is apparent that the more roads we build the more we are inclined to encourage people to use those roads. We find that every tollway and every major road that is constructed inevitably end up choked with traffic. Because they end up choked with traffic, public transport suffers as a result. I believe they are not a solution to any problems. They result in short-term gridlock in our cities and longer-term destruction of our climate. Peak oil is a very relevant consideration and it has not been adequately dealt with in this debate until now.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD [4.50 p.m.]: I am delighted to speak in this debate, particularly to defend our Government's record on road spending. Much of what we have heard in today's debate from the Opposition could be described only as myth. So, it is important that I relate some facts. Roads spending in the Illawarra has increased to \$174.2 million as part of the State's biggest ever roads budget this year. The Princes Highway is receiving its fair share of that budget. Almost three-quarters of the roads capital and maintenance program budget will be spent outside the Sydney metropolitan area. That is not what the Hon. Don Harwin wants the community to believe, but that is the fact. And \$2.6 billion, or 72 per cent of that amount, already has been committed.

The following are key projects that have already been committed. Work on the Princes Highway upgrade to dual carriageway between Oak Flats and Dunmore is progressing well. I am sure all members opposite know that. Work actually started on that \$130 million project on 1 June this year. Next month work is set to commence on the construction of the Kiama ramps. I am sure members have seen that work progressing. The \$1.9 million Bewong to Wandandian project, which includes the construction of a two-way right-hand turn lane at Wandandian, has been completed.

All we have heard from Opposition members this afternoon is mud-slinging at, personal attacks on, and childish name-calling of current and former Ministers. Even Ministers who are not members of this House have been ridiculed in this debate, and that is appalling. Opposition members have engaged in mud-slinging and name-calling—they have not offered up facts or anything of substance, just lies and mud-slinging!

The Hon. Duncan Gay: Take a point of order!

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: My colleagues have been doing that very well. In fact, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has been called to task, and quite rightly! Work is progressing well on the construction

of a new Pambula Bridge and road approaches, which have been raised to improve access during flood events along the Princes Highway over Pambula River and, of course, the flood plains in Pambula. Work on that project was started in March this year.

I have other projects, other works and other facts to put to the House. Work on the safety upgrade of the Princes Highway from South Nowra to Jervis Bay Road started earlier this year and is progressing very well. With regards to the Princes Highway Gerringong to Bomaderry upgrade, community meetings are underway as part of the route options investigations. Surely members opposite would not be critical of that project. Surely we need to consult the community, and determine which is the best route to progress.

The Hon. Don Harwin: It does not take four years to do that.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: The record of our Government has certainly been far better than that of the Federal Government, which members opposite continue to defend. It is a shame that there is not a Mercy Hospital situated in the area. If there were, the Hon. Don Harwin might get some funding! If this important project were in a more marginal electorate, members opposite might actually be willing to go to their Federal colleagues and demand the funds that are needed for projects and works to which this State Government has been willing to commit. I refer next to the Conjola Mountain realignment. Tenders have been invited for the first stage of the \$45 million realignment of the Princes Highway between the Bendalong turn-off and Conjola Creek. This project has a \$35 million commitment from the State Government and construction is due to start later this year. The project will be delivered in two stages. The first stage will be the construction of a new Conjola Creek Bridge and approaches at the southern end of the work. The second stage of that project will involve the realignment of the Princes Highway between Bendalong Road and the connection to the new Conjola Creek Bridge.

Conjola Mountain is located approximately 46 kilometres south of Nowra on the Princes Highway. The existing highway passes through mountainous terrain and will be realigned to increase safety, and to improve travel times and traffic flow. The overall project involves reconstructing 3.5 kilometres of the highway at Conjola Mountain between Bendalong Road, which uses Red Head Road, and the southern approach to a new Conjola Creek Bridge. An uphill overtaking lane will be provided to reduce delays to motorists caused by slow moving heavy vehicles and, of course, tourist traffic. We are pleased to see that tourist traffic in the area because tourism certainly contributes to the local economy.

Construction on the highway improvements at Conjola Mountain is expected to take two years following planning and detailed design. The new bridge and approaches are expected to be open to traffic late in 2008, while planning for the second stage will continue with the invitation of tenders in mid-2008. The entire project will be completed in late 2009. This is just additional evidence of the commitment of this Government to further improve roads throughout our State, but particularly in the Illawarra region. Far from being condemned, this Government and its Minister should be commended for their excellent administration of the portfolio to ensure that New South Wales citizens and motorists have the best roads in the nation, despite the Federal Government's lack of willingness and commitment to fund very important roads infrastructure throughout this State.

The Hon. MICHAEL VEITCH [4.56 p.m.]: Earlier in this debate members heard a rollicking performance by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Unfortunately, as part of that rollicking performance he sought to slur the reputation of the honourable member for Bathurst, Gerard Martin. It was a disgraceful attempt at denigrating that member's reputation. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that Gerard Martin had made a statement opposing the sale of electricity generators. That is correct; the member for Bathurst did say that. However, he did not retract those statements; they stand on the record in the pages of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition owes the member for Bathurst an apology, and he should correct his statements in this House.

The motion is about the roads network on the South Coast. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition took us all over the State! He took us for a drive along the M5 and on the roads that he travels more than others—the inner-city roads of Sydney! He did not speak about the roads in the geographical area of the South Coast. The Nationals should be known as the Sydney Nationals because Sydney is where they spend most of their time! Unlike the members of Country Labor, The Nationals do not travel too often in the area they purport to represent—country New South Wales. Members of Country Labor live in regional New South Wales and we know what the people in the country want. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is smiling because he knows what I am saying is true.

The roads network is extremely important, and we have a plan for the roads network. Members of the Coalition could not even come up with a transport policy for the State election! What a disgrace. And yet the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has the hide to attempt to slur the reputation of a stalwart of Country Labor. The members on the Government side of the House will not accept that. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition must apologise to the House.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: I have done more for Gerard Martin's reputation than he has ever done!

The Hon. MICHAEL VEITCH: I am pleased that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is speaking highly of Gerard Martin's reputation; he is a fine, upstanding member of Parliament.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: He is a wuss!

The Hon. MICHAEL VEITCH: He is a fine, upstanding member of Parliament. There are a number of members on this side of the House who live in the country and who have similar beliefs to those of the member for Bathurst. I spend some time in the South Coast region because I find the South Coast to be a wonderful place. Every year I take my family for a holiday in the Merimbula area. I assure the House that the road network in the area is a priority for the Minister for Roads. The Hon. Eric Roozendaal is a hardworking New South Wales Minister for Roads and is a fine Iemma Government Minister. I will strongly defend the reputation of the Minister and other Government members.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: You will get a big nose from telling fibs.

The Hon. MICHAEL VEITCH: I stand behind the nose of the Minister for Roads! The motion is a Coalition furphy that is calculated to hide the fact that the Coalition does not have a funded roads policy. Like everything else put forward by the Coalition, the motion is erroneous. The people of the South Coast deserve much better representation. I stand by the comments of the Minister and other members of the Government.

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted to permit a motion to adjourn the House if desired.

The House continued to sit.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion by the Hon. Eric Michael Roozendaal agreed to:

That this House at its rising today do adjourn until Tuesday 16 October 2007 at 2.30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The Hon. TONY KELLY (Minister for Lands, Minister for Rural Affairs, Minister for Regional Development, and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [5.01 p.m.]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

GAMBLING EPIDEMIC

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE [5.01 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House a very important social issue—the epidemic of gambling in New South Wales. I was surprised that the chief executive officer of ClubsNSW, David Costello, stated today that some clubs have an unhealthy reliance on poker machine revenue. He went on to say:

Some clubs are dependent for 70 to 80 per cent of their revenue from gaming ... While many clubs are making a concerted effort to reduce that, I still think there is an unhealthy reliance on the level of gambling.

I ask honourable members to particularly note the next statement:

There is no doubt that there is a negative social impact, but to what degree nobody truly understands.

He also said that clubs are being encouraged to seek alternative revenue sources by providing retail space and opening fitness clubs. One club that has taken up that challenge is the South Sydney Leagues Club. I commend

the announcement by the current owners of the club, actor Russell Crowe and businessman Peter Holmes a Court, that the club will dispose of its 160 poker machines. Three cheers for these two adventurous, thoughtful and progressive leaders!

The proposal will be put to the club's members and board for approval. I have no doubt that the proposal will be a challenge because I understand that revenue from poker machines amounts to \$7 million annually and produces the club's surplus. Mr Holmes a Court said that the club is hoping to find other sources of revenue, such as serving good food. The Federal Treasurer, Peter Costello, has commended the proposal of the current owners but he criticised the New South Wales Government for the plan to introduce Keno lottery machines into hotels. He commented that profits from gambling are derived from human tragedy. I endorse those comments.

The State Government has attracted criticism from many welfare groups by amending the Keno licence held by ClubsNSW to pave the way for a rollout. Former Premier Bob Carr ruled out allowing pubs to run the game, but I understand that the decision to allow Keno in hotels was made as a result of an agreement between clubs that have a licence or control over Keno and the hotels. Nevertheless, in an effort to reduce the impact of gambling in this State, the State Government could have intervened to prevent that from occurring. It is expected that approximately half the 2,000 hotels in New South Wales will take advantage of the change to introduce Keno in their premises.

It is already a tragedy that the Parliament agreed to allow poker machines into hotels because that has resulted in an additional 30,000 poker machines operating in this State. At least clubs are owned by the membership and the money is invested to benefit members and, to a small extent, community activities, but the money that is derived from Keno in hotels will go into the pocket of the hotel owner and will benefit hotel owners only. The change in New South Wales gaming regulations that allowed poker machines to be installed in hotels literally doubled overnight the value of each hotel with a poker machine licence. While allowing Keno machines in hotels may not double the value of premises because Keno does not result in as huge a turnover of profit as do poker machines, there is no doubt that the value of the hotel properties will increase as a result of the introduction of Keno, and that will put more money into the pockets of hotel owners.

The Government has been criticised for apparently trying to satisfy demands made by the New South Wales branch of the Australian Hotels Association. Some people think that the link between the Australian Hotels Association and the Government is too close as a result of political donations made by the association. I understand that the association also makes donations to the Coalition. But when a government appears to respond to political donations from a particular organisation, that cannot be good governance. Hotels are certainly getting a dream run in this State. The public has a right to ask why that is the case. Many organisations have been critical of the increase in Keno gambling and the number of poker machines in this State. I call on the Government to respond positively to address the gambling epidemic. *[Time expired.]*

WALK AWAY YOUR WORRIES 2007

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI [5.06 p.m.]: On Sunday 16 September the fourth annual Walk Away Your Worries was held in Griffith. The 20 kilometre walk receives great support from local businesses, and all moneys raised go towards helping people in our local community who have a mental illness. Walk Away Your Worries is one of the events staged each year by a local Griffith organisation, Suicide Awareness. The Suicide Awareness organisation was formed in 2003 and has been ably led by its president, Val Rowe, since this time. Val is extremely passionate about mental health issues in rural New South Wales. I applaud Val for her dedication and commitment to helping local families and sufferers of mental illness during often sad and difficult times.

The importance of mental health issues in our regional areas is demonstrated by the fact that Val is supported by a dedicated committee of 18 members ranging in age from 21 to 65. The caring attitudes of the people involved do not go unnoticed. It is for this reason that the organisation receives such great support from local businesses, media and well-known Australian and international celebrities. A website has been set up by the organisation, and it is an important resource for people suffering from mental illness and their families. The website includes inspirational stories and important information for friends and family. It is during times of celebration, such as Christmas, that people experiencing isolation due to low incomes or mental illness need others to reach out to them. The members of Suicide Awareness go out of their way to do that.

Each year Suicide Awareness organises a Christmas tree. This loyal group has an amazing ability to obtain items that have been donated by companies throughout Australia to ensure that young people who are

alone, or who are suffering from mental illness or depression, have a Christmas to remember. Different support groups in the local area are asked to nominate people who they believe need a helping hand and then to pick out gifts from the Christmas tree selection to distribute to them. The Christmas tree is bolstered by funds raised through the annual Walk Away Your Worries event, which continues to raise more than \$20,000 each year. The advantages of the Walk Away Your Worries event are many: not only does it raise money for a very worthwhile cause but it also increases awareness about mental illness among local businesses and in the community.

The flow-on effects have been enormous. This year 26 businesses participated in the Walk Away Your Worries event. Many local employees who have undertaken training to recognise mental illness and learn the best way to handle situations that may arise in their workplaces and businesses are, in turn, bringing mental health issues to the attention of their clients merely through their support of the Suicide Awareness Group. I was also pleased to hear that this year the Walk Away Your Worries event received great support from the Dubbo media.

The dedicated members of the Suicide Awareness Group aim to teach young people that it is okay to seek help if they are depressed or have been feeling out of sorts for some time. Committee members—none of whom have lost loved ones to suicide—want to do everything they can to ensure that lives are not lost. I am very proud to support the Suicide Awareness Group and I commend it for making a valuable contribution to our local area. I encourage people to support this important organisation whether by making donations or by becoming members. I applaud the people of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area for their continued support of the Suicide Awareness Group, particularly as the region continues to experience hardship associated with the long-running drought. I pay tribute to Val Rowe, a tireless and dedicated supporter of our region's young people. She is held in high regard by the people of Griffith and was awarded Citizen of the Year in 2005 for her suicide awareness work. She is to be congratulated for bringing mental health issues to the fore.

MR MICHAEL TOWKE

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA [5.11 p.m.]: I speak today about a person of the utmost integrity and ethics who has given much time to those less fortunate in our society. He is Mr Michael Towke. Michael Towke grew up in Redfern and was one of eight children of Lebanese heritage. Michael's parents came to Australia from Lebanon to embrace all that Australia has to offer: the rights of the individual to prosper, free enterprise, the concept of mateship and the fact that everyone is given a fair go. Michael strived at school and went on to achieve a Master of Business Administration at the Australian Graduate School of Management. Michael Towke's unusual depth and breadth of vision regarding social policy issues saw him awarded the University of Sydney's Alan Davis Memorial Prize for Sociology as the most outstanding student in this field. Further, during his university studies Michael Towke also undertook groundbreaking research into wireless telecommunications, which he published at an international conference attended by experts from across the world.

It is clear that all his life Michael Towke has been committed to serving others. At 17 years of age Mr Towke enlisted in the Australian Army Reserve because of his deep love for this country and its people. He is an extremely compassionate person who has endeared himself to thousands of people. His commitment to social welfare is outstanding and resulted in his being commissioned as one of the youngest presidents of the Sylvania conference of the St Vincent de Paul Society. Over the past 17 years Michael Towke has volunteered his time serving those less fortunate in our community. During this period he has helped in crisis situations and given a helping hand to those in desperation. He has worked tirelessly at a grassroots level, feeding the homeless, comforting victims of abuse and tending to the sick.

Earlier this year Michael Towke was selected by a majority of Liberal Party preselectors to be the party's candidate for the Federal seat of Cook. Following that achievement Mr Towke was subjected to the most disgusting campaign of vilification that I have witnessed in my more than 26 years in politics. All allegations were unsubstantiated and false. I am alarmed by some media representatives' blatant racism and by the fact that they accepted from dishonest, unethical and anonymous sources false information regarding Michael Towke. One journalist incorrectly published that Mr Towke was a commander of the Bulldogs rugby league army and published a photograph of a person that was purported to be him. I am pleased that the real person in that photograph was located by ABC's *Media Watch* program, which exposed this shameful and irresponsible journalism. The newspaper subsequently published a belated correction and apologised to Mr Towke. Another journalist verbed elderly Liberal Party members—one of whom has cancer—for weeks on end and falsely printed that they had admitted that their Liberal Party memberships had been paid by Mr Towke. Further, a scurrilous statutory declaration against Mr Towke by property developer Matthew Daniel that was published in the media has also been proved false.

The Liberal Party of Australia, New South Wales division, issued a media release on 16 August 2007 indicating that a review of the processes in the Cook preselection had found that Mr Towke had followed and complied with all constitutional processes. It noted that Mr Towke was subjected to unsubstantiated allegations and, importantly, that the party's candidate review process found Michael Towke to be a fit and proper person, pursuant to the provisions of its constitution, to be a candidate for public office. The Australian Parliament needs people of the ability, ethics and character of Michael Towke. I can only express my regret and condemn the disgraceful acts against him. I wish him all the best for the future and encourage him to continue his great work in the community and within our great party.

CHINA HUMAN RIGHTS

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES [5.16 p.m.]: From an early age I was deeply moved by the plight of persecuted Christians in China under the Communist regime, which came to power in 1948. As a teenager, I prayed for them and was not able to do much more than that until 1997 and 1998. Then, with help from the Bible League, my wife and I joined a group that smuggled thousands of Bibles into China for the underground Christian church. Although border guards caught some members of our group, we got through and travelled by train the length and breadth of China, delivering Bibles to persecuted Christians. A number of my books have been published in Chinese and more than 1.5 million have been sold in China.

Many Chinese Christians remain in prison and slave labour camps making products that are sold in our chain stores. Their wives and children are left behind to face poverty. While travelling through China I discovered Christians were not the only group suffering persecution. Members of a religious cult known as the Falun Gong were also being persecuted. Since then I have worked for their human rights as well. That persecution took another sickening step when reports—which were later verified at the highest level in the United Nations—were published in the West claiming that human body parts, including kidneys, corneas, livers, hearts and lungs, had been taken from many of these persecuted prisoners and sold by the Government mainly to wealthy Western people who had ordered the parts. The bodies of the unwilling donors were cremated immediately.

The Global Human Rights Torch Relay inspired by the Olympic torch relay was lit in Greece on Thursday 9 August 2007. The relay is travelling around the world to put human rights on the agenda in the lead-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics. More than 100 cities will take part in the torch relay that will span five continents. Sydney was recently the location of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. Some of us were determined that its agenda should be broadened from trade and economics to include human rights. This was an opportunity of inestimable strategic value that offered immense public and international exposure. We organised a huge protest march through the streets of Sydney that was attended by thousands of people. We were surrounded by a massive police presence but there was no violence as occurred with other protests during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. It was a successful and peaceful protest.

On Wednesday 5 September I had the privilege of presenting humanitarian awards in memory of many who had died in prison in China. I also hosted a free public forum themed "Balancing the Scales with China" at Parliament House. International experts discussed current issues that have global repercussions, in particular, the harvesting of organs. More than 500 people attended the three public forums held throughout the day in Parliament House, and we received considerable media publicity from both Australian and international press. At the forum I said:

This forum is available to all members of the public and is not in opposition to APEC. Rather, it is an opportunity to raise issues that are not—but should be—on the APEC agenda. China is Australia's biggest trading partner and their human rights record should be addressed at this time.

This is an opportunity to give voice to those who are persecuted and denied the basic human rights in China. If Australia is serious about upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights we should use this opportunity.

International expert speakers presented a horrifying litany of human rights abuses occurring in China today. It was little wonder that a week before the President of China arrived in Sydney the Chinese embassy sent high-level officials to the Parliament to put immense pressure upon the Premier and the President of this Parliament to stop the protest. Both—and I commend the President for this—refused to do so. It is a 600-year right of the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy that concerned citizens have the right to enter Parliament House to discuss matters of concern with their parliamentarian. This is what is not allowed in China. During our protest Chinese men in suits videoed and photographed everyone participating.

Thank God we are free to discuss important values such as human rights and protest against the escalation of violence and fear in order to restore and to maintain the principles of democracy and human rights, especially to our largest trading partner. As a Christian, I care about all human rights including the religious sect called the Falun Gong. It is time for people concerned with human rights, particularly the abuses of political prisoners in China, to stand up and to speak out. I place on record my appreciation for the President for standing up against the pressure brought by the Chinese embassy to have these meetings and protests held in this Parliament stopped. Thank you, sir.

TECHNICAL AID TO THE DISABLED

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN [5.21 p.m.]: The Technical Aid to the Disabled [TAD] New South Wales organisation assists people with disabilities to live their life to the fullest by promoting independence, enhanced quality of life and participation in the community for people with disabilities and their carers. TAD New South Wales clientele covers a wide range of people with disabilities and age groups. The organisation coordinates the work of volunteers to design and construct aids for people with disabilities. Some volunteers also rebuild old computers and pass them on to people across the State. TAD New South Wales volunteers have helped by making modifications to tricycles and bicycles so that children with disabilities can ride them. In many cases children with severe disabilities are unable to walk unaided and for their families it is often difficult to go out on family outings. With these special modifications, the families are finding that they have a little more independence and freedom to get out and about with their disabled child.

Other special volunteers for TAD New South Wales are the foster parents. For anyone who has not been through it, raising a child with a disability is extremely challenging to all involved. Many families are not prepared for the challenges ahead and, as a result, find it difficult to cope. This is where the foster parents help. In one particular case there is a couple with grown children who had a child with Down syndrome. Sadly, their son died in his early 20s. Their son's death spurred them on to do anything they could for children with disabilities. For many years they have opened their house and had it specially modified for young children who have been abandoned or need a bit of extra care. Following the death of their son they adopted two children who both have Down syndrome. At present they are caring for three-year-old twin boys who have cerebral palsy, epilepsy and vision and hearing impairment. This amazing couple have made so many sacrifices in order to provide these special children with the full-time care they require. Their compassion and strength is very humbling.

I also speak today about a very special person in my life. When I gave my inaugural speech in this place I spoke about my goddaughter Jenny McCullum who has Down syndrome. Over the years Jenny has visited me in Parliament on many occasions and met a number of my colleagues. Jenny works part time in the nursery at the Domain depot of the Botanic Gardens. This is a job that Jenny loves and takes great pride in. In May this year Jenny featured on the front cover of the TAD New South Wales journal. The journal featured a story on Jenny and equipment used at the nursery to assist the staff members in riveting signs for plant displays. Jenny is very proud of having been featured in the journal.

For the last 10 years Jenny has been working at the Domain depot of the Botanic Gardens. She is required to measure, drill and rivet the vinyl and galvanized iron signs neatly onto stands, which are placed into the ground near where various plants are throughout the gardens. Whilst Jenny has always enjoyed her work, there was one problem: The hand-held pop riveter used to make the signs was difficult for her to hold because she has very small hands. This also meant that her hands and arms would get very sore and tired after only a few rivets.

Because of the difficulty with using the existing machine Jenny's supervisor, Quentin, found a concertina style machine, which was not as difficult to use and did not require the same amount of force, meaning that Jenny found it easier and faster to rivet the signs. The only remaining problem was solving the difficulty of keeping the signs in place whilst trying to manipulate the machine. Quentin contacted TAD New South Wales and an assessment was undertaken and a design was put in place to hoist the machine vertically onto a device that would take its weight. Barry Lees, a volunteer from TAD New South Wales came up with the design of the stand and because of his design Jenny is able to work faster and more efficiently than ever before. The supervisor at the gardens, Quentin Chadwick, says in the magazine article that previously Jenny could do only 10 rivets a day, and that was with difficulty. Now she can do more than 200.

Working in places such as the gardens has huge benefits for people who are employed, as Jenny has been, through Hornsby Challenge. As well as having a significant opportunity to develop their skills and

confidence, all the staff enjoy being part of a workplace with the sense of belonging and social interaction that that entails. If you talk to Jenny she will tell you she loves having been at the gardens for 10 years. She also works two days a week at a printing company in Mascot. On two days a week she travels from Wahroonga to Mascot to her job at the printing company and on two days a week she travels from Wahroonga to the city to be in the gardens. As I said in my inaugural speech, I am extremely proud of Jenny. She has a great work ethic and she still continues to surprise us. She is so very much a great part of Hornsby Challenge. I think she is a great advertisement for people with a disability who know that they can do anything—they certainly try—and she always wins out. I am extremely proud of her.

BROADBAND SERVICES

The Hon. RICK COLLESS [5.26 p.m.]: Yesterday in question time the Minister for Regional Development, the Hon. Tony Kelly, accused the Federal Government of signing a dud deal for the provision of broadband services with an organisation known as OPEL. The Minister further claimed that the broadband services to be provided will be available only to a narrow strip of New South Wales, that it will be a second rate service and that the WiMax is not included on Intel chipsets. Nothing could be further from the truth and this Minister has deliberately misled the House in an effort to score some cheap political points.

I shall correct the technical inaccuracies in the Minister's statement and then point out the political nonsense that he went on with. The provision of high-speed broadband to remote parts of Australia requires the application of a mix of technologies according to the location to which it is to be delivered, including fibre optic, ADSL2+ and wireless broadband. The Federal Government's Australia Connected Program, introduced earlier this year by the Federal Minister for Communications, Senator Helen Coonan, has undertaken to provide 99 per cent of Australians with at least 12 megabit per second broadband services by mid 2009 and speeds up to 50 megabits per second as the demand grows, all fully funded from the income stream provided by the Government's \$2 billion communications fund. The contract for \$958 million was awarded to OPEL, which is a joint venture between Optus and well-known Australian rural merchandising group Elders—

The Hon. Duncan Gay: He didn't mention that.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: No, he didn't. OPEL will make a further commercial contribution of \$900 million to further enhance the new network. OPEL will use a new 12 megabit per second state-of-the-art wireless technology known as WiMax, ensuring that regional Australia gets a network that will be the world's best practice. WiMax is a high quality international wireless broadband standard that is purpose-built for supplying very fast speeds over long distances and is specifically designed for optimum broadband performance, hardly the same system that the Minister accused as being second rate. OPEL will build 1,361 WiMax base stations across Australia under the Australia Connected program. It is well suited to delivering high bandwidth services over long distances. It is already used in many other countries to provide broadband services to previously under-serviced areas. Well-known international telco Nortel has endorsed the move to introduce WiMax. I quote from a letter from Nortel:

With our significant technical expertise, it is Nortel's view that the Government's decision is commendable and will provide great benefit to rural and remote Australians.

We believe the inclusion of WiMAX as part of the Optus Elders Joint Venture bid will provide a leap forward in the delivery of broadband services to rural and regional Australians.

WiMAX is the worlds most advanced global standards-based wireless technology. It has been designed to provide users with a true broadband internet experience while enjoying the benefits of wireless freedom.

As a company with leading expertise in the fields of both optical and wireless technologies, I would like to make you aware of the following information, which confirms the suitability and benefits of WiMAX as a broadband technology for rural and regional Australians. The use of WiMAX will place them at the forefront of global broadband wireless technology, allowing the access of broadband, when and where they want it.

WiMAX—The future delivered today

Future Proof Technology

...

- Today WiMAX networks can deliver peak speeds of up to 40Mbps, sustained speeds of 10Mbps, and have a robust evolution path to 140Mbps in 2009 and up to 1Gbps when the technology evolves to the [next] standard.

So the Minister was absolutely wrong with his assessment of WiMAX. Even his statement that WiMAX is not included on Intel chip sets is incorrect. Nortel also advises that Intel has recognised the potential for WiMAX technology and will be embedding WiMAX chips in all its computers and other electronic devices from 2008. It would seem that the State Ministers for regional development had also grossly misunderstood the potential for WiMAX technology when they called on the Federal Government not to go ahead with the WiMAX contract. But, thankfully, the Deputy Prime Minister Mark Vaile is literally streets ahead of them in his understanding of the WiMAX technology, and he vetoed their motion.

Question—That this House do now adjourn—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 5.31 p.m. until Tuesday 16 October 2007 at 2.30 p.m.
