

# LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday 12 May 2011

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**The President (The Hon. Donald Thomas Harwin)** took the chair at 9.30 a.m.

**The President** read the Prayers.

## INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

### Report

**The President** tabled, pursuant to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, a report entitled "Investigation into the Solicitation of a Corrupt Payment by a Strathfield Municipal Council Officer", dated May 2011, received and authorised to be made public this day.

**Ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Duncan Gay.**

## PETITIONS

### Planning and Development

Petition requesting the House immediately repeal part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and establish an independent planning body to assess State infrastructure, and that all development applications be determined by elected local councils, received from **Mr David Shoebridge**.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Precedence of Business

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY** (Minister for Roads and Ports) [9.36 a.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow the moving of a motion forthwith relating to the conduct of business of the House.

**The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO** [9.36 a.m.]: I am happy to support the motion because it will allow us to finalise the establishment of the general purpose standing committees of this House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### Precedence of Business

**Motion by the Hon. Duncan Gay agreed to:**

That, notwithstanding the sessional order for precedence of business, General Business take precedence this day after the conclusion of debate on Government Business Notices of Motions Nos 1 and 2.

## GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEES

### Appointment and Portfolio Responsibilities

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY** (Minister for Roads and Ports) [9.38 a.m.] I seek leave to amend Government Business Notice of Motion No. 1 by omitting paragraph 1 and inserting instead a new

paragraph 1. After consultation with the Opposition and crossbench members, I advise that this is an agreed position. I am sure that all members would acknowledge that this is the way the House should be run. New paragraph 1 reads:

1. Five General Purpose Standing Committees, reflecting Government Ministers' portfolio responsibilities, be appointed as follows:
  - (a) General Purpose Standing Committee No. 1—Economic Development
    - Premier
    - Western Sydney
    - Treasury
    - Finance and Services
    - Planning and Infrastructure
    - Trade and Investment
    - The Illawarra
  - (b) General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2—Community and Services
    - Health
    - Medical Research
    - Education
    - Mental Health
    - Healthy Lifestyles
    - Ageing
    - Aboriginal Affairs
    - Disability Services
    - Family and Community Services
    - Women
    - Citizenship and Communities
    - Western New South Wales
    - Sports and Recreation
  - (c) General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3—Transport, Regional Infrastructure and Services
    - Regional Infrastructure and Services
    - Special Minister of State
    - Transport
    - Roads
    - Ports
    - Tourism
    - Major Events
    - Hospitality
    - Racing
    - The Arts
    - The Central Coast
    - The Legislature
  - (d) General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4—Law, Justice and Safety
    - Attorney General
    - Justice
    - Police
    - Emergency Services
    - The Hunter
  - (e) General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5—Environment, Accountability and Regulation
    - The Environment
    - Heritage
    - Small Business
    - Local Government
    - Fair Trading
    - Primary Industries
    - Resources and Energy
    - The North Coast

**Leave granted.**

**Motion by the Hon. Duncan Gay agreed to:****Appointment**

1. Five General Purpose Standing Committees, reflecting Government Ministers' portfolio responsibilities, be appointed as follows:
  - (a) General Purpose Standing Committee No. 1—Economic Development
    - Premier
    - Western Sydney
    - Treasury
    - Finance and Services
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    - Trade and Investment
    - The Illawarra
  - (b) General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2—Community and Services
    - Health
    - Medical Research
    - Education
    - Mental Health
    - Healthy Lifestyles
    - Ageing
    - Aboriginal Affairs
    - Disability Services
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    - Heritage
    - Small Business
    - Local Government
    - Fair Trading
    - Primary Industries
    - Resources and Energy
    - The North Coast

**Referral of inquiries**

2.
  - (1) A committee is to inquire into and report on any matter referred to the committee by resolution of the House.
  - (2) A committee may inquire into and report on the expenditure, performance or effectiveness of any government department, statutory body or corporation, relevant to the portfolios allocated to the committee.
  - (3) A committee meeting to consider a self-reference may be convened at the request of any three committee members in writing to the Committee Clerk.

- (4) The Committee Clerk must convene a meeting within seven days of the receipt of the request, providing that members are given at least 24 hours' notice.
- (5) A majority of committee members is required to adopt the self-reference.
- (6) The terms of reference are to be reported to the House on the next sitting day.

#### **Membership**

- 3. Each committee is to consist of seven members, comprising:

- (a) three Government members,
- (b) two Opposition members, and
- (c) two crossbench members.

#### **Substitute members**

- 4. (1) Members may be appointed to a committee as substitute members for any matter before the committee, by notice in writing to the Committee Clerk.
- (2) Nominations for substitute Government or Opposition members are to be made by the Leader of the Government, Leader of the Opposition, Government or Opposition Whip or Deputy Whip, as applicable.
- (3) Nominations for substitute crossbench members are to be made by the substantive member or another crossbench member.

#### **Participating members**

- 5. Unless a committee decides otherwise, a member of the House who is not a member of the relevant committee may take part in a private meeting of the committee but may not vote, move any motion or be counted for the purpose of any quorum or division.

#### **Electronic participation in deliberative meetings**

- 6. (1) A committee member who is unable to attend a deliberative meeting in person may participate by electronic communication and may move any motion and be counted for the purpose of any quorum or division, provided that:
  - (a) the Chair is present in the meeting room, and
  - (b) all members are able to speak to and hear each other at all times.
- (2) Notwithstanding paragraph 6 (1), a member may not participate by electronic communication in a meeting to consider a draft report.

### **BUDGET ESTIMATES 2011-2012**

#### **Motion by the Hon. Duncan Gay agreed to:**

- 1. That upon tabling, the Budget Estimates and related papers for the financial year 2011-2012 presenting the amounts to be appropriated from the Consolidated Fund be referred to the General Purpose Standing Committees for inquiry and report.
- 2. That the initial hearings be scheduled as follows:

##### **Day One: Monday 24 October 2011**

GPSC 1  
GPSC 2

##### **Day Two: Tuesday 25 October 2011**

GPSC 1  
GPSC 3

##### **Day Three: Wednesday 26 October 2011**

GPSC 2  
GPSC 4

##### **Day Four: Thursday 27 October 2011**

GPSC 4  
GPSC 5

##### **Day Five: Friday 28 October 2011**

GPSC 3  
GPSC 5

3. That an initial round of supplementary hearings be scheduled as follows:

**Day One: Monday 28 November 2011**

GPSC 1  
GPSC 2

**Day Two: Tuesday 29 November 2011**

GPSC 1  
GPSC 3

**Day Three: Wednesday 30 November 2011**

GPSC 4  
GPSC 2

**Day Four: Thursday 1 December 2011**

GPSC 4  
GPSC 5

**Day Five: Friday 2 December 2011**

GPSC 5  
GPSC 3

4. That each scheduled day for the initial round of hearings will begin at 9.15 a.m. and conclude by 6.00 p.m.
5. The committees must hear evidence in public.
6. The committees may ask for explanations from Ministers in the House, or officers of departments, statutory bodies or corporations, relating to the items of proposed expenditure.
7. There is no provision under this resolution for a Minister to make an opening statement before the committee commences questions.
8. A daily Hansard record is to be published as soon as practicable after each day's proceedings.
9. The committees are to present a final report to the House by the last sitting day of the first sitting week in February 2012.
10. Members may lodge questions on notice with the Clerk to the committee during a Budget Estimates hearing and up to two days following.
11. All answers to questions taken on notice during the hearing, and questions on notice lodged up to two days following the hearing, must be provided within 21 days, or as otherwise determined by the committee.

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business**

#### **Motion by the Hon. Mick Veitch agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that Private Members' Business item No. 55, outside the Order of Precedence, relating to the death of Lionel Rose, be called on forthwith.

#### **Order of Business**

#### **Motion by the Hon. Mick Veitch agreed to:**

That Private Members' Business item No. 55 outside the Order of Precedence be called on forthwith.

## **TRIBUTE TO LIONEL ROSE, MBE**

#### **The Hon. MICK VEITCH [9.42 a.m.]: I move:**

1. That this House notes the passing on 8 May 2011 of Lionel Edward Rose.
2. That this House notes that Lionel Rose was:
  - (a) the first Aboriginal Australian to win a world boxing title when he defeated Japan's "Fighting" Harada in 1968 in the bantamweight division;
  - (b) in 1968, the first Aboriginal to be announced Australian of the year;
  - (c) appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire in 1968;

- (d) the inaugural inductee into the Australian National Boxing Hall of Fame in 2003; and
  - (e) one of the first sportspersons anywhere in the world to make a personal stand against apartheid.
3. Extends its condolences to the family of Lionel Rose.

On 8 May 2011 Lionel Edward Rose passed away, aged 62 years. Lionel Rose was born at Jackson's Track, a bush settlement near Warragul, Victoria, on 21 June 1948. Lionel grew up with a large family that lived in a hut with a corrugated iron roof, packed floor dirt, no electricity and no running water. Lionel Rose was best known for his athletic achievements in the sport of boxing. He was a sublime exponent of the noble art. Lionel learnt to box from his father, who was also a boxer. It is said that Lionel saw boxing as an escape from poor living in the country. He sparred with rags on his hands in a ring made from fencing wire stretched between trees. At the age of 15 he won the Australian flyweight title. Kooriweb, the Koori history website, tells us:

One of Lionel's greatest achievements was winning a world title. Although he was not the first aboriginal to win a world title he was the first boxer to do so. Rose won the Bantamweight title in 1968 against Harada from Japan. He was also only the second Australian to win a world title while still in his teens. After Lionel missed out on the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, Rose turned professional. He was trained by a Melbourne trainer named Jack Rennie.

Rose entered in a fight against Rocky Gattellari at Sydney stadium, everybody was behind Rocky Gattellari but when Lionel Rose knocked him out in round thirteen the fans had a new hero.

When Lionel went to Japan to fight Harada, Harada already had five successful title defences to his credit. Harada was given advice that if he hit an aboriginal in the legs he would fall immediately. He ignored the advice and hit him in the head, this had no effect. In the ninth round Harada had dropped to his knees with a short left punch to his chin he then opened himself to more and more punishment.

The world was a much different place in 1968 from what it is today. We should never underestimate the significance of Lionel Rose's victory. It was significant on so many levels. In 1968 Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy were assassinated; John Gorton was Prime Minister of Australia; it was the time of the TET offensive in South Vietnam; and the Australian Government had set about determining broad principles of Aboriginal policy whereby the ultimate policy objective remained that of assimilation—a single Australian community. It was in this environment that Lionel Rose travelled to Japan. A hundred thousand people were at Melbourne town hall for a public reception upon his return, and it is said that a quarter of a million people lined the streets of the city for his welcome home parade.

Lionel Rose became Australian of the Year in 1968, the first Aboriginal Australian to have that post, and he was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire in the same year. He defended his title three times, but lost it ultimately. He continued to fight until 1975 when he retired with a record of 42 wins and 11 losses as a professional boxer, 12 wins by knockout. Lionel Rose became an icon to boxing; he became an icon to all Australians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike. My father often said that Lionel Rose was the best fighter, pound for pound, anywhere in the world.

On an interesting note, Lionel Rose had a No. 1 hit song *I Thank You*, which was written by Johnny Young. Anyone can listen to it on YouTube, as I did yesterday. But of most significance was Lionel Rose's leadership in the fight against apartheid—of doing what is right. Lionel Rose was one of the first sportspersons anywhere in the world to make a personal stand against apartheid. In 1970, just after the D'Oliveira affair, which finally brought South Africa's white-only sport policy to international attention, and a generation before Australia would wrestle with questions of rebel cricket tours, Rose was offered large sums of money for a stadium fight in South Africa. It was not as if Lionel Rose was not in need of either the fight or the money that it would attract—indeed Rose had just lost his 1968 world title to Ruben Olivares, and this engagement would have been a much-needed boost to his career and the financial fortunes of his family—but he would never take up the offer. How could he when the visa requirements of his visit would see him deemed an "honorary white"?

There is no better way to end a tribute to Lionel Rose than to go back in time to 1968 and his greatest achievement, his fight with Fighting Harada, which was called by Ron Casey—and you can still hear it if you go on line to the Australian Screen website, which records Australia's audiovisual history. Casey was barracking for Lionel as much as anyone. As people waited for the announcement of the result of the fight, Casey said:

Waiting now for the announcement to be made.

The boy is sitting back.

And Lionel Rose is the champion of the world!

Lionel Rose is champion of the world in the bantamweight division!

Vale Lionel Edward Rose.

**The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY** (Parliamentary Secretary) [9.48 a.m.]: I congratulate and thank the Hon. Mick Veitch for bringing this motion forward and for his beautifully delivered speech. I am representing the Government on this motion ostensibly because the Hon. Charlie Lynn, Lionel Rose's Gippsland neighbour in Victoria, is today at the funeral of Joseph Rokoqo, a former parliamentary officer who had a long career in the service of the New South Wales Parliament. I know Charlie had some wonderful stories to tell about his connection with Lionel Rose, coming from the same part of regional Victoria, Gippsland, but I put my hand up to take his place because I am also from regional Victoria. I am, however, of a different generation—the Rose-Harada title fight took place one year before I was born.

The name Lionel Rose and his history still have a huge effect on all Australians. It is an honour on behalf of the Government to contribute to debate on this motion and to recognise the role played by Lionel Rose in Australian sport and reconciliation just by being himself and a brilliant sportsman. His career embodied the stuff legends are made of. In a boxing career begun in a makeshift ring in a poverty-stricken Aboriginal settlement, Rose developed a crushing punch that helped him become the first Aboriginal boxer to win a world title. His win catapulted him to fame in Australia and abroad. Rose, who died on Sunday after a long illness, remains one of Australia's most popular sportsmen, and pound for pound the greatest fighter Australia has ever had.

In 1968 a young Aboriginal boxer with a charming smile punched his way to history when, aged only 19, he stopped Fighting Harada in Japan to win the world bantamweight title. He was the undisputed bantamweight champion of the world. He was the first black sporting hero, he was Australia's first boxer with a world crown, he was Lionel Rose, and a quarter of a million people lined the streets of Melbourne on his return from his title bout to welcome him home. Melbourne's population today is four million to five million. In 1968 it was probably only one million or two million. That means that almost a quarter of that city's population turned out to welcome home our country's first international sports champion. Poor Lionel, upon seeing so many people lining the streets to welcome him, thought that the rock band the Beatles must have been on his plane.

Lionel Rose was named Australian of the Year after his world title win, the first Aborigine to receive the honour. He was appointed a member of the Order of the British Empire in the same year. Rose successfully defended his bantamweight title three times before relinquishing it in 1969. In his contribution the Hon. Mick Veitch talked about the sacrifice Rose made by making a stand against apartheid in South Africa. His incredible sense of right made him reject a visa that would have deemed him to be not who he was. What a proud and honourable thing to do.

Lionel Rose married his childhood sweetheart, Jennifer—who just happened to be the daughter of his trainer—at Mernda in December 1970. Their son, Michael, was born in 1974. Rose retired in 1971, made a comeback in 1975, and then finished his career in 1976 with 42 wins, 12 by knockout, from 53 fights. He remains one of only four Australian-born fighters to win a world title overseas. In the 1970s Rose became a recording artist, as the Hon. Mick Veitch pointed out, and had two hits.

He was born the eldest of nine children on an Aboriginal settlement on 21 June 1940. He grew up on Jacksons Track, an Aboriginal settlement near the town of Warragul. His father was an amateur boxer who introduced him to the sport at the age of 14. He won his first major fight at Melbourne's Festival Hall in 1963, the day after his father's death. He turned professional in 1964, mainly to support his family, and trained under the legendary Australian trainer Jack Rennie. He became Australian bantamweight champion in October 1966. Jack Rennie, who shared his home with the boxer for six years, said the former champ was the "embodiment of boxing". He also spoke of indescribable feelings of loss at the passing of a man who earned everything the hard way with sweat and his fists. He said:

Lionel was one of a kind and will be missed by his family, his friends, and all Australians. He rose from poverty and difficulty, he worked and trained to improve himself, he was courageous, and his courage was clear for all to see.

Mr Rennie said the then young fighter moved in with his family in the early 1960s as a happy young kid. He said also:

Lionel became a member of our family and over the years that followed, from triumph to loss, he never forgot his family and friends and remained a man of the people.

I stood in Lionel's corner throughout his professional career and I can say that Lionel's courage never wavered.

The most enduring memory I have is of a boy who grew to be the champion of the world but never forgot his people, his family or what it took to succeed.

Mr Rennie recalled Rose's world championship bout against Masahiki "Fighting" Harada in 1968 as the most unforgettable moment in his career. Rose became a symbolic figure in the interracial politics of the times. He won the world title just a few months after the referendum that gave the Australian Government new powers to advance Aboriginal rights, under the Gorton-"Black Jack" McEwen Government. Brad Vocale, one of Australia's most respected boxing referees and international judges, said of Lionel Rose:

He had left the country for Japan in February 1968, as just another Aboriginal boxer and returned an Australian hero. I believe the win helped bridge the colour divide.

World Boxing Council official Frank Quill said Rose was one of the first sportsmen in the world to speak out against apartheid in South Africa, refusing a lucrative offer to fight in South Africa. Quill said of Rose:

He considered the fight and if he had have taken it he would have had to go there as an "honorary white". So he said "I am not going."

To my knowledge he was the first sportsman to refuse to go to South Africa because of apartheid.

Rose refused to get involved in political issues, instead he helped Aborigines at the grassroots level, often children. And an example of that took place in 1999 when Rose gave his championship belt to an Aboriginal child who had been set on fire in a racially-motivated attack in North Queensland. Brad Vocale said Rose will be remembered for his generosity. He said also:

Lionel would give complete strangers his last \$10 in his wallet if asked. That's the Lionel I want to remember most.

According to famous fight trainer Johnny Lewis, "There are some whose ability and charisma transcends sport. Rose was one of them." He said further:

It didn't matter if you were black or white, a labourer or a lawyer, Lionel always found time to stop for a chat. He was one of the first to encourage kids to get off the grog and take up a sport. It didn't have to be boxing.

Johnny Famechon said about Lionel Rose:

In the world of boxing, it's rare to meet a fighter with no enemies.

We have not only lost a very good sportsman, but a very fine person.

At the height of his career Rose was courted by celebrities all over the world, including Elvis Presley, who met the boxer when he defended his title in California in 1968. Rose said of Presley:

I was in awe of him, but he said he was in awe of me.

Three-times boxing world champion Anthony Mundine says that Rose is Australia's greatest-ever fighter. Mundine also said:

[I] have an immense respect for the man and what he's done for Aboriginal culture and what he's done for Australia.

He was the pioneer not just for Indigenous Australians. He was the first Australian world champion, he was not the first Indigenous but the first Australian champion.

Rose was a remarkable man who had a remarkable career and he did his very best as our first world champion. Pound for pound he is the best fighter Australia has ever produced.

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM** [9.57 a.m.]: I congratulate the Hon. Mick Veitch on moving this motion and on his excellent speech. I speak on behalf of The Greens as our spokesperson on sports and offer my condolences to Lionel Rose's friends, family and fans. He was a great Australian and he will certainly be missed. His greatest achievements occurred even before I was born but I am well aware, as are we all, that he was a trailblazer for sport, for Australia and for his people—Australia's first international sporting hero, the first Australian boxing world champion and the first Aboriginal Australian of the Year in 1968. They were enormous achievements. When accepting his award as Australian of the Year he noted:

One hundred and eighty two years ago one of my mob would have been a dead cert for this.

So, he acknowledged the cultural achievement as well as Aboriginal Australia. At that time real change was taking place, with the referendum on the Commonwealth's involvement in Aboriginal affairs and so forth. This



is an indication that sport has a role in society, that it can transcend social and cultural boundaries. Sport has the ability to break down misunderstanding and build greater social bonds. Lionel Rose inspired many other Australians, especially Indigenous Australians. He was a real role model and he showed what a boy from Jacksons Track in Victoria could do. The Greens fully support this motion.

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA** (Parliamentary Secretary) [10.00 a.m.]: I congratulate the Hon. Mick Veitch on moving this fine motion and bringing this matter to the attention of members. As most members know, when one looks at the life of a boxer the first thing one does is look at a boxer's fighting record. For someone like Lionel Rose that means his entire life. The Hon. Mick Veitch's portrayal of Lionel Rose's life was brilliant and eloquent, as was the portrayal of other members. I do not wish to repeat his record other than to say he was truly a champion in every sense of the word. I have had the honour of being involved with boxing since the age of 10, which covers a period of 45 years. Yesterday some members kept reminding me that at the age of 55 I have become a senior citizen. For a considerable number of those 45 years I have been involved in boxing and today I reflect on the way in which Lionel Rose inspired my life.

I was 12 years of age when Lionel Rose became a world champion. At the time I was training and fighting at South Sydney Police Boys Club and doing the police boys club circuit, as we did during that era. I did not know of one person involved in boxing who was not inspired by what this young Aboriginal boy from the bush was able to achieve. The lesson he taught to each and every one of us was that we were able to achieve anything if we put in the time, effort and spirit—there were no barriers. The fact that I was a young boy from Lebanese descent was no longer a barrier. Lionel Rose winning a world championship opened the doors to so many who followed him.

I never had the opportunity of going into the ring with Lionel Rose, thank goodness, but my older brother, who at that time was 17 years of age, had the opportunity to spar with Lionel Rose. He was brought in to be one of Lionel's sparring partners, to help him train a little more. To quote my brother, he did it once and once only because the little money he earned was clearly not worth going into a ring with Lionel Rose. To quote him, he never saw the hands coming at him. My brother went on to be rated number three in the Commonwealth as a professional light welterweight fighter yet he, the fastest I had ever seen, could not see Lionel Rose coming at him, such was the incredible speed and strength of Lionel Rose.

When one talks about racism, multiculturalism and prejudice, one of the first people one should think about is Lionel Rose, who from a young age and throughout his entire life fought racism and prejudice. He did not just fight for his community—his brothers, as he referred to them, the Aboriginal, Indigenous Australian community—but for people from all cultures and backgrounds. He hated racism. That to me is his greatest achievement. That is what makes him a true champion, and a champion who will be missed. He will go down in history as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, pound for pound fighter in the world, not just Australia.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN** [10.04 a.m.]: I speak on behalf of the Shooters and Fishers Party and congratulate the Hon. Mick Veitch on moving the motion. It is good to hear such consistency in the comments of members. The reason I am speaking is that I could not help myself. The Hon. John Ajaka said he started his boxing career at the age of 10. Mine finished then and it was my first amateur fight. I was born and raised in Leichhardt and my father was a boxing fanatic. Even before I could walk I was going to fights all around Sydney. I started my boxing career early at Balmain Police Boys Club.

**The Hon. John Ajaka:** You should have gone to South Sydney.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Yes. At about 10 years of age I decided I would have a go. I got through a couple of preliminary fights and I did okay. Then this little skinny Aboriginal kid who was a head shorter than me came into the ring. The gloves looked too big on him. Of course, parents were not allowed to be in the corners or to be seconds, but I had one of the trainers there with me. He said, "Listen, Robert, just take it easy. This bloke can fight a bit." I thought, "Look at him!" The bell rang for round one, I got 30 seconds into round one and I was sitting on my backside wondering what the hell had happened to me. As members can see, because I am still so pretty, my boxing career ended there. Much to the disappointment of my father I decided I would rather be a champion swimmer, a champion diver or something. However, it just happened to coincide with the fact that my father was transferred from Callan Park to Newington and it was not so easy to go to the police boys club.

It is a noble art. Many people do not agree with boxing. I have spent a bit of time with Arthur Tunstall and discussed this matter with him. I think boxing is a sport in the true sense of the word—man against man or

woman against woman, as the case may be. Another member who contributed to debate on this motion said that when one looks at the career of Lionel Rose one becomes aware of the fact that he showed disadvantaged children in Australia, no matter where they came from—whether they were first Australians or new Australians, as they were then—that they could achieve things. He conducted himself like no other. He was truly a champion. Vale Lionel Rose.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN** [10.07 a.m.]: I congratulate the Hon. Mick Veitch on moving this motion. Both he and I are of a generation that might well remember the Fighting Harada fight.

**The Hon. Mick Veitch**: I do.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN**: On black and white television?

**The Hon. Mick Veitch**: Yes.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN**: One has to be of that generation to understand the implication of what occurred in that fight and in the career of Lionel Rose. It is easy to talk about what people have done but I suggest that Lionel Rose might well be remembered for what he did not do and say. The impression I had of Lionel Rose was that he was a gentle man, not just a gentleman. That was the start of a television era in a very different Australia from what it is today. For many of us—though I speak only for myself—it was the first time we had seen on television a gentle man, an Aboriginal man, and a hero.

**The Hon. Robert Brown**: On the world stage.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN**: On the world stage. It was a life-changing event. He was a gentle man who spoke kindly and who was embarrassed by the fame that he received. Because of the way in which he conducted himself he was successful in instigating a change in attitude. My memory of him is that he was a gentle, humble man who achieved great things. Through his achievement of great things in a quiet and simplistic way he changed the approach of my generation to Aboriginal people in Australia. That is what he did and in my view that is what he should be remembered for.

**The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS** [10.10 a.m.]: I also congratulate the Hon. Mick Veitch on moving this excellent motion. Having been born in 1968, I did not get to see Lionel Rose's career live. But for fathers of my generation—which the Hon. Mick Veitch and the Hon. Robert Brown mentioned—Lionel Rose represented something remarkable. My father was a great aficionado of boxing. Reference has been made to the police citizens boys clubs. My father supported boxing and judo at Newtown Police Citizens Boys Club. As far as he was concerned, Lionel Rose was the finest fighter he had ever seen, and he would tell me about it.

I like boxing. I would not say that I am as into boxing as my father was but my father was absolutely convinced that Lionel Rose was the greatest fighter he had ever seen, bar none. Lionel Rose's story reminds us also of another thing—that is, while we are all too happy to celebrate Aboriginal physicality, whether it be through boxing or rugby league or rugby union, we sometimes forget to acknowledge the intellectual achievements of the Aboriginal community. I would hate to see the apogee of Aboriginal culture being Sharman's boxing tent; that would be horrible.

Yesterday the Hon. Michael Gallacher reminded us of the wonderful new police recruitment program for young Aborigines, a program that facilitates careers for young Aborigines in the Police Force. That is a fantastic achievement, and I am sure that Lionel would be very happy for that to have taken place. No doubt they will in their spare time teach other youngsters, including young Aboriginal children, about boxing, judo and other things young people learn about in the now police citizens youth clubs—these days we have to get that term right. The final thing I will say about Lionel—and again it speaks about a greater problem of the nature of Aboriginality in Australia today—is that, like many others, Lionel died far too young.

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE** [10.12 a.m.]: I join members in expressing my condolences on the passing of Lionel Edward Rose. I support the motion moved by the Hon. Mick Veitch. Like many of the members of communities who have had to suffer through discrimination, racism and other such elements in society, in the past Aboriginal people had to go to extra lengths in order to be recognised. Unfortunately, all too often people are recognised post death and not at the time of their great achievements. I compare the stories of Muhammad Ali, who has not passed away, but who went through tough times similar to those experienced by Lionel Rose in the areas of discrimination and racism. They both suffered during their rise in their sport, at

which they excelled. But sport is a key to denouncing discrimination, racism and other such elements in society and ensuring those elements are attacked. It allows the community to ensure that those sorts of attitudes are eliminated in those communities.

The Aboriginal community should be proud of Lionel Rose—as it is—and it should be proud also of Tony Mundine and Anthony Mundine. Their contribution to Australian sport has been significant and has certainly put Australian boxing on the international stage. I support the comments made by my colleagues and particularly endorse the mover of the motion, and I express my condolences to the family of Lionel Rose.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH** [10.15 a.m.], in reply: I thank honourable members for their wonderful contributions to this debate. Australia has lost an outstanding citizen, a wonderful athlete and a fine example to us all.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business**

**The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO** [10.15 a.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that Private Members' Business item No. 58 outside the Order of Precedence, relating to the Parliamentary Budget Office, be called on forthwith.

The reason this motion is urgent is that, firstly, I have been very concerned about reports released this week that there is no guarantee of the continuation of the position of Parliamentary Budget Officer. Secondly, the acting Parliamentary Budget Officer ceased his duties this week. Thirdly, yesterday the Premier refused to confirm his support for the Parliamentary Budget Office. I believe this is an important matter that the House should debate today. I note that the first item of private members' business on today's *Notice Paper*, pursuant to the draw that took place, is an item of which I had given notice. However, as we negotiated successfully with the Government and members of the crossbench in relation to the establishment, composition and portfolio break-ups of the general purpose standing committees, the items I had on the *Notice Paper* have been superseded. I believe that my motion is the important matter that the House should debate urgently today.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE** (Minister for Finance and Services, and Minister for the Illawarra) [10.17 a.m.]: As members know, today is private members' day and therefore, as a general principle, we would expect that the members would determine what matters are dealt with. I note that this matter is not urgent, given that the Hon. Amanda Fazio was given the number one slot pursuant to the draw but did not choose to place this motion in the number one slot. I find it extraordinary that yesterday she did not think the motion was urgent but today she apparently thinks it is urgent.

Indeed, perhaps it was not a choice; perhaps it was through sheer incompetence that the Hon. Amanda Fazio did not get around to nominating an item for the number one slot in the order of precedence. Members have put forward a number of motions that deserve to be treated with urgency. I could go through each of those items. Private Members' Business items Nos 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 are all listed on the *Notice Paper* as items in the order of precedence. Unfortunately, Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile is not with us at the moment but his motion is No. 12 in the order of precedence. It is extraordinary that the Hon. Amanda Fazio seeks to move urgency in relation to this matter, given that many times she took the opposite view in other circumstances. In the circumstances, given that the Hon. Amanda Fazio would have had the first item in the order of precedence if she had been competent enough to get around to nominating it, I think it would be a little churlish to refuse urgency.

**The Hon. Amanda Fazio:** Mr President—

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! On urgency the Hon. Amanda Fazio can speak only once.

**The Hon. Amanda Fazio:** I have a right of reply.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! No, not on urgency.

[Interruption]

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I take this opportunity to remind all members when seeking the call that they should stand and say, "Mr President" so I am aware they are just not getting up to leave the Chamber as the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham was on this occasion.

**Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.**

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Order of Business**

**Motion by the Hon. Amanda Fazio agreed to:**

That Private Member's Business item No. 58 outside the Order of Precedence be called on forthwith.

### **PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICE**

**The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO** [10.20 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (a) expresses support for the continuation of the Parliamentary Budget Office, and
- (b) calls on the Government to give a commitment to continue the current level of funding for the Parliamentary Budget Office.

I am concerned that to date there has been no agreement from the Government to continue funding for the Parliamentary Budget Office. As was noted by the media earlier this week, Mr Tony Harris, a former State Auditor-General who has been acting as the Parliamentary Budget Officer, finished in that role this week. He was reported as saying his workload had been patchy but that Opposition members were slowly coming to realise the usefulness of that office. He said:

Unfortunately I will have left by the time they have found their feet, which means there will be ... a vacuum in the system ... It is a pity that parliaments all over the world have become less and less effective at, a, understanding what governments are doing and, b, being able to enunciate any views about what the government is doing ... The PBO is one step to rebalance that.

Mr Harris was reported also as saying that he did not know whether the office would continue. I continue the quote:

Officially I haven't been told anything except that I'm going, which I already knew.

A spokesman for the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Shelley Hancock, was reported as saying:

Parliament's presiding officers are still in discussion with the Premier about the office's future ... Barry O'Farrell is yet to decide whether to continue funding for the office.

I strongly believe that the Parliamentary Budget Office is an important innovation in New South Wales and that its work is also important. It places the minor parties in a much better position by enabling them to put forward policies they know have been independently costed and verified by an office established to ensure a level playing field for people to have their policies costed.

To date, in the run-up to elections we have had the farce of different parties going to different people to have their budget promises costed. We have had no capacity for independent costings during the term of any government—another important role that the Parliamentary Budget Officer can play. In the run-up to the last State election the first round of recruitment to fill the position of Parliamentary Budget Officer was unsuccessful. Part of the reason for that was the uncertainty within the public and private sectors as to the long-term view of the Liberal-Nationals Coalition in supporting or abolishing that office. People rightly were concerned about giving up positions in either the public or the private sector to take on the role of Parliamentary Budget Officer when they were not sure whether support for that office would continue after the election, which was held on 26 March 2011. That is why the first round of recruitment was unsuccessful.

That is also why the then Presiding Officers appointed Tony Harris as an Acting Parliamentary Budget Officer. He was selected on the basis of his experience as a former New South Wales Auditor-General and his

continued interest in public finances, which was demonstrated by his appearance at a number of committees. It could not be said that Tony Harris was somebody who was a particular supporter of the former Government. In his appearances at parliamentary committees where he gave evidence, he notably cast his critical eye over costings attached to government projects and pointed out where he thought those costings were incorrect. He has been a critic of governments. He was critical as a State Auditor-General and he has been critical since then. He has been critical when appearing before parliamentary committees. He has been critical in the media, both in letters to the editors and in newspaper articles—including the *Australian Financial Review*.

Because the former Presiding Officers were not able to have the Parliamentary Budget Office in place by the date designated in the legislation, the then Opposition refused to have its policies costed by the Parliamentary Budget Officer, which I think was churlish and probably an attempt at a reason for not having its costings done on the same basis as the then Government. It is all well and good to get one's own former Auditor-General to do the costings, but when one cannot guarantee that the costings will be examined in the same way it is not a fair or direct comparison. In any case that was in the past.

But the Parliamentary Budget Office, even with the interim arrangements in place, was able to do effective costings and since the election that office has looked also at some critical issues. One of those critical issues was the alleged budget black hole that the O'Farrell-Stoner Government has been trumpeting around: the budget black hole that it managed to find by 1.00 p.m. on the Monday after the election—

**The Hon. Greg Pearce:** Point of order: This motion is about the continuation of the Parliamentary Budget Office; it is not about any assessment of the budget position or finances of the State. The member is not being relevant.

**The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO:** To the point of order: My argument goes to the reasonable concerns raised about this Government's motive in not giving to date a commitment to continue funding for the Parliamentary Budget Office. I believe my argument is relevant to the motion before the House. The point I was making is that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has been critical of the assessment of the budget black hole and in doing that has incurred the wrath of the current Government.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! There is no point of order. The Hon. Amanda Fazio has the call.

**The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO:** The Leader of the Opposition referred the allegation of a budget black hole to the Parliamentary Budget Office for assessment and last week he received a report from that office, which indicated that the Government's budget black hole was non-existent. It is worth looking at that in relation to the Government's response to calls to continue the office and its funding. In that regard the Leader of the Opposition said:

The Premier has broken his promise to be open and accountable with the people of NSW ... by not committing to the continuation of the ... Parliamentary Budget Office.

One of the important planks of the recent election campaign was Barry O'Farrell's contract and commitment to the people of New South Wales. Importantly, in that contract he guaranteed that under his premiership of New South Wales there would be increased government accountability and scrutiny. The retention of the Parliamentary Budget Office would go a long way towards giving confirmation to the people of New South Wales that that commitment was genuine and being acted on. I am not criticising the Premier at this stage because this motion calls on the Government to continue the Parliamentary Budget Office and its current level of funding, and it calls on this House also to express support for the continuation of that office.

My advice to the Premier is that if he wants to demonstrate to the people of New South Wales that he is serious about keeping his commitment to have open and accountable government in this State he retain the Parliamentary Budget Office and recognise the important work it does in ensuring openness and accountability. I encourage the Premier to retain the Parliamentary Budget Office as a good public demonstration of his commitment to openness and accountability. The establishment of parliamentary budget offices has received strong support from the Federal Liberal leader, Tony Abbott. In an address to the Committee for the Economic Development of Australia in June 2010 he said:

The next Coalition government will establish a Parliamentary Budget Office, similar though on a smaller scale to the US Congressional Budget Office ... it would analyse the fiscal implications of major policy announcements including modelling their impact. It would undertake cost-benefit analyses for all major new government spending decisions and make them available to MPs and Senators who could go public with this work. It would be a politically independent alternative to the Treasury as a potential source of policy advice and economic research.

Tony Abbott, a person whom I usually would never agree with, advocates the establishment of a Parliamentary Budget Office. Such offices have been established in jurisdictions overseas, where they work well. I emphasise the most important basis for retaining the Parliamentary Budget Office for this Parliament, particularly for members of this Chamber. Any member of Parliament who advocates a public policy can have their policy independently costed and analysed by the Parliamentary Budget Office. They can then go to the government of the day and to the people of New South Wales and say, "This is my policy and this is how much it will cost. The advice from the Parliamentary Budget Office shows that the policy is affordable and can be properly implemented." That is an important reason for members in this place to support the retention of the Parliamentary Budget Office.

As I alluded to earlier, in the immediate run-up to an election people tend to leave the costing of policies to as late as possible. Prior to the last election, the Coalition's costings were released in the five days before polling day, which did not give analysts or the public a great deal of time to look at them. It did not enable lobby groups and industry groups who would be impacted by the policies time to examine the costings and form an opinion on the proposals put forward. An independent Parliamentary Budget Office will ensure that the costings advanced by a political party are fair dinkum. In the past the Coalition has used the perceived politicisation of Treasury as an excuse not to have it cost Coalition policies. I do not agree with that assertion, but if there is concern that Treasury is not independent enough when preparing costings of a political party's policies, then a Parliamentary Budget Office is a good way to overcome such anxiety. The Parliamentary Budget Office will cost all policies on the same basis, independently and impartially. As a result, those examining the policies will be able to make a genuine comparison; it will not be matter of comparing apples with oranges.

I strongly endorse the valuable role of the Parliamentary Budget Office, and I urge all members in this Chamber to express support for its continued operation. This House should send a strong message to the Government by calling on it to give a commitment to continue the current level of funding for the Parliamentary Budget Office. Although the recruitment process for a permanent officer is a long way down the track, recent newspaper advertisements sought to recruit a panel of experts to assist the Parliamentary Budget Office. The office does not have to be set up from scratch. Even though Tony Harris is gone, everything is in place to allow for the recruitment of a permanent Parliamentary Budget Officer.

The support of the House and a Government commitment to retaining the Parliamentary Budget Office, together with an adequate funding base, will further ensure that the good candidates who have applied and been successful will take up their positions in the knowledge that there is a bipartisan commitment to the office. It will also allow the recruitment of other experts and advisers to take place quickly. We will then have a fully effective and functioning Parliamentary Budget Office for the benefit of all members. The alternative is that the Government will have its policies costed by Treasury and everyone else, including the minor parties, left out in the cold when it comes to obtaining valid costings of policies. I urge all members to support the motion.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE** (Minister for Finance and Services, and Minister for the Illawarra) [10.35 a.m.]: We are debating this matter today because the Hon. Amanda Fazio in her former role as President, together with the former Speaker, chose to appoint only an acting Parliamentary Budget Officer and selected the term of his appointment. We are debating this matter because the mover of the motion in her former capacity chose not to appoint a permanent Parliamentary Budget Officer. Let me put it in perspective: The Hon. Amanda Fazio was a member of a Government that was in power for 15 years and 10 months before it got around to realising the importance of this office.

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** It was so vital that they waited 15 years and 10 months.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** They went 15 years and 10 months without a Parliamentary Budget Officer. Let us recall that the original proposal was that the Parliamentary Budget Officer be in place by 26 January 2011, Australia Day, in order to allow costings in the lead-up to the election. That did not occur. As there was no Parliamentary Budget Officer we, the former Opposition, were faced with a conundrum. What would we do? To fulfil our commitment to transparency and openness we had no choice but to proceed with costing our policies. Given that we had no indication as to when or whether the Parliamentary Budget Officer would be appointed, we took the view that the only option available to us was to go ahead with our costings and have them tested, verified and confirmed by a former Auditor-General of this State. He was appointed to that position by the former Labor Government and was clearly experienced. He was greatly respected and someone the community could have great confidence in. We followed that course, had all our policies costed and published the report well before the election. What did the Government do? I refer to Tony Harris who, on 22 March 2011 when he released the Government's costings, said:

We costed 42 policies for the report that we put out today and I think we had another 49 policies arrive this morning.

The former Government submitted 42 policies to be costed. On the day the report was to be released—four days before the election—it submitted another 49 policies. It never had any real commitment to this office or to the process.

**Dr John Kaye:** They may have been just deeply disorganised.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** I acknowledge the interjection of Dr John Kaye. As I have said on many occasions, Dr John Kaye is financially literate, unlike the Opposition. His comments are worth noting. What is Mr Harris's assessment of the process? He said, "I would like to tweak the system considerably". He does not think it works. He said—and this is a ringing endorsement—"It is probably better than nothing but it can be improved considerably". On the day that the costings of the 42 promises the then Government had got around to putting in were released, the then Treasurer put out his own assessment of the budget that contained completely different numbers. He claimed a total surplus of \$834 million in the forward estimates while on the same day Mr Harris put out his report and projected a surplus of \$248 million in the forward estimates—only a \$586 million difference!

I do not wish to take up a great deal of the time of the House. The Premier was asked about this in the other place and he indicated that the Government would consider the issue but that he had not had an opportunity to have any proper discussion with Mr Harris and would need to do that. The Premier said, "But at the end of the day we need something that works, something that suits the public and something that does not suit either party in this place." I look forward to retaining the Hon. Amanda Fazio's speech today because she will be around in 2015, when the next election occurs. I hope that by then she will be the shadow Treasurer or shadow finance Minister because she has a lot of experience and deserves a prominent role. She is obviously trying to make her mark in the finance area by moving this motion today. Who is the shadow Treasurer? Does anyone know? Who is the shadow finance Minister?

**The Hon. Tony Kelly:** It's the same person: Michael Daley. You know that.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** Michael Daley, of course. I look forward to using the Hon. Amanda Fazio's words in debate when we see what the Labor Party does with its costings in the lead-up to the 2015 election. The Hon. Amanda Fazio also referred to the budget position, and adopted the populist line that the Opposition has been arguing. Let us be clear about the budget position and about the Lambert report. The Lambert report shows a growing deficit—out to \$1.4 billion in four years. It emphasises what we complained about continually when we were in opposition: over 16 years the former Government let expenses grow faster than revenues. As a result, we now face an unsustainable budget position with growing deficits.

Let us not forget that the former Government engaged in all sorts of trickery, such as former Treasurer Egan's action in highlighting the operating result as the budget result. As I am sure Dr Kaye will explain if he is asked, the real figure we need to be concerned about is the net lending result, and that shows a growing deficit of \$3 billion to \$4 billion a year. That is putting real pressure on the budget and it is why our borrowing is skyrocketing. Ignore the hypocrisy of Opposition members who ask me about the triple-A credit rating. The triple-A rating is under threat now because under Labor borrowing skyrocketed, and is rapidly approaching the threshold of the triple-A rating. Unfortunately, Labor has got us into a position where debt is building on itself. Every year there is an extra \$140 million, \$160 million, \$180 million in interest to be funded, and that is compounding and compounding. That is why we have a major budget problem. I do not want to indulge in political theatre. This is a serious budget problem that we must all face up to. Our budget position will become unsustainable if we continue to allow expenses to grow in the way they have been and if we continue to increase debt and interest charges.

**Dr JOHN KAYE** [10.45 a.m.]: I speak on behalf of The Greens in support of the motion moved by Ms Fazio. It is important that the Parliamentary Budget Office continues its functions. I note that the Minister for Finance and Services quoted Mr Harris, who said that the operation of the Parliamentary Budget Office can be much improved. That is not surprising as it is the first time we have had a Parliamentary Budget Office in this Parliament. It began operating on the eve of an election. The Minister said that it could have been introduced earlier, and he is probably right. But given that the Parliamentary Budget Office has not yet had the opportunity to exercise its functions outside an election cycle, it would be a great shame to lose it now before we know how well it can work.

The Parliamentary Budget Office has two key functions: first, costing proposals and policies put forward by members of Parliament; and, secondly, making budget impact estimates of proposals and election

policies put forward in the lead-up to an election. Having an independent body that will perform both of these functions is very important to the future of democracy. The United States of America has the Congressional Budget Office and Canada has a similar body. Both bodies work well. They enrich the public policy space and enhance democracy by allowing for a greater diversity of proposals. It would be a great shame now to cut off at the very beginning the body that can deliver the same benefits to the people of New South Wales.

In the first instance, having a functional Parliamentary Budget Office will allow for fact-based election costings and budget impacts. At many elections—unfortunately I think the last one fell into the same category—parties go to the polls with policies that are costed by their own consultants or, as in our case, by them. I am the first to say that our policies would have more credibility if an independent body calculated their cost and their impact on the budget. It makes sense to have a commonly accepted mechanism that measures the budgetary impact of the election policy promises of different parties using a common metric. Elections can then be contested on a far more level playing field—it is not a case of my consultant versus your consultant versus my internal person. Those sorts of debates simply do not work, and for a good reason: the people of New South Wales turn off entirely.

The second key reason for retaining the Parliamentary Budget Office is that it will create more informed debate, not only in this Chamber but also in the community, by allowing policy proposals from Government and Opposition backbenchers, The Greens, the Christian Democratic Party and the Shooters and Fishers Party, to be costed by an independent body, which will report on their impact on the budget. For example, if the Shooters and Fishers Party decides it wants to change the way in which the Game Council is funded, it can say, "This is the cost and this is the budgetary impact". We can rely not just on the assertions of the Sporting Shooters Association or some other body but on the assessment of an independent body that gives public policy space—

**The Hon. Robert Borsak:** What about the Nature Conservation Council?

*[Interruption]*

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** The Hon. Robert Brown and the Hon. Robert Borsak should let me respond to one interjection at a time. I am happy to entertain them, but I cannot deal with the scattergun approach.

**The Hon. Helen Westwood:** "Scattergun"—that's appropriate.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** I thank the Hon. Helen Westwood; I was hoping that someone would notice. It is equally true of a policy presented by a union, the Nature Conservation Council or The Greens. It would be better for debate in this Chamber and in the community if policies were costed independently. It is a shame that we have only a budget office and not a general accounting office.

**The Hon. Greg Pearce:** I am always willing to get Treasury to cost The Greens' promises.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** I note the Minister's very generous offer, and we will probably take him up on it. However, there is a difference between having Treasury, which is under the control of the Government and which is responsible to a Treasurer who is not a member of The Greens—

**The Hon. Greg Pearce:** Are you casting aspersions on the independence of Treasury?

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** No, at this point I am not, but I reserve my right to do so in a later debate. There is something special about having costings produced by a body that is independent of the Government and the policy's proposer. It provides for a richer range of ideas and for their costings to be debated. The point I was about to make is that it is a shame we do not have an organisation like the General Accounting Office of the United States Congress. That office goes much further than the Congressional Budget Office's analysis of budgetary implications in that it provides a full accounting estimate of the impact of a policy. It looks at policies in a more general sense and provides an independent appraisal. However, that is separate from the issue we are debating now; I parenthetically think that is important.

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** Then you should not support this motion. It says this is the only valid model. Why are you locking yourself in?



**Dr JOHN KAYE:** I will accept the interjection from the Government Whip, who has a different interpretation of the motion. It states:

That this House:

(a) expresses support for the continuation of the Parliamentary Budget Office—

which is sensible—

and

(b) calls on the Government to give a commitment to continue the current level of funding for the Parliamentary Budget Office.

I am struggling to understand how that could mean that we should not also have an accounting office, that the current arrangements for the office are ideal and should not be reviewed, or that the office's operating procedures—which are not mentioned in the motion—should not be reviewed or evolve. Perhaps there is some hidden meaning, but from my reading of it the motion does not say that. The importance of an independent Parliamentary Budget Office is that it not only challenges Treasury's numbers—and there is a need for contestability with regard to any government department's costings and policies—but also allows for the exploration of different questions. It provides for the introduction of new policies and that could mean New South Wales can operate in a richer public policy environment, which would inevitably lead to a better outcome.

The Minister for Finance and Services outlined the history of this issue. With all due respect, I do not believe that is relevant to this debate. It is true that the then Opposition did not support the establishment of the Parliamentary Budget Office and that a long period elapsed before the appointment of a Parliamentary Budget Officer. However, if anything, that delay means we should maintain the office so that we can review its operations in a more realistic environment rather than in the pressure-cooker environment in which it began its life. The Parliamentary Budget Office is a work in progress and it would be a shame to shut it down before we explored its full potential and established what it can deliver for the people of New South Wales. Money spent enhancing the fabric of democracy and enriching the breadth and depth of debate is money well spent. The Greens support the motion.

**The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO** [10.55 a.m.], in reply: I thank Dr John Kaye for his contribution to the debate and his support for the motion. I will respond to a few of the issues raised by the Minister for Finance and Services. First, the Minister used the debate today to call me incompetent on a number of occasions. He first criticised me for the manner in which I brought forward the motion. I had to do it by way of suspension because the motion was not on the *Notice Paper* at the time of the draw for Private Members' Business. The Minister would not be aware of that because I do not think he ever used the vehicle of Private Members' Business to bring up anything. He also implied that I was incompetent because a Parliamentary Budget Officer was not appointed by 26 January.

**The Hon. Greg Pearce:** I said you were; I didn't imply it.

**The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO:** The member said I was incompetent. As I said earlier, we had a great deal of difficulty in the first recruitment round because members of the then Opposition backgrounded people in the public and private sectors that a Coalition Government would abolish the office and any applicant would be wasting his or her time leaving a good job and applying for a position that would be abolished after the State election. As I said, a recruitment process was—

**The Hon. Greg Pearce:** Point of order: The member has just cast an aspersion on members of the former Opposition, suggesting that we somehow backgrounded or verbalised people. I ask her to withdraw or to produce evidence to support her claim.

**The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO:** To the point of order: Mr President, as you would be well aware from previous President's rulings, comments made about collective entities such as political parties or groupings of political parties are not covered by the standing orders and therefore it is not possible to ask me to withdraw my truthful comment.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! There is no point of order.

**The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO:** As I said, a recruitment process was conducted for the appointment of a Parliamentary Budget Officer that would have enabled a person to be appointed by 26 January, which was the

date specified in the legislation. However, because we believed the position was so important we advised the independent selection panel that if it was not confident that any of the applicants was good enough to fill the position it should not recommend the best out of that pool of applicants. If that were the case, the panel should advise the Government to re-advertise, which is what it did.

It is regrettable that we did not have a Parliamentary Budget Office for most of the term of the former Government. I only wish that the office had been established earlier. The Minister's comments were disingenuous in some ways. He talked at length about his view of the current Government's budget position even though earlier in the debate he said he thought that that issue was outside the leave of the motion. I am glad that you, Mr President, corrected him in that regard. However, his explanation of the alleged black hole and his then lengthy discussion about what he saw as the major budget problems confronting the current Government were a smokescreen. It allows members opposite to say that the budget position is so bad that the Government will have to make savings by doing things like axing the Parliamentary Budget Office despite its very modest annual budget. The Minister cannot use that as a justification for axing the office.

The continuation of the Parliamentary Budget Office is an important measure of the increased accountability and transparency that Barry O'Farrell said will be a bulwark of his term as Premier of New South Wales. Surely he is not going to send a message to the voting public of New South Wales saying, "I went to you with a contract that was direct mailed at great expense into every household in New South Wales saying my contract is for greater accountability and greater transparency, and one of the first things I am going to do is to abolish the Parliamentary Budget Office." That would be so breathtakingly hypocritical that even I do not believe Barry O'Farrell would do it. It would send a bad message to the people of New South Wales.

There has been discussion during the debate about the form of the Parliamentary Budget Office. That is why the motion I have moved was so brief. I wanted the House to express support for the continuation of the Parliamentary Budget Office. I did not refer to the exact form in which it has been established; I did not include such detail. The motion referred simply to the continuation of the Parliamentary Budget Office. I did not want to include such detail without attaching some commitment and expenditure because it would be very easy for a cynical government that had no genuine commitment to accountability and transparency to say, "Of course we will continue to have a Parliamentary Budget Office but we will reduce the amount of money allocated to it to the extent that it cannot properly perform its functions." That is why I included paragraph (b) of the motion, which states:

... calls on the Government to give a commitment to continue the current level of funding for the Parliamentary Budget Office.

In that way we would end up with a position that would benefit all parliamentarians, regardless of the political party they were elected to represent. They would have access to an adequately funded, independent, impartial Parliamentary Budget Office that would be able to publish reputable costings of the Government's proposals during its term as well as reputable and comparable costings of different parties and Independent members—and we have to remember that there are Independent members in the other House—so that in the run-up to an election they could get independently verified and reputable costings of proposals that they can put to electors whose support they are seeking in an election campaign.

It is important that we retain the Parliamentary Budget Office. It is an innovation that has the support of the Federal Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott. As I said earlier, it is disturbing for me to have to agree with Tony Abbott on anything but I think that the advice that someone has given Tony Abbott on this occasion is correct. Barry O'Farrell should accept both my advice and the advice of Tony Abbott, that he should retain the Parliamentary Budget Office and that he should give a commitment to continue the current level of funding for it. Support for this motion is a test of the Government's commitment to accountability and transparency. It is a test of its commitment to the contract it direct mailed into every household in New South Wales. If the Government fails the test now so early in its term, it will be showing the people of New South Wales that its claim that it wanted to get rid of the spin and the rhetoric and bring honesty back into government was nothing more than a bit of spin that was put out by the Premier during the election campaign. I urge all members, including Government members, to support the motion.

**Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 17**

Ms Barham	Dr Kaye	Mr Shoebridge
Mr Buckingham	Mr Kelly	Mr Veitch
Ms Cotsis	Mr Moselmane	Ms Westwood
Mr Donnelly	Mr Primrose	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Faehrmann	Mr Roozendaal	Ms Fazio
Mr Foley	Ms Sharpe	Ms Voltz

**Noes, 20**

Mr Ajaka	Mr Gallacher	Mr Mason-Cox
Mr Blair	Miss Gardiner	Mrs Mitchell
Mr Borsak	Mr Gay	Mrs Pavey
Mr Brown	Mr Green	Mr Pearce
Mr Clarke	Mr Khan	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Cusack	Mr MacDonald	Mr Colless
Ms Ficarra	Mrs Maclaren-Jones	Dr Phelps

**Pair**

Mr Hatzistergos                      Mr Lynn

**Question resolved in the negative.**

**Motion negatived.**

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****Postponement of Business**

**Private Members' Business item No. 2 in the Order of Precedence postponed on motion by the Hon. Robert Borsak.**

**PARLIAMENT PLEIN AIR PAINTING EXHIBITION**

**The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD** [11.11 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (a) notes that an exhibition of selected works from the New South Wales Parliament Plein Air Painting Prize is on display at Parliament House in May 2011, and
- (b) acknowledges the ongoing work of the committee and their contribution to the success of the New South Wales Parliament Plein Air Painting Prize.

I draw the attention of the House to the fine exhibition that is on display around the Fountain Court in Parliament House. The first question that is usually asked is: What is plein air? The term "plein air", as I am sure the linguists amongst us already know, is a French expression that refers to the practice of painting out of doors, in the open air, in direct engagement with nature, where the transitory effects of light can be observed and recorded. It has a history in Europe of several hundred years. The most famous exponents include Salvator Rosa, Claude Lorrain in the seventeenth century, and Corot and the Barbizon School painters in the nineteenth century.

Well-known French Impressionist painters such as Claude Monet, Camille Passarro and Renoir advocated "en plein air" painting and much of their work was done outdoors in the diffuse light provided by a large white umbrella. In an Australian context, the Impressionists of the late nineteenth century included Arthur Streeton and Tom Roberts, who were devoted to painting out of doors and thus brought a new understanding of Australian light and landscape to the public through their work. Fred Williams, Australia's great master of landscape painting in the twentieth century, used studies painted out of doors as the foundation of his work. These artists and others established a strong tradition of painting en plein air in Australia that continues to this day.

Contemporary Australian artists paint en plein air both in the bush and in the city. To many, it is a private aspect of their work rarely exhibited that provides a complement to their studio work. For others it is their principal method of working. Australia's climate and landscape has long proven conducive to working out of doors and certainly continues to fascinate the public. I am proud that the former Labor Government, in an active demonstration to the arts in New South Wales, introduced the New South Wales Parliament Plein Air Painting Prize. It is an inquisitive art prize, which was set up in 2008, aiming to recognise this great and often overlooked aspect of Australian painting. The exhibition is held here in the New South Wales Parliament, with the winning work entering the New South Wales Parliament's permanent collection and the winning artist receiving \$20,000. I believe that Barry Pearce, the 2008 judge of the inaugural New South Wales Parliament Plein Air Painting Prize stated the position succinctly when he said:

There is nothing like the emotional power, intimacy and immediacy that can be encapsulated in a plein air painting, which by its very nature is contingent on immersing oneself in the landscape and capturing the fleeting, transitory effects of nature. There is a humble honesty about plein air painting that I find endlessly engaging, and exciting.

It is important to the industry that a prize such as this rightly supports Australian artists and encourages the development of Australian cultural expression. It is a requirement that the work must evoke a subject found in New South Wales. While it may have been painted at any time, it must have been en plein air. This collection will build up to a unique and challenging collection of works on New South Wales by Australian artists and will become a significant body of Australian works to complement the New South Wales Parliament's valuable collection.

It is worth noting the value of using Parliament House as an exhibition space because many people who see this exhibition would not normally visit a gallery. In these few weeks following the election and with a new Government many visitors, including tourists, are coming to Parliament House and will be able to observe the artworks. Indeed, in March this year many tourists came to Parliament House even when we were not sitting to see the exhibition that I organised celebrating International Women's Day, in particular, the way it is celebrated in New South Wales. From my observation the interest shown in the many exhibitions in Parliament House broadens the audience and develops an interest in the subject of the exhibition.

Therefore, the Plein Air Painting Prize and exhibition is important. In addition, many schoolchildren visit Parliament House, and most members would have seen the hordes of children visiting this week; it is important to encourage their love of arts. In fact, artists often comment about the importance of arts education particularly for children. People often argue that arts are the glue that holds communities together. They are an expression of the whole culture and reflect a point in our history. Arts will often be described as the universal language that communicates with all beliefs. I think it is true to say that arts define and celebrate all aspects of our lives, and from that perspective it is important that we encourage a love and appreciation of arts in our schoolchildren.

The Plein Air Painting Prize, in particular, develops an appreciation of the beauty and aesthetics of our outdoors. Some of the works in this year's exhibition feature a variety of landscapes in New South Wales. They include landscapes in suburban and country areas, small villages around the State, coastal areas, and urban areas of Sydney such as the heart of Kings Cross. Many of the works feature landscapes on the South Coast. Others feature some of the islands, both in Sydney Harbour and off the New South Wales coast. Others feature scenes at dawn and scenes at sunset. A good range of works are on exhibition as part of the Plein Air Painting Prize.

I acknowledge the hard work and long-term commitment of the committee that was instrumental in organising this valuable exhibition and prize. In particular I acknowledge Virginia Judge, the chairperson of the committee and former member for Strathfield and Minister for the Arts; Paul Connor, the committee director; Anne Ryan, the curatorial adviser; Dominique Brammah; Russell Grove, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly; Steven Reynolds, the Usher of the Black Rod in the New South Wales Legislative Council; and parliamentary staff Robert Nielsen and Phil Goldsmith, who, I am sure members will agree, are really helpful when we have these exhibitions as we call upon them to assist us in hanging the various items.

I acknowledge previous winners of the New South Wales Plein Art Painting Prize. The 2010 prizewinner was Isabel Gomez, her piece being titled *Newcastle Ports*. Rodney Pople was the 2009 prizewinner for his piece *St Mary's Cathedral at 4 am*. The 2008 prizewinner was Euan Macleod, his piece being titled *Murwillumbah X 5*. The 2011 entries showcase a range of locations across New South Wales, including places like Mudgee Floodwaters and Lawson railway. Quite a few entries depict expressions of landscapes in the Blue Mountains. Other entries include expressions of a wet day at Manly, and scenes of Old Adaminaby, Coaldale, Pambula, Kandos, Carrington Falls, Blackheath and Gerringong. As I said, the works showcased in this year's

exhibition feature a really good range of landscapes in various places. The prizewinner will be announced at a dinner held at Parliament House on 18 May. I encourage all members to attend the dinner. I hope members get an opportunity to have a look at some of the great works that are on display in this exhibition.

**The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY** (Parliamentary Secretary) [11.23 a.m.]: I thank the Hon. Helen Westwood for moving the motion. In the hurly-burly of politics sometimes we forget the most important things like art and culture that make our lives that little bit nicer. I thank the Hon. Helen Westwood for bringing to the attention of the House this very important art prize. Rewarding artists in this way is an important way to ensure they can feed themselves while they are painting. As I look across the Chamber I see the Hon. Jan Barham, who is from Byron Bay, and I acknowledge the many artistic people who live in her community. I compliment her on her inaugural speech, which she made in this Chamber yesterday. I, too, live in a community that is home to some amazing artists, particularly around Coffs Harbour, Bellingen and the Nana Glen area, some of whom are my friends. They add to the diversity of our communities. It is wonderful that our artists receive acknowledgement through such prizes as the Plein Air Painting Prize. Most importantly, they provide sustenance to these artists, and this allows them to continue their very beautiful work.

Plein air painting plays a special role in Australian art. It encapsulates some of the very important aspects of Australian culture, such as the beauty of our natural landscape and the enjoyment of the outdoors. Painting en plein air is a familiar concept to many of us today. However, in the late 1800s, when the Impressionists first ventured out of their studios into nature to investigate and capture the effects of sunlight on a subject at different times of the day, it was a revolutionary idea. The first Australian artists to start painting outdoors were known as the Heidelberg School. In the late nineteenth century a developing sense of nationalism led Australian artists such as Frederick McCubbin, Arthur Streeton and Tom Roberts to capture the essence of the Australian light and landscape directly onto their canvases. These artists spent much of their time painting en plein air, and their work brought a new understanding of light and landscape to the Australian public.

I have seen some of McCubbin's pieces in the New South Wales Art Gallery and the Melbourne Art Gallery. His depictions of fire, pioneering families and light filtering through the forests, and scenes of tranquillity, adventure and pioneerism capture the Australian spirit in so many ways—indeed, so much so that many of his paintings have been used in television commercials. I do not think that we appreciate just how revolutionary these artists were in their time, but they have certainly had a profound impact on Australia's culture. Frederick McCubbin was one of the first Australian-born artists of significance and was particularly interested in en plein air painting. One of his most famous works, *Lost*, was inspired by a 12-year-old girl who was found alive after three weeks lost in the bush. It encapsulated the harsh challenges the landscape presented to Australians of the time. In 1915 McCubbin said, "The Australian Artist can best fulfil his highest destiny by remaining in his own country and studying that which lies about him." This value of artists studying the environment around them is demonstrated by the diversity, quality and vibrancy of the works exhibited in this Parliament.

Fred Williams, Australia's great master of landscape painting in the twentieth century, also used studies painted out of doors as the foundation of his work. These artists and many others established a strong tradition of painting en plein air in Australia, and it continues to this day. I am sure that the artists who first ventured out of their studios to paint outdoors would be encouraged to know that the rich en plein air tradition is continuing in the present day. As can be seen from the selection of works on exhibition in the Parliament, there is considerable inspiration to be drawn from the beautiful and varied landscapes of New South Wales. These works feature the extraordinary diversity of landscapes in New South Wales, ranging from particularly urban settings—such as at Garden Island, Balmain and Kings Cross—to rural scenes painted in Mudgee, on the South Coast, in Mulwara, and even in Mutawintki, in far western New South Wales.

The great achievement of the New South Wales Parliament Plein Air Painting Prize is the way in which it showcases and recognises the tradition of plein air painting. Plein air is a long-established but often overlooked aspect of Australian painting. The prize exposes the plein air tradition to new audiences, and highlights the enduring importance and contemporary significance of landscape painting within the Australian art world. One of the most wonderful aspects of this exhibition is how accessible the works are. They capture the beautiful and varied landscapes that exist in our State, using the basic tools of visual language—texture, colour and line. Importantly, this acquisitive prize also develops a collection of plein air paintings of New South Wales subjects. The collection will be kept in perpetuity for the people of New South Wales. As we know, hundreds of people visit Parliament House every week. Not only will they get the opportunity to view this exhibition throughout May, but also they will be able to view the growing collection of plein air paintings in years to come. The Government knows that the arts are important in the lives of the people of New South Wales, and the statistics confirm this.

It is important to acknowledge the value of the arts across New South Wales. As we venture forth as the new Government I hope for, and we will be fighting for, a greater share of arts funding for regional New South Wales. I am the first to acknowledge that many people from country areas of New South Wales visit and appreciate many of the arts institutions in Sydney. But it is important at the same time to acknowledge and encourage artists who live in regional areas, and to provide valuable tours and opportunities for them to thrive in regional areas. There is always room to improve the level of engagement of people in the arts. That is why increasing audience understanding and participation are central to the New South Wales Government's policy for the arts.

In George Souris, our new arts Minister, we have a great proponent and advocate for the arts and culture. George Souris is from Greek heritage and, as such, he is very respectful of traditions and of the need for beauty and entertainment in life. I congratulate him on his appointment. His roles as Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts are entwined. I am supportive of him and I am confident he will do a great job.

Under the Arts NSW Arts Funding Program everyone who applies for funding must be able to demonstrate how he or she is building audiences and engaging in the community. Whether one runs an art gallery, theatre, dance company, new media organisation, museum, writers' centre or delivers community-based projects, it is important to see that people are building audiences and encouraging an appreciation of the art form. The Plein Air Painting Prize is an important addition to the cultural mix in New South Wales. It encourages participation and appreciation of this particular area of visual arts. I thank the Hon. Helen Westwood for her motion and for making Parliament a nice place for a little while.

**The Hon. JAN BARHAM** [11.31 a.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I support the motion of the Hon. Helen Westwood as I am The Greens spokesperson for the arts—an issue to which I referred last night in my inaugural speech. The role of artists and the important work they do in representing our lives should be recognised and supported. There is nothing better than to have paintings from the Plein Air Exhibition hanging in the foyer of the Parliament for all to see, including students, young people and visitors to the Parliament. Those paintings show the beauty and wonder of the Australian landscape. What a wonderful thing it is for people to be able to venture outdoors to paint in natural light, which is so different to artificial light. I am finding quite interesting how different the world looks through the filter of artificial lights rather than the clarity of daylight and country air.

The Plein Air exhibition is a representation of New South Wales through the eyes of artists who have taken the opportunity to venture outdoors and to paint in natural light. This style of painting dates from the late nineteenth century to modern times. I commend the former Labor Government for establishing this acquisitive art prize and the Parliament for supporting it. In society we love to celebrate those artists who gain recognition, particularly those who rise to overseas notoriety. We claim those artists as our own and we celebrate them reaching those high marks but do we recognise their strength and the contribution that they make? Only through acquisition prizes do many of them have the ability to continue their work and to purchase the expensive materials that are required to produce good artwork.

Acquisitive prizes have a twofold outcome: they support the artist and they provide the public with an ongoing treasure of works representing who we are and our nature for all to see. I note that Virginia Judge was involved in establishing this prize in her great commitment to the arts. I look forward to this Government continuing to support the Plein Art Prize and expanding its support for the arts. I note the acknowledgement by the Hon. Melinda Pavey that for non-metropolitan artists from country areas this is a major opportunity for them to have their work seen. Last week the Local Government Cultural Awards for the Local Government and Shires Associations were held in Parliament House—an issue about which I will speak further later today. The winner of the Essential Energy Art Prize—formerly Country Energy—who is a country person, talked about how often artists feel unappreciated. It is through acquisitive prizes that artists feel acknowledgement: having the opportunity for their work to be shown and perhaps appreciated enough to win a prize so they can sustain themselves.

The life of an artist is a hard one. It is wonderful that this type of practice is being strongly encouraged through schools and adult education. In my area local environment groups are joining with artists and sharing their experiences in wonderful natural environments: conservationists are learning to paint and painters are learning about the natural environment. That is a wonderful outcome of art being embraced as an important part of our way of life. Not only does it represent the beauty of our world; it also allows people to learn and to

appreciate more about life. I again thank the Hon. Helen Westwood for moving this motion. I think it is wonderful that the paintings are exhibited in the foyer of Parliament House. Each time I walk through the foyer I stop to look at another painting and enjoy that work. I am happy to support the motion.

**The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD** [11.36 a.m.], in reply: I thank the Hon. Melinda Pavey and the Hon. Jan Barham for their contributions to debate on the motion today. I was particularly pleased that the Hon. Jan Barham spoke in support of this motion because prior to the election I, on behalf of the former Government at very late notice, attended an arts forum. It really was a candidates' forum at which each of the major parties presented their policies on the arts. The major institutions in the arts community as well as community arts were in attendance at that forum. Mr Anthony Roberts represented the then Opposition. This week a comment made by a political commentator in the media in the lead up to the Federal budget reminded me of the interesting debate that had taken place at that forum. He remarked that usually it is the arts that are cut from budgets, which is true. I do not think it matters which political party it is; the arts struggle to achieve a position high on the agenda of any government's budget, which is a tragedy because in some way we all have art in our lives. We either practice or express art or we appreciate art. As the Hon. Melinda Pavey said, the arts are important to us all and they have an important place in local communities.

I am still a board member of Bankstown Youth Development Services, which is a youth arts organisation. Mostly its emphasis is on performing arts but it still plays a role in visual arts. I know the difference that organisation has been able to make to the lives of many struggling young people and it has also been able to develop an appreciation of the arts in young people. The need for the arts community to develop an audience and consumers of art was spoken about at the forum. It is important to go beyond the large institutions and those very exclusive areas. As both the Hon. Melinda Pavey and the Hon. Jan Barham said, we need to have support for art and artists in regional areas. I believe that the monetary prize is also an important element of the Plein Air Painting Prize because artists struggle financially and often have great difficulty in funding their works.

The Bankstown City Council Arts and Cultural Grants Program provides funding to individual artists to enable them to practice their trade and continue with their creative works. That is a great challenge for many artists. We discussed this issue at the forum and later I suggested to the organisers that they should hold a follow-up meeting a year later. Candidates' forums are held before an election, but they are not held a year later to see whether the successful candidates have lived up to their promises. The organisers agreed with the suggestion, but I bet it does not happen. In relation to a comment about art appreciation, particularly amongst children, I share with members a quote from Pablo Picasso:

Every child is an artist. The challenge is how to remain an artist once he grows up.

I failed that challenge. My brother is an artist and entertainer. He is a musician, singer and visual artist in painting and drawing. I am of the view that my brother acquired both our arts genes; I received none at all. It also seems to have skipped a generation and appeared in my grandchildren. My granddaughter's paternal grandmother, Ros Psakis, is an excellent and well-recognised artist in the St George area. She has also taught at Bankstown. One of my grandchildren has had the great fortune of inheriting Ros' artistic gene. So one never knows; there may be an artist among one of my descendants. Unfortunately, I have no artistic ability other than an appreciation of art. I am not very creative and I would never attempt to demonstrate any artistic expression in public because it would be far too embarrassing. Another quote of Pablo Picasso that I appreciate is:

Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.

How true that is. Art brings great joy and pleasure to most of us every day. I have appreciated the works on exhibition as part of the New South Wales Parliament's Plein Air Painting Prize. I ask honourable members to support my motion.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

## NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY** [11.43 a.m.]: I move:

1. That this House notes that:
  - (a) 9 to 15 May is National Volunteer Week,
  - (b) the theme for National Volunteer Week 2011 is: "Inspiring the Volunteer in You",

- (c) National Volunteer Week provides an opportunity to acknowledge, highlight and thank the 5.4 million Australians who volunteer in their communities each year, and
  - (d) Volunteering Australia, the national peak body for volunteering, represents the views and needs of the volunteer movement while promoting the activity of volunteering as one of enduring social, cultural and economic value.
2. That this House calls on the Government to continue the support and initiatives of the previous Labor Government with respect to volunteering in New South Wales.

At the outset I congratulate the Hon. Jennifer Gardiner on her elevation to the position of Deputy-President and wish her well in her duties in the weeks and months ahead. It is with great pleasure that I move this motion today during National Volunteer Week. I thank those 1.67 million people in New South Wales who are involved in volunteering on a formal basis in communities throughout the State. It is important also to acknowledge the number of people who participate in volunteering informally. The literature on volunteering indicates that this dichotomy is defined by people who are formally involved and enrolled in volunteering, which is approximately 1.67 million people, and those who participate in good works of various kinds informally. The best figure on people who are involved in informal volunteering activities in New South Wales is over one million. Their activities include the assistance, care and support of relatives, friends, neighbours and members in their community.

The combined efforts of these groups of volunteers—to whom I will refer as volunteers for the purpose of my presentation—contribute enormously to the welfare and wellbeing of the citizens of this State. Their contribution is significant. Members would agree it is almost impossible to quantify the contribution that volunteers make all around the State. I do not believe a dollar figure could be put on it. Many honourable members will want to participate in this debate and they will seek to cover the many aspects of volunteering. Hopefully, by the end of the debate we will have examined and reflected on the most important and the key aspects of this significant social activity. I look forward to the various contributions that members present to the House.

I was going to launch into the definitional aspects of volunteering until I started to think about my own experience interfacing with volunteering and how it has impacted on my life. I cast my mind back to when I was a young boy and I thought about the people who had been involved in my life—people I had been introduced to and with whom I had had an association. It dawned on me that a number of these people undertook activities on a voluntary basis, although at the time I did not fully appreciate or comprehend it. I certainly did not appreciate the value of their work in my local community. I am unable to refer to every one of those people, but I will mention a couple. If members were to undertake the same task and to think back over their lives, particularly their early childhood, they would remember a number of people who assisted voluntarily in the community. They would not have thought much about it at the time but, on reflection, they would realise they voluntarily did the work and we were the beneficiaries.

In my home town of Mandurah in Western Australia, where I was brought up, as a young fellow I was a keen golfer. For many years I would have golf lessons every Saturday morning. It is a game I do not play much these days because I do not have the time. Every Saturday Mr Josh Lefroy, who died many years ago, would coach young people at the Mandurah Country Club. From about 8.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. he would coach any young person who turned up. The young people did not have to apply or phone him and they did not send him an email because there was no such thing back then. They would turn up on spec, be introduced by Mr Lefroy and integrated into the group and, before they knew it, they were getting their first golf lesson. That coaching lesson would go on for probably 20 minutes or half an hour and then he would move on to the next person and so on. People could go back for coaching every Saturday—there was no limit. No doubt I was the beneficiary of probably hundreds of hours of golf coaching by a very good golf coach, at no cost to me. We should think about people in our lives who have been involved in perhaps training or coaching us in sport. By and large most, if not all, these people do it on a voluntary basis.

Living across the street from us was a woman called Mrs Cooper—I cannot remember her first name because as a young boy I always called her Mrs Cooper—who did voluntary work for St John's Ambulance. Once again, at the time I did not appreciate the type of work she was doing. An ambulance would often come into our street with sirens blaring and lights flashing to pick up Mrs Cooper. I lived in a country town which had some roads running in and out of it that were quite dangerous, particularly around Christmas holidays when there were lots of people on the roads in cars and on motorbikes. Terrible accidents happened on those roads. Around the Christmas period, sometimes daily or maybe two or three times a day, an ambulance would come into our street with its sirens blaring and lights flashing to pick up Mrs Cooper and invariably it would take her to the scene of a terrible motor vehicle accident.



Of course, back then seatbelts were not required to be worn and cars did not have airbags and the various safety features that they now have. Mrs Cooper was fronting up as a volunteer to the most horrific motor vehicle accidents and doing what has to be done after such events. I could not comprehend the sorts of things that Mrs Cooper would have seen in her life as a volunteer with St John's Ambulance. Once again, there was no charge, no cost—she was a volunteer and she did it because she obviously enjoyed doing it and she felt that she was making an important contribution to her community, as indeed she was.

I was fortunate enough to have been educated in a public primary school and in a Catholic high school in Fremantle in Western Australia where wonderful parents donated a considerable amount of time to the parents and citizens associations of those schools, in particular, parents who held office on those committees, organising events for the school community such as spring fairs, carnivals and so on. Those people put themselves out significantly by giving of their time to ensure the events were successful. I mention the St Vincent de Paul Society because I have great respect for that organisation. I remember that my father was heavily involved in the St Vincent de Paul conference in Mandurah. On some evenings after work he would disappear and come back a bit later. He explained to me that he had been out visiting some people or a family who had fallen on hard times and there was a need to organise food vouchers and so on. Of course, he was not an exception. All around Australia tens of thousands of people are involved in and are doing wonderful work for the St Vincent de Paul Society and other similar organisations.

The last organisation in my local town I will mention is the fire brigade. Back then in the 1960s we knew there was trouble in town when the fire siren sounded and the firemen—I suspect it was mainly voluntary firemen—dropped what they were doing wherever they were in earshot of the siren and would quickly make their way to the fire station, man the vehicle and go off to the fire. I could go on and mention other organisations, but I am simply making the point that with a simple exercise of thinking for a few minutes one can bring to mind many people in one's own life who have done things both directly and indirectly that have influenced, assisted and helped us, and they have done it in a voluntary capacity.

I do not intend to get academic on this, but I will move on to the social science of volunteering. I draw members' attention to some books that I have read and that I have found quite interesting in forming my thinking and ideas about volunteering. One book that I read a few years ago was written by Harvard academic Robert Putnam. His well-known book entitled *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* was published in 2000. The book examines the shrinking of what he calls the "social capital base" in the United States of America. He looks longitudinally, mainly over the course of the last century, at how participation in non-profit organisations and associations and the like declined in the second half of the last century.

Putnam articulates the argument that this has major implications for society and he goes on to argue that as this social capital has shrunk it has had significant implications for the welfare and wellbeing of the community and its citizens. His argument is not unique to the United States; he presents the argument that if this social capital declines over time it is an issue that will challenge societies and communities in the way they pick up the slack, so to speak, of the work that was otherwise done by people on a voluntary basis. He concludes by presenting the case that there needs to be a serious effort made by societies and communities in particular to work collectively to rebuild the social capital.

Robert Putnam's 2003 book, co-authored by Lewis Feldstein and Don Cohen, entitled *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*, builds on the research contained in the 2000 book. This is another good book I recommend in which he looks at a series of case studies in the United States of America in the three-year period since his last book was published. He looks at the way in which communities and organisations have either built themselves or rebuilt themselves in rather diverse circumstances. In the Australian context the literature in this area is limited, but it is growing. I did not have a chance to read many books on this subject prior to making this contribution, but I did glance at one published last year written by Dr Andrew Leigh, who is now the Federal member for Fraser.

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** A very good economist.

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY:** I acknowledge that interjection. He was a professor in the Research School of Economics at the Australian National University before he entered the Commonwealth Parliament. His book is entitled *Disconnected*. It is an easy book to read. It is not too dense or too academic, but it does contain a lot of interesting observations that a number of members in this House would probably find interesting in relation to social issues and matters to do with community in general. In chapter 2 of his book, entitled

"Joining, Volunteering and Giving", he looks at this whole issue in some detail. I do not intend to spend a lot of time reading what he says under the heading of "Volunteering"; suffice to say it is covered on pages 19 to 22 in the book. I will just mention some interesting figures based on his research and analysis. He states:

In the most recent survey—

meaning the last national census—

conducted in 2006, 35 per cent of Australian adults said that they had volunteered in the past year.

He then goes on to talk about the types of organisations we support and gives a good explanation about that. I found it rather interesting that he states:

Asked why they became a volunteer, the number one answer is 'someone asked'. Personal contacts matter. By contrast, only one in 20 volunteers said they decided to do it because of an advertisement in the media.

He goes on to state:

For most volunteers, the motivation is internal—they are much more likely to say that they want to help the community than they are to say that volunteering gives them contacts and skills.

There is a genuine motivation behind the impulse to volunteer. It is obviously not done for financial gain because, by definition, volunteering involves giving one's time freely. Nor do people volunteer explicitly to gain contacts and to develop skills. That does happen through the act of volunteering, but it is not a primary motivation. Dr Leigh talks about how volunteering has changed over time, and makes some fascinating observations. It is interesting to note that during the 1990s and in the current decade we have seen an increase in volunteering in Australia, with about 35 per cent of Australians now being involved.

Dr Leigh indicates two offsetting trends since 2000. First, we have witnessed an "up-ticking" in the number of people making a decision to volunteer. That is the explanation for the increase in participation to 35 per cent. Secondly, the typical volunteer is giving slightly less of his or her time. In 2006, the average time spent volunteering was 46 hours a year, which was a slight reduction from 49 hours a year in 2000. Dr Leigh then provides some thoughts about why volunteering has increased in Australia, and makes some interesting reflections on the Sydney Olympics and the influence it had on shaping community attitudes about the value of volunteering not only in New South Wales but also across Australia. He states:

Part of the reason that volunteering rates have stayed above their level in the 1980s and 1990s is the emergence of groups such as Clean Up Australia (which claims to have over 600 000 volunteers participating each March).

He refers to the emergence in the 1990s of a national peak body for the volunteering sector now known as Volunteering Australia. That organisation has been most effective in ensuring more comprehensive and professional lobbying on behalf of volunteer organisations. He also mentions the creation of volunteer matching websites, including *VolunteerMatch.com.au*, *GoVolunteer.com.au* and *fido.com.au*—which might be for dog walkers. They allow voluntary organisations to locate people with the skills they need. Literature about volunteering does exist and it is worth reading. It is important that we understand volunteering better so that those involved in policy formulation and the drafting of legislation can address the issues more effectively.

We have access to a large amount of information about volunteering in New South Wales. The New South Wales Government website is a key source of information, and specifically the volunteering portal on the Communities NSW website. I will not read the extensive material on that website, but it is very helpful. It also has various icons that allow access to information about how to volunteer, types of volunteering activities, volunteer resources, frequently asked questions and volunteer conferences. It also contains an icon that provides access to a huge range of voluntary organisations, associations and peak bodies not only in this State and Australia but also across the world. I have not had time to look at all of them, but it is fascinating to scan the range of organisations and to see how volunteering has matured throughout the world. I did take the time to click on the icon labelled "Minister". I was disappointed to find that the site advised "Minister details on this page will be updated shortly."

**The Hon. Sophie Cotsis:** Did you look at the 100 Day Action Plan?

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY:** I acknowledge that interjection. I did not look at the 100 Day Action Plan. However, I did consult the official list of New South Wales Ministers of the Crown in an attempt to find a reference to volunteers. I started at the top, with the Premier, and went down the list. I looked as carefully as I could, but found nothing. I thought there must have been a mistake and that it had been omitted, so I checked

again and again. The word "volunteer" is not included in the portfolio title of any ministry in this Government. I decided to check with the shadow Minister responsible for volunteering, because I could not believe the website was correct. I rang my colleague Cherie Burton and she explained the situation to me. I was gobsmacked to learn that there is no Minister responsible for volunteering. I could not believe it. Perhaps I should consult the 100 Day Action Plan, because it might have some information that I should know. I did not have time to read it before this debate, but I will. It is worth noting that there is no formal allocation of ministerial responsibility for volunteering.

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** Yes, there is. Victor has responsibility for it.

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY:** I do not know about that.

**The Hon. Marie Ficarra:** He is responsible for community relations.

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY:** I see. We all like community relations and we all have them. But given that volunteering is so significant and that volunteers make such an enormous contribution to our society surely that should be recognised by the appointment of a Minister with oversight of that area. I draw members' attention to the icon labelled "New South Wales Guide to Volunteering", which contains a wealth of information about volunteering in New South Wales. I also point out the icon labelled "2011 Australian Government Volunteer Grants Program". Applications for grants are being received from 4 May until 8 June. If members know of individuals or organisations in their community who are involved in volunteering they may care to draw that to their attention. I have previously mentioned two volunteer groups with which I have been associated during my time in this place. I spoke about one of them in an adjournment speech about 12 months ago.

Karinya House for Mothers and Babies, which operates in the Australian Capital Territory, accommodates on an ongoing basis a number of young women from New South Wales—they are often from southern areas but also from Sydney—who have fallen on hard times. They have had an unexpected pregnancy and are very much on their own. As I have said in previous adjournment speeches, the organisation is the gold standard in providing support to young women who wish to continue with their pregnancies and who are completely isolated. They may have been thrown out by their boyfriend or husband, their partner may have shot through or there may have been domestic violence.

Karinya House opens its door to such women—they are often, but not always, young—and accommodates them for the remainder of their pregnancy, which could be weeks or months. The women are cared for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and are case managed by professionals, who are often female. Karinya House has 23 volunteer workers. After the birth, mothers are transitioned from Karinya House to its sister house, Erin House. At Erin House they are helped with everything concerned with motherhood—any contacts they may need, accommodation arrangements such as social housing, information about training facilities to develop their skills so they can re-enter the workforce, and so on. We are fortunate to have in Sydney a similar centre run by the Red Cross. The Red Cross Young Parent Program in Coogee was established in 1993. I encourage honourable members who are interested to go to the Red Cross website and look specifically at the Young Parent Program. They will be overwhelmed in a positive way by the range of activities and the good work done by the Red Cross at its Coogee centre. I was absolutely gobsmacked to learn that the centre has 105 volunteers, who give their time to provide assistance and support for young women in need.

The Leader of the Government will speak shortly about the good work of the Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service volunteers. On behalf of the Opposition, I conclude by acknowledging specifically the wonderful work of those organisations in this State. We have all had an association with them one way or another. The volunteers are dedicated and very brave, and are never found wanting when it comes to putting themselves out—and that goes for their families as well. We should thank the families who support our volunteers and their great work. I look forward to hearing other members' contributions to the debate.

**The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER** (Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Hunter, and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [12.13 p.m.]: This is National Volunteer Week and today the Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service Cadet of the Year awards were presented. Volunteers come from all walks of life and are committed, caring and highly skilled people who give up their time in service to others. In New South Wales alone, around 1.67 million people are involved in formal volunteering activities through community and other voluntary organisations. More than one million people are involved in informal

volunteering, such as caring for relatives or helping their neighbours in their free time. National Volunteer Week gives us the opportunity to draw attention to the incredibly valuable contribution that these individuals make to their local communities.

I highlight today, in particular, our admiration for and appreciation of our Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service volunteers. More than 70,000 people serve as unpaid members of the Rural Fire Service, dedicating their time to protecting their local communities from bushfires and other disasters. The volunteers come from all walks of life; they are men and women from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, age groups and professions. Rural Fire Service volunteers perform a range of important duties, including attending and combating bushfires and other fires, and, far too often, assisting with search-and-rescue activities. Volunteer members of the Rural Fire Service also conduct hazard reduction work throughout the year, as well as preparing their local communities and educating them about the risk of bushfires. Rural Fire Service volunteers also provide valuable support to other agencies, both in New South Wales and in other States, during major natural disasters.

The State Emergency Service comprises a widely diverse membership of more than 10,000 men and women who volunteer to assist their communities in times of flood, storms and other emergencies. The State Emergency Service is recognised as the most widely used and versatile emergency service in New South Wales. State Emergency Service volunteers are highly skilled and well trained in providing rescue, first aid and a range of other vital services during emergencies. They frequently travel outside their local areas at short notice—sometimes for days, if not longer—responding to emergency situations and helping others. State Emergency Service members help with storm damage and also play an active role in flood management. When a storm hits everybody runs for cover, but State Emergency Service volunteers run in to help. Volunteer members of the State Emergency Service also help to rescue people injured in road crashes, as well as providing support to other emergency services such as the New South Wales Police Force, Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Rural Fire Service and the Ambulance Service of New South Wales.

To inspire young people to become volunteers, the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service each run a yearly cadet program for secondary school students. These programs encourage good citizenship and foster the volunteering spirit. The Rural Fire Service cadet program has proven a great success since its launch six years ago. It aims to develop an interest in the NSW Rural Fire Service and its traditions. Rural Fire Service cadets get a foundation in firefighting knowledge and participate in practical exercises, team building and safety training. I understand that more than 3,000 cadets have graduated from the Rural Fire Service cadet program, many of whom have gone on to become dedicated volunteer firefighters with their local brigades. The State Emergency Service cadet program has also been a great success and is now in its third year of operation. State Emergency Service cadets gain an understanding of the roles that volunteers play during flood and storm events. The State Emergency Service has had 703 cadets graduate from its program in the past three years, some of whom have gone on to join a State Emergency Service unit.

Participants in both programs develop qualities of leadership, self-discipline, self-reliance, initiative and teamwork. These qualities are not only crucial in emergency situations but also important in their daily lives. As I mentioned earlier at the presentation, which I will talk about in a few moments, far too often—and I hate to say it—older members of the community look down on the young, thinking they lack direction and do not have enough to do. But when one gets an opportunity to meet young people such as those who received awards today, it sends home a different message. Too often, we complain that the glass is half empty rather than half full. One award recipient is studying for her Higher School Certificate. Many kids say, "My HSC is on; I have to drop my bundle and do nothing else." But this young woman's attitude is that she will get through it. I am told that she aspires to be a doctor. She is aiming high and she is getting the runs on the board.

It was inspirational to have the opportunity to meet the young award recipients, and the young people they represent. That is why I invited them to come to the Chamber so that members could acknowledge their achievements. The young people can see where decisions are made and we have an opportunity to see people who are giving back to the community. I commend the volunteers for their work and I encourage the young people of New South Wales—indeed, people of all ages—to consider joining the Rural Fire Service or the State Emergency Service, or taking up some other volunteering role in our community.

Earlier today I was pleased to present the Rural Fire Service Cadet of the Year Award to James Petty of Gundagai High School. James is in the public gallery. This award is presented to the student who has completed the Secondary School Cadet Program at an exceptional level. James completed the program with an outstanding degree of energy and commitment, showing throughout the course a great deal of initiative and passion for the

work of the Rural Fire Service. James was also part of the Riverina Highlands zone team in the Rural Fire Service State Championships, where his team achieved third place overall in the fire ground procedures event. I ask members to acknowledge James for his work so far. Well done.

I was also pleased to present Jasmyne Lee from Ulladulla High School with the State Emergency Service Cadet of the Year Award. While completing the State Emergency Service Cadet Program, Jasmyne became known for her abilities to mentor, encourage and support her peers. Jasmyne also demonstrated a high level of leadership skills throughout her studies, acting as an enthusiastic promoter of the State Emergency Service and its important work. I note also that the theme for this year's National Volunteer Week is "Inspiring the Volunteer in You". The purpose of this theme is to highlight the feeling of joy and satisfaction that comes from helping others. I ask members to acknowledge the work that Jasmyne has done. Well done.

I am hopeful that the inspirational examples of James and Jasmyne lead other young people to take up volunteering, whether as members of the Rural Fire Service or State Emergency Service or in any other organisations. I extend to both James Petty and Jasmyne Lee the congratulations of this House and the people of New South Wales on their outstanding achievements. I also extend my personal thanks to the thousands of Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service volunteers who work every day to protect and assist their local communities.

**The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ** [12.22 p.m.]: I thank the Hon. Greg Donnelly for moving this motion. I also thank the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for these exceptionally talented young people to the Chamber. They are doing some fantastic work. We all know the importance of the State Emergency Service and the Rural Fire Service, and it is great to see some of their members in the public gallery today.

**The Hon. Melinda Pavey**: Perfect timing.

**The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ**: It is perfect. Today I pay tribute to all the volunteers who make possible not only organisations such as the State Emergency Service and the Rural Fire Service but also organisations such as the Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. These people put in considerable time helping young people grow and develop; they do an outstanding job. The Girl Guides and Girl Scouts play an important role in the development of our young women and girls. These organisations help them not only develop a love of our natural environment and community involvement but also build a sense of self in the years when this is fundamentally important.

More than a million Australian women have been, or still are, guides. It is a defining feature of their lives. My daughter is a junior guide—or a brownie as we used to call them—like I was before her. Since 1996 all members have been referred to as guides. The former gumnut guides, brownies and rangers are all now known as guides. The Girl Guides movement celebrated its Centenary of Guiding in 2010. Over that time many women have dedicated much of their time to ensuring that the organisation continues to offer opportunities to our young women and girls, and all those women—the Mindas and Tanas of the world—deserve our thanks and recognition.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to one leader of that organisation who, unfortunately, passed away recently. Nancy Eastick was born on 19 August 1920 at Lidcombe in New South Wales to Alfred Albert Kemp, a World War I veteran who became a public servant in the Commonwealth Repatriation Commission, and Gladys Barbara Kemp. After she left school she worked for the Junior Red Cross and then the Far West Children's Health Scheme in Manly. There she became a leader of the St Matthew's Anglican Church unit and a trainer. At the same time she trained to become a member of the Guides International Service. This was established in Britain and Commonwealth countries in 1942 to participate in relief work in Europe at the end of the war. In January 1947 Nancy sailed for Britain, where she trained at Pax Hill, Bentley, the home of Lord and Lady Baden-Powell.

In March Nancy went to Germany, which was still devastated and under Allied occupation. She joined Displaced Persons Camp 131 at Einbeck, in the British Zone, working with displaced people from eastern Europe whose homes were now in the eastern bloc. Her first task with another young volunteer was to set up and run a home for Romanian children suffering from tuberculosis. She then transferred to a rehabilitation centre for displaced people crippled by war, forced labour or the horrors of concentration camps. A colleague said of her:

Somehow people were happier in Eastick's company for she was alert and cheerful, ready to laugh the tension out of a situation.

Nancy returned home in 1951 and wrote about her experiences in her book, *Guides Can Do Anything: The Guides International Service 1942-1954*. Back in Sydney she worked at Guide House as a typist and also a voluntary trainer. In 1953 she was appointed camp adviser for New South Wales, becoming a full-time trainer. From October 1955 to July 1956 she was seconded to New Guinea as a travelling trainer. On return, she was appointed development officer for migrant children, finding leaders and establishing units in East Hills and Villawood migrant centres. In 1958 Nancy returned to New Guinea as a full-time trainer, living in Port Moresby. Initially she taught eight indigenous women, who were to become guides and brownie trainers. On completion of their one-year course the women returned to their villages, where they set up units. They were the first women from those villages to receive a formal education.

From February 1960 to October the next year Nancy repeated this process in Rabaul. Again, she returned to Guide House in Sydney as a full-time trainer, from 1961 to 1965. In 1962 she was awarded the Silver Fish—the Girl Guides top honour. In 1965 Nancy returned to New Guinea, where she found rapidly improving education levels had changed her training role. She was supported by leaders from Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, who paid their own fares and gave up their holidays to teach there. She wrote training manuals and also an unpublished history of guiding in Papua New Guinea. She also became a district leader, first for Boroko and later Waigani. In 1966 she wrote a book *Let's Go Camping*, and an updated version is still used today. In 1967 Nancy married Frank Eastick. She resigned as a travelling trainer to work out of the guides head office in Port Moresby. In 1972 the couple moved back to Australia to live, first at Kirra and later at Mudgeeraba on the Gold Coast. She became heavily involved in guiding locally and, in particular, training and camping. Frank was always a welcome addition to her camps. As one friend remarked, "Frank could fix anything." Nancy remained an enthusiastic participant until the end, joining the Trefoil Guild of former guides in retirement.

In her ninetieth year Nancy attended the organisation's centenary conference in Canberra. Nancy died on 20 February 2011, with Frank having predeceased her. Her memorial service was held on 28 March 2011 at Glengarry, the Girl Guides campsite at North Turramurra. I know the Girl Guides will miss Nancy Eastick. There are few volunteers these days who have served in so many countries—Europe following the Second World War and in Papua New Guinea—and been so fundamental to the development of the guides movement there and in Australia, where she also made a wonderful contribution. In considering the contributions and achievements of volunteers, Nancy stands alone as one of the most outstanding volunteers Australia has ever seen.

**The Hon. MARIE FICARRA** (Parliamentary Secretary) [12.29 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge the wonderful work in our community of volunteers, particularly during this year's National Volunteer Week, the theme of which is "Inspiring the Volunteer in You". I note that International Volunteer Week will be held between 9 and 15 May. As we all know, volunteers make up the fabric of our society, and our community would not be what it is without them. I congratulate the Hon. Greg Donnelly on moving the motion. As the member said, as we grow up in our communities we come into contact with many volunteers, both in our networks of family and friends and in the wider community. It certainly has an impact on us as children; indeed, it makes us appreciate the important things in life and our need to give back to the community. All members of this place are lucky to have received a good education and opportunities that have enabled them to become members of this esteemed place, and it is therefore important that we remember that we must always give back to the community.

This motion gives me an opportunity to place on record the extraordinary service of some extraordinary people with whom I have come into contact over many years in the voluntary sector. Across Australia each year over 5.4 million people give generously of their time and volunteer in an array of capacities. Sadly, statistics documented by The Centre for Volunteering—the home of Volunteering NSW—indicate that urban areas across Australia New South Wales have a lower rate of volunteerism than is the case in most other States and Territories. The finding surprised me in a way, until I thought about the reasons for it. I think it is a realistic reflection of the cost of living in cities and all the challenges individuals and families face nowadays with regard to earning a living, the rising cost of providing a roof over the family's head, and the cost of food and electricity. We know that when times are tough—and in many cases people have to take on part-time jobs to support their families—the first thing to go must be the hours that a volunteer gives to the community, because we know that the family comes first. We hope that that situation can be improved and that New South Wales will once again lift its rate of volunteering.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly was somewhat disingenuous in his comments about the Minister. I am disappointed that the latter part of the motion politicises the issue. Perhaps part of the reason why New South

Wales has a lower rate of volunteerism than most other States and Territories is that the former Labor Government, while it drafted a volunteering strategy known as "Celebrating IYV+10"—which I imagine stands for the "International Year of Volunteerism Plus 10"—it failed to ever implement the strategy and make it public. So it is a bit disingenuous of the Hon. Greg Donnelly to try to make cheap political shots at the Minister. The Minister's title and portfolio responsibilities are clearly set out on the Parliament's website. The Hon. Victor Dominello, MP, is Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. The Communities portfolio encompasses citizenship, youth, volunteers and veterans affairs. Clearly, the Hon. Victor Dominello is a dynamic Minister. His personality, for all those who know him, lends itself perfectly to the portfolio for which is responsible.

The O'Farrell Government is committed to supporting and encouraging volunteers, and the Minister, the Hon. Victor Dominello, will do a great job in that role. Minister Dominello himself comes from a family and community dedicated to serving others. Clearly, this was acknowledged in his electorate of Ryde, primarily in the first by-election and subsequently at the last State election. In the Italian-Australian community we have people who have worked tirelessly for many years to promote Italian culture and foster relations and good citizenship. I refer to people like John Caputo, OAM, Tony Mustacca, Roy Mustacca, OAM, Vince Foti, Luigi Stivalla, Paul Signorelli—many of us will attend next week's function hosted by the Signorelli Foundation for mesothelioma and asbestos-related diseases—Ubaldo Larovina, Filippo, John and Sal Navara, Nick Scali, Nat Zanardo, OAM, Vince Cammareri, Phil Montrone, Frank Oliveri and Teresa Restifa. I also acknowledge Peter Todaro, John De Bellis and Linda Restuccia, who are working through the Co.As.It organisation, and Romano Di Donato, Frank Chiment, Claudia Ganora, Francesco Lo Pizzo, Maria Pirrello, Ben Sonogo, Franca Arena, AM, and Rita Zammit. All these people continue to make a significant contribution, as they have done over many years.

The GO Research Fund, a fund for cervical cancer research—"GO" standing for gynaecological oncology—is another organisation through which volunteers give their all. I pay tribute to the main founder of the GO Research Fund, Professor Neville Hacker, who is renowned nationally and internationally as a leading clinician in the field of gynaecological oncology. Professor Neville Hacker has for many years turned his attention to ovarian cancer, the silent killer. I acknowledge another great man who works at the Royal Hospital for Women: the head of the cervical dysplasia and colonoscopy clinic, Dr Mick Campion. I thank the Maroubra Rotary Club, which is a great supporter of ovarian cancer research. The club has made the research project one of its special initiatives over the years. In particular I acknowledge the club's immediate past president Rosa Spencer, who is a good friend of mine.

On 25 May this year many members of this Parliament will again attend a high tea in support of the Cancer Council's Biggest Morning Tea initiative. The high tea concept was borne principally as a result of the dedication of my advisor, Vincent De Luca, OAM, who has organised this event for several years. At the age of 22 Vincent was given six weeks to live when he was diagnosed with Hodgkins lymphoma cancer. Fortunately, through courage he survived. Vincent De Luca has been a community volunteer since he was 12 years of age, following in the footsteps of his beloved grandmother and mother, both of whom have been awarded the Order of Australia for their outstanding voluntary contributions to the community.

Vince has worked in community services, sporting organisations, social welfare, youth suicide prevention, drug and alcohol prevention, and child protection. He served as President of the Curl Curl Youth and Community Centre Management Committee for over a decade. He is a White Ribbon Ambassador for the prevention of violence against women, has been the President of Give Anything Prevent Youth Suicide, was a delegate to the National People's Convention on Youth Suicide Prevention, and is a former executive member of the People's Council on Drug Prevention—High on Hope. In 2004 Vince became one of the youngest people in this nation to be awarded the Order of Australia for outstanding voluntary service to our community. I am very proud of Vince, and I wanted to place on record his outstanding voluntary service, which continues today—and he loves doing it.

**The Hon. Greg Donnelly:** He keeps busy.

**The Hon. MARIE FICARRA:** He keeps busy, as the Hon. Greg Donnelly says. When I think of the sport of swimming, I think immediately of Mrs Isa Wye, MBE, OAM, who was the Manager of the Australian Women's Olympic Team that competed in the 1980 Olympics in Moscow. Isa was a foundation member of Warringah Amateur Swimming Association, has been president of the oldest ladies swimming club in Australia, Dee Why Amateur Swimming Club, for over 50 years. She has served as patron, president, senior vice-president, vice-president and technical convenor of Warringah Amateur Swimming Association and has

been accorded life membership of Dee Why Ladies' Amateur Swimming Club, the Warringah Amateur Swimming Association and the New South Wales Amateur Swimming Association. A qualified swimming referee, judge and timekeeper, Isa has officiated at club, district, State and national championships as well as international meets. In honour of Isa's outstanding service to swimming she was awarded the Medal of the British Empire and Order of Australia Medal. She was also awarded the auspicious Natatorial Award of the Australian Union of Old Swimmers for her lifetime contribution to swimming.

I have spoken in this place before about one of the largest participatory sports in this country—netball. In order that that great sport can be played across New South Wales, thousands of volunteers give freely of their time each and every week. The Board of Netball NSW Wales does a wonderful job. The board comprises its president Wendy Archer, AM, and members Rodney Watson, Michele Murphy, Carol Murphy, Ruth Havrlant, Lynn Quinn, OAM, and John Hahn. Carolyn Campbell also does an excellent job as the board's general manager. When one talks of netball, one immediately thinks of Anne Sargeant, OAM, a worldwide legend of netball. She has spent her life promoting and furthering the interests of netball across the world. She has dedicated herself to giving something back to the game, and has worked tirelessly at club, district, State, national and international levels. New South Wales is also the home of world number one ranked umpire Sharon Kelly. Sharon has been awarded Netball Australia's Umpire of the Year award on numerous occasions, and has also named the New South Wales Sports Official of the Year.

Maureen Stephenson is also amazing. Maureen has been involved with the sport all her life as an elite AA umpire, administrator and team manager. She is the current manager of the Australian 17 years Junior Talent Squad, the 21 and under and 17 and under State teams and Australian national league team. There are many other men and women involved in netball at all levels who contribute voluntarily and whom I have had the pleasure of knowing for many years. I speak of Neita Matthews, OAM; Roslyn De Luca, OAM; Beverley Dew, OAM; Lyn Burgess, OAM; Wendy Glassman; Coralie Newman; Anka Cveticanin; Stuart Ting; and Tracey Robinson, to name just some. I also note the outstanding work of Lesley Milner, who has been involved with the Hills Netball Association for many years. She was the association's first registrar and served as junior registrar for almost 20 years.

I have been privileged to meet people in the surf life saving movement like Kevin Martin, OAM, who has dedicated his life to surf life saving. He also served for many years as a soccer referee and local historian. With regard to rugby union, I have been delighted to visit the Central Coast and see the work of volunteers at the Warnervale Rugby Club. John and Karen McNamara, club president Jim Bilton and the rest of the committee do a wonderful job, as do the many coaches, managers and referees associated with this sport. I also note the excellent work of former Wallaby Julian Huxley, who continues to be an inspiration for thousands of people after recovering from a brain tumour and becoming a great advocate for cancer research. He is a Cancer Council ambassador and regular speaker. He is the only person in the world to have returned to an elite physical contact sport following a craniotomy. Similarly, his mother Kerri Huxley, the former Mayor of Woollahra, continues to work hard on behalf of the community and supports Julian in his voluntary endeavours.

Soccer is becoming one of Australia's favourite sports. The generosity of Lucas Neil and others is admirable. Apart from donating money, Lucas Neil set up a junior scholarship program in 2006 not only to give something back to his boyhood football club, Manly United, but also because of a genuine desire to develop grass roots football in Australia and give young Australians an opportunity of a lifetime. In rugby league I have nothing but admiration for people like Diane Langmack, Luke Lewis and Petero Civoniceva. Diane Langmack has made an outstanding contribution to the Cure our Future Foundation for Cancer Research, other charitable organisations as well to rugby league in general. In 2006 her world was turned upside down when she was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma cancer. Instead of surrendering to her illness, Diane decided that the best medicine was to work harder, and she dedicated herself to furthering the work of her doctor and leading medical researcher, Professor John Rasko. During her time at Penrith Panthers she has helped establish various community-focussed programs to assist youth at risk and charitable organisations.

Both Luke Lewis and Petero Civoniceva are the backbone of the Panthers on the Prowl program, which endeavours to make a difference to the wellbeing of young people in western Sydney. The schools program began in 2002 and has had a measurable impact on the lives of over 250 young people and their families. As well as making this important individual gain, it has proved that communities and agencies working together can produce mutually beneficial outcomes. Both Luke and Petero are ambassadors for the White Ribbon Foundation—for the prevention of violence against women—and in 2010 Luke was a finalist in the New South Wales Volunteer of the Year awards.



Thousands upon thousands of others have made significant contributions by volunteering in a wide variety of way: Meals on Wheels, feeding the homeless, the Rural Fire Service, the State Emergency Service, the Country Women's Association, neighbourhood centres, Rotary and Lions clubs, the Red Cross and church parishes throughout the country. There are so many dedicated people in my parish, St Aloysius at Cronulla, who are undertaking many incredible programs on a daily basis. There is also St Vincent's de Paul, Anglicare, the Salvation Army, Wesley Mission, Clean Up Australia activities, Cancer Council events such as the Relay for Life, Daffodil Day, Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, the girl guides and scouts—the list goes on.

I make particular mention of a real character and great friend of mine from the Sutherland shire, Councillor George Capsis, OAM. George, who is a Baptist minister and an independent councillor on the Sutherland Shire Council, runs a Christian outreach ministry. What a wonderful man he is. He does his own fundraising. He is also a part-time electrician. Whatever he is paid for any electrical work he does is given to the Christian outreach ministry for victims of domestic violence, for homeless youths, and for adults and youths affected by alcohol and who are drug dependent. He also successfully runs group homes. He has a great ability to connect with anyone in need. He officiated over the bringing together of relations post the Cronulla riots. He is a great human being. To all of volunteers too numerous to put on record throughout New South Wales and Australia I say thank you for your selfless dedication to community.

**The Hon. JAN BARHAM** [12.46 p.m.]: On behalf of The Greens I make a contribution to the motion of Hon. Greg Donnelly in acknowledgment of National Volunteer Week. I thank the Hon. Greg Donnelly for moving the motion. I place on record the appreciation of The Greens of the enormous contribution made by volunteers in the New South Wales community. Their passion and commitment for supporting their local communities must be recognised and celebrated. Volunteering is an essential part of strong and resilient communities. In my community volunteering in part fills the gaps left by insufficient government funding of services. In a sense volunteers become a safety net. In my inaugural speech last night I commented on how volunteers in rural and regional communities are the glue and that without their work many of the support services in our communities would fall apart. No doubt the Hon. Paul Green will agree with me that from a local government perspective the good work of our volunteers is relied upon.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge some of the great contributions made in my community by volunteers. It was fantastic to hear the Leader of the House acknowledge the young award winners who were present in the gallery today. I have some interesting statistics indicating how many Australians engage in volunteering each year: 5.4 million people. It is nice to see but I suppose not surprising—and I mean no disrespect—that the statistics show that slightly more women than men volunteer. We need to understand why that is happening, and by doing so perhaps more men will take up the challenge of volunteering. We should encourage equity in our contributions and involvement in resilient, vibrant and healthy communities. It is all about health and well-being, and that is what I want to talk about.

On average 1.1 hours a week are volunteered. Busy people say they cannot find the time to volunteer. The theme for this year's National Volunteer Week is "Inspiring the Volunteer in You". We must send the message that volunteering gives back to the individual. That is often forgotten. People think that they are too busy to volunteer. But by volunteering one hour a week and meeting wonderful people in their community they also enrich their own lives. As I have heard many times, people who go out into their community and help those in need get so much back. At times we think that life is tough, that we are too busy and we are struggling to cope. But when we know of others who are less fortunate or in greater need, it stops us thinking that way. That awareness is something that money cannot buy.

While I applaud the work of volunteers across New South Wales, I realise that we have to aim higher in terms of increased volunteer participation. In some areas in New South Wales less than 10 per cent of the population contributes voluntary work. I appeal to the Government to continue to review how volunteer work can be supported, encouraged and enhanced. Perhaps it could be done through further grants and assistance, particularly in the regions where transport support may assist people to engage in the community. We have to determine how we can make improvements and provide opportunities for greater participation. I am honoured as an elected representative to be invited to many events in my area and become better informed about my community. When I became mayor I was invited to meetings and events that I had no idea ever took place in my community. I have met with small groups who look after others in the community. They perform work that many of us do not know about, but if they stopped performing that work, we would notice.

Some groups help those less fortunate, for example people who live on the street. Since the global financial crisis, the number of people turning up at soup kitchens and seeking services from regional community

centres in my area has increased by 60 per cent. We have to offer more support to those who need assistance and those who provide it. The Volunteering Australia website has information about how business and corporate entities can encourage and support their workers to volunteer during work time. I congratulate the businesses and corporations who support their employees to contribute in this way. It is a fine way to meet their corporate social responsibility benchmarks by allowing their staff to go out into the community and do good work. When those employees come across others less fortunate, they will have a greater appreciation of the opportunities they have in their lives. It is a valuable lesson.

Members have raised the important work of the State Emergency Service [SES], the Rural Fire Service and emergency rescue workers. I have often heard stories of accidents and emergencies in my area where these people attend all hours of the night and then turn up for work the next day. Sadly, sometimes they have attended accidents where the victims are people they know. It takes enormous strength and resilience to keep doing it and to keep giving back to the community. National Volunteer Week gives us an opportunity to recognise the work of our volunteers. Volunteering should be recognised every single day. We should keep it in focus and support it. The previous Labor Government implemented laudable programs and support for volunteers, such as providing free national park passes to State Emergency Service volunteers. These small gestures, which do not cost a lot of money, are an acknowledgement of our appreciation and a way of giving back. I encourage the Government to think creatively about providing more support in this way.

We must reflect on current impediments that act as disincentives for people who are currently volunteering or contemplating giving their time to their community. I draw the attention of members to the New South Wales publication "State Electoral Districts Ranked by 2006 Census Characteristics", which provides interesting data. It shows that country electorates rank high in volunteering. The fact that metropolitan areas are lower ranked deserves our attention. We have to make it easier or more attractive for people in the cities to volunteer in their communities. In many ways, it is easier for people in denser communities to volunteer. In my area a tremendous amount of people provide voluntary work. The average for volunteering in communities is 17.7 per cent of the population. My community is ranked right up at the top with 27 per cent of people engaged in volunteering. Volunteering covers a broad area; there is something for everyone. There is bush regeneration work, as I have done, or working at a soup kitchen or with the Girl Guides, the Rural Fire Service and the Christian Women's Association [CWA]. I am very proud of the Christian Women's Association membership in my area.

Mention has been made about cadetship programs. A few years ago organisations in country areas noted the lack of young people amongst their membership. Since then, they have made a concerted effort to attract young people. They have gone to schools to talk to students and encourage them to do volunteer work. In my area, Suffolk Park station was being vandalised. A crew went along to the local school, informed the young people about the importance of community work and encouraged them to become involved. Now a high percentage of young people are volunteering in the community.

The Rural Fire Service brigade leader in Suffolk Park, Greg Miller, won our Volunteer of the Year award last year. I note that our local group went to Queensland to help during the floods. I wish to make special mention of a wonderful friend, Noel McAviney from the State Emergency Service. Noel has volunteered also on committees of the council and is a fantastic person in our community. Both the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service encourage the participation of women as well as young people. Finally, I mention another member of my community who gives his time and energy endlessly, Paul Irwin, a member of the surf life saving organisation and sports association. These wonderful people deserve to be recognised and applauded. I thank the Hon. Greg Donnelly for moving this motion.

*[The Deputy-President (The Hon. Jennifer Gadinier) left the chair at 1.00 p.m. The House resumed at 2.30 p.m.]*

**Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted at 2.30 p.m. for questions.**

## **QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

### **PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE**

**The Hon. TONY KELLY:** My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Treasurer. I refer the Minister to a private member's statement made by Andrew Fraser, the member for Coffs Harbour in the other place, on 17 November 2006 relating to Pacific Highway funding. He

said, "I fear that some of them will be involved in motor accidents and be injured or killed, purely because of the lack of funding by this Government." Given the Coalition Government's much-repeated statements regarding the need for the upgrade of the Pacific Highway, why does the Government not stop playing politics and just provide the funding to complete this road?

**The Hon. Duncan Gay:** It's my portfolio.

**The Hon. Tony Kelly:** But he provides the finance.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** The Leader of the Opposition knows that his question relates to a portfolio matter.

**The Hon. Tony Kelly:** I didn't ask you whether you are going to build it; I asked you whether you are going to pay for it.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** It is a very important point and given that it is a portfolio issue I will take it on notice and come back to the Leader of the Opposition with a full answer. I have not discussed this issue with the Minister for Roads and Ports.

### FEDERAL BUDGET AND NEW SOUTH WALES

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Will the Minister inform the House how the Federal budget, delivered by Federal Treasurer Wayne Swan, is likely to affect New South Wales?

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** Honourable members have a great deal to be disappointed about in relation to the Federal budget. I welcome the Federal Labor Party's attempt at fiscal conservatism. It tried but it got it wrong. This is an old-style tax-and-spend budget. Yesterday we heard the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps say that Labor had never seen a tax it did not like. I will add the other part of that expression: Labor had never had a tax it did not hike. When will Federal Labor and the Opposition start to believe in prioritising value for money with the public purse? The Federal budget delivered an \$875 million deterioration in the forecast GST payments to New South Wales. Those who doubt that our budgetary position is continuing to deteriorate should note Mr Swan's budget announcement of another \$875 million deterioration in the GST forecast.

*[Interruption]*

I had too many other good things yesterday. This money could have been invested in transport. I know Government members will not have had time to update themselves on the budget so I thought I would tell them about it today. That \$875 million could have been invested in transport, schools and hospitals; it could have assisted hardworking New South Wales residents to meet the increasing costs of living; or it could have been used by the New South Wales Government to deal with the \$5.2 billion black hole that the former Government left behind. The Federal budget has done nothing to relieve the cost-of-living pressures for the people of New South Wales, despite the fact that for 2011-12 inflation is projected to be 2.75 per cent and 3 per cent for 2012-13. Let us not forget that under Labor's administration New South Wales grew more slowly than any other State—\$500 million was wasted on the Rozelle metro—

**Dr John Kaye:** Was it \$500 million?

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** A bit more. I am sure that we will inform the House and the public about that in due course. Under Labor's administration \$200 million was spent on consultants for the botched power sale—thank you, Eric; \$100 million on the Tillegra Dam, another botched project—

**Dr John Kaye:** Where was the \$100 million?

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** Dr John Kaye might like to know the details of that. He should ask me a question about it. I do not have the details now but I am sure I could get the details for him, because we are a transparent and open government. The former Labor Government wasted \$100 million on the Tcard. Also, the Federal budget was missing something, and I will come back to this: the carbon tax. The carbon tax—the greatest moral challenge of all time—was so important that the Treasurer missed it out in his budget. Have no doubt: the carbon tax will monumentally affect the people of New South Wales because it will increase the cost of living for the people of New South Wales, who Labor has neglected for so long. *[Time expired.]*

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** I ask the Minister for Finance and Services a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer in relation to the carbon tax?

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** I am pleased that honourable members on the other side of the House are so interested in the Federal budget, because, as I said, Mr Swan forgot the carbon tax.

**The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox:** Where are the details?

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** I do not know. Is it a dog-ate-my-homework sort of excuse? I just do not know what happened to it. The greatest moral challenge of all time was not anywhere in the budget. As I said, it will increase the cost of living for the people of New South Wales, who Labor neglected while in power, yet it rated such scant mention in the Treasurer's budget. While New South Wales Labor and now Federal Labor would increase the cost of living of the people of New South Wales, the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is committed to reducing the cost-of-living pressures. We have promised rebates of up to \$250 for low-income earners, to be phased in from July; we have committed to a review of the electricity network licence conditions to halt any overspending that may be forcing power prices up; and we will seek compensation from the Federal Government to offset the price rises caused by the Commonwealth's Renewable Energy Target. I am sad to inform the Hon. Rick Colless that the people of New South Wales have every right to be disappointed in the Federal budget.

### EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY PROPOSALS

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM:** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Will the Minister explain how mining, petroleum and extractive industry related proposals already lodged and accepted under part 3A of the Planning Act—such as AGL's Camden gas expansion, Cobbora and Maules Creek coalmines and Dargues Reef gold mine near Braidwood—will be treated by the Government, given that public announcements to date about how existing part 3A projects will be assessed have specifically excluded any mention of mining, petroleum and extractive industry developments?

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** I thank the member for his detailed question, which referred to a number of specific projects. I do not have the information with me. I will take the question on notice and provide a detailed answer as soon as I can.

### PRISON POPULATION

**The Hon. LUKE FOLEY:** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. I refer to comments made last year by the now Attorney General, the Hon. Greg Smith, when he committed to decreasing the prison population by 20 per cent. What action will the Minister support to achieve this outcome?

**The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER:** It is good to start question time with a good question—sadly, this is not one of them! The Liberal-Nationals Government has publicly stated that it will be tough on crime and the causes of crime. Our plan is to reduce the reconviction rate to below the national average within 10 years. The 2011 report of the Productivity Commission inquiry into government services relating to those who return to prison indicates that the figure for New South Wales is 42 per cent and the figure for Victoria is 33 per cent. Even the former Attorney General in his farewell speech last night—he has decided to do a lap of honour today—made reference to the discrepancy in the figures reported for Australia's two largest States. The figure for Queensland is 33 per cent and the figure for South Australia is 38 per cent. Not one other State has a reconviction rate of more than 40 per cent. That is the bad news.

The good news is that the O'Farrell Government has a comprehensive plan, including a second Sydney drug court, a specialist drug treatment facility to ensure that up to 300 drug-addicted prisoners get treatment and are given the opportunity to get off drugs, a budget allocation of \$20 million for education and training programs in prisons, greater use of non-custodial punishment, and greater access to diversionary programs such as the Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment Scheme. I have some words of advice for those who doubt the success of the Drug Court: Compared to offenders who did not participate in that program, Drug Court participants were 17 per cent less likely to be reconvicted for any offence, 30 per cent less likely to be reconvicted for a violent offence and 38 per cent were less likely to be reconvicted for a drug offence at any point during the follow-up assessment period. Every prisoner who returns to jail costs taxpayers and diverts resources that could be spent on providing more hospital beds and better public transport and fixing our roads, and that is what this Government has committed to do.

## ROAD SAFETY

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will the Minister advise the House of the New South Wales Government's involvement in United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety?

**The Hon. Luke Foley:** Phelpsie, you don't support the UN, do you?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** The members of the Opposition should settle him down.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I thank my Parliamentary Secretary for that question. I have had to wait 15 minutes for a question today and I have had to rely on the best Parliamentary Secretary I have ever had to ask it. Despite the fact that he has asked me a question about the United Nations, I assure the House and those who may be concerned that he is not travelling overseas; this question does not involve overseas travel.

**The Hon. Eric Roozendaal:** What about a feasibility study?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** The Hon. Eric Roozendaal will be able to travel as much as he likes after 24 June. This is a good question because more than 1.3 million people are killed each year around the world as a result of road crashes. Unless further action is taken, that number is expected to increase to the point at which road accidents will be the fifth leading cause of death in the world. Although the New South Wales provisional road toll in 2010 of 421 fatalities was the second lowest annual toll since 1945, 421 is still a tragic number for many families.

The New South Wales Government has committed to further improve road safety to reduce the loss of lives and the resulting social cost to the community. In March 2010 the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed a decade of action for road safety from 2011 to 2020. The decade of action aims to halve the road toll globally and 10 years will provide an opportunity for long-term and coordinated activities in support of regional, national and local road safety measures. The New South Wales Government is also committed to working with the other States and Territories on the development of a new national road safety strategy. That strategy will set governments, organisations and community groups around Australia a challenge over the next 10 years to improve road safety coinciding with the United Nations decade of action. In addition, the New South Wales Government Centre for Road Safety is commencing the development of a new road safety strategy building on the 2010 road safety initiative to address road safety for New South Wales motorists.

Yesterday I had the pleasure of launching the Decade of Action for Road Safety with the Australasian College of Road Safety's New South Wales chapter at an event held in this place. The launch and seminar featured representatives from road safety stakeholders across New South Wales and community representatives. More than 70 people attended and speakers gave presentations on how their organisations are working towards improving road safety in New South Wales. To increase public awareness, pylons on the Sydney Harbour Bridge were lit on Sunday night to mark the launch and to highlight the importance of road safety. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government has promised to improve road safety by implementing a series of practical measures, such as the allocation of an extra \$200 million to fix well-known black spots and an extra \$13 million to almost double the number of flashing lights in school zones.

## MOTORWAY PROJECTS

**The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN:** My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. In signing the contract for the construction of the M2 motorway in 1994, the Fahey Liberal Government agreed to terms that could have triggered a claim for compensation if operator Hills Motorways' profits were impacted by public transport projects. Will the Minister guarantee that any contracts for new or expanded motorways signed by this Government, including the possible M4 East or M5 expansions, will not contain terms that will prevent or increase the cost of implementing public and active transport solutions, including terms that could trigger compensation if predicted vehicle usage numbers are not met?

**Dr John Kaye:** Good question.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** Who said "good question"?

**Dr John Kaye:** I did.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** That is unbelievable. This is the sort of rubbish that has been perpetrated across this State—

**Dr John Kaye:** Point of order. The Minister knows full well that he is debating the question.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I am sure the Minister was about to answer the question.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** This sort of scuttlebutt has been around the city for a decade or more. A parliamentary inquiry investigated this issue and members, the Presiding Officers and the Clerks spent hundreds of hours examining the evidence. As members know, I am always here to help The Greens, and they need more help than most. They have double the staff of the rest of us, but they still need more help.

**Dr John Kaye:** Why don't you do that?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I am a nice person and I am here to help. There is a Legislative Council document on this.

*[Interruption]*

We have a lot less staff than the previous Government had—in fact, nearly half the staff. If you have a lot less staff, you deserve to have a lot less staff. That report is there for members to examine. The concerns that were raised at the time of that inquiry and report are exactly the concerns the member is raising now. If that was going to happen I would have thought it might have happened in the past decade or so. Given that we have had a decade or more of the M2's operation and there has not been any sign of that, I think the member's concerns are scaremongering. I know it is a large call to say The Greens may scaremonger but with a little bit of trepidation I put that out there.

**The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN:** I ask a supplementary question. I ask the Minister to elucidate his answer by explaining what report he was referring to.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** One can only give so many suggestions. The member can go to the Parliament's website and look at the report. If a member does not have enough staff or the staff is not operating to full ability that is her fault, not mine. I have enough trouble looking after my portfolio without helping The Greens out by scouring the parliamentary database.

#### INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COMMISSION

**The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO:** My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. In view of serious community concerns, will the Minister advise the House whether the Government intends to remove the authority of the Industrial Relations Commission to make determinations about wage claims for the public sector?

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** No.

#### ALCOHOL-RELATED VIOLENCE

**The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK:** My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister update the House on the latest information concerning the New South Wales Police Force Operation Unite, which is targeting alcohol-related violence?

**The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER:** Police commissioners across Australia and New Zealand have planned two national days of action—on 13 and 14 May—for Operation Unite, where thousands of police officers will target alcohol-related violence. New South Wales Police, under the leadership of police commissioner Andrew Scipione and the New South Wales commander of Operation Unite, Assistant-Commissioner Dennis Clifford, will focus on alcohol misuse, violence and antisocial behaviour. The operation is about cracking down on crime, alcohol misuse, violence, antisocial behaviour and making people feel safer and more secure, not curbing their enjoyment. The operation will see more than 700 officers rostered on over the operation. This is a serious issue, and we hope that over time people will start getting the message

and drink responsibly rather than drink simply to get drunk. I have made the point for far too long; we have spoken about the responsible service of alcohol but we need to start talking about responsible consumption of alcohol as well.

Alcohol-related behaviour can and does result in deaths and represents a massive challenge for police. Alcohol represents a massive challenge for police not only in looking after the community but also in their ability to service the needs of the community. Some 70 per cent of all police engagements on our streets can be traced back to alcohol abuse—dealing with victims, perpetrators or witnesses to alcohol-related crime. In New South Wales there will be overt and covert licensing operations, random breath testing, mounted police and marine command police on our waterways, and dog squad police and the riot squad on patrol dealing with drugs. There will be a specific focus on trouble spots in and around the central business district, while local area commands across the State will run locally focused operations. We are not saying that people cannot have a drink; we are saying drink sensibly, plan ahead and think about others. Until people get that message we will be living with alcohol violence every week of the year.

The Government has a responsibility to support our police officers and give them the power to do their jobs properly to protect our community. That is why this week I introduced a bill to Parliament to strengthen police move-on powers to crack down on antisocial behaviour. Police will be able to move on intoxicated individuals who are acting in a way that may cause harm to themselves, to others or to property. Current move-on powers restrict police in giving directions to intoxicated people in groups of three or more. We have to change the culture of alcohol-related antisocial behaviour in New South Wales, and that change starts with people being personally responsible for their own actions.

The new laws will be a valuable preventative measure as, by complying with police move-on directions, a person will be able to avoid a charge of being intoxicated and disorderly, a new summary offence that the New South Wales Government will shortly introduce. This simple but important reform will help the capacity of our police on the streets and in other public places to make them safer and it most certainly strengthens the ability of police to do their job more effectively.

#### AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY TRAFFIC RULES

**The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK:** My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Given that the Minister intervened to help cotton growers move their equipment over Easter, he is obviously aware that as agricultural equipment becomes larger farmers are finding that if they need to move their equipment they face Roads and Traffic Authority limitations that can be impossible to meet. Does the Government support calls from the New South Wales Farmers Association for the removal of the many Roads and Traffic Authority limitations relating to the movement of agricultural equipment, produce and livestock? If so, when will it sit down with the association and address some of its specific concerns?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I could not say that that is a good question—it is a fantastic question! It is so important to the people of regional New South Wales. For the previous Government it would have been a tough question but for us it is heartland stuff. We represent the regions. Labor is down to two people in the whole team who represent rural New South Wales. The whole idea that the country has to operate, that our primary industries have to be productive, is alien to that side of Parliament and the previous Government did not work to ensure there was good interaction between the Roads and Traffic Authority and those industries in regional New South Wales. The problem was that people were not talking to each other. We proved over Easter that if a Minister is prepared to do something and good staff are having a go, you can do something. There are good people in the Roads and Traffic Authority and we were able to bring them together with new enthusiasm to get it to happen.

**The Hon. Amanda Fazio:** You should be addressing the chair.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** One of the problems I have when I face the chair is that I do not get to address the person who asked the question. I apologise, I was not meaning to be rude, Mr President. I was answering the question from the Hon. Robert Borsak. Of course, some people in the Labor Party do not understand about eye contact.

*[Interruption]*

I will look behind me. The situation was way better—

**The Hon. Mick Veitch:** More notes.

**The Hon. Tony Kelly:** A word of warning: Always read the notes.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I thank the former Minister for his advice. I am pleased to report, having consulted my notes, that I was on the right track—pretty well, anyway. I have additional important information. Over the past decade the New South Wales rural sector has experienced prolonged drought followed by widespread flooding. The Roads and Traffic Authority, while maintaining a focus on road safety, is now offering support to rural industry through consultation and development of relevant policies and notices—something that was not happening in the past.

Examples include the Christmas Holiday Travel Restrictions; Class 3—Baled or Rolled Hay—this will interest former Minister Kelly—and Straw, Disaster Relief Exemption Notice 2011; Class 1 Grain Auger Combination Exemption Notice 2010; and the Class 1 Combine Harvester Combination Exemption Notice 2010. The Wool Bales Regulation, a petty regulation, was affecting the comeback of our wool industry. As some members opposite and many Government members know, at the moment wool prices are terrific, and seasons are great, but transport of wool had become problematic. In fact, during the election campaign—*[Time expired.]*

#### M4 EAST FUNDING

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Did the Government, either now or before the election, make an agreement with the Federal Government to divert funding from the M4 East to the Pacific Highway?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** No.

#### INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COMMISSION AND INDUSTRIAL COURT

**The Hon. NIAL BLAIR:** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Can the Minister outline to the House the role of the Industrial Court and the Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales?

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** I am pleased to outline the ongoing and important role played by both the Industrial Court and the Industrial Relations Commission. The Industrial Court—of course, the Industrial Relations Commission in court session—continues to exercise jurisdiction in relation to offence proceedings taken before the Industrial Relations Commission, including contempt; declarations of right; proceedings for unfair contracts; proceedings for contravention of dispute orders; proceedings for registration and regulation of industrial organisations; proceedings for breaches of an industrial instrument and for recovery of money under an industrial instrument other than small claims; proceedings on a superannuation appeal; and proceedings on appeal from a member of the commission or an industrial magistrate or another court.

The Industrial Relations Commission retains jurisdiction for terms and conditions of employment of State and local government sector employees. The Industrial Relations Commission exercises jurisdiction in relation to making or varying awards; making or varying enterprise agreements; promoting equal opportunity in employment; civil matters and prosecutions, for example, underpayment of award entitlements and superannuation appeal; resolving industrial disputes through conciliation and arbitration; registration and regulation of employer and employee organisations; proceedings for unfair dismissal; and proceedings for unfair, harsh or unjust contracts.

The previous Government sought to merge the functions of the Chief Industrial Magistrates Court into the Industrial Court, thereby greatly increasing the workload of the Industrial Court. Under the Industrial Relations Act 1996 the Chief Industrial Magistrates Court has responsibility for the following Acts: the Industrial Relations Act 1996, other industrial relations legislation, the Entertainment Industry Act 1989, the Building and Construction Industry Long Service Payments Act 1986, the Essential Services Act 1988, the Industrial Relations (Child Employment) Act 2006, the Industrial Relations (Ethical Clothing Trades) Act 2001, the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000—

*[Interruption]*



Apparently Opposition members did not know this. The Chief Industrial Magistrates Court has responsibility also for the Shop Trading Act 2008, the Workers Compensation Act 1987, the Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998 and the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act 2001. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government will explore further ways to integrate the various tribunals to reduce complexity, duplication and cost. In addition to the role of the Industrial Court, I envisage a role for mainstream courts in occupational health and safety. There are good reasons why occupational health and safety cases should be handled by mainstream courts. Such a move will allow a right of appeal from decisions where previously no such right of appeal existed. Decisions of the District Court and Supreme Court can end up in the Court of Appeal and eventually the High Court without appellants needing to seek equitable writs.

The national review of operational health and safety laws recommended that there should be a clear path for appeals. Furthermore, the laws we propose will include provisions in the most serious cases where courts can deprive people of their liberty, with maximum penalties of up to five years. It is generally the custom and generally seen as justice that when a court is able to send a person to jail such a case should be presided over by a judge, with a jury empanelled. However, at the moment the Industrial Court deals with matters summarily, with no provision for juries. In summary, I inform members that the Industrial Court and the Industrial Relations Commission still retain important roles in the New South Wales industrial relations system.

### NEWELL HIGHWAY SPEED LIMIT

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. The Minister's Roads and Traffic Authority chief, Michael Bushby, was yesterday quoted as saying, "Speeding remains the main killer on our roads and it must stop if we are to effectively reduce the road toll." This completely contradicts the Government's "promise to reinstate a 110-kilometre-an-hour speed limit along those sections of the Newell Highway that had been reduced to 100 kilometres an hour by the previous Government in 2009". Why will the Minister not accept the advice and expertise of his own public service?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** Correct me if I am wrong—

**Dr John Kaye:** You are wrong.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** One has to love the tolerance of The Greens; they talk about tolerance and giving people a go but they never do it. It was a good line, though. I cannot remember but I do not think the head of Transport, Les Wielinga, said that our promise to restore the 110-kilometre speed limit to the Newell Highway would cause any problems. I might be wrong but the Hon. Penny Sharpe, who asked the question, tried to imply that our policy was at odds with the statement of Mr Les Wielinga.

**The Hon. Penny Sharpe:** No, Mr Bushby.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** No, the implication was that Les Wielinga said this and we were doing that, so Les Wielinga is saying we are wrong. Come on—that is a big stretch of highway! We are determined to restore the 110-kilometre-an-hour speed limit to the Newell Highway. I know that privately members of the former Labor Government who are from that region and communities in that area totally agree with us. As I have said, the Government is committed to delivering on its election promise to reinstate a 110-kilometre-an-hour speed limit along sections of the Newell Highway that in 2009 were reduced to 100 kilometres an hour by the Labor Government.

For the people of Dubbo, Parkes and Forbes it was a key election issue that saw them vote overwhelmingly for a new local member—The Nationals' Troy Grant—with a swing of 14.5 per cent. Significantly, the Government is not alone in wanting that 110-kilometre-an-hour speed limit reinstated in these areas. Earlier this year the NRMA reiterated its support for returning the speed limit to 110 kilometres an hour on these stretches of the highway. Are members opposite trying to say that the NRMA is also trying to lower road safety standards? I do not think that it is. The NRMA said that increasing the speed limit to 110 kilometres an hour would be a huge relief to motorists on the Newell Highway after the 2009 speed limit reduction to 100 kilometres an hour forced cars and trucks to travel at the same speed. The frustration of motorists who were unable to pass in the overtaking lanes was palpable. Significantly, the NRMA said also that the safety risk on the highway did not justify the speed limit being reduced to 100 kilometres an hour. Instead, the NRMA stated:

When cars were travelling at 110km/h on the highway they could share the road safely with heavy vehicles limited to 100km/h, yet when the speed limit was dropped a range of safety concerns came into play such as overtaking safely, traffic bunching together and tailgating.

Similarly, on 22 September 2009 on radio station 2DU Assistant Police Commissioner John Hartley made the following comment regarding the Newell Highway speed limit reduction:

There are some long stretches where 110 is quite sufficient and to reduce it, may make criminals out of people who are doing the right thing.

[*Time expired.*]

### LOWER HUNTER WATER SUPPLIES

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Primary Industries. What steps has the NSW Office of Water taken to develop a new plan to secure water supply for the Lower Hunter, as promised by former Premier Kristina Keneally in her news release of 28 November 2010? Can the Minister inform the House which division of the NSW Office of Water is developing the draft plan, who they have consulted, what steps have been taken to engage local experts and the community to review the plan, and whether the development of a new dam at Tillegra or elsewhere has been ruled out?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I hardly need to remind members of this House that just days after the Milton Orkopoulos scandal a Labor Government arrogantly told members of the community they were getting a new dam foisted on them whether or not they liked it, so that they would forget about the Labor scandal. The residents of the Hunter Valley deserve better. Unlike the incompetent former Labor Government, an O'Farrell Government will consult with the community. On this side, we will work alongside the community and listen to their views and concerns. This fair and transparent process will ensure that whatever the outcome is it will be the best solution for the residents of the Lower Hunter.

The community has made it very clear to the O'Farrell Government that Tillegra Dam is not an option—and we support their views. Had Labor done some proper community consultation, it might have worked this out for itself. The NSW Office of Water developed the 2010 Metropolitan Water Plan for greater Sydney. It was a major task involving significant analytical work and review of successive plans undertaken over the past decade. A similar plan for Lower Hunter will also be a major task. The Hunter region is a growth area and it is important that any such plan be undertaken with the appropriate degree of rigour and care.

The Office of Water, through its Metropolitan Water Branch, and Hunter Water have mapped out the steps in the planning process and have started to develop a range of options to secure Lower Hunter's water supply. We will consider this proposal and the resources required to implement the planning process. We will certainly consider all options, including demand management, water recycling, stormwater harvesting, desalination, and surface water and groundwater sources.

**The Hon. Robert Brown:** And dams!

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I know that Dr Kaye and the Greens do not like some of these options, but we are looking at all the options and we will not be repeating the mistakes of the Labor Government in telling members of the community what they are going to get before we give them a full raft of issues on which to consult. I am sure the Minister will make sure that any such project will involve full consultations with the Lower Hunter community and stakeholders, to ensure we understand community expectations and needs with respect to water supply.

### EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANNING

**The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister update the House on New South Wales emergency response planning?

**The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER:** On 13 April 2011 more than 200 police, emergency services and Sydney Airport personnel took part in Exercise Capricorn. This exercise, which was conducted at Tempe, involved the testing of a local level multiagency response to a plane crash. Those participating in the exercise included the NSW Police Force, Fire and Rescue NSW, the Ambulance Service of New South Wales, NSW Health, the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, the Australian Federal Police, Sydney Airports Corporation Limited, Marrickville Council, Rex Regional Express Airlines and Airservices Australia.

The exercise gave the agencies the opportunity to test their response to a plane crash in conditions that were as realistic as possible, and included the use of sections of a plane, smoke and emergency vehicles. I am

told that Fire and Rescue NSW personnel were in charge of all safety matters on the day. They organised the aircraft frame and hazardous materials used during the exercise, such as fuel, and coordinated a range of emergency services vehicles. A number of volunteers played the part of crash victims—much like the Hon. Luke Foley did during the election campaign—which enhanced the effectiveness of Exercise Capricorn as a training exercise. These "injured passengers" were rescued and treated on site. Emergency operations centres were also activated, at Marrickville and Sydney Airport, to coordinate the response effort and oversee relative-passenger arrangements.

Exercise Capricorn was a valuable opportunity to test the response of a range of agencies to an emergency we all hope will never happen. Government must be prepared and the public must have confidence in our ability, planning and preparation for this sort of emergency. I am proud to be able to say that the New South Wales Police Force is highly trained and prepared to respond to a range of potential incidents in this State. Under the New South Wales Counter Terrorism Plan the Commissioner of Police has operational responsibility for the response to, and management of, a terrorist incident within New South Wales.

The Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command has been established within the New South Wales Police Force to focus specifically on preparing, preventing and responding to terrorism in New South Wales. The command comprises more than 600 specialist and support staff, divided into five groups, with the commander or manager of each group reporting to the Assistant Commissioner for Counter Terrorism. The Assistant Commissioner reports to the Deputy Commissioner of Specialist Operations, who represents New South Wales on the National Counter Terrorism Committee, along with the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services.

The National Counter Terrorism Committee was established in 2002 to coordinate a national framework to counter terrorism and its consequences. In the event of an incident, the details of the Government response are outlined in the New South Wales Counter Terrorism Plan. At an operational level, police would establish a police forward command post at the site of the incident, under the command of a police forward commander. At a strategic level, the Police Operations Centre would be established with overall strategic command under an appointed commander.

As members can see, this involves a multiagency coordinated approach and that is what these exercises test. This opportunity to test Exercise Capricorn followed earlier exercises, such as Exercise Gateway, which was conducted in October last year. Exercise Gateway involved a bomb and rescue disposal unit and Queensland Police response to an improvised explosive device at Lismore Airport. Another example was Exercise Safe Base, which was conducted in November last year, involving response procedures to an act of terrorism occurring on Australian Defence Force facilities within New South Wales. We have confidence in the State's emergency services response to such events, and our emergency services personnel will continue to train to ensure that if such an event occurs they are as well trained as they can be. [*Time expired.*]

## GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT RELOCATION

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, representing the Premier. Is it a fact that relocation of the Mineral Resources Division of Industry and Investment NSW to Maitland has injected about \$16 million into that region's economy? Given that the Government has spoken about its commitment to supporting regional and rural communities across New South Wales, what government departments are being considered for relocation to regional areas and what towns or cities are being considered?

**The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER:** I thank the Hon. Robert Brown for his question. I will seek a response from the Premier or the Minister responsible and provide that answer as soon as I can.

## PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE:** My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. I refer to comments made by the now Deputy Premier in an ABC News online article on 24 November last year that his Government would inject \$5 billion of new funds into infrastructure in its first term and that its priority would be utilising a large part of these funds to upgrade the Pacific Highway. If the Pacific Highway upgrade is the Government's priority, why has the Government not committed to matching the additional Federal contribution announced in the Federal budget this week?

**The Hon. Charlie Lynn:** That is a roadkill question.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** Without examining the question, I acknowledge the comments from members on my backbench that it is a stupid question.

**The Hon. Eric Roozendaal:** Point of order: I think it has been a fairly relaxed question time today but when a Minister starts insulting a questioner clearly he is debating the question. I ask you to draw him back to the question and to be relevant.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! There is no point of order. The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I am willing to accept the concern of the former Treasurer and I acknowledge that there are only 17 sitting days and 32 working days until Friday 24 June. We appreciate the fact that born-again Eric cares about people in this House. If the questioner had looked at his question he would have noticed it stated that the money should have come out of Infrastructure NSW. Infrastructure NSW has not been established and, in case the member has not noticed, the Government is still appointing officials. The chairman has just been appointed—

**The Hon. Eric Roozendaal:** Who is the chairman?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** The chairman is Nick Greiner. I am pleased that the former Treasurer interjected because I am willing to quote from no other than Neville Wran. First of all, Nick Greiner was the person used by Joe Tripodi, the former Treasurer's friend and mentor, to fix up the mess on the rail line in the Hunter. When the Labor Party had a problem Nick Greiner was its person of choice to fix up the problem. Neville Wran said, "If you have the best person available then membership of the Liberal Party should not be a handicap to putting him in place."

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The Hon. Penny Sharpe will come to order. I call the Hon. Mick Veitch to order for the first time.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** Neville Wran, one of the great Premiers of this State who was recognised across this country as being able to achieve things—not like the last few Premiers—said, "If you have the best person available then membership of the Liberal Party should not be a detriment to appointing him to that position." The reference in the question to the statement by Andrew Stoner that Infrastructure NSW will receive \$5 billion in funding is correct, but the rest of the question is absolute rubbish.

### SCHOOL ROAD SAFETY

**The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will the Minister inform the House of the various initiatives being implemented by the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government to ensure road safety in school zones?

**The Hon. Lynda Voltz:** Yes, on the Pacific Highway!

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** There are very few school zones on the Pacific Highway. There are some, mind you, but very few. The safety of children in school zones is a priority for the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government. This is why the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government has made a \$13 million commitment to almost double the number of flashing lights in school zones by 2015. This additional funding will allow the Government to fast-track the rollout of school zone flashing lights at schools such as Oatley Public School in the electorate of Oatley, which Mark Coure won for the Liberals with a swing of 14.9 per cent; Dubbo West Public School in the electorate of Dubbo, which Troy Grant won for The Nationals with a swing of 14.5 per cent; and Arthur Phillip High School and Parramatta Public School in the electorate of Parramatta, which Geoff Lee won for the Liberals with a swing of 25.8 per cent.

**The Hon. Michael Gallacher:** How much?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** A swing of 25.8 per cent. It was noted, however, that during the election campaign the former Treasurer was not seen in any of those electorates. It was a case of, "Spot Eric!" Finding Eric was harder than finding people in Pakistan; we could not find him anywhere. We were wondering where he was hiding. We now know where he was hiding but today he is on the backbench. We note that on 24 June 1997

United States Air Force officials dismissed reports that unidentified flying objects had landed in Roswell, New Mexico. While the United States Air Force might have dismissed the reports, it is now clear that they may have landed. For those who are not conversant with that important date in 1997, 24 June is the same day that the former Treasurer is eligible for his superannuation. We would be disappointed if he stayed.

By June 2011 the New South Wales Government intends to install flashing lights in more than 680 school zones. Over the term of our government we will have rolled out flashing lights to nearly 1,100 schools across the State. In addition to flashing lights there is an overall package of measures to improve schools own safety, including pedestrian overhead bridges, foot crossings and more than 1,000 lollipop crossing supervisors. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is committed also to the current fines and demerit points system for speeding and parking offences committed within school zones. There is absolutely no excuse for unsafe driving in these areas. On Friday 20 May, the Premier, the Minister for Transport, and other Ministers and members of the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals will be taking part in the National Walk Safely to School Day. The event aims to promote the message that active kids are healthy kids— [*Time expired.*]

### **BULLYING AND HARASSMENT**

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Given the serious reports of bullying in the report on WorkCover entitled "Independent inquiry into workplace bullying and harassment", will the Minister advise what actions he has taken, or the Government will take, to ensure that the recommendations contained in that report are implemented in a timely manner so that the employees of WorkCover, being the organisation entrusted with ensuring the safety of workplaces across New South Wales, have a safe and supportive workplace?

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** I thank Mr David Shoebridge for his question and I fully share the sentiments expressed in the question. I will have to double check, but one of the very first meetings I had was with the chief executive officer of WorkCover and this was one of the agenda items. One of the very first departments I visited as a Minister was at Gosford—I think it was in the first week but it could have been in the second week.

**The Hon. Tony Kelly:** Decentralised by Labor.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** Yes, it was decentralised by Labor. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government is in favour of decentralisation. One of our policies is a decade of decentralisation. I went for a walk, met a number of people and addressed this very issue. In a more formal sense, I can inform the House that an independent review into allegations of bullying and harassment within WorkCover was requested by the previous Government. PricewaterhouseCoopers conducted the review on behalf of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Members of staff were asked to participate in an anonymous online culture survey, which provided them with the opportunity to make comments on the culture of WorkCover as well as workplace bullying and harassment.

In addition, individual interviews were conducted with staff. The report was released by the previous Government on 3 March 2011. No matters were referred for further investigation at that time. The report outlines the need for clear internal communication and engagement strategies, transparent recruitment processes, robust performance management, an effective grievance-handling framework and strengthened leadership capability. I am told that WorkCover immediately accepted all the recommendations—and that has been confirmed to me by the chief executive officer. A more detailed examination and engagement with staff about the report's findings on culture is generally underway now.

Initial steps have been taken to increase the level of communication and engagement across the organisation, to build teamwork, to develop a new leadership framework, to review recruitment practices, to simplify and improve grievance handling, to improve the capability of people, culture and managers and to support employees to report inappropriate behaviours. In a formal sense, I requested a quarterly report on WorkCover's culture to be provided to me. I meet with the chief executive officer and senior officers of WorkCover at least fortnightly and it is a standing item on our discussion list. I will monitor this issue and do everything I can to change the culture.

**The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER:** If members have further questions, I suggest that they place them on notice.

**Questions without notice concluded.**

## SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

### Motion by the Hon. Michael Gallacher agreed to:

That this House at its rising today do adjourn until Tuesday 24 May 2011 at 2.30 p.m.

## ADJOURNMENT

**The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER** (Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Hunter, and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [3.30 p.m.]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

## GAME COUNCIL

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN** [3.30 p.m.]: Today I want to talk about an issue concerning The Greens, which I referred to earlier this week. Earlier in the week when I thanked Mr David Shoebridge for his publicity efforts during the election campaign on behalf of the Shooters and Fishers Party, I omitted to give him credit for his decision to continue in his role as our unofficial publicist for the next four years. For some reason Mr Shoebridge has an obsession with the Game Council of New South Wales. I am concerned it might be contagious because his predecessor, Ms Lee Rhiannon—also a de facto publicity agent for the Shooters and Fishers—had the same blighted view of the world. The Greens, in an email to their friends, made the declaration:

One of the key Greens campaigns over the next four years is to abolish the Game Council.

The letter says that the establishment of the Game Council in 2002 was a shameless capitulation to the gun and hunting lobbies and has allowed the promotion of a gun culture in New South Wales, the licensing of "cruel"—that is the word they used—animal hunts and has diverted funds from more humane and effective feral animal control methods. I do not know whether Mr Shoebridge has seen the alternative to shooting feral animals. It is 1080 poison, a non-discriminatory form of eradication that kills probably as much native wildlife as ferals. It is not a proper alternative. Licensed hunters target the ferals, the ferals are removed and the problem is lessened. The Game Council is to be commended for its work, not condemned by one small and shrinking group within our community. The Greens are opportunist conservationists. The letter then states:

While feral animals do pose a serious risk to native ecosystems in national parks and State owned forests ... it does not follow that any measure which kills them is therefore useful.

As I have already referred to the 1080 poison, I do not need to say any more on that. Do The Greens want the Premier to send a letter to the foxes, pigs, goats, wild dogs and feral cats, asking them to leave the parks and offer them a nice home elsewhere so that The Greens members will not be offended by having to look at them when they choose to go bushwalking? Perhaps Mr Shoebridge wants them put in Centennial Park in the comfortable eastern suburbs. That would be fun; they would be in among the flying foxes. There is more, as the letter goes on to say:

In the new Parliament the Shooters Party—

they forgot to include the fishers—

are once again in a position to influence Government legislation.

I thank them for that concession. It must be hard for the five Greens members in this place to realise that the Shooters and Fishers and the Christian Democratic Party, with four members, are in a position to perhaps influence government legislation. The Greens have started a petition calling for the Game Council to be abolished. They want to get 10,000 signatures and then have the matter debated in Parliament. If they get the 10,000 signatures and present the petition in this place I imagine we will hear five emotive, ill-researched, frothing-at-the-mouth speeches from The Greens demanding that the rest of the world see things as they do. But it will not advance the cause of getting feral animals out of national parks one inch—or one centimetre, I should say. The letter states that the Premier said:

... that any petition of 10,000 signatures or more will see the issue debated on the floor of the NSW Parliament.

It is not clear whether that means here or in another place. If it went to the other place perhaps only two or three members would speak in support of the petition. No doubt The Greens will want to bring it here so that they can at least vent their vitriol. I should also correct a claim in the letter that asks people to sign the petition. It says:

In the last term of Parliament, a campaign involving environmentalists, animal welfare groups and the Greens stopped the Game Council's push for recreational hunting in National Parks.

It did not. Recreational hunting in national parks did not occur because a former Premier went back on his undertaking. I inform the House and The Greens that the Shooters and Fishers Party is also working on a Game Council-style body for fishing in this State. I look forward to Mr Shoebridge's ill-researched criticism of that proposal as well. The Greens can no longer claim that they are the conservationist party, having fallen well to the left and become social engineers. The Shooters and Fishers Party will continue backing the Game Council's efforts in removing feral animals from parks and reserves. The backing of the council by the current Government and the previous Government shows that the majority of members of Parliament support it. If the petition does get to the floor of this Chamber, five votes in favour and, say, 36 votes against means that the Game Council will stay and The Greens will again be irrelevant on real conservation issues.

### ELECTION RESULT

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS** [3.35 p.m.]: This afternoon I want to place on record my thoughts on the results of the election on 26 March 2011. In particular, I want to talk about the performance of The Nationals candidates in the 20 seats that we contested. Of those 20 seats, we won 18. In 13 of those seats we secured more than 60 per cent of the primary vote—an unheralded and substantial victory. Only one of the seats went to preferences—that is, Monaro. The highest vote that Labor got in any of the seats was 41 per cent, also Monaro. Labor managed to secure only 34.5 per cent in Cessnock. In 15 of the seats Labor scored less than 20 per cent of the primary vote. It is truly an appalling situation that the Labor Party finds itself in. When we look at the two candidate preferred votes, we see that in 14 of the 20 seats our candidates secured more than 70 per cent of the two candidate preferred votes and in three of those seats they scored more than 80 per cent of the two candidate preferred. Those seats were Barwon, Burrinjuck and Clarence. In the Northern Tablelands, one of the seats we lost, we secured a swing of 10.8 per cent. That was a big enough swing for us to win other Independent seats.

I will refer to individual performances in specific towns in the seats of Bathurst and Murray-Darling. I have had considerable involvement with both seats over the past number of years. In many of the booths in the Bathurst electorate The Nationals candidate Paul Toole, now the member for Bathurst, scored more than 70 per cent of the primary vote. In many of the booths the Labor Party scored less than 20 per cent. As I went through the figures I started highlighting all the booths where Labor received less than 20 per cent but there were so many my highlighter pen ran out of ink.

If we look at the two candidate preferred results, we see that in 2007 Gerard Martin got 63 per cent of the vote and The Nationals got 37 per cent. In the 2011 election the Australian Labor Party candidate scored 26.3 per cent of the two candidate preferred vote and Paul Toole got 73.7 per cent. That is a pretty fair turnaround in a seat that was held by the supposedly great Gerard Martin. In the booth of Trunkay, Paul Toole achieved 91.2 per cent of the two candidate preferred vote. That is a belting by anyone's estimation.

I turn to the result in Murray-Darling. The once great Peter Black held the seat of Murray-Darling until he was comprehensively beaten by John Williams in 2007, with an 18.7 per cent swing. At this election John Williams secured another 14 per cent swing and now holds the seat with 77.2 per cent of the two candidate preferred vote. The Australian Labor Party candidate was Neville Gasmier and Peter Black was his campaign director. Neville Gasmier secured 22.8 per cent of the two candidate preferred vote. Guess who was the campaign director in the seat of Bathurst? It was Gerard Martin. The Nationals now hold both seats with more than 75 per cent of the two candidate preferred vote. John Williams won every booth in Broken Hill city and Paul Toole won every booth in Lithgow—and The Nationals had never won a booth in either Lithgow or Broken Hill before.

### INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE** [3.40 p.m.]: I speak today to show my support for the International Day Against Homophobia on 17 May 2011. Today, thousands of kilometres away from this place, the Ugandan Parliament was due to debate the Anti-Homosexuality Bill. Introduced in 2009 by Ugandan member of Parliament David Bahati, it is known as the "Kill the gays" bill. The original legislation proposed to hang people found guilty of being gay or lesbian. After intense pressure from the international community, the Ugandan

President deferred the bill in 2010. It was due to be debated again today. However, around the world a strong campaign culminating in a petition signed by more than 1.5 million people has helped to see the bill again withdrawn—for now. David Bahati has said that he will author another similar bill and submit it in the future.

Gay men and lesbians in Uganda live in fear. For the simple act of loving someone of the same gender they risk their lives every day. In January this year this risk was clearly and brutally demonstrated. David Kato Kisule was murdered after winning a lawsuit against a magazine that had published his name and photograph, identified him as gay and called for him to be executed. David Kato was a member of the Sexual Minorities Uganda Group. He was among 100 people whose names and photographs were published in October 2010 by a Ugandan newspaper in an article that called for their execution as homosexuals. The photos were published under the headline "Hang them" and were accompanied by the individuals' addresses. David Kato was bludgeoned to death in his own home. The Anti-Homosexuality Bill is an extreme and harsh reminder that for many people being gay is a matter of life and death.

The International Day Against Homophobia [IDAHO] began as a national day in Canada in 2003. It has quickly been taken up by organisations and activists across the globe who want to highlight the issues and the impact that homophobia has on the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex [GLBTI] people and the community more broadly. Next week a number of activities will take place in New South Wales to recognise IDAHO. Pride in Diversity is Australia's first and only not-for-profit workplace program designed specifically to assist Australian employers with the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender [LGBT] employees. The inaugural Pride in Diversity Business Luncheon will include a presentation of awards for Australia's top employers.

The AIDS Council of New South Wales [ACON] is hosting a forum to explore how discrimination impacts on people of diverse sex, sexuality and gender. The forum will contribute to an increasing focus on transphobia as part of International Day Against Homophobia. Parramatta, Newcastle and Wollongong will be hosting "Sea of Hearts" and "This is Oz" events. These are visibility events that are very important for the gay and lesbian community. I am happy to note that the exhibition in Parramatta includes the use of images of local heroes from the Parramatta Eels football club, who have stood up and said that homophobia is not welcome in their part of the world. Wear it Purple formed in 2010 after a string of gay youth suicides in the United States of America. Proclaiming that every young person has the right to feel proud of who they are, the group coordinated a day to encourage people everywhere to "Wear it purple" in order to raise awareness about homophobic and transphobic bullying and youth suicide. Wear it Purple is hosting an event to celebrate and support rainbow young people. This special youth-friendly event will be held as part of the annual International Day Against Homophobia exhibition entitled "FRAGILITY—Strength of Spirit" at the Pine Street Creative Arts Centre.

The Open Door in Penrith is proudly hosting a forum entitled "Being Gay, Lesbian & Transgender Out West: Opportunities, Challenges & Fun". This International Day Against Homophobia event aims to raise awareness of the challenges facing the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex community in Sydney's western suburbs. The Blue Mountains Family Support Service will host a Blue Mountains Rainbow Flag Raising and community breakfast. This year's event will focus on celebrating Blue Mountains rainbow families. The Heroes vigil invites people to bring images of their community heroes who have experienced homophobic or transphobic violence and vilification to stand alongside the images of Harvey Milk, David Kato and others. I acknowledge and congratulate the many organisations who will use International Day Against Homophobia to draw attention to homophobia and transphobia. In doing so they provide visibility and public space that celebrates diversity and inclusion of everyone in our community. They also look beyond our borders and ask us to take action on behalf of others—like those in Uganda and other countries—who need the rest of the world to be watching and campaigning for change.

## ABORTION

**The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN** [3.45 p.m.]: Today I draw the House's attention to the hardships faced by women who seek an abortion in New South Wales. Not only does a woman's right to choose abortion remain subject to criminal law in some circumstances but there are significant financial and other access barriers. The most significant barrier is the out-of-pocket cost of an abortion conducted in New South Wales before 12 weeks of pregnancy. Women are required to pay upfront between \$255 to \$525. The current out-of-pocket cost is between \$175 and \$300 after the women has received Medicare rebates. This is a substantial amount of money that creates significant barriers for many women.

A reproductive health service that is this expensive is out of reach to women receiving the Newstart Allowance, who get as little as \$474.90 a fortnight, or someone earning the minimum wage of \$15 an hour. This



high up-front cost means that women on a low income will either have to borrow the money from family and friends or they will have to save the money from each fortnightly payment until they have the full cost saved. This means that those women are either being forced to disclose their pregnancy or they are having a termination much later than they would prefer.

After 12 weeks gestation the cost of an abortion continues to increase. For each week after 12 weeks the cost of an abortion increases by approximately \$100. The maximum gestational age available in New South Wales is up to 20 weeks, by which time the cost can be as great as \$2,000. Not only do these women have to make a difficult decision but financial and other pressures may require that they make the decision in a very short period. There are many circumstances where a woman is not able to get an abortion due to lack of access to comprehensive information before 12 weeks. The increased use of long-term contraceptives, such as the Implanon, which is inserted under the skin in a woman's arm, can result in women having irregular bleeding or no bleeding. If the contraceptive fails, many women will not become aware of the pregnancy until after 12 weeks.

For women in rural and regional areas the costs are greatly increased. Though clinics in Tweed Heads, Coffs Harbour, Newcastle, Gosford and Wollongong provide abortion services, that is not much help for women in the areas of Bourke, Dubbo or Young. In addition, the majority of regional abortion services perform abortions only to 12 weeks gestation. On top of medical fees, women from regional New South Wales must also pay for transport and accommodation to get to a clinic. As a result, many women find they may have to take further time off work or further time away from their family. Of equal concern is the reality that many women will find that their budget may not stretch to allow a support person to accompany them to the clinic and assist them with their recovery.

Not only are clinics that offer abortion services limited but the number of doctors who are able and willing to perform the procedure is in decline. A major barrier for this is that doctors are not taught how to perform an abortion at medical school. The only provider of training in how to perform an abortion in New South Wales is the Preterm Foundation. Preterm is a not-for-profit organisation that provides medical students, nursing students and students from counselling and related fields training in best-practice pregnancy termination services. Preterm also provides training for local and overseas doctors in termination procedures. This organisation exists for the benefit of women and to empower women to make a choice. It does not exist to make a profit from their need for a termination. The valuable training services provided by Preterm are filling the void left by lack of government commitment to this very important women's health area.

I take this opportunity to also recognise the contribution of the Bessie Smyth Foundation, which between 2003 and 2006 operated statewide on a self-funded basis. The foundation provided a valuable all-options counselling, advocacy, brokerage and microfinance service for women. Despite extensive lobbying efforts and representation of an expression of interest to secure government funding in those years, this service had to cease service delivery in December 2006 as a result of a lack of resources. This has greatly reduced the services available to women in New South Wales. In addition to these financial barriers, women are still subject to stigmatisation for making choices about their future. A significant step in reducing this stigmatisation would be removing abortion from the Crimes Act. It remains an offence in New South Wales to have an unlawful abortion. For an abortion to be lawful, it is required that a doctor considers that the abortion is necessary because the pregnancy is a threat to the women's mental or physical health. It should be a woman's right to choose what happens to her body. This is not the case in New South Wales as a result of both legal and financial barriers.

#### **SOUTH ASIA MUSLIM ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA**

**The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE** [3.50 p.m.]: On 12 March 2011 at Auburn Town Hall I, along with the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. John Robertson, the shadow Attorney General, and shadow Minister for Justice, the member for Liverpool Paul Lynch, the member for Auburn, other members of Parliament and many other distinguished community guests, attended the South Asian Muslim Association of Australia function known as Jashne Buzurg, or the Elderly Festival. The function was well attended by approximately 300 people, including many elderly, volunteers, officials from various non-government agencies, community representatives and members of the association.

The South Asia Muslim Association of Australia is yet another community-based organisation that is quietly contributing to the harmony and prosperity of our multicultural, multi-faith society. It was certainly uplifting to see many older members of the community joining in the annual celebration, with the highlight

being the 100th birthday celebration for Aliya Khatoon. I congratulate her and the organisation, and in this National Volunteer Week I congratulate all at the association on giving up their valuable time and making the effort to provide assistance to the elderly and those who are most in need.

The South Asia Muslim Association is an incorporated association that provides various services to the elderly of the south Asian Muslim community in metropolitan Sydney. It is a non-profitable incorporated association and a public benevolent institution that strives to provide services to the elderly and disabled. It carries out its mission by interacting with relevant government and non-government bodies and all people of goodwill to develop programs to enhance the human dignity of our elderly. Its long-term objective is to build an aged persons hostel and provide culturally appropriate care to south Asian elderly with the aim of offering relief from old age, sickness, incapacity and loneliness to members of this community who come from Subcontinent nations such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Afghanistan and other countries such as Fiji, South Africa, Malaysia, Singapore, and many others.

The members' ancestors migrated here from the Subcontinent over many decades. Like many of our communities, encouraged by State and Federal policies of multiculturalism they have successfully maintained their cultural and religious traditions and are making significant contributions to peace and harmony in our society. The association is a fitting example of the success story of community harmony and volunteering, and it is definitely a multiculturalism success story. That is thanks to distinguished Commonwealth leaders such as Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser. Their contribution to, and support for, multiculturalism has kept this great community policy alive, with the full endorsement of the former Keneally Labor Government. Following changes from the principles of assimilation in the 1960s, through to the policy of integration and then to the definitive policy change in the 1970s, Australia has moved to embrace multiculturalism and enshrined it in legislation and in institutions. Organisations such as the South Asia Muslim Association continue to reinforce community harmony, volunteering and the multicultural vision espoused by people with such nation-building foresight.

In the long term, the association aims to establish its aged care facilities such as a nursing home and a retirement village. It aims to build the nursing home by raising funds through appeals and government grants. We must do what we can to help it. I have had the pleasure of working in the community field for more than 25 years, and have supported many wonderful community institutions that serve needy people. The South Asia Muslim Association's hard work, commitment and dedication to the community is commendable. Through its enhanced services the association has drawn people together by working towards a harmonious community, providing its members with the respect, the strengths and the dignity they deserve. Australia's diversity is our strength. Our future is determined by our capacity to capitalise on the strengths of multiculturalism and on the hard work and commitment of volunteers and community groups such as the South Asia Muslim Association. I take great pleasure in congratulating its members on their commitment and dedication to serving those most in need and wish them every success for many years to come.

### INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY

**The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY** (Parliamentary Secretary) [3.55 p.m.]: I speak in my capacity as the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health on International Nurses Day, which we are celebrating today. It is certainly a day worth commemorating and a day on which we should remember the amazing work that nurses do throughout our communities. This morning I was privileged to be invited to a morning tea hosted by the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, for nurse practitioners from across the State. It is important that we highlight this day and the work of nurses. Access to health services may contribute to a person's life expectancy or to the quality of life they experience. That is particularly relevant in rural and regional New South Wales, where communities rely heavily, or even solely, on nursing services to fulfil their healthcare needs. Nurses form the largest workforce in our health system. We have more than 43,000 working in New South Wales public hospitals. The International Council of Nurses affirms that nurses have an important role to play in achieving health equity and developing a clear understanding of how the health sector can act to reduce health inequities. Nurses are essential to improving equity and access to healthcare and adding to care outcomes.

That is why the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government has made a strong commitment to nursing in New South Wales and believes nurses form an integral part of the future of this State's healthcare system. This Government is committed to a 10-year health professional plan that will protect the skill mix of the nursing workforce, identify strategies to develop more rapidly the clinical skills of new nursing graduates, attract experienced nurses back to the workforce, identify needs for administrative support so that nurses can spend more time on clinical work, restore the right of nurses to be involved in setting their own rosters, and

enhance career pathways for nurses and midwives. Supporting nurses by providing a satisfying and rewarding career path is one of the avenues for retaining them within the healthcare workforce and reducing the number leaving to go overseas or to take up other careers.

In 1998, following 10 years of research and much negotiation, the nurse practitioner role was introduced in New South Wales. Ours was the first State or Territory in Australia to recognise the advanced practice work of many senior clinical nurses in relation to ordering medications, tests and investigations and making referrals in their role as providers of expert clinical nursing care. They work collaboratively with a multidisciplinary team and have a clearly defined expert scope of practice. They are very important, particularly in regional New South Wales. Dr Sue Page from the North Coast, who was the head of the Rural Doctors Association, said recently that we have made some great advances in the development of the nurse practitioner role following the profession's efforts to achieve health equity. That was advanced with the introduction of legislation to allow nurse practitioners and eligible midwives access to Australia's Medicare benefit schedule and the pharmaceutical benefits scheme, enabling patients to receive publicly funded rebates in certain instances.

One of the people I met this morning was the chief nursing and midwifery officer, Adjunct Professor Debra Thoms, who is the professional link between the Minister for Health, the Director General of Health and the public, private and education sectors of the nursing and midwifery professions in New South Wales. We discussed the role of nurse practitioners, particularly in regional New South Wales. She is very keen, as I am, to see many nurses in regions across New South Wales take up the opportunity to study to be a nurse practitioner. It is an onerous degree and course, but it is a very rewarding and important one in our regional communities. I look forward to working with her and the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, to ensure that we have as many people as possible taking up those roles, not only in the city but in regional New South Wales. They are an important part of health delivery in our regional areas.

We all know nurses. My mother was a nurse. My favourite aunt, Joyce Emily Clements, was a nurse. She was a World War II nurse working out of Darwin. They are the most amazing people and I am proud this week to have heard that one of our new members, the member for Myall Lakes, Stephen Bromhead, started his life as a nurse. In the coming weeks we will hear the inaugural speech of Leslie Williams, the new member for Port Macquarie, who was a nurse up until the end of December.

**The Hon. Amanda Fazio:** And Natasha Maclaren-Jones.

**The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY:** Natasha Maclaren-Jones is a nurse.

**The Hon. Amanda Fazio:** And Paul Green.

**The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY:** And Paul Green is a nurse. We have all had formidable nurses in our lives who have helped shape us. I note that Jillian Skinner's mother was a nurse, as the Minister stated during her ministerial statement on this International Nurses Day. Nurses provide valuable and irreplaceable services across the spectrum of health care and we all have experienced their dedication and commitment to their profession in some way or through family and friends. Where would we be without them!

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**The House adjourned at 4.00 p.m. until Tuesday 24 May 2011 at 2.30 p.m.**

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