

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday 14 September 2011

The President (The Hon. Donald Thomas Harwin) took the chair at 11.00 a.m.

The President read the Prayers.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Report

The President tabled, pursuant to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, the annual report of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption for the year ended 30 June 2011, authorised to be made public this day.

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

TRIBUTE TO THE HON. ALAN ROBERT LINDSAY GORDON, A FORMER MINISTER OF THE CROWN AND MEMBER FOR MURRUMBIDGEE

Motion by the Hon. Mick Veitch agreed to:

1. That this House notes the passing on Thursday 16 June 2011 of Alan Robert Lindsay Gordon, aged 94 years.
2. That this House notes that Mr Gordon:
 - (a) was a member of the Legislative Assembly from 14 February 1970 until 5 March 1984, and
 - (b) served the people of New South Wales as a Minister of the Crown in the portfolio areas of Conservation, Water Resources, Lands, Forests, Local Government and Ports and as Acting Minister for Health and Corrective Services.
3. That this House extends its condolences to the family of the late Alan Robert Lindsay Gordon.

NEW SOUTH WALES SCIENCE WEEK

Motion by the Hon. Marie Ficarra agreed to:

1. That this House:
 - (a) acknowledges the importance of New South Wales Science Week and the engaging program of events that took place from 13 to 21 August 2011 across New South Wales, and
 - (b) congratulates the dedicated and hardworking teams who developed and ran each of the events held in New South Wales during Science Week.

HEART FOUNDATION DOORKNOCK APPEAL

Motion by the Hon. Marie Ficarra agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) during the month of September, the Heart Foundation will undertake a Doorknock Appeal to raise funds towards the fight against heart disease,
 - (b) heart disease is the number one killer of men and women in Australia,
 - (c) the Heart Foundation in the past year has invested \$13.6 million into cardiovascular research, and
 - (d) the Heart Foundation hopes to raise \$5 million during the Doorknock Appeal to fund critical research and community research projects to improve awareness, prevention and treatment of heart disease.

2. That this House thanks and congratulates:
 - (a) the National Office Bearers of the Heart Foundation of Australia:
 - (i) National Board - Board of Directors: Associate Professor Peter T. Sexton, National President; Dr Jennifer A. Johns, Deputy National President; and Mr Barry J. Davies, OAM, National Treasurer;
 - (ii) Directors: Professor Philip E. Aylward, Mr Martin Lavery, Mr John R. Cowen, Ms Helen J. Egan, Mr Derris Gillam, Professor Ian Meredith (CSANZ representative), Dr John O'Shea and Dr Michael Sargent;
 - (iii) Additional Directors: Professor Garry L. Jennings, Chair of the National Cardiovascular Health Advisory Committee; Mr Colin B. Taylor, Chair National Finance Advisory Committee; Dr Lyn M. Roberts, Chief Executive Officer - National; and Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, AC, National Patron,
 - (b) Office Bearers of the Heart Foundation (NSW): Mr M. J. Lavery, LLM, President; Mr G. S. Katari, BCom, FCA, FAICD, FCIS, AIMM; Mr L. J. Patton, BA, MCom; Ms G. Schroder, GAICD; Mr G. Selig, BEc; and Mr P. Kimbell, CPA, BEc., Company Secretary, and
 - (c) the 110,000 volunteers who will doorknock across Australia to raise much-needed funds.

SMALL BUSINESS SEPTEMBER

Motion by the Hon. Marie Ficarra agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) Small Business September 2011 is organised by NSW Trade & Investment and is supported by more than 100 partners from business, industry, professional and government organisations that are offering a range of activities tailored for small business owners and operators,
 - (b) Small Business September 2011 celebrates the important role of small businesses in New South Wales, as well as the vital contribution they make to the State's economy,
 - (c) the theme of Small Business September 2011 is "See your business from a new perspective", and
 - (d) Small Business September 2011 is a fantastic opportunity for anyone looking for strategies to grow their own business in New South Wales.
2. That this House:
 - (a) encourages small businesses to take part in the more than 300 events run statewide with business experts offering tips and advice, and
 - (b) thanks the sponsors of Small Business September, including:
 - (i) Gold Sponsors: City of Sydney, Netregistry and Magazine Dynamic Business, and
 - (ii) Platinum Sponsors: Cumberland Courier Newspapers, Business Telstra, Westpac Bank.

PAKISTAN ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Motion by the Hon. Marie Ficarra agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) on Wednesday 8 September 2011, the Pakistan Association of Australia [PAA] held its Eid Milan function at Parliament House with the Minister for Citizenship and Communities in attendance, and
 - (b) the Pakistan Association of Australia, based in Parramatta, has existed as a non profit community organisation since 1973, and aims to promote Pakistani culture and to contribute to the general community.
2. That this House:
 - (a) applauds the Pakistan Association of Australia for its work in voluntary welfare activities, catering to the needs of children, promoting the image of Pakistan in Australia, encouraging women to play an active role in Pakistan Association of Australia's activities and providing Islamic religious education,
 - (b) wishes the Pakistan Association of Australia every success in meeting its goal of establishing a Pakistani community centre in New South Wales, and
 - (c) congratulates the Pakistan Association of Australia on its successful conduct of its Eid Milan function at Parliament House, including positively bringing together people of diverse backgrounds.

FATHER ATANASIO GONELLI CHARITABLE FUND**Motion by the Hon. Marie Ficarra agreed to:**

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) on 8 September 2011, the Father Atanasio Gonelli Charitable Fund Inc. was officially launched by the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, the Hon. Victor Dominello, MP, and chairperson of the charity, Mr Felice Montrone, with over 400 people in attendance at Le Montage Events Centre,
 - (b) the objectives of the charity are to work with and assist people in need whilst respecting their dignity, sharing hope and encouraging them to take control of their own future, to promote informed discussion on the plight of those in need and advocate for improved services and facilities, and
 - (c) Father Atanasio Gonelli has been a spiritual leader in Australia since his arrival in Sydney in 1949 and was presented on the night with a Papal certificate through the Apostolic Nunzio in Australia, commending his 61 years of service, and a congratulatory letter from His Eminence, Cardinal George Pell.
2. That this House acknowledges:
 - (a) the outstanding contribution to Australian society of Father Gonelli at St Fiacre's Church where he has served as Chaplain for 61 years, and particularly his care for Italian migrants, work to find migrants housing and employment, support for patients in hospital and attendance to the Australian Italian community's spiritual needs,
 - (b) the work of:
 - (i) President, Felice Montrone,
 - (ii) Vice President, Rosa Peronace,
 - (iii) Secretary, Bruno Buttini,
 - (iv) Treasurer, Gianni Carelli,
 - (v) Foundation patron, Giuseppe Fin,
 - (vi) board members Peter Ciani, Filippo Navarra, Michele Salamone, Susi Schio, Armando Tornari, Nat Zanardo, John Williams,
 - (c) those that attended and supported the launch, particularly:
 - (i) Father Gary Devery, Provincial Minister, Capuchin Friars
 - (ii) Father Anthony Freeman,
 - (iii) Padre Dino Fragiaco,
 - (iv) Padre Antonio Fregolent,
 - (v) the Hon. Victor Dominello, MP, Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs,
 - (vi) the Hon. Marie Ficarra, MLC, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier,
 - (vii) Mr Charles Casuscelli, MP, member for Strathfield,
 - (viii) the Hon. Amanda Fazio, MLC, Opposition Whip,
 - (ix) Mr John Sidoti, MP, member for Drummoyne,
 - (x) Mr Guy Zangari, MP, member for Fairfield,
 - (xi) Mrs Franca Arena, AM, former member of the New South Wales Legislative Council,
 - (xii) Councillor Michelle McKenzie, Deputy Mayor, Leichhardt Council,
 - (xiii) Councillor Tony Costantino, Leichhardt Council,
 - (xiv) Councillor Daniel Kogoy, Leichhardt Council,
 - (xv) Dott. Sergio Martes, Consul General for Italy,
 - (xvi) Dott. Barbara Schiavo, Vice Consul for Italy,

- (xvii) Dott. Mara Longo, Education Attache, Italian Consulate,
- (xviii) Cav Pino Muso, President of COMITES,
- (xix) Mr Lorenzo Fazzini, President Co.As.It,
- (d) the Navarra Group and Le Montage for hosting the launch, and
- (e) the \$123,000 which was raised from generous members of the public and a contribution of the Government.

MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES COUNCIL OF ILLAWARRA THIRTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

Motion by the Hon. Marie Ficarra agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) on 9 September 2011, the Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra [MCCI] held its 35th anniversary celebration at head office in Wollongong, New South Wales, and
 - (b) the Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra actively encourages and supports culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD] communities in its region.
2. That this House acknowledges:
 - (a) the outstanding work of Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra and the community-based projects it delivers in the Illawarra for aged services, the arts and youth,
 - (b) the work of Mr Ken Habak, OAM, in bringing the 35th anniversary celebration to fruition,
 - (c) those that attended, including:
 - (i) Mr Pino Migliorino, Chair, Federation Ethnic Communities Council of Australia,
 - (ii) the Hon. Victor Dominello, MP, Minister for Citizenship and Communities and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs,
 - (iii) Mr Ryan Park, MP, member for Keira,
 - (iv) Mr Ken Habak, OAM, Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra chairperson,
 - (v) Mr George Bartolo, Senior Vice Chair [MCCI],
 - (vi) Mr John Papakosmas, Vice Chair [MCCI],
 - (vii) Dr Husayn Aly, Treasurer [MCCI],
 - (viii) Mr Lazo Gorgiev, Assistant Treasurer [MCCI],
 - (ix) Ms Helen Sara, Secretary [MCCI],
 - (x) Ms Sabine Hauth, Assistant Secretary [MCCI], and
 - (d) the Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra for hosting the 35th anniversary celebration.

TRIBUTE TO WAYNE BENNETT, AO

Motion by the Hon. John Ajaka agreed to:

1. That this House congratulates Wayne Bennett, football coach of the St George-Illawarra Dragons, on his contribution to the success of the St George-Illawarra Dragons over the past three years, as well as the Rugby League code.
2. That this House notes:
 - (a) that Mr Bennett was appointed as coach to the St George-Illawarra Dragons in 2009,
 - (b) that Mr Bennett previously coached the teams of Ipswich, Souths Logan Magpies, Past Brothers Rugby League Football Club, the Canberra Raiders and the Brisbane Broncos, and
 - (c) Mr Bennett's contribution to the National Rugby League throughout his 35-year career as a coach.
3. That this House notes that, among his many achievements, Wayne Bennett:
 - (a) is a seven-time premiership winner, including two back-to-back premiership wins,
 - (b) was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia "in recognition of service to the sport of Rugby League, particularly as coach of the Brisbane Broncos" in 1994,

- (c) was named Super League Coach of the Year in 1997,
 - (d) coached the Kangaroos in 1998, leading them to an undefeated two test matches,
 - (e) was awarded the Australian Sports Medal for "significant contribution to the development of sport" in 2000,
 - (f) was named National Rugby League Coach of the Year in 2000,
 - (g) was the Queensland State of Origin Coach during 1986-1988, 1998 and 2001-2003,
 - (h) was an advocate and coach for Australia in the Tri-Nations series during 1988 and 2004 to 2005,
 - (i) became the second person to coach 500 premiership games in 2006,
 - (j) was named Queensland's Sports Coach of the Year and made a life member of the Broncos club in 2007,
 - (k) coached the All Golds in 2007,
 - (l) began coaching the St George-Illawarra Dragons in 2009, and
 - (m) led the St George-Illawarra Dragons to win their first premiership in 2010, defeat the defending champions in the 2011 World Club Challenge and achieve fifth place on the National Rugby League ladder.
4. That this House notes that:
- (a) in 1998, Wayne Bennett was awarded the Queensland Father of the Year award for his role as father to his two children with disabilities,
 - (b) in 2002, Mr Bennett published a memoir called *Don't Die with the Music in You*,
 - (c) in 2008, Mr Bennett published the book *The Man in the Mirror*, and
 - (d) Mr Bennett was also a weekly column writer for the *Australian*.
5. That this House notes:
- (a) Wayne Bennett's unique coaching style and, in particular, the culture he has created at the Dragons, and
 - (b) that Mr Bennett leads by example, regularly taking part in training; is known for recognising the strengths in his players, constantly highlighting them, yet holding them accountable for their actions; and is regularly considered a father figure and friend to his players.
6. That this House congratulates:
- (a) Wayne Bennett for his many achievements and contributions to the National Rugby League and, in particular, to the St George-Illawarra Dragons, and
 - (b) Peter Doust and the Board of Directors of the St George-Illawarra Dragons on their judgement and success in securing the appointment of Wayne Bennett as head coach for the three-year period of 2009 to 2011.

33 POSTCARDS FILM

Motion by the Hon. Marie Ficarra agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
- (a) the recent *33 Postcards* production is the first official co-production, with the support of Screen NSW between New South Wales and China,
 - (b) *33 Postcards* will have the largest cinema release for an Australian film in China,
 - (c) Screen NSW invested \$200,000 in the production of *33 Postcards*, which was filmed on location in Sydney and at the Hengdian World Studios, China,
 - (d) the film was awarded the Sydney Film Festival Community Relations Commission Award for best reflecting multicultural experience in Australia,
 - (e) New South Wales boasts the strongest creative workforce and most extensive screen infrastructure in Australia,
 - (f) New South Wales is the dominant State for screen production in Australia with more than 60 per cent of national activity in the sector generated within New South Wales,
 - (g) over two-thirds of Australia's post, digital and visual effects companies are based in New South Wales,

- (h) 1,400 film- and television-related businesses are located in New South Wales, employing close to 7,000 people and generating income of around \$1.3 billion a year, and
 - (i) in the last year, Screen NSW has approved investments of \$9.6 million across 48 film, television and cross-platform productions.
2. That this House congratulates:
- (a) the Government's Screen NSW for its outstanding work in promoting New South Wales across the world and fostering the film and television industry,
 - (b) the film's director, Pauline Chan, and Producers Portal Pictures and Zhejiang Hengdian Film Productions, in association with IFS Capital Ltd and Screen NSW,
 - (c) the film's stars, Guy Pearce, Zhu Lin, Claudia Karvan, Elaine Jin and Lincoln Lewis, and
 - (d) Zhu Lin who received the Shanghai International Film Festival Asian New Talent Award for her debut performance in *33 Postcards*.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Postponement of Business

Government Business Orders of the Day No. 1 postponed on motion by the Hon. Duncan Gay.

APPROPRIATION BILL 2011

DUTIES AMENDMENT (FIRST HOME—NEW HOME) BILL 2011

Second Reading

The Hon. GREG PEARCE (Minister for Finance and Services, and Minister for the Illawarra) [11.21 a.m.]: I move:

That these bills be now read a second time.

I am sure members will join me in congratulating the Treasurer, Mike Baird, on his first budget. The budget has returned fiscal responsibility to the State, allowed the Government to deliver on its election promises, focused on front-line services for the people of New South Wales, and is delivering much-needed infrastructure after 16 years of mismanagement, decay and waste under Labor. I will touch on a number of aspects of the budget and the Duties Amendment (First Home—New Home) Bill. At the outset I acknowledge that in the first year of the budget forward estimates we are anticipating an operating deficit of \$718 million for 2011-12. This outcome reflects the global economic outlook, the downward revision of growth forecasts, the solar bonus costs and restructuring costs.

Without the impact of Federal stimulus spending, the New South Wales budget would also have been in deficit for two of the past three years. Sovereign debt concerns in the euro zone and uncertainty over fiscal settings in the United States have intensified. The high Australian dollar has weakened conditions in some non-mining areas of the economy, and global uncertainty has continued to affect consumer confidence, which has fallen sharply in recent months to levels not seen since the slowdown of 2009. Treasury has revised down its growth forecasts for 2011-12, from 3.5 per cent to 2.5 per cent. This reduction has a \$414 million impact on the budget this year. Forecasts for GST revenue for 2011-12 have also been revised down by \$395 million since the half-yearly review.

This budget is also affected by and suffers a \$260 million hit due to cost blow-outs from Labor's failed Solar Bonus Scheme. The cost of the scheme, initially estimated at \$355 million, has since blown out to an estimated \$1.75 billion, including \$260 million in this year alone. This year's budget is also meeting restructuring and transitional costs associated with the change of government. This includes the cost of funding our election commitments. The Government intends to return the budget to surplus in 2012-13. This is in contrast to the forecasts left by Labor, which would have led to ongoing and bigger deficits across the forward estimates period, including a \$2.4 billion deficit in 2014-15. The budget result for 2012 is a forecast \$292 million surplus, and the budget is then expected to remain in surplus of about \$150 million each year.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members should leave the Chamber quickly and quietly. It would assist Hansard if the Minister spoke a little louder.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: This represents a total turnaround over the forward estimates of \$5.2 billion, compared to the forecasts confronting us in March this year. In order to achieve the budget turnaround, approximately \$8 billion of savings are needed over the next four years. This requires tough decisions, including a combination of long-term structural reforms and additional savings measures. Long-term structural reforms to the public sector include changes to the Health, Transport and Corrective Services portfolios, including a reduction of about 300 administrative positions in Health, a reduction of about 350 administrative positions in Transport and around 350 voluntary redundancies in Corrective Services.

We are also introducing greater contestability to service provision, including in ferries, road maintenance and prisons. Our wages policy and changes to managing excess employees are expected to avoid costs of about \$2 billion over the next four years, and procurement reform is expected to deliver more than \$1 billion in savings through improved purchasing, whole-of-government contracts and reduced expenditure on consultants, travel and advertising. The efficiency dividend and program savings will deliver about \$6 billion in savings over the next four years. While efficiency dividend savings targets were included in Labor's budget forecasts, many of the savings were not implemented. This Government will maintain and deliver Labor's efficiency dividend savings over the forward estimates. An additional efficiency dividend target of \$150 million has also been included for 2014-15.

A program review will also contribute \$800 million in savings. This will involve a comprehensive assessment of programs against a range of criteria, including effectiveness and value. Over the next three years, programs no longer delivering for the taxpayers will be discontinued. To underpin delivery of these savings, the O'Farrell Government is prepared to offer about 5,000 voluntary redundancies over the next four years. This is a difficult but necessary decision, and it compares to similar approaches in other States: about 3,500 voluntary redundancies in Queensland in 2010 and 4,000 in South Australia over the past two years. Further reductions are also likely to occur through normal staff turnover and natural attrition.

These measures will be delivered in accordance with our election commitments to deliver improved front-line services, including more teachers, nurses and police. One of the first problems confronting the Government was the blow-out in costs of Labor's Solar Bonus Scheme. The cost of the scheme, initially thought to be \$355 million, has since blown out to \$1.75 billion, delivering a significant blow to the budget. The Government has absorbed some of these costs in the budget. However, an additional blow-out in the costs of Labor's failure will require a further \$150 million increase in climate change fund contributions from 2013-14. This is expected to increase average annual electricity bills by about \$10 to \$12 per household. The Government regrets the impact that this will have on electricity users, but Labor's failure has made this action necessary.

One good decision in the budget, among a large number of good decisions, is a \$342 million increase in the disability services area this year. The budget provides for a record \$1.4 billion in new growth funding for disability services as part of the five year \$2 billion Stronger Together Program. This latest funding commitment to disability services is the greatest in New South Wales history and it is a great privilege to be part of making that decision.

One of the other difficult decisions was in relation to the first home buyers grants. The undersupply of the housing market is a major challenge. We have already undertaken a number of reforms to increase housing supply with the release of 10,000 new housing lots, a comprehensive review of the planning laws, extending concessions on State infrastructure levies, extending the home builders bonus for over-55s who buy a new home and abolishing Labor's \$400 million home buyers tax. With new housing construction at historically weak levels and a weak fiscal position, we need to target assistance to where it is most needed in the economy.

To encourage activity the Government currently provides a stamp duty exemption for first home buyers purchasing a new or existing dwelling up to \$600,000 in addition to the \$7,000 first home owners grant. Preliminary Treasury advice suggests that these incentives may put upward pressure on housing prices, particularly for existing homes. Treasury analysis of the period of the 2009 first home buyers boost indicates that prices were higher due to the influence of first home buyers buoyed by the increased grants. Some housing market analysts also believe these grants can increase prices. On 6 September the *Australian* reported Andrew Wilson, senior economist with Australian Property Monitors, as follows:

AMP economist, Shane Oliver, said that stamp duty concessions did not improve housing affordability because they caused a spike in demand. He suggested the release of more housing blocks would provide a better stimulus.

On 27 August the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported him as saying:

I don't think we have a need really for ongoing grants.

On the same day Cameron Kusher of RP Data said:

If anything, the grants worked too well and resulted in too many people ... competing for properties so prices rose.

Our incentives should encourage activity, not push up house prices. In the 2010-11 financial year around 32,500 first home owner grants were provided, of which only around 2,700 were for new homes, about 12 per cent. The Government has therefore decided that from 1 January 2012 eligibility for stamp duty concessions through the First Home Plus and First Home Plus One schemes will be limited to those purchasing newly constructed homes, including off the plan. The revised First Home Plus and First Home Plus One schemes will continue to provide a full stamp duty exemption for all eligible first home buyers purchasing a newly built home up to \$500,000 and partial exemptions for homes costing between \$500,000 and \$600,000. All eligible first home buyers will continue to receive the \$7,000 first home owner grant for purchases of new and existing dwellings. We recognise that this is a difficult decision but it is necessary to make buying a new home relatively more attractive than buying an existing dwelling for first home buyers. We will continue to closely monitor housing sector conditions and will work closely with the sector to develop further options to encourage growth.

The budget has affirmed the Liberal-Nationals Government commitment to preventing housing stress and homelessness with the allocation of more than \$2 billion in this year's budget to address these issues. The budget provided significant investment in housing infrastructure and services to help those most in need of housing support. This budget will assist more than 450,000 people across New South Wales, including more than 330,000 people living in public, community and Aboriginal housing. The Government is committed to building stronger and more sustainable communities. We are listening to and meeting tenants' demands and this budget will also assist 38,000 with crisis accommodation: \$45.7 million will be available to help at least 37,000 households with temporary accommodation and Rentstart to help secure accommodation in the private rental market, and a further \$119 million has been set aside for new leases from the private rental market and to continue leases on 9,285 homes already let to public and community housing.

The budget includes a \$488.6 million investment in capital works for public, community and Aboriginal housing during 2011-12. This investment is underpinned by a new approach in social housing investment targeting the building of communities rather than construction of towers. This will lead to reduced concentrations in social housing, support the social and economic participation of residents and contribute to a more sustainable and affordable social housing system. This budget is a first step to addressing Labor's legacy of 43,000 people on the social housing waiting list and a maintenance backlog of over \$300 million.

Areas of expenditure in the 2011-12 budget include \$221.5 million to build 529 new social housing homes and to complete 1,072 units that were started in previous years; \$203.2 million for routine repairs and maintenance in public and community housing; \$195 million to upgrade public and community housing, including crisis accommodation such as women's refuges and emergency accommodation for homeless people; \$23.6 million for private rental subsidies to assist people with disabilities; \$17.7 million for the Building Stronger Communities Program to improve the quality of the built environment and community in seven major locations; \$5.5 million to continue with the rollout of Start Safely, a program to provide assistance to 567 households leaving domestic and family violence; and \$2.4 million to improve environmental sustainability in public housing by replacing electric hot water systems with solar systems and retrofitting ceiling insulation.

In addition the Aboriginal Housing Office will be allocated \$21 million for the repair and maintenance of up to 500 homes supplied by Aboriginal housing providers in urban and regional areas under the Build and Grow Program; \$12.6 million to reform and strengthen the Aboriginal community housing sector under the Build and Grow Program through the Provider Assessment and Registration System, time-limited operating subsidies and business development and support; \$13 million to deliver 30 new homes under the Aboriginal Housing Office's capital works program; \$16.7 million to build 35 new homes in remote areas under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing; and \$2.7 million for six new homes for employment and training related accommodation for Aboriginal people. In total the family and community services cluster will receive over \$5.5 billion in the 2011-12 budget.

One of the other decisions in the budget involves the long-term lease of Port Botany. The Government has undertaken an additional asset transaction to free up funds that can be used to address Labor's critical infrastructure backlog. We are making a record investment in infrastructure but more needs to be done. The recent Pacific Highway funding offer from the Commonwealth has placed added pressure on our infrastructure spending. In its last budget the Commonwealth allocated \$750 million for the Pacific Highway to 2014-15, but

only on the condition that the New South Wales Government matched this amount. Notwithstanding our differences with the Commonwealth on other matters, this offer provides an opportunity for an historic contribution to the upgrade. While falling short of previous Commonwealth commitments, we are determined to provide the funds needed to match the Commonwealth offer. The Government has therefore decided to proceed to market with the long-term lease of Port Botany. Funds made available by the transaction will be used to match the Commonwealth's funding offer on the Pacific Highway. Funds made available will also deliver further improvements to the Princes Highway, as well as other key infrastructure projects through Restart NSW.

Existing ownership arrangements for the Port of Newcastle and Port Kembla will be retained. The port facilities in Sydney Harbour will remain under State management. The introduction of private operators at Port Botany will increase contestability and help drive further efficiency on the waterfront, which will in turn help to further develop the New South Wales economy. This measure is in line with measures taken in other jurisdictions. The Queensland Labor Government sold the Port of Brisbane for \$2.1 billion in 2010. A number of other ports in Australia are also privately operated, including the Port of Adelaide in South Australia, Port Walcott in Western Australia and Portland in Victoria.

The Government also made a decision to increase mining royalties. New South Wales is not getting its fair share from Canberra and Federal Labor. As I mentioned earlier, GST revenue will be \$900 million less than will be raised in New South Wales in 2011-12, and each New South Wales household will be around \$300 worse off on GST. The people of New South Wales paid the most for the flood levy and will also be hard hit by Federal Labor's means test of the private health insurance rebate. New South Wales has also missed out on a fair share of Federal infrastructure funding.

But the most damaging Federal Government measure is the Federal carbon tax, with its impacts on the New South Wales budget. New South Wales Treasury analysis confirms that the carbon tax will have a big negative impact on New South Wales. There will be 31,000 fewer jobs, with the Hunter and Illawarra being particularly hard hit, with a predicted 17,000 job losses in the Hunter. The direct cost to New South Wales of the carbon tax is predicted to be up to \$900 million, or perhaps more, over the forward estimates, and the value of State generator assets is expected to diminish by \$3.6 billion. The Commonwealth has refused to consider or discuss these issues despite our repeated attempts.

We are not going to accept a multibillion dollar hit without taking action to protect the budget on behalf of the people of New South Wales. To offset the cost of the carbon tax on the State budget the Government plans to increase State mining royalties. Noting the commitment of the Commonwealth to reimburse companies for State royalty liabilities, it will be the Commonwealth that will bear the cost, not the mining companies. We will work with the mining sector on this measure and finalise details once the Commonwealth's mining resources rent tax legislation is finalised. The Commonwealth recently released a preliminary draft of its legislation and will release a final exposure draft later in the year. Should the Commonwealth propose a suitable alternative compensation arrangement, or not proceed with the carbon tax, the New South Wales Government will not proceed with this measure.

I mentioned voluntary redundancies and job losses. We are determined to deliver the savings needed to fund improved services and infrastructure and to fix Labor's mess. To underpin delivery of the required savings we are prepared to offer around 5,000 voluntary redundancies over the next four years. This is a difficult but necessary decision. It also compares to similar approaches in other States. In 2011 the Queensland Government announced 3,500 voluntary redundancies. Similarly, a reduction of 4,000 positions has been announced over the past two South Australian State budgets. Further reductions are possible from normal staff turnover and natural attrition. These measures will be delivered in accordance with our election commitments, including more teachers, nurses and police.

In an orderly and methodical way, each department and agency is assessing its activities and costs to identify savings. As part of this process departments and agencies can use voluntary redundancies to help meet their savings targets. We have already announced changes in the Health, Transport and Corrective Services portfolios. I mentioned those earlier in this speech. Further changes are expected as departments and agencies implement their futures savings programs.

I am particularly pleased and proud that the budget delivers services and infrastructure to the Illawarra. The budget is focused on improving services and providing the essential infrastructure required for the Illawarra region to grow. The Illawarra is absolutely vital to the health of the New South Wales economy, and the investment in this year's budget shows that the New South Wales Liberals and The Nationals are

committed to the success of the region. By focusing investment on both frontline services and core infrastructure we will make a real difference to the lives of residents and provide the facilities for the region to grow and prosper.

In health we are providing 192 additional nurses in the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District and South Eastern Sydney Local Health District. We are also providing 21 more acute care beds in Wollongong Hospital and \$4 million to commence planning on the Shellharbour Hospital expansion. We are investing in education with more than \$540 million for local schools. This includes new gymnasiums at Bomaderry and Kiama high schools and upgrading Wollongong and Nowra TAFEs.

We are improving the Illawarra road network by investing \$103 million for major projects, upgrades and maintenance and to improve road safety. This includes an upgrade to the Princes Highway between Gerringong and Bomaderry and widening it to two lanes between Mount Pleasant and Toolijooa Road. In public transport we are building the new train stabling facility at Wollongong for the OSCar trains and investing in community transport. Together with other statewide initiatives, this will keep the region moving. There is \$106.2 to be provided for disability services and \$40.6 million for the Home and Community Care program to assist the most vulnerable in our society. The Illawarra is a vital regional area and the commitment in this year's budget will ensure we provide the services that people need and the essential infrastructure to support its continuing growth.

This year's budget delivers on our commitment to rebuild our State finances. There are tough reforms and savings measures to deliver long-term benefits. We are delivering on our commitments to rebuild services, with 200 more teachers, 900 more nurses and 150 more police in this budget. We are rebuilding infrastructure with the biggest investment in infrastructure in the history of New South Wales, \$62.6 billion over the next four years, including \$600 million for the North West and South West Rail Links. We are rebuilding protection of the vulnerable with record funding for disability services to deliver Stronger Together II. And we are rebuilding the confidence of the community by delivery of our Jobs Action Plan, including payroll tax rebates for 100,000 jobs, record infrastructure spending, focusing on the supply of new homes, and we are standing up to Canberra in the context of the Rudd-Gillard Government's failure to give New South Wales its fair share. I commend the budget and the Duties Amendment (First Home—New Home) Bill 2011 to the House.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.46 a.m.]: The budget presented by the Government is harsh and it is unfair, but above all it is dishonest in that so much of the detail is left out and there are so many unstated assumptions.

The Hon. Rick Colless: Didn't you ever read a Labor Party budget?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I acknowledge the interjection, because over the 16 years covered by the 16 budgets delivered by the previous Government Labor delivered accumulated surpluses of \$7.819 billion. When Labor left office the budget ended up being \$1.3 billion in surplus. That is to be sharply contrasted with the projected deficit in this budget for the next financial year of \$718 million. This budget reduces employment by sacking staff—5,000 voluntary redundancies and, we estimate, 1,250 involuntary redundancies, or reductions in employment. The Government is cutting jobs and reducing services. The budget makes provisions for increasing taxes and charges and for significantly increased borrowing, yet the Government still cannot keep the budget in the black.

This Government inherited a budget with a triple-A rating and an economy with steady growth. In the last two years there was employment growth of some 195,000 jobs. Since this Government came to office 20,000 jobs have been lost from the New South Wales economy. It inherited employment growth under Labor of 3.8 per cent, but only 1 per cent is projected for the following year, and that will not even keep pace with increases in the population. Since this Government came to office it has given away more than \$1 billion in concessions: the \$300 million of poker machine taxes, \$400 in payroll tax rebates, \$280 million in regional relocations grants, \$20 million in stamp duty cuts and other measures total \$1.429 billion in give-aways. The budget that the Government has presented is built on the backs of pensioners, foster carers, first-home buyers and the most vulnerable in our society. The savings of \$8 billion over four years are not entirely obvious from a reading of the budget.

In the budget there are presumably some unstated things. For example, it is said that \$1 billion will be saved on government procurement contracts, travel and advertising. Yet we have no idea how that will be achieved. Another measure involves the efficiency dividend designed to save, I think, billions of dollars. It has

been described by Standard and Poor's as ambitious and difficult to achieve. Again there is no real indication in the budget as to from where the \$8 million will come. It raises the spectre, of course, of the privatisation of electricity and/or water. Although some job reductions have been identified there is perhaps an unstated assumption that there will be savings derived from attrition in the public sector, but that quantum is not honestly set out in the budget. We will wait to see how that turns out.

I note that the Minister indicated what he described as a record infrastructure spend but, again, when one examines the detail, as with so much of this budget, it appears mirage-like because the infrastructure spend actually represents a \$1.6 billion cut over a four-year period. The bulk of the projects to be funded were set to be funded by the previous Labor Government although, of course, there are some notable omissions or axing of projects such as the Parramatta to Epping rail line. Who will lose out? Approximately 70,000 pensioners will see their public housing rents increase by about \$10 per week, taking one-third of hard-won pension increases. That is a double hit for pensioners because in the previous budget some \$232 million had been set aside or provided for maintenance and repairs for social housing. In this budget it is estimated that that area of expenditure will only be \$195 million. On the face of it, that is a \$37.5 million reduction in spending on repairs and maintenance. Pensioners living in social housing will be paying more but getting less in repairs and maintenance. It is a double hit on those most vulnerable in society.

The first home buyers changes which have been set out mean that first home buyers will be hit by having to pay an average \$10,000 to \$20,000 more for their home, which is forecast to save the Government \$1.05 billion. That is a very significant cut in any person's language and will make it even more difficult for first home buyers to purchase a home. Of the top 20 postcodes for the first home buyer concession 14 are in the western Sydney area. We keep being reminded by the Government that many tens of thousands of people in western Sydney voted for the Coalition for the very first time. They have been repaid by significant cuts not only in relation to the first home buyers stamp duty concession but also in other areas that I will address shortly.

Foster carers also lose out in this budget, with their allowances cut by more than \$212 a fortnight when their child turns 16 years of age. The allowances for new carers who adopt children and young people in out-of-home care will be reduced. It is very difficult to attract and retain foster carers, who do a fantastic job, often in very difficult and trying circumstances. The Government has attacked their financial wellbeing by reducing their allowances rather than providing them with support and encouragement. Electricity bills will be increased by \$12. This is on top of the decision by the Premier to permit increases in electricity prices of 1 July by 18 per cent.

In relation to what is proposed for Sydney Water, there is an outrageous 78 per cent increase in profit in the next financial year. The Premier and the Treasurer have also increased the dividend that Sydney Water must pay to the State Government to an incredible \$245 million in the next financial year. The only way those targets can be met is by increasing household water bills and/or shedding staff. Water prices will skyrocket for 4.4 million people in Sydney, the Illawarra and the Blue Mountains in order to permit Sydney Water to make a record profit and for this Government to gouge out record dividends, but the losers will be the citizens of this State, who rely on Sydney Water. In addition, for the first time parents will be forced to pay fees for State-run preschools at the rate of approximately \$40 to \$50 a day, which will undermine the affordability of preschools for families who very much need those services.

I will now deal with a couple of specific areas in the budget that are notable. Again, the more the budget is looked at the more nasties come crawling out of the woodwork. In relation to education, this Government in its first budget is slashing State funding for capital works in schools by a frankly unbelievable \$266 million in its first budget, which will mean that schools across this State will miss out on classroom upgrades, halls, gymnasiums and new technology. This constitutes a 42 per cent reduction in State funding for capital works in schools, which excludes the reductions relating to the Australian Government's economic stimulus wind down.

In the 2010-11 budget the education capital spending, excluding national partnership programs, was \$623 million. In the 2011-12 budget the amount of capital foreshadowed is only \$357 million, a \$266 million cut. In addition, the principal priority building program worth \$65 million to schools across New South Wales last year appears to have been deleted altogether. The Building Better Schools Program has been reduced from \$55 million last year to only \$1.3 million in this budget. The Connected Classroom Project has been cut by almost two-thirds, from \$31 million last year to only \$13 million in this Government's first budget. Those cuts total \$1.3 billion over the forward estimates, which is a shocking and disturbing development, that a government would so significantly reduce public investment in schools for which it has responsibility.

Also missing from this budget is the hundreds of millions of dollars in promised funding for major New South Wales hospital upgrades. Blacktown and Mount Druitt hospital was promised a \$125 million upgrade but in this budget only \$500,000 has been allocated for planning. There is also only \$6 million in planning money promised for hospital upgrades at Parkes, Forbes, Hornsby, Maitland and Cessnock. This Government promised more than \$137 million in capital works for those hospitals but is delivering only \$6 million for them to share pooled planning money. Hospitals also missing out on major funding with no start date include Northern Beaches Hospital, \$5 million for a promised \$125 million upgrade and Tamworth Hospital will receive \$3 million for a promised \$220 million upgrade. The list goes on.

The theme that emerges is that the Government made commitments at the last election that have not been delivered in this budget. The Government is failing communities across New South Wales. Many areas in western Sydney voted heavily for the Government for the very first time but their reward has been to receive at least \$365 million in cuts. In relation to western Sydney roads, last year's budget provided \$543 million and this Government's spend is only \$348 million, a decrease of almost \$200 million. Commuter car parks in Cabramatta, Granville and Blaxland also appear to have been cancelled. A major upgrade of the bus stop and transport interchange at Fairfield also appears to have been dumped. The \$20 million upgrade that was promised for the Victoria Bridge is missing from the budget, as is the \$25 million promised to establish the Parramatta arts precinct at the old King's School site. Promises to secure funding for the Gipps Street recreational precinct in Mulgoa to provide for the relocation of St Marys methadone clinic and funding for Ched Town's Reserve at Glenmore Park is similarly nowhere to be seen.

During the election campaign the now member for Mulgoa made a commitment to secure \$10 million of funding for the Werrington arterial road, but the Government has come to the table with only \$1.5 million for planning, much of which has already been done. Despite the strong support given to this Government by the people of western Sydney it has not only taken them for granted but it has also significantly punished them by planning dramatic underinvestment in much-needed projects. Of course, western Sydney includes 14 of the top 20 postcodes accessing the first home buyers concession.

The same story can be told as we move around New South Wales. The Government has failed the people of the Illawarra by cutting funding to transport services and infrastructure projects in the region by nearly \$50 million. Last year the Labor Government invested \$61 million in Illawarra-specific transport initiatives. In addition, it provided further funding for transport initiatives that benefited the region. This Government has cut funding to just \$12 million and has not announced one new transport project for the area. More disturbingly, given recent developments impacting negatively on local jobs, the Illawarra Advantage Fund is also missing from the budget papers. It appears to have been axed despite the fact that it has generated more than 3,500 jobs to date and was a very useful tool for the Government to promote and support employment growth in the region, which is now needed more than ever. This Government has axed that fund and we will witness the negative consequences that that will have.

The Hunter has been the subject of deep budget cuts, with nearly \$1 billion in funding for roads and hospitals slashed. More than \$100 million in funding for Hunter roads has gone missing from the Government's list of commitments in the budget. During the election campaign Liberal candidates promised upgrades to the Lemon Tree Passage Road, Nelson Bay Road, Pennant Street Bridge and the New England Highway, which have all been cut in this budget. The new hospital development in Maitland that was promised by the now Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Robyn Parker, has not been delivered, and only \$1 million of the \$15 million promised by the now member for Charlestown for the Glendale interchange has appeared in the budget. Some \$8 million promised for the Calvary Mater Newcastle cancer research and treatment centre also seems to be missing from the budget papers. In addition, the Hunter Development Corporation's budget has been cut by 10 per cent, which will restrict its ability to attract investment and development to the Hunter region.

Again, the same story can be told about the Central Coast. The Government has cut funding for road infrastructure projects in the region by more than \$40 million. That is a cut of nearly one-third compared to last year's budget, making road users in that region among the biggest losers in this Government's first budget. Last year the Labor Government invested \$135 million in Central Coast roads. That has been reduced to just \$93 million, with only \$64 million dedicated to building new road infrastructure. That is despite the fact that the Central Coast is one of the fastest growing regions in New South Wales. Another important region in need of support and encouragement has been attacked by this Government.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: And it voted overwhelming against Labor.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I acknowledge that interjection because the Central Coast is another area in which the Coalition did very well at the election. How have the people of that region been rewarded? They have been rewarded not with the maintenance of government investment and support but with significant budget cuts. The Government has also confirmed that it has no vision for nature conservation. There is no budget allocation for the establishment of any new national parks other than the \$107,000 allocated to Dharawal. Of course, there are 22 per cent fewer projects in this budget designed to reduce community exposure to chemicals and radiation. For example, the number of chemical tests that will be undertaken to inform pollution investigations and to monitor air and water quality will be slashed by 30 per cent from \$70,000 to \$50,000. In addition, the regional illegal dumping squad's activities will be wound back by about 14 per cent. The more we look at this budget the more reductions, cuts and so on we see that will impact on ordinary people.

I mentioned attacks on the most vulnerable and I note that the Minister referred to this issue in his contribution. Excluding Federal funding through the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan, New South Wales investment in housing infrastructure in 2010-11 was \$637.9 million. The investment projected in this budget for 2011-12 is only \$564 million. That is a reduction of \$73.9 million. The Minister also mentioned the Building Stronger Communities program. Last year it received more than \$24 million to improve community infrastructure in seven priority locations around New South Wales: Mount Druitt, Claymore, Macquarie Fields, Killarney Vale, Bathurst, Orange, Dubbo and Wagga Wagga. That important program will receive \$6 million less this year.

The important area of mental health spending also deserves mention. This Government is increasing total spending in this area by only 3.34 per cent compared to last financial year even though inflation is running at 3.6 per cent. Taking into account total spending on mental health, this budget represents a real cut to mental health funding. If one excludes capital funding and disaggregates between capital and the other spending that underpins those services, this budget slashes funding by nearly \$25 million. That is despite the Government's claim that it has delivered a record investment in this area.

A perusal of the budget papers proves that the real record increase in spending in this area was set by the previous Government, which spent \$1.296687 billion in 2010-11. That was an increase of 12.27 per cent on the previous budget. Again, excluding capital funding, funding for mental health services in this budget has been reduced from \$1.25 billion last financial year to only \$1.226 billion in this budget. Therefore, the Government's claim to have increased mental health spending by nearly 9 per cent or \$109 million does not stack up to any scrutiny. The Government has also provided no detail in the budget about its flagship policy—the establishment of the Mental Health Commission—although we look forward to receiving further details.

The list of major funded initiatives announced by the Government largely builds on the significant work done by the previous Government, and we welcome those initiatives. This Government claims that it has increased funding while in reality it has been cutting it and not being frank about what it is doing. That is a constant theme throughout this budget. The Opposition believes that the Government has its priorities significantly wrong. It is also proposing to close the Berrima, Kirkconnell and Parramatta prisons, which will lead to the loss of 350 jobs. Of course, that will have a negative impact on those regions.

I cannot conclude my contribution without mentioning a significant announcement made by the Treasurer when he handed down the budget, which was reiterated by the Minister for Finance and Services—that is, the Government's wages policy. The Government has stated that the legislation and the regulation enacted to implement that policy will "avoid costs of around \$2 billion over the next four years". That is a significant estimated saving to the budget given that there are approximately 400,000 public sector workers in this State. I shall localise it a little and refer to the Blue Mountains electorate. That electorate would see a reduction of some \$38 million in public sector wages over a four-year period. With respect to the down-streaming effect of moneys in local economies, people get a dollar, they pay tax on it and they spend the rest in the local shops. Obviously, there are flow-on effects and multipliers.

Even taking a fairly conservative approach to this, a \$38 million direct reduction in the Blue Mountains local economy through what are effectively cuts to public sector wages would have a multiplier effect of reducing money going into the electorate's economy by some \$100 million over a four-year period—and that is just one State electorate. If these estimated savings are achieved by the Government's wages policy, the Blue Mountains electorate will have \$100 million taken out of its local economy. It is just one of 93 electorates. If one looks at each electorate in New South Wales one will see these profound impacts not only on the 400,000 public sector workers, their children, dependants and families, but also on their total communities. This will undermine the potential for economic growth throughout New South Wales, contract local economies and perhaps undermine government revenues—it will be a vicious circle.

These are just some of the many negative aspects of the budget, which are to be unfavourably compared to the Opposition's positive plan to divert money for regional relocation grants into a plan to create and retain 44,000 jobs in agriculture and manufacturing in regional areas over this four-year period. Retaining 44,000 jobs in those areas is the positive plan set out by the Opposition. I compare it to the negative plan set out by the Government to cut jobs, slash services, increase taxes and charges, increase borrowing and still not deliver a balanced or surplus budget, thus undermining economic growth in this State.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE (Minister for Finance and Services, and Minister for the Illawarra) [12.13 p.m.], in reply: I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for his comments. The Government is proud of this budget. The budget will rebuild the State's finances. There is a \$5.2 billion turnaround to tackle Labor's black hole and to protect the triple-A credit rating. This budget will return New South Wales to surplus, in contrast to the growing deficits left by Labor that would have blown out to a \$2.4 billion deficit in 2014. The budget will align revenue growth and expenses growth over the longer term.

The budget contains tough reforms and savings measures to deliver long-term benefits. The public service wages policy and the abolition of the unattached list are important in delivering \$2 billion in avoided costs. There is a restructure of bureaucracy in health, transport and prisons. There are efficiency and programmed savings of around 5,000 redundancies, which should deliver \$6 billion in savings. Our prison reform will deliver better outcomes. The Police Death and Disability Scheme requires long-term reform to make it sustainable.

This budget delivers on the Government's commitment to rebuild services, with 200 more teachers, 900 more nurses and 150 more police. That is part of our first-term commitment of 900 more teachers, 2,475 more nurses and 550 more police. It is a record Health budget, with more nurses, the first 660 of nearly 1,400 more beds and with 45 per cent of Health expenditure in regions in 2011-12. There is also funding for more express trains, better stations and more buses for better transport services. This budget delivers on our commitment to rebuild infrastructure, with the biggest infrastructure investment in New South Wales history—\$62.6 billion over the next four years. In rail alone there is \$600 million for the North West Rail Link and South West Rail Link. There is over \$1 billion in 2011-12 on the hospital building program across the State as part of our \$4.7 billion program over four years—50 per cent more than Labor's last four years. There is more funding for roads, with \$200 million for roads congestion and blackspots commitments, funding for upgrading of the Princes Highway and an additional \$1 billion for the Pacific Highway.

There are asset sales or refinancing of the Sydney desalination plant and Port Botany, which are to release funds for much-needed infrastructure. We are delivering on our commitment to rebuild protection of the vulnerable, with record funding for disability services to deliver Stronger Together II. There is a new payroll tax rebate for eligible workers with a disability and new social impact bonds to deliver incentives for better outcomes. We are delivering on our commitment to rebuild confidence, with delivery of our Jobs Action Plan, including payroll tax rebates for 100,000 jobs and record infrastructure spending in 2011-12, which will help underpin economic activity.

The New South Wales economy and budget need a greater supply of new homes in the housing sector. Therefore, our first home buyer stamp duty exemptions—which will be limited from 1 January 2012 to new homes only—are targeted to deliver. We are standing up to Canberra. New South Wales Labor refused to stand up to Rudd and Gillard. Our budget will be hit by up to \$950 million and a \$3.6 billion loss of asset value as a result of carbon tax. We will offset that in part through mining royalties to recover some carbon tax costs, noting that those costs will be passed through the Commonwealth Government with no additional cost to the mining sector. This is a great budget. I compliment everyone in the Government. In particular, I compliment the Treasurer on his hard work. I commend the bills to the House.

Question—These these bills be now read a second time—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Bills read a second time.

Leave granted to proceed to the third reading of the bills forthwith.

Third Reading

Motion by the Hon. Greg Pearce agreed to:

That these bills be now read a third time.

Bills read a third time and returned to the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

BUSINESS NAMES (COMMONWEALTH POWERS) BILL 2011

Bill received from the Legislative Assembly, and read a first time and ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Duncan Gay, on behalf of the Hon. Greg Pearce.

Motion by the Hon. Duncan Gay agreed to:

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

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

VETERINARY PRACTICE AMENDMENT (INTERSTATE VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS) BILL 2011

Second Reading

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY (Minister for Roads and Ports) [12.20 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Veterinary Practice Amendment (Interstate Veterinary Practitioners) Bill 2011 makes straightforward and far-reaching amendments to the Veterinary Practices Act 2003. The bill will implement national recognition of veterinary registration in New South Wales. Significantly, it will simplify the requirements for the registration of interstate vets in New South Wales. Currently an estimated 6,000 vets are registered in other parts of Australia. As a result of these amendments, vets from outside the State will be able to practice in New South Wales without having to register again, which will mean a reduction in costs and red tape for those vets wishing to practice here.

Each Australian State and Territory has its own legislation covering veterinary practice administered by its own veterinary board. In New South Wales we have the Veterinary Practitioners Board. All the boards require equivalent veterinary qualifications and practical experience before a vet can be registered. These requirements provided for a single, uniform, national standard. At present, however, if vets wish to work in more than one State then they must obtain separate registration in each jurisdiction they intend to practice in. This creates an unnecessary administrative burden for governments and additional cost for an increasingly mobile workforce. The current system can also cause delays in responding to animal disease emergencies because interstate vets must be registered in New South Wales before they can undertake work here, including emergency response work.

In 2007 the Primary Industries Ministerial Council endorsed a model for the national recognition of veterinary registration to overcome these problems. Implementation of the national recognition registration model requires each jurisdiction to amend its veterinary registration legislation. Whilst all States and Territories have committed to making these amendments, so far Victoria is the only State to have introduced the model. The bill will mean that New South Wales is the second State to do so. It is anticipated that the other States and Territories will follow shortly.

However, I note that vets who are resident and registered in New South Wales will not have deemed registration in States other than Victoria until these jurisdictions have passed similar legislation. Once the other States and Territories have passed their legislation vets in New South Wales will have the advantage of deemed registration there as well. Under the national recognition registration model vets will still have to be registered by the veterinary board in the State or Territory in which they live; however, they will be deemed to be registered in all other Australian jurisdictions. This will allow them to practice in all States and Territories without needing separate registration in each jurisdiction they intend to practice in.

This simple and effective system will streamline the registration of vets. The bill will directly benefit 246 interstate vets, including specialist vets, who currently practice and pay registration fees in New South Wales. Interstate vets will be spared the additional expense of \$235 per year in State registration fees. Adoption of the national recognition registration model will be of particular benefit to those vets who practice in regional areas and who regularly undertake work near State borders. They will soon be free to travel across State borders to treat sick or injured animals, and to lecture and provide training to other vets or students without incurring additional registration fees. These are common sense, effective amendments. Currently 2,615 vets reside and practice in New South Wales. These vets will also benefit from the adoption of the national recognition registration model because they will be able to practice in other States without the need for separate registration.

Further benefits relating to emergency disease response will flow directly from adopting a national registration system for vets because it will allow vets to be immobilised quickly in the event of an outbreak of a disease. This has the potential to save New South Wales millions of dollars. The equine influenza outbreak cost the New South Wales Government \$62 million and the cost to the equine industry was upwards of \$126 million. It has been estimated that an outbreak of foot and mouth disease could cost the Australian economy up to \$13 billion. In 2001 the United Kingdom experienced one of the most horrendous outbreaks of foot and mouth disease in living memory. It resulted in some six million animals being put down and the financial cost of the outbreak was estimated to be in excess of £3 billion to the industry. The British Government paid £2.5 million in compensation to cover the costs of putting down and disposing of so many animals. The emotional cost to those at the front line of this disaster was immeasurable.

Minor amendments are needed to the Veterinary Practices Act 2003 to introduce the national recognition registration model in New South Wales. The bill provides that vets who are registered and reside in other States and Territories will be deemed to be registered in New South Wales and will be able to practice in New South Wales. Similarly, a person with a specialist vet registration in another jurisdiction will have deemed specialist registration in New South Wales. I remind members that veterinary boards in all jurisdictions require equivalent veterinary qualifications and practical experience. This provides a high uniform national standard. The bill will ensure that interstate vets practising in New South Wales will meet the same high standards as vets registered here. The introduction of the national recognition registration model will definitely not lead to any reduction in standards.

It is important to note that those vets whose interstate registration is subject to conditions or limitations will have the same conditions and limitations imposed on their deemed registration in New South Wales. However, the New South Wales Veterinary Practitioners Board will have the power to waive or vary a condition or limitation on a deemed registration at the request of the holder of a deemed registration. The board may also vary or impose a condition on a vet's deemed registration by giving notice to the vet in writing. However, there are limitations on the board exercising this power—it may do so only where it is necessary to ensure that the authority conferred by the deemed registration is substantially the same as the authority conferred by the vet's registration in the other jurisdiction. To ensure procedural fairness, vets with deemed registration will be able to apply to the New South Wales Administrative Decisions Tribunal. They can ask for a review of a decision by the board to waive, vary or impose a condition on their deemed registration.

The bill also provides for instances where a vet is suspended from practising or deregistered in another Australian jurisdiction. In that situation a person's deemed registration in New South Wales may be suspended or cancelled by the board. In many cases the New South Wales board may decide to suspend or cancel a deemed registration on exactly the same terms as another jurisdiction has done. However, there may be reasons why the board would not want to replicate the decision made by another jurisdiction. One example would be where the offence that led to the suspension or cancellation is specific to that particular State. It is therefore appropriate to allow the board to have a discretionary power in relation to suspension or cancellation of deemed registrations.

The bill also provides that the board can enter into an arrangement with other States and Territories to establish a national register of veterinary practitioners. The national register has been funded and set up by the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council. Victoria is currently the only State to have access to the register. Following the amendments being made today the national register will also include a list of all the veterinarians registered in New South Wales. The registrar of the New South Wales board will have access to the register. This means that the registrar will be able to review the names of veterinarians registered in other participating States and Territories.

The bill also amends the powers of the Administrative Decisions Tribunal to reflect the introduction of deemed registration into the Act. At present if the tribunal cancels a veterinarian's registration following

disciplinary action, it can also order that the veterinarian cannot apply to be re-registered for a specific length of time. Such a provision is important in ensuring that high standards of practice are maintained here. The bill adds a similar provision in relation to the cancellation of an interstate veterinarian's deemed registration. A further provision in the bill requires the New South Wales board to notify each interstate registration authority of any disciplinary action taken against a veterinarian. This will ensure that current information on all veterinarian registrations will be available to the veterinary board of each State and Territory.

The Australian Veterinary Boards Council, the New South Wales Veterinary Practitioners Board, the Australian Veterinary Association and the veterinary industry have all had significant input into the national recognition of registration model. There is strong support among the veterinary profession and the livestock industry for this national recognition. This is because it is simple to implement, reduces the regulatory burden on industry, minimises costs to veterinarians and facilitates employment mobility. At the same time the national recognition of registration model ensures that practise standards are maintained across all jurisdictions.

Consistent with the Government's approach to reducing regulation, implementing the national recognition of registration model in New South Wales will cut red tape for both veterinarians and the Government. The amendments in the bill will reduce administrative requirements and provide cost savings to the industry and the community. Because they are consistent with the principles of mutual recognition, they will reduce market barriers and increase mobility for veterinarians. These are far-reaching, sensible and useful amendments which will benefit rural, regional and city communities in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [12.32 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition on the Veterinary Practice Amendment (Interstate Veterinary Practitioners) Bill 2011, which the Opposition does not oppose. The main purpose of the bill, as outlined by the Minister, is to allow veterinarians registered in other States to practise in New South Wales without having to go through the process of registering separately in this State. The other purpose of the bill is to give effect to the national recognition of veterinary registration model, which has been endorsed by the Primary Industries Ministerial Council. The objects in the bill are the result of a continuing process to recognise professions and skills earned in one State to be recognised throughout Australia. They have their origins in the mutual recognition laws that have been worked out by national and State governments since the 1990s.

In veterinary practice the issues involve more than simply convenience and are of greater importance than cost savings and reducing red tape, which are benefits of this bill. Australia has always had a proud record of protecting its livestock and residents from diseases that can wipe out industries and, in extreme cases, even kill people. One reason for the bill is that veterinary officers play an important role in the biosecurity of this country. State agencies such as Primary Industries are an important link in this national effort, and anything that can be done to eliminate laws that restrict the movement of professional people across State borders is important and necessary if biosecurity in this country is to be achieved.

I note that the Minister referred to the outbreak of diseases, including overseas. We have had our own difficulties in this country. The outbreak of Newcastle disease affected the poultry industry throughout New South Wales, hitting western Sydney, the Central Coast and later Tamworth and other areas, and required the full cooperation of almost all government agencies directed by the Department of Agriculture to deal with it. Having veterinary officers on hand who can do that work is necessary. From time to time if a threat is of such a size that it requires veterinarians from other States to come here to assist us to deal with it, it would be most unfortunate if that task were made more difficult by veterinarians having to leap over difficulties that might be occasioned by the need to register separately in this State.

I note, for example, that the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the United Kingdom cost the government in that country \$6 billion to \$7 billion and cost the whole economy more than \$80 billion. Through ministerial council meetings, that problem has not been dealt with here. That is because our veterinary authorities and farming communities were concerned about the threat posed by foot and mouth disease and took steps to minimise the risks. It is important that we continue to look nationally at how rules and regulations could hamper our ability to deal with such situations that may arise. Although the bill does not profess to deal with all the issues, disease emergencies and the need to deal with disease emergencies from time to time are one reason for this bill. Veterinarian officers provide an essential role for society, play a crucial role in protecting country farmers and citizens during emergency disease outbreaks, and have a responsible role. So we do not oppose the legislation.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS [12.35 p.m.]: I support the Veterinary Practice Amendment (Interstate Veterinary Practitioners) Bill 2011. In simple terms, the bill allows veterinarians who are registered in New South Wales to practise interstate and veterinarians who are registered interstate to practise in New South Wales. That is important. The importance of this bill can easily be lost on people, particularly those in cities who see veterinarians as basically the people who look after their pet birds, cats and dogs. Veterinarians also work in the equine industry, the racing industry and so on. To rural people, veterinarians are much more important because they take care of cattle, sheep and pigs, as well as horses and working dogs, in addition to all the small animals and pets with which most city people would be familiar. I shall make a few comments about the training of veterinarians. One problem in the veterinary industry is that over the past few years a great proportion of the people who study veterinary science have been women. While that is good for the industry, it puts a few constraints on the industry. Many women veterinarians prefer to work with small animals in cities rather than with large animals in regional areas. I am not discriminating against women when I say that.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: Sounds like it.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: It is not. It is a fact of life that women veterinarians who go into a large animal industry have constraints placed on them relating to their strength to deal with large animals. I recall a case I had of a cow that was having difficulty calving. Indeed, the calf had died before it was born; it was a breech birth. The veterinarian came out and performed a caesarean operation. Anyone with experience of heifers knows that the heifer is in a crush and remains standing throughout the operation. This young veterinarian did a fantastic job; she was a skilled veterinarian surgeon. However, she had trouble removing the calf once she had opened up the heifer. I recall that I helped her pull out the calf because it required a lot of strength. Indeed, it probably requires two people normally. I do not have an issue with the skills of veterinarians; it is about the fact that they prefer to practise in the small animal industry.

Charles Sturt University veterinary school at Wagga Wagga has taken steps to address this problem. Late last year its first intake graduated and entered the workforce earlier this year. From memory, the ratio of men to women in that 2010 course was 50:50 which re-established a gender balance. All those young veterinarians have now graduated and are working in regional areas in the large animal industry. Training vets is somewhat akin to training doctors. If veterinarians who are country kids are trained in veterinary schools in regional areas they end up going back into those much-needed country practices. This important bill will enable veterinarians to move more easily between States when performing their duties. As has already been mentioned, when there is an outbreak of exotic diseases it is important to have highly mobile veterinarians who are able to get to where they are needed as quickly as possible. A few years ago during the equine influenza outbreak veterinarians could not go straight to the areas in which they were needed as they had to cross State borders.

This bill will enable what in other States is called a deeming of registration. Those veterinarians who are registered with the New South Wales Veterinary Practitioners Board will be deemed to have the correct qualifications and experience to practise in other States. At the moment Victoria is the only other State that has passed similar legislation, but this will occur in other jurisdictions and veterinarians will be allowed to work across State borders when there are outbreaks of exotic diseases. I refer members to the good speech made in the other place by Andrew Cornwell, the member for Charlestown, and a registered veterinarian. He was supportive of this bill which will increase the number of veterinarians who can practise in New South Wales, thus providing the community with a greater choice of veterinarians and greater competition, which ultimately will result in a reduction in costs.

Andrew Cornwell spoke at length in his contribution about the equine influenza outbreak. I refer members to his speech in which he gave a good overview of that equine influenza outbreak and the speed with which it travelled across three States. Some exotic diseases can travel very quickly, but a disease such as equine influenza can spread, with aerosol transmission, up to several kilometres and therefore no direct contact is required. As a result, 211 race meetings were cancelled and the gaming turnover fell by \$550 million or more. This highly contagious disease can be transmitted, for example, on clothing, shoes and car tyres. Horse-to-horse transmission is rapid and, generally, if horses come into contact with one another, transmission is complete.

As has already been mentioned, if there were an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in New South Wales or in Australia it would be extremely difficult to control. Foot and mouth disease is highly transmissible by pigs and we have a large population of wild pigs in Australia. Many members would be aware that pigs are capable of travelling up to 25 to 30 kilometres a day. If there were an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in our national parks it would spread extremely quickly throughout the rest of Australia. Exotic diseases do not recognise State borders. If there were an exotic disease outbreak veterinarians must be able to travel quickly to

the affected areas. I will conclude my contribution as I am aware that many other members want to speak in debate on this important bill. I congratulate the Minister for Primary Industries on introducing this bill which will make a big difference to the industry as a whole and assist in controlling exotic disease outbreaks. I commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM [12.45 p.m.]: As The Greens spokesperson on primary industries I support the Veterinary Practice (Interstate Veterinary Practitioners) Bill 2011 and commend the Minister for introducing this bill which will make important changes in this industry. The Minister for Primary Industries said in her agreement in principle speech in the other place that 2,615 veterinarians reside and practise in New South Wales. Veterinarians play an essential role in our society, whether it be in our cities and suburbs providing care to our beloved pets; supporting the great work of native animal rescue organisations; or working in regional New South Wales supporting graziers and other farmers involved with livestock and animals. Recently when I travelled to Scone I was made aware of the massive thoroughbred breeding industry in that region. The thoroughbred breeding industry contributes a great deal to our State economy and veterinary practices in that region are centres of excellence. Industry relies heavily on skilled practitioners in the community working and travelling with performance and racing animals.

This bill will create a national registration system for veterinarians registered in other States to practise in New South Wales provided they meet the requirements of State-based registration and that appropriate safeguards are in place to ensure State control over practise standards. New South Wales is undertaking reform that has already been implemented in Victoria—the only other State to have introduced the national recognition of veterinary registration model. New South Wales is the second State to do so and I am sure that other jurisdictions will follow suit. Members would be aware of the free flow of animals across State borders. As livestock moves with seasons, racing animals travel interstate and animals are sold across our borders we must ensure that veterinary practitioners are able to move with those animals when responding to biosecurity threats. This legislation was formulated as a result of the consolidation of different animal enterprises, bearing in mind that animals live under different conditions in a number of areas, and the need for performance animals to travel nationally to compete.

The Greens support this bill principally as it will reduce red tape and make it easier for veterinarians to practise across the State, which is a good thing. Farmers must be able to access veterinary practitioners with relevant expertise and with whom they have a working relationship. This bill will enable specialist veterinarians to move with ease into areas, access the market more easily and develop certain skill sets that can be used in any area. It will ensure a free flow of veterinarians and enable them to work across regional New South Wales, an issue of key concern. As a result the Government of the day will be able to implement biosecurity and other animal health measures. As we have seen with the Hendra virus, Newcastle disease and avian flu, we must not restrict the capacity of our veterinarians to respond to exotic disease outbreaks because of bureaucracy and red tape.

The Greens carefully examine any legislation that proposes, as this bill does, to cut red tape and to streamline processes. That is why we wholeheartedly support this bill without amendment. This State should play a role in protecting the New South Wales community and the credibility of professional people. This bill strengthens those important principles and puts in place those protections. There is general agreement within the profession that these reforms will not impact negatively on the users of veterinary services or on those practising veterinary medicine now or in the future. The Greens commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL [12.49 p.m.]: I too support the Veterinary Practice Amendment (Interstate Veterinary Practitioners) Bill 2011. As my colleagues have mentioned, the purpose of the bill is to establish national recognition of veterinary registration. This model, once implemented nationally, will allow the 9,800 veterinarians currently registered in Australia to travel and work freely across the country as long as they are registered in the State in which they reside. This is good for a number of reasons, but it is important because it will allow interstate veterinarians to assist with emergency animal disease outbreaks here in New South Wales or other States and Territories.

National recognition of veterinary registration will work in a way similar to a drivers licence. As we know, to obtain a drivers licence we must pass a number of tests to become registered to drive in New South Wales. But our drivers licence then allows us to drive in all other States and Territories without needing to register in those States first. That is the model proposed for veterinary registration; as long as veterinarians are registered in their own States, they will be able to work in other States and Territories across Australia. Without these important amendments proposed by the Government, veterinarians would need to be registered first in

New South Wales before they could contribute during emergency situations here. While the application process for registration is not particularly arduous, it may take a couple of months to process an application, and this would be completely unacceptable in an emergency in which veterinarians are needed immediately. The time taken to sort out paperwork and to wait for registration approval could seriously compromise an emergency animal disease response.

These amendments are vital to enable a quick response in animal emergencies. The bill will allow veterinarians from other States to quickly respond and assist with disease outbreaks or other emergencies here in New South Wales. Unfortunately, New South Wales is no stranger to animal emergencies. In 2007 we experienced an outbreak of equine influenza which cost horse-related industries in this State upwards of \$126 million. Veterinarians from hundreds of New South Wales veterinary practices were directly engaged in controlling and attempting to eradicate this disease. Veterinarians were integral in identifying and isolating the infected animals. They vaccinated horses, educated horse owners on biosecurity principles and treated sick horses. Many of those veterinarians worked around the clock and were tireless in putting in the effort on farms and laboratories to eliminate the disease. In the end, more than 50,000 in New South Wales were vaccinated, and more than 132,000 equine influenza tests were made during the outbreak. However, the only veterinarians who could join in the campaign to fight equine influenza at that stage were veterinarians registered in New South Wales. This obviously meant that New South Wales registered veterinarians were stretched to the limit to try to halt the disease and then eradicate it.

As well as helping with disease control at home, veterinarians from New South Wales and other parts of Australia have also volunteered to assist with emergency responses overseas. One example was in 2001, when many Australian veterinarians played a significant role by packing their bags and heading off to the United Kingdom to work on the campaign to eradicate foot and mouth disease. That outbreak involved more than 2,000 cases of the disease and resulted in the culling of millions of animals. So it was very important that our veterinarians were able to travel overseas and help. The veterinary profession has a very strong history of lending a helping hand when that is needed. I think the bill will only strengthen that history here in New South Wales. Currently, veterinarians who wish to work overseas must apply and pay for a letter of professional standing from the veterinary practice board of every State where they are registered. However, under national recognition of registration requirements, a veterinarian will need to obtain only one letter. This will save the veterinarian both time and money.

The bill will ensure that in future disease outbreaks registered veterinarians from all over Australia will be on hand to assist in tackling those outbreaks. For that reason I strongly support the bill. The bill will result in a better outcome for our veterinarians. I am very proud to be a member of The Nationals, but I do not have the stories of my colleagues such as the Hon. Rick Colless about cows in breech and so on. I am a country girl, but I am not a farm girl; there is a difference. I have to admit to sometimes being a little afraid when a big mob of cattle are coming towards me. I do spend a bit of time on properties; my husband's family are graziers to the north of Inverell. My closest connection to the veterinary industry comes through my husband's family. His uncle, Mark Powell, was a veterinarian in Coolah for a number of years. Though now retired, Uncle Mark still has plenty of advice for us all. There are also some great veterinarians in my home town. So I am very happy to support this industry and the work that they do, and for those reasons I commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH [12.54 p.m.]: I support the Veterinary Practice Amendment (Interstate Veterinary Practitioners) Bill 2011. As indicated by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the Opposition will not be opposing the bill. This bill is quite important, particularly to the 2,600-odd veterinarians who practise in New South Wales. I half expected the Hon. Charlie Lynn to be in the Chamber when he heard us talking about vets; I thought he might have come down to talk about veterans, as opposed to practitioners of veterinary practices. Veterinarians are essential in rural New South Wales. I recall a number of instances of veterinarians being called out to deal with calving issues, bloat or other concerns about stock. Working dogs are an important part of any farmer's support base. I remember my father being in tears when one of his favourite dogs, Cobber, became quite ill.

The Hon. Niall Blair: A working dog?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes, a working dog. The veterinarian was called out, and Cobber hung around for a long time after that—the veterinarian doing his best to support Dad through the process. Veterinarians are also very important to much larger-scale operations in rural New South Wales. The Minister for Roads and Ports, the Hon. Duncan Gay, would remember the issues surrounding footrot eradication, and

veterinarians working with the old pasture protection boards, now Livestock Health and Pest Authorities, on programs such as those to eradicate footrot or to deal with ovine Johne's disease, which was a critical issue around Crookwell, where farmers had significant issues.

The Hon. Niall Blair: And Bredbo.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: And around Bredbo. Again, veterinarians played a significant role in those campaigns to eradicate or help eradicate those diseases. The Hon. Rick Colless spoke about the veterinary science campus at the Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga. I encourage members who get the opportunity to go and have a look at that campus. It is a brilliant campus. In my view, it will in the longer term contribute to the number of veterinary practitioners across rural New South Wales not only because of the calibre of education provided at the campus but also because of the experiences it brings from rural New South Wales. Training veterinarians in a rural setting goes a long way towards ensuring that veterinarians take up practice in a rural setting. We should all applaud the Charles Sturt University veterinary science campus. I hope to see a number of graduates from that program at some stage in the future, certainly around Young. I have a friend whose daughter is in I think her final year at that campus. She is in an equine practice, being quite keen on horses. I know the Hon. Niall Blair has an interest in horses and knows their importance to country New South Wales.

Although the important aspect of the bill is registration of veterinary practitioners, there is one thing that we must get right. Schedule 1 proposes to insert sections 34D and 34E into the Act. Those sections set out what will happen in New South Wales if a veterinarian has his or her registration suspended or, even worse, cancelled. It is critical that New South Wales has some surety that veterinarians whose registrations have been cancelled or suspended are treated in accordance with appropriate processes, so that they will not be able to practise in New South Wales if their registration has been suspended or cancelled in other States. The bill in my view deals with that situation quite well through those provisions. Veterinarians are important to the shearing industry. I was never a rough or non-clean shearer but I certainly want to talk about—

The Hon. Duncan Gay: You would need a veterinarian every time you went into the pen, I think.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I very rarely cut a sheep; I would cut myself more than I did the sheep. Veterinarians are critical to the shearing industry in that often shearers will identify a cancerous sheep or one with some illness whilst they are handling them. Farmers will draw on the shearer's knowledge of the animal and the illness for assistance with the sheep. This important bill will enable veterinary science practitioners to come to New South Wales when we have critical issues such as equine influenza or the spread of other diseases in this country. I support the bill and commend it to the House.

[The President left the chair at 1.02 p.m. The House resumed at 2.30 p.m.]

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

Item of business set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The PRESIDENT: I invite attention to the presence in the President's Gallery of a delegation from the Parliament of Bangladesh Standing Committee on Law and Parliamentary Affairs. The delegation is led by Mr Suranjit Sengupta, chairman of the parliamentary committee. I welcome the delegation to the House.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

ORICA PLANT INCIDENT

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Finances and Services. Will the Minister now advise the House when he was first informed of the Orica chemical leak?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I answered that question yesterday. I was also asked a question by the Hon. Walt Secord about the serious pollution incident at the Orica ammonium nitrate plant at Walsh Point on Kooragang Island. He suggested that there may have been some breach of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. He asked:

Is WorkCover investigating a claim that when the contamination alarms went off during the 8 August Orica chemical spill the workers ran to the protection huts but three men who were covered in an orange substance were turned away and told to go home in their own vehicles and rinse off in their backyards with a garden hose?

These are serious allegations. In previous answers to questions about this incident and WorkCover's role I have clearly stated that WorkCover has not received any notification of any injury to or illnesses in workers on the site at the time of the incident. I also strongly encouraged any employee or interested party who has any questions, concerns or evidence about work health and safety issues at the Orica site to contact WorkCover.

This Government takes its workplace health and safety responsibilities seriously. The health and safety of workers in this State is a matter of paramount concern to this Government and it is not a matter that should be used to score political points. I sincerely hope that the Opposition does not use this serious matter for such ends. I immediately followed up Mr Secord's question with WorkCover as the appropriate investigating authority. I am advised that there has been no indication so far to WorkCover that workers were denied access to safety areas. However, WorkCover will inquire into this issue as a part of its investigations.

I also advise the House that WorkCover has established a clear channel of communication with the occupational health and safety committee at Orica. Two improvement notices in relation to health surveillance and clean-up procedures and a notice under section 62 were issued to Orica on 18 August 2011 to obtain policies, procedures, plans and health surveys. I have been advised that WorkCover has taken four statements so far from people on the site at the time of the incident. WorkCover has also issued notices to a further 32 people who were on the site at the time. Those notices are due to be complied with by Friday 16 September. Following receipt of that information, WorkCover will undertake a full analysis, including further interviews, inspections and engagement of experts to determine the next phase of its investigations.

I understand from my inquiries that neither Mr Secord, nor the Leader of the Opposition, nor any other member opposite has contacted WorkCover as the investigating authority to provide information about the matters raised in this House yesterday. I urge any party that has any information about health and safety matters that may assist the investigation to contact WorkCover. I have asked the chief executive officer of WorkCover to contact the Leader of the Opposition and Mr Secord and to give them an opportunity to provide any information they have. The inquiries will continue. I will report back to the House on the outcome and on what information members opposite give to WorkCover.

The Hon. Eric Roozendaal: Point of order: Mr President, I ask you to remind all members—including the excitable ones—that they must address members by their correct titles at all times.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I uphold the point of order.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer and finally tell the House when he was informed of the Orica chemical leak?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I am happy to elucidate my answer. As I indicated, WorkCover has taken statements from four people who were on the site at the time of the leak and issued notices to a further 32 people. Those notices, which are issued under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, are designed to obtain statements about what actions were taken by Orica and what occurred immediately after the pollution release. That will include information about potential exposure, decontamination procedures, health surveillance and the handling of clothing. The notices have been framed broadly so as to obtain all relevant information about the health and safety of workers. As I indicated previously, neither the Leader of the Opposition nor the Hon. Walt Secord has approached WorkCover with any of the information they have apparently obtained.

The Hon. Luke Foley: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The Minister has made no attempt to answer my first question or my supplementary question. I advise him that that information was submitted by the Government in the papers he returned to this House.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. There is no point of order because most of his contribution contained debating points rather than matters referred to in the standing orders.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Who is the excitable one? I know the Leader of the Opposition is new to this place, but the rule is that if I take a question on notice he will get an answer in the normal course of events.

BLUE LIGHT PROGRAM

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister update the House on the great work of the Police Force's Blue Light program and how it is helping local schools to tackle youth crime and antisocial behaviour?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: On this side members are interested in blue lights, but members opposite are interested only in red lights. As we all know, the Police Force is strongly committed to working and building trust with young people living in our local communities. One of the ways that is achieved is through the establishment of youth liaison officers, school liaison police officers and specialist officers who provide advice and support and who implement strategies designed to tackle youth crime and antisocial behaviour. Another strategy is the Blue Light initiative, which has been running across New South Wales for almost 30 years.

In 2003 Blue Light was reinvigorated and became owned and operated as a policing program that involves both off-duty and on-duty police officers working together with community volunteers to provide events. There are many Blue Light branches operating across the State. Collectively they provide events such as discos, movie marathons, pool parties, camps, debating, markets and stalls, and much more. The objectives of the Blue Light program are simple: to provide safe, healthy, supervised entertainment for young people in an environment that excludes drugs, alcohol consumption and violence; to develop and encourage better relations and to improve communication between young people, police and adult members of the community; to prevent the occurrence of crime with youths, either as victims or perpetrators, while at events; and to ensure that the funds raised are used within the community in support of our young people.

Revesby Blue Light Disco has been running for almost 22 years; it is one of the most successful events of its type in the State. Over the years Revesby has generously donated money to schools and many community initiatives for the benefit of local youth. It kindly provides an annual disco to the students and the friends of Caroline Chisholm Special School. Yesterday, at the invitation of the member for East Hills, Glenn Brookes—an outstanding member—I presented \$1,000 cheques on behalf of Revesby Blue Light. That money has been raised throughout the year to be donated to worthy local schools. The cheques that were awarded are going towards programs educating young people in areas such as personal safety, safe use of public transport, bike and road safety, and cyber bullying programs, which is a major problem across our schools and communities.

The schools awarded cheques included De La Salle, East Hills Public School, East Hills Girls High School, Milperra Public School, Mount St Joseph at Milperra, Padstow Heights Public School, Padstow North Public School, Padstow Park Public School, Panania North Public School, Panania Public School, Picnic Point High School, Picnic Point Public School, Revesby Public School, Revesby South Public School, St Christopher's primary school, St Luke's primary school and Tower Street Public School.

I thank the member for East Hills, Mr Glenn Brookes, for the kind invitation to attend and witness the incredible work of Revesby Blue Light. I also thank Gloria Hansen and all of the local volunteers whose dedication is making a difference in their kids' lives and in their community. The work of everyone involved in the Blue Light program should be applauded. Revesby Blue Light disco is an example of the incredible reach that this initiative can have. I encourage everyone to get involved in Blue Light programs in their local areas.

RIVER RED GUM NATIONAL PARKS

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for the Environment. When the previous Labor Government unilaterally declared the river red gum national parks last year, it provided a \$97 million management and industry assistance package, which was to have facilitated an orderly withdrawal from the industry by those workers and businesses that had lost their jobs and their livelihoods. Will the Minister provide the latest available figures on how and where thus far the money in that assistance package has been distributed?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I thank the member for his question. I would be very interested to know where the money has gone. I will provide a detailed answer as soon as I can.

ORICA PLANT INCIDENT

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. When was the Minister's ministerial office first informed of the Orica hexavalent chromium leak at Stockton?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Those opposite are really slow learners. I will take that question on notice and provide an answer.

STATE BUDGET AND BEGA ELECTORATE ROADS

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: My question is addressed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will the Minister update the House on roads funding for the Bega electorate in the 2011-12 State budget?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank my Parliamentary Secretary for his question. I have been waiting for a question like this from Opposition members—but they do not ask questions about good news in this State. As the Leader of the Government said, if the Hon. Eric Roozendaal had had a Parliamentary Secretary like the Hon. John Ajaka he would probably still be Treasurer. I am particularly proud to say that the 2011-12 New South Wales Roads budget includes an unprecedented investment in the South Coast region. In particular, more than \$100 million will be invested in the continuing upgrade of the Princes Highway as part of the 2011-12 State budget. This funding will benefit the communities and businesses in Berry, Kiama, Shellharbour, Gerringong, Batemans Bay, Eurobodalla, Shoalhaven, Ulladulla and Falls Creek, to name a few.

This year's budget provides funding to allow work to begin on several long awaited and long overdue upgrades of the Princes Highway—and it is the Princes Highway, not the "princess" highway as the former Treasurer called it. Thank you, Eric. This is particularly welcome news for the residents of the Bega electorate, who received \$10 million to start major work on the Bega bypass. This, of course, is State and Federally funded, but we at least talk to our Federal colleagues. Speaking of Mike Kelly, where is Whan? That is probably why the Leader of the Opposition—

The Hon. Luke Foley: Point of order: The Deputy Leader of the Government should not go there. The Hon. Steve Whan is at Harold Mair's funeral in Albury.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I was not aware of that.

The Hon. Peter Primrose: How about an apology?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: There is nothing for me to apologise for. I was just asking where he was and I was told. Harold Mair was a great member—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister will ignore interjections.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: We will be investing \$17 million to start major work on the realignment of the Princes Highway at Victoria Creek. As part of the Princes Highway commitment, the Bega electorate will receive \$1 million for planning for the realignment of the highway at Dignams Creek and \$1 million for the upgrade of the bridge over the Clyde River. Despite there being a clear need for funding on the Princes Highway, those opposite did nothing for the far South Coast in their time.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: That is not true.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: It was the forgotten part of the State. There is a clear need for funding of this highway. There is no clearer example of Labor's broken promises than the Princes Highway Gerringong to Bomaderry upgrade, which was promised by the former member for Kiama, Matt Brown, in 2006. Five years after the former member's promise, not a centimetre of new bitumen had been laid. In the Bega electorate, this year's funding of \$70 million represents a staggering 50 per cent increase on last year's funding of \$35.7 million. In 2009-10 how much did those opposite— [*Time expired.*]

MACLEAY AND NYMBOIDA RIVERS CONTAMINATION

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for the Environment. I thank the Minister for his detailed answer previously

revealing that the Macleay River has been contaminated by the Hillgrove antimony mine for millennia—which is thousands of years, in case he does not remember. Ancoa has a proposal to reopen the Hillgrove antimony mine responsible for much of this contamination. Anchor Resources plans a new antimony mine at Wild Cattle Creek at the top of the Nymboida River. Given the toxicity of antimony and history of contamination, what is the Government doing to ensure that these mines will not further contaminate the Macleay River and contaminate the Nymboida River?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Last week I commented upon the member's North Korean controller and the need to translate his questions from Korean to code, then from code to Korean, and then from Korean to English. I said that his questions are garbled. If anyone could make sense of that question, I invite them to answer it for me. I could not follow it at all—I really could not. I invite the member to put the question on notice to get a detailed answer.

ORICA PLANT INCIDENT

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: My question directed is to the Minister for Finance and Services. When did WorkCover officials first discuss the Orica chemical leak with the Minister?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I know the answer to this question off the top of my head. WorkCover officials have not discussed it with me; they have discussed it with my staff. My staff have given me all the briefings I needed in our detailed discussions about it.

LYSAGHT OVAL

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: My question is addressed to the Minister for Finance and Services, and Minister for the Illawarra. Will the Minister update the House on the New South Wales Government's commitment to accountability in the Illawarra?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I thank the excellent Parliamentary Secretary for his question and his interest in the Illawarra.

The Hon. Mick Veitch: What about the other Parliamentary Secretaries? You never congratulate them.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: That is probably right. I congratulate all of our excellent Parliamentary Secretaries.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister will ignore interjections and continue with his answer.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: As the Minister for the Illawarra I do not have to look very hard to find examples of Labor's waste and mismanagement. I have recently looked into issues regarding Lysaght Oval as a result of inquiries received from Mr Ryan Park, the member for Keira. I thank Mr Park for his interest in this matter. Lysaght Oval is a glaring example of mismanagement and incompetence, the hallmarks of the former Government.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Lynda Voltz to order for the first time.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: For those not aware of this issue, I take members back to 2002 when a plethora of Labor Party heavies such as the Hon. Eric Roozendaal, Mr David Campbell and Mr Paul Macleay announced again and again funding for the relocation of the Wollongong Wolves and Wollongong Olympic clubs. Lysaght Oval remains incomplete since being first announced in 2002. From 2002 to 2009 the Labor Party disbursed almost \$2.5 million of taxpayer's money to Wollongong Sports and Recreation Club Pty Limited for the project. There was an initial grant of \$2.2 million, which was supplemented by a further \$500,000. Then, despite years of no progress, one month out from the March 2011 election Crikey and the Hon. Eric Roozendaal announced a further commitment of \$2.5 million—no questions asked. This was despite an audit into the project in 2009 by KPMG that found, amongst other things:

Insufficient detail was included on many invoices provided to Council to indicate work performed or services provided.

It further found:

Several invoices indicated that the service provided or work performed was on a site other than Lysaght Oval, with no supporting commentary.

I have received numerous representations from concerned local residents about Labor's mishandling of this and I note that the members representing the electorates of Keira and Wollongong have written to some of my parliamentary colleagues expressing concern. Both of those members should be well across the matter considering they were deeply involved with the previous Ministers representing the Illawarra and the principals of Wollongong Sports and Recreation Club Pty Limited.

Several months ago I viewed the current state of the oval as the Minister for the Illawarra. It beggars belief that almost \$2.5 million of taxpayers' money has been wasted on this project. What is to be found there? A partially assembled grandstand, some rusted steel girders, a long track record of delays and cost blowouts, no proper construction plan and a plethora of unexplained payments of taxpayer's money. A preliminary estimation has been made of the cost of completing the project by Public Works. It is estimated that the cost of completing the project would be in the order of \$12 million if a grandstand of similar amenity to the western grandstand at WIN Stadium were to be constructed. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Assuming a lower standard of amenity, it is considered that the grandstand could not be reasonably completed for less than \$6 million. So if that \$2.5 million had been paid it would also have been wasted. This is yet another Labor legacy of complete incompetence. I assure the people of New South Wales that this Government is accountable to them. We are ending the cycle of debacle after debacle inherited from the former Government. We have engaged the Internal Audit Bureau to conduct an independent inquiry into the grounds for the relocation of the Wollongong Wolves and Wollongong Olympic clubs from Brandon Park to Lysaght Oval.

The people of the Illawarra deserve to know where and how their money was spent under the former Labor Government. They need to know why nearly a decade on there is still no football facility. The Coalition Government has inherited this mess and it is determined to review the arrangements involving the former Government, Wollongong City Council and all other parties to the project. The Government supports projects to develop local sporting facilities. However, given the appalling record of those opposite, it is important that stakeholders receive value for money.

The Government has established the \$130 million State Investment Attraction Scheme and the Regional Industries Investment Fund to attract industries and to develop businesses in regional New South Wales. Interested stakeholders are encouraged to apply for assistance under the new funds. The Government is determined to ensure taxpayers' moneys are provided to projects that benefit the entire community and that the people of the Illawarra get value for their money. I look forward to reporting back to the House on the outcome of the Internal Audit Bureau investigation.

PIPI HARVESTING

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Primary Industries. Is the Minister aware of the almost total loss of pipis from New South Wales beaches, and that more than 4,000 tonnes of pipis have been commercially harvested since 2001? Is the Minister aware that in Victoria no commercial harvesting of pipis is allowed and that only small amounts of pipis can be taken by recreational fisheries? Given the critical role that pipis play in coastal ecosystems, will the Minister assure the community that the recent Government declaration of reduced bag and size limits will be enough to ensure the recovery of pipis on our beaches? If not, will the Minister declare a complete ban on the removal of pipis from New South Wales beaches until pipi numbers recover? The Greens have heard that no pipis are to be found on New South Wales beaches.

The Hon. Walt Secord: It is a serious environmental question, Duncan.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: It is a serious environmental question. As far as I am aware, this has been an issue for some time. Most members would know that one of the keys to good fishing is to harvest a few pipis. But one of the things I will not do is accept that The Greens' figures are accurate. I will refer this important question to the Minister for an answer. In no way should any member ever accept The Greens' figures—

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: Do you remember the bream incident in western New South Wales?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: We do remember the bream incident and we have all read *The Torn Blue Fringe*.

The Hon. Cate Faehrmann: That has nothing to do with The Greens.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The member might pretend that she is not a supporter of *The Torn Blue Fringe* now, but the facts were not terrific. I will refer this serious question to the Minister for an answer.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I thank the delegation for its presence today in the Legislative Council

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for Local Government. Will the Minister give a guarantee that the proposed date for the next New South Wales local government elections to be held in September 2012 will not be changed?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What a wonderful question. I have been worried because the Hon. Sophie Cotsis has not asked me a question for the past couple of weeks. I have been wondering what has been going on. The member has obviously given up asking me industrial relations questions because each time she asks me an industrial relations question she is embarrassed by her lack of knowledge on the issue. I can understand why she has now moved to local government.

The Hon. Walt Secord: Point of order: The Minister is debating the question.

The Hon. John Ajaka: He is not.

The Hon. Walt Secord: Yes, he is.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I remind the Minister of the need for him to be generally relevant in his answer.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I thank the Hon. Sophie Cotsis for her interest in local government. I can inform the House that for the first time the Liberal Party ran a ticket in the Shellharbour City Council elections. As a result, the Liberal Party secured two councillors, Kelly Marsh and Paul Rankin.

The Hon. Sophie Cotsis: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. I ask you to bring the Minister back to my question.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I refer the Minister to my earlier ruling.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: As I said, I am pleased that the shadow Minister is interested in and has asked me a question about local government. I will give her an answer about local government. My answer is good because I can report to the House that the newly elected Shellharbour City Council met last night for the first time. This is good news for the people of the Illawarra. After years of Labor mismanagement and having no elected local government voice, the people of Shellharbour have local democracy again.

The Hon. Sophie Cotsis: Point of order: My point of order relates again to relevance. I asked the Minister whether he will change the local government elections next year. If the Minister does not know, he should take the question on notice.

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

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: We did change the local government elections. Had Labor been in government, the people of Wollongong and Shellharbour would have been left without local government until 2012. What did we do? We brought democracy back. We brought the elections forward; elections were held in September. In Wollongong four Liberals were elected as councillors. In Shellharbour two out of the seven councillors are Liberals.

[*Interruption*]

Members opposite do not want to hear this. We did not leave the elections until 2012; we brought the elections forward. What happened last night? Last night the council elected a new mayor and deputy mayor. The good news for the people of Shellharbour is that I can report that the council elected Liberal Councillor Kelly Marsh as the Mayor of Shellharbour.

The Hon. Sophie Cotsis: Point of order: My point of order is on relevance. I ask the Minister to answer the question.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister has concluded his answer.

STORM SEASON

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister update the House on what measures the State Emergency Service is taking to bring the message of preparation for the storm season to a non-traditional audience?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: Over three nights last week New South Wales State Emergency Service volunteers played a leading role in the great storm storyline of the popular television series *Home and Away*. I understand that the character of Alf from the show is the fictional unit controller of the Yabby Creek State Emergency Service located near Summer Bay.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: That's Walt.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: That was Walt. Labor's great storm was on 26 March but we will not go near that one.

The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox: That was the perfect storm.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: Yes, and this one was located near Summer Bay. The New South Wales State Emergency Service has featured on the show on many occasions. In the great storm episodes New South Wales State Emergency Service volunteers were shown doing what they do best: helping their community, and in this case the fictional town of Summer Bay, through difficult times. The airing of the great storm episodes was particularly appropriate as we stand on the threshold of another storm season. Last year's storm season was one of the busiest in recent years and the 10,000 volunteers of the New South Wales State Emergency Service worked tirelessly in responding to and assisting the many affected communities. A total of 10,451 requests for assistance were received from the New South Wales community during last year's storm season period from the start of October through to the end of March this year.

Next week is StormSafe Week—a time when the New South Wales State Emergency Service actively encourages the community to prepare itself for the coming storm season. Storms are the most costly natural disaster to affect New South Wales. Each year on average they cause \$217 million worth of damage. All of us are at risk from a severe storm, and that is why the efforts of the New South Wales State Emergency Service to educate the public about how to better prepare for the storm season are so important. Across the State, the State Emergency Service, in partnership with NRMA Insurance, will be holding numerous community activities to help communities be better prepared for the coming storm season.

The New South Wales State Emergency Service will be running an extensive media campaign to get its messages about storm safety and preparedness to as many people as possible. While it is comforting for residents of our State, whether they are in Summer Bay, Broken Hill or Bondi, to know that if they need help the State Emergency Service is at hand, prevention is always better than cure. That is why I urge the public to visit the New South Wales State Emergency Service website, www.ses.new.gov.au, to prepare themselves for the coming storm season. In New South Wales we have wonderful men and women who volunteer in our emergency services, and it is crucial that we support them in their efforts by doing our part.

SHOALHAVEN CANCER CARE CENTRE

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, representing the Minister for Health. Given the Government's generous \$10 million commitment to fund the Shoalhaven Cancer Care Centre, will the Government also look into securing the steel for this important project from BlueScope Steel, given the recent pressures on job losses?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: As the question is directed to a Minister in the other House, I will get an answer from that Minister. Recently I gave the Hon. Paul Green a number of answers to other questions he asked in this place. They were comprehensive responses. It is pleasing that the member has confidence in the system by continuing to ask questions in this way.

CARBON TAX

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: My question is addressed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Given that Treasury has provided advice that the average impact of a carbon price to public transport commuters will be 0.49 per cent, does the Minister still support the Premier's indication that commuters will face a 3.6 per cent price rise?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the Hon. Lynda Voltz for her question. Sometimes I wonder why members opposite lead with their chins in that manner. We thank the Hon. Eric Roozendaal because he supported the Federal carbon tax and the cost that would impose on New South Wales. What I have not told the House—I was saving this for another day because every time I read about it I get depressed—is the cost of the carbon tax on the provision of New South Wales infrastructure and particularly roads. The provision of roads in New South Wales involves heavy equipment: earthmoving equipment, trucks, graders, rollers, bulldozers and steel. Each of them uses diesel or petrol. What do we put on roads? We put bitumen on roads and we use concrete to construct roads.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: Point of order: My point of order is on relevance. We are one minute into the Minister's answer and he has not got anywhere near telling us the cost to public transport commuters and the impact of the carbon price based on Treasury's figure of 0.49 per cent.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I remind the Minister of the need for him to be generally relevant when he answers questions.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I should not have to give remedial lessons to members opposite. I thought it would have been obvious, even to members opposite, that buses and cars travel on roads. When we are talking about a carbon tax that affects the construction of roads and rail, that is directly relevant. Members opposite do not understand that a carbon tax will be a cost to our country and our State. It is a cost that will be put on exporters and industry that, frankly, they do not need at the moment. Earlier members opposite cheered when a question was asked about giving work to BlueScope in the Illawarra, but now their heads are in the sand as they pretend not to understand that the Federal Labor tax is almost directly the reason that jobs have been lost in the Illawarra.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: Point of order: The question relates directly to the Treasury advice that commuters' fares will increase by 0.49 per cent and the Premier's indication that they will increase by 3.6 per cent. I am asking the Minister to clarify that, but he has not come within a bull's roar of doing so.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I refer the Minister to my previous ruling.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I have been talking about carbon tax all the way through my answer. There is a difference between not answering the question and the answer that I am giving to the question. It is the appropriate answer. I am reminded that when we are talking about the cost of a carbon tax, we should remember that one of the major elements of road construction for the transport network in New South Wales is bitumen, which is an oil- and carbon-based product. Every day, in every place and in every way this horrible tax will hurt this State, and members opposite should hang their heads in shame. This is just another indication of why the members opposite need to form a question time committee—so that they do not ask questions like this one.

STATE BUDGET AND MARITIME SERVICES

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will the Minister update the House on funding for Maritime Services in New South Wales in the 2011-12 State budget?

The Hon. Robert Brown: Particularly boat ramps.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: We will have to see about that. There is ongoing negotiation about some of these matters.

[Interruption]

There is always negotiation about funding to put these things in place. One talks to a contractor to determine the size of a project, and then one sees how much is in the budget.

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: And things will cost more with a carbon tax.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Exactly. As part of the 2011-12 budget the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government will invest \$24 million in improving maritime infrastructure and safe navigation. This is particularly important given the comments yesterday of my colleague the Hon. Michael Gallacher, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, regarding the Water Safety Roundtable that I attended on Tuesday evening. That great initiative had its genesis during our days in opposition. Included in the funding is \$2.5 million for new New South Wales Maritime patrol boats and engines, which provide fundamental operational tools for boating safety officers statewide to carry out on-water safety compliance and education.

In addition, \$1 million will fund the provision of new safe navigational markers, signage and public moorings. These navigation markers and signage are the traffic signs for our waterways and help keep safe the estimated 1.5 million people who go boating each year. The New South Wales Government considers water safety to be a priority, and this funding will go a long way to improving safety for users of our waterway. Yesterday my colleague the Hon. Michael Gallacher said how pleased he was to see all the organisations coming together to discuss issues relating to water safety and showing a willingness to assist the Government in developing strategies aimed at reducing drowning deaths. Tragically, two people drowned yesterday while rock fishing. The incidence of such drownings is of great concern in this State.

New South Wales Maritime owns and maintains a network of more than 45 commuter wharves across the harbour and it is important that this infrastructure meets appropriate standards of public safety and amenity. The next commuter wharves in line for replacement are at Rose Bay and Neutral Bay. Other New South Wales Maritime projects in the 2011-12 budget include a \$3.5 million upgrade of charter vessel wharves and the redevelopment of the Rozelle Bay Maritime precinct. As part of the New South Wales Maritime operating budget, which is additional to the capital program, other funding includes \$5 million for the Better Boating Program and \$1.47 million to support the work of non-government volunteer rescue groups, for example, Marine Rescue New South Wales. By providing funding to organisations such as Marine Rescue New South Wales and for such initiatives as the Better Boating Program, we are able to ensure greater community involvement in water safety and infrastructure on New South Wales waterways. [*Time expired.*]

TOBACCO ACTION PLAN

Dr JOHN KAYE: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Hunter, and Vice-President of the Executive Council, representing the Minister for Health. Why has New South Wales been without an active tobacco action plan after the expiry of the 2005-09 plan? What steps has the O'Farrell Government taken to progress towards the release of a 2011-16 plan?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I thank the honourable member for his question, to which I will get an answer from the Minister for Health as quickly as possible.

PORT BOTANY PRIVATISATION

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. When was the Minister first advised of the Government's intention to privatise Port Botany?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the member for her question. I cannot remember the exact date that I was advised but it was after I answered the question in this House.

SHELLHARBOUR MAYOR

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: My question is directed to the Minister for the Illawarra. Can the Minister update the House on the restoration of local democracy in Shellharbour, and in particular can the Minister provide more information on the selection of the new Mayor of Shellharbour?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I commend the member, who is an excellent Parliamentary Secretary, for her ongoing interest in the Illawarra. I compliment both the Hon. Marie Ficarra and the Hon. John Ajaka for their work in the Illawarra, particularly since the election in March.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Sophie Cotsis to order for the first time.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I know that the Hon. Sophie Cotsis has retreated from the field of industrial relations so I encourage her to ask me more questions about local government. As I was saying earlier, at its first meeting last night the council elected a new mayor and a deputy mayor. I have more good news for the people of Shellharbour because I report that Liberal Councillor Kellie Marsh was last night elected as the Mayor of Shellharbour. Yes, members heard me right: there is a Liberal Mayor of Shellharbour. I say it again: a Liberal Mayor of Shellharbour. This is more evidence of the Liberal Party making inroads into traditional Labor territory.

We won seats in western Sydney, we won seats on the Central Coast, we won Newcastle and other seats in the Hunter, and now the Liberal colours are flying high in the Illawarra, indicating that the Liberal Party is a party for every person and every community. I should point out that our vote in Shellharbour and Wollongong increased in the council elections from that which we gained at the State election—and so did the vote for the Shooters and Fishers Party. Labor went backwards, even after the massive result we had in March 2006. Councillor Marsh recently commented that she was quite overwhelmed at her appointment and promised to run a positive council that worked together to serve the community. She stated:

I am a people person and I am a communicator. With those two attributes I have always made a good leader. My willingness to listen and learn and my willingness to admit when I am wrong, to seek further knowledge when required will be beneficial to this job.

That is what Liberals do: admit when they are wrong and are willing to seek additional knowledge. Councillor Marsh's experience in the local community sector reflects her passion and desire to ensure that the Shellharbour community grows and prospers well into the future. Councillor Marsh is the proud mother of two children, having moved to the local community eight years ago for a better life. Following this, Councillor Marsh immediately got involved in the local community, where she has volunteered for charities such as Red Cross and the St Vincent de Paul Society. As well as being a proud member of the Oak Flats Progress Society Councillor Marsh also manages the local under-13s Shellharbour Swans football team. She is often described as the champion of the needy, and her track record volunteering within the community reflects this. She has a strong background in small business, sales and marketing.

I note also that a Labor councillor, Councillor Marianne Saliba, was elected deputy mayor. Many members would recall that Marianne was the member for Illawarra before the seat of Shellharbour was created in 2007. Marianne was dumped before the 2007 election. Shellharbour was then represented by Lylea McMahon, who was chosen using the N40 rule that allows Labor Party central office—those shadowy figures, including the Hon. Amanda Fazio—instead of grassroots members to choose members of Parliament. Subsequently, however, Ms McMahon suffered the same fate. She chose to retire citing family reasons, but we all know that Anna Watson was going to be parachuted in under the N40 procedure. That is the way they go down there—Labor, Labor, Labor. Once again, I congratulate Kelly Marsh on her election as mayor— [*Time expired.*]

TAXI DRIVER SAFETY

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Given the recent violent attacks on taxi drivers across New South Wales, what action is being taken by police to work with taxi operators to improve the safety of taxi drivers?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I genuinely thank the member for a very good question. I think it is fair to say that all members of this House are concerned that at night our hardworking taxi drivers seem to be the focus of drunken hoodlums who think they can just get stuck in and belt taxi drivers. That is an absolute disgrace. Many taxi drivers are new to this country, and for some of them when they arrive here, taxi driving is one of the jobs they can get. Many who do not have trades skills choose to drive taxis, and some end up getting belted or robbed by drunken louts, and sadly from time to time some are murdered while simply going about the business of providing a service to the people of New South Wales.

I assure the Hon. Greg Donnelly that every matter reported to New South Wales police is investigated thoroughly. It is important to continue the relationship with policing in this State that members on this side of the House—and I suspect all members—are hoping to foster right across the community. One challenge we have is breaking down the barriers that may exist with some drivers who do not necessarily come to this country with a warm memory of good relationships with police in their home countries. We must continue to work to break down those barriers so that we have good communication with taxi drivers.

Many taxi drivers, by the very nature of their work, have information about crime that is valuable to police—not gained as a result of being victims, but as a result of driving people from one point to another. I am

keen to pursue with the taxi industry and the New South Wales Taxi Council methods that will continue to foster a good relationship. This will continue to be a challenge for governments of all persuasions, as it has for some time. The member can rest assured that the Government will continue to take every opportunity to promote and develop a better working relationship between police and the taxi industry as well as others in the sector. I assure the member again that any matters reported to police are investigated thoroughly.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I ask a supplementary question. Can the Minister elucidate his answer by referring to precise initiatives that police are taking to improve the safety of taxi drivers in New South Wales?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I do not have any precise local plans or approaches that police are taking related to taxi drivers and the taxi industry. As the member is sufficiently interested to seek precise details, I will obtain advice from the Police Force and report back to the member directly.

POLICE VEHICLE TECHNOLOGY

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. What is the Government doing to make sure our police have the latest technology in their vehicles?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: The Government is committed to giving our officers access to the most up-to-date policing technology while they are out and about on the road. We are investing in new vehicles and in new in-car policing technology. Before the March election we showed this through a commitment to install mobile automatic number plate recognition technology in 100 additional police vehicles. Last week's budget allocated \$3.6 million this financial year to deliver on this pre-election commitment. This will be matched by another \$3.6 million in 2012-13. In addition, the O'Farrell Government has committed a further \$1.366 million to continue the current rollout of mobile automatic number plate recognition technology.

Mobile automatic number plate recognition is a vital tool for police. It uses cameras to automatically scan the road for unregistered or stolen vehicles and when it detects one such vehicle it automatically alerts police. Officers can then take appropriate action. In the meantime, police are able to continue their work, confident in the knowledge that they will be alerted when a criminal drives by. This technology is being progressively rolled out through the police fleet. I am told that 82 units have currently been installed. The rollout of the first tranche of units is expected to be completed by June 2012, and that will bring the total number of units fitted to 110. Police will then start seamlessly rolling out the additional 100 units that were part of our pre-election commitment to the New South Wales Police Force. These are expected to be installed by December 2013, bringing the total to 210 units.

The O'Farrell Government is also investing \$1.351 million this year in the rollout of new in-car video technology as part of the In-car Video Refresh project. This funding will see the current digital eyewitness system—also known as DEWS—replaced by the next generation of technology, known as G3. This technology is far more intuitive for police to use and links in with other technological capabilities in our police vehicles, including mobile automatic number plate recognition. The total commitment for this project is \$4 million over two years to fund the replacement of 330 in-car video units. I understand that 220 units were purchased in the 2010-11 financial year, with another 110 to come this year. Installation of the new units will be ongoing, as police vehicles are changed over.

The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is delivering on its commitment to increase authorised strength to a record 16,356 police officers by June 2014. To support this commitment, we have allocated \$1.183 million in the 2011-12 financial year to fund the ongoing fit-out of additional police vehicles. Vehicles will be added to the fleet in a rolling program by duty type—such as general duties, highway patrol or detective fit-outs—as the relevant area of need is identified. Under this program, 110 additional vehicles have already been added to the police fleet, and police estimate that 30 vehicles will be added in 2011-12.

This investment in our fleet provides the New South Wales Police Force with the support it needs to do its job, to keep our roads safe, and to help police make the best use of their time. All this so-called background technology provides the foundation that police need to get out and about in the community, where they are needed. I assure the House that this Government will continue to support police in their work. Without doubt, automatic number plate recognition technology, whilst it focuses on unregistered and uninsured vehicles, also provides officers with a level of safety. If a car is known to be associated with criminal activity, the police will know that before they approach it.

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

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNUAL LEAVE

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Yesterday Mr David Shoebridge asked me a question relating to the Annual Holidays Regulation 2011. Members might be aware that under arrangements for the national workplace relations system annual leave entitlements for private sector employees in New South Wales are a matter for private sector employees in New South Wales and are dealt with under the Fair Work Act 2009. State law on such matters, however, continues to apply to New South Wales public sector workers and to local government workers.

The principal Act is the Annual Holidays Act 1944. That Act includes a section that provides that bonuses paid to employees are not to be taken into account in calculating annual holiday payments where the ordinary annual pay of the worker exceeds the annual amount prescribed by the regulations. The Annual Holidays Regulation 2005 prescribed the annual amount to be \$144,000. In accordance with the requirements of the Subordinate Legislation Act 1989 the 2005 regulation was due to lapse on 1 September 2011, but was remade in the same terms on 26 August 2011, commencing on 1 September. However, the relevance of the Annual Holidays Act and the regulation made thereunder to New South Wales public sector workers is extremely limited. The Annual Holidays Act applies only to public sector and local government employees who are award-free, or whose industrial instruments adopt the provisions of the Act, or provide less favourable leave benefits.

Annual leave entitlements for employees, including chief and senior executive officers in the public service is determined under the Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Award and under the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002. The Annual Holidays Act does not apply to those employees. In any case, the issue of whether to count bonuses in calculating annual leave payments is unlikely to arise for any New South Wales public sector worker for two reasons. Firstly, bonus payments are not a common feature of public sector employment. Few, if any, staff would receive bonuses. Secondly, the vast bulk of public sector workers earn below the \$144,000 threshold. The Annual Holidays Act bonus provision is therefore best regarded as a residual provision that continues the previous Government's policy of limiting the exposure of employers to excessive annual holidays payments in the very few, if any, cases in the public or local government sector where highly paid employees also receive bonuses.

SEAFORTH TAFE

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: On 10 August 2011 the Hon. Paul Green asked me a question without notice regarding Seaforth TAFE. The Premier has provided the following response:

Seaforth TAFE was closed on 17 December 1999, nearly 12 years ago, by the former New South Wales Government.

Following the results of the Manly Council Plebiscite in 2008, the New South Wales Liberals & Nationals in Opposition made a commitment to ensure that the site would be used as an education centre of excellence. However, the former New South Wales Labor Government commenced negotiations in 2009 for the sale of the site to Manly Council. These negotiations were well advanced when the new Government took office.

Following discussions between the new Government and Manly Council, agreement was reached to ensure that a component of education was offered on the site.

On 1 August 2011, the Mayor of Manly announced that the Council had executed the contract to purchase the former Seaforth TAFE site. Furthermore, the Council has already explored usage options for the site, including education.

I am advised that there are appropriate covenants in the agreement for the usage of the site, and the consent of the Minister for Education will be required for any future sale of the site.

Questions without notice concluded.

IDENTIFICATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Bill received, read a first time and ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Michael Gallacher.

Motion by the Hon. Michael Gallacher agreed to:

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

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

VETERINARY PRACTICE AMENDMENT (INTERSTATE VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS) BILL 2011**Second Reading****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR [3.34 p.m.]: I support the Veterinary Practice Amendment (Interstate Veterinary Practitioners) Bill 2011. It was acknowledged earlier that this bill delivers on another commitment by the Liberal-Nationals Government to reduce red tape in this State. The bill is a fantastic outcome for all veterinary practitioners throughout New South Wales. The bill provides for an efficient national system of registration for veterinarians practising in New South Wales. The veterinary profession requires dedication and a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of animals. Across Australia, anyone wanting to become a veterinarian must study at university for a minimum of five years.

Many veterinarians provide a range of services free or at cost. For example, in New South Wales some veterinarians regularly work with organisations such as the RSPCA, Guide Dogs, and the Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service, also known as WIRES. Their services to these organisations include the desexing of animals and providing care and treatment to sick, injured and stray animals. I acknowledge the work undertaken by many veterinarians through the Wildlife Information and Education Service, in particular in my local area in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales where wombats regularly fall victim to contact with motor vehicles. Our local veterinarians provide a great service to the Wildlife Information and Education Service by treating many of the young of animals that are hit by motor vehicles.

Veterinarians in New South Wales provide a high standard of care to all our finned, furred and feathered friends. It is a great pleasure that we in government can provide our veterinarians with assistance to make their job much easier. Within the profession there are a number of specialist practices and some veterinarians choose to carry out mainstream day-to-day operations that can also include orthopaedic, spinal and heart surgery or the routine de-sexing of animals, pregnancy testing, et cetera. All animals are provided with a high standard of care by veterinarians in New South Wales and throughout Australia. It is unnecessary for each jurisdiction to require separate registration of veterinarians when standards across Australia are uniformly high.

Every veterinary board in each State and Territory requires equivalent veterinary qualifications and practical experience, providing a single, uniform national standard. It is because of these uniform requirements that New South Wales will not be flooded by veterinarians with lower standards than those that the New South Wales public is used to or expects. With the proposed introduction of the national recognition of registration, animals in New South Wales will continue to be provided with a high standard of care because of these uniform national standards. The requirements for veterinarians to register in each jurisdiction where they intend to practise creates a financial burden for an increasingly mobile veterinary workforce and its clients.

When I was living in the Riverina I often utilised the services of veterinarians who were working in Victoria, in particular specialist horse veterinarians who provided a fantastic service. It was a burden for them to travel across jurisdictions, particularly when we were located in New South Wales. Currently it would cost a veterinarian upwards of \$1,770 in fees to be registered in every Australian State and Territory. As has been pointed out by other members, this is a burden for veterinarians who work in border areas of the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia or Queensland. The requirement to register in each jurisdiction where veterinarians intend to practise also causes delays in getting interstate veterinarians onto response teams when there is an outbreak of any exotic animal disease. Other members referred also to equine influenza. It is no secret that my family has horses. Members would be aware that the equine influenza outbreak severely impacted on horse breeders in New South Wales.

It was a very good illustration of the response required and it demonstrates that all jurisdictions must work together to ensure that our biosecurity is protected, particularly where it is vital to an industry. I was in Ireland during the foot-and-mouth outbreak and that experience gave me an appreciation of how such an incident can cripple an economy if it is not managed properly. Obviously that outbreak had a huge impact on Ireland's agricultural sector. However, it also had an enormous impact on the tourism sector. Strict limitations were imposed on people travelling from town to town, and particularly those who had had any contact with livestock and those travelling from Northern Ireland into the Republic of Ireland. We must ensure that our response to any form of biosecurity incident or animal disease outbreak is seamless and we must be able to recruit veterinarians from any jurisdiction to the affected area so that we minimise the impact of any such emergency on our communities and our economy.

It is acknowledged that the proposed amendments will result in some loss of income for the Veterinary Practitioners Board because the number of registration applications and the fees that it will receive will decrease. However, the board will realise some savings under the new system with a reduction in its administration costs. The board will be able to absorb the net loss without increasing fees now or in the foreseeable future. That is another great benefit of the enactment of this legislation. The council of the Australasian Veterinary Board has created a national database to record the details of all registered veterinarians in participating States and Territories. As each State and Territory introduces legislation to implement national recognition of registration the details of the veterinarians registered in that State or Territory will be made available on the national database. As an end user of veterinary services I know that that will be handy, particularly for people living in regional areas who may need to access a veterinarian from a cross-border jurisdiction. The council will be responsible for maintaining the national database.

There has been very strong support for these amendments among stakeholder groups in New South Wales, including the livestock industry and the veterinary profession. The Hon. Rick Colless pointed out that the member for Charlestown is a registered veterinarian. He spoke at length in the other place about the benefits that this legislation will afford his profession. The president of the New South Wales branch of the Australian Veterinary Association believes that the present registration system no longer provides the most appropriate and efficient mechanism for the regulation of modern veterinary practice. The current system has become outdated as we have moved to incorporate new technology that allows our veterinarians to move throughout the State and across jurisdictions. The new system will allow veterinarians to travel further. The president believes that national recognition of veterinary registration is vital to the profession meeting existing and future market demand for veterinary services. The national registration system will be simple to implement, will facilitate employment mobility and will maintain the current State and Territory veterinary boards.

The proposal is also consistent with principles of mutual recognition, the reduction of red tape and the objectives of national competition policy. The bill includes sensible amendments that will allow registered veterinarians to practise in other States and Territories without needing to go through the rigours and expense of registering in each jurisdiction. National recognition of registration rightly recognises the consistent standards that veterinarians across Australia bring to their work. Every time I call on veterinarians to treat our many animals I am amazed at what they do. I believe that their job is harder than that of a general practitioner. A general practitioner can get a patient to explain his or her symptoms, but a veterinarian must go through a rigorous process of elimination and examination to work out what is affecting the animal and then treat it. That is often an arduous exercise and the work they do is fantastic. The proposed amendments in this bill go some way towards assisting veterinarians in the great work they do while at the same time benefiting our communities and animals—great and small alike—and those who rely on the services of veterinarians, particularly those in regional New South Wales. For those reasons, I commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN [3.45 p.m.]: I speak on behalf of the Christian Democratic Party in support of the Veterinary Practice Amendment (Interstate Veterinary Practitioners) Bill 2011. The object of this bill is to enable veterinary practitioners registered in other States or Territories to practise in New South Wales without having to register separately in New South Wales. The bill gives effect to the National Recognition of Veterinary Registration Model, which was endorsed by the Primary Industries Ministerial Council. Under the agreed model, other States and Territories will recognise veterinary practitioners registered in New South Wales. The Christian Democratic Party recognises the important contribution that veterinarians make to New South Wales, the nation, local and rural communities and to the health and welfare of animals and people. I also note that 2011 is World Veterinary Year.

Veterinarians play vital roles in human health and welfare through disease control, food safety, scientific research, biosecurity, quarantine, agriculture, and the positive power of pets in the lives of Australians. Veterinarians are also vital to ensuring the high quality of Australia's commercial herds and flocks and the security of our food supply. Although some 2,600 veterinarians reside and practise in New South Wales, the Minister notes that we have the potential to attract an estimated 6,000 more who are not currently registered here by cutting the cost and red tape associated with such registrations. This is essential because in the event of an animal disease emergency it will enable New South Wales to call on veterinarians in other States to undertake emergency response work without the delays and burdens of significant registration processes. Animal diseases can have serious impacts on industries, communities and people. The Australian Veterinary Association notes:

The equine influenza outbreak in New South Wales and Queensland during 2007-2008 cost Australian Governments at least \$350 million in direct costs. It also cost an additional \$1.5 billion in indirect costs to the horse industry and the nation.

Should Australia experience a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak, the cost to the gross domestic product has been estimated to be between \$8 billion and \$13 billion in the first year. In addition to the response costs borne by governments and industry, an outbreak would take a massive toll on agricultural communities and businesses in rural and regional Australia. Disease threats to animals are serious and potentially expensive to the Australian economy and to people's livelihoods. Veterinarians are at the forefront of both surveillance and response to disease outbreaks and this legislation will enable them to respond to such emergencies successfully without delay. Victoria has already implemented such legislation and upon the passing of this bill New South Wales will be second, with other States and Territories following shortly after that. That will create a uniform national practice standard and increased mobility for veterinarians. The Christian Democratic Party commends the bill to the House.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO [3.49 p.m.]: I support the Veterinary Practice Amendment (Interstate Veterinary Practitioners) Bill 2011. As has been said, this legislation is the result of Council of Australian Governments discussions, and like many other things that result from those discussions it has taken a very long time to come to fruition. This amending bill, which will enable veterinary practitioners to transfer from State to State without having to apply for re-registration, has come about after consultation within the veterinary practice industry. It is good that we are able to help veterinarians relocate and move around more easily as this will give individual veterinary practitioners an opportunity to expand their work experience. All members are aware that we tend to have a shortage of large animal practitioners in New South Wales because many students attending university veterinary colleges indicate a preference to work with small animals. This is a good opportunity to get veterinary practitioners who have experience in working with large animals to practise in New South Wales.

The Hon. Melinda Pavey: Like Charles Sturt University graduates are doing for Wagga.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Yes. Some universities have implemented initiatives to ensure they are getting a balance of students in newer intakes so they have people who want to work with large and small animals. I recognise the great work that veterinarians contribute to our society, whether they work in the food industry, in cattle breeding or in horse breeding. The horseracing industry, in particular, which is important for the New South Wales economy, relies to a great extent on the high standard of veterinary practices we have in New South Wales. I am sure there will be no diminution of that as a result of allowing interstate veterinary practitioners to transfer to New South Wales. I want to talk about some of the good work that veterinary practitioners do and I use as an example my local vet—someone who is not just involved in running her own veterinary practice but also contributes greatly through charitable work and through involvement in the veterinary industry.

The Hon. Rick Colless: And who looks after your puppies.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Yes, someone who looks after my pets in an incredibly good fashion and who ensures that a vet is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, if there is an emergency. The Haberfield veterinary practice, which is run by Tanya Carter, supports a number of different charitable organisations, including the Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service [WIRES]. On the odd occasion, we have dropped off a baby parrot or cockatoo that we have found in a local park. It also supports the Delta Society, which is helping animals to help people, where companion animals are taken into nursing homes and hospitals to engage with patients, and it supports VetAid and Vets Beyond Borders. In addition to supporting vet charity, it supports a vaccination campaign in East Timor to reduce the incidence of rabies amongst domestic dogs. The practice supports the University of Sydney by taking veterinary students in for practice. It also supports the Australian Companion Animal Health Foundation so that if a companion animal that is a patient at the practice passes away a donation is made to the foundation in its name to assist with research, which I think is worthwhile.

That practice has been established for over 30 years. Before setting up her practice, Dr Tanya Carter undertook research on marsupials and has maintained a keen interest in wildlife disease throughout her professional life. She is a member of a number of wildlife disease and management organisations as well as being a scientific member of the Royal Zoological Society. In 2008 Tanya became a member, by examination, of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists (Animal Welfare). Tanya is the vice president of the Australian Veterinary Association's Australian Veterinarians for Animal Welfare and Ethics, serves on three animal ethics committees and was a member of the Veterinary Surgeons Board between 2003 and 2006. Tanya was a recipient of the Belle Bruce Reid medal awarded to Australia's top 100 women veterinarians by the University of Melbourne in 2006.

Tanya is the lead veterinarian at the practice and is ably supported by Dr Helen Gibson, who does most of the surgery at the practice. I am glad, as a companion animal owner, to have a local veterinarian with such a wealth of experience and knowledge to whom I can turn if I need to. Veterinary practices such as the one operated by Tanya Carter, who has mentored many young veterinarians and allows veterinary students to live upstairs in the practice so they can gain practical experience and earn a little bit of money on weekends and after hours, are great examples of practices that are concerned about supporting companion animal owners in the community and giving back—not being run purely as economic models.

I commend the Veterinary Practice Amendment (Interstate Veterinary Practitioners) Bill 2011 to the House. I think that the changes that will be introduced as a result of the bill should allow us to have greater width of experience in the veterinarians who come to work in New South Wales. It is common sense to make veterinary skills portable across Australia, rather than people having to pay to register State by State, particularly in areas like the Tweed where veterinarians may want to practise across the border in Queensland on a locum basis. This type of legislation is the way to go to harmonise the registration of veterinary practitioners across Australia. I support the bill.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY (Minister for Roads and Ports) [3.56 p.m.], in reply: I thank members for their contribution to the debate and for their general support for the Veterinary Practice Amendment (Interstate Veterinary Practitioners) Bill 2011. I especially thank my colleagues the Hon. Rick Colless and the Hon. Sarah Mitchell for their contributions. I note that the bill even had the support of The Greens and I acknowledge also the Opposition's support. In particular, I thank the Hon. Rick Colless for his contribution to debate and his comments about veterinarians. I understand that yesterday the Minister for Primary Industries met with the Veterinary Practitioners Board of New South Wales and the board informed her that currently there is no shortage of veterinarians in regional and rural areas. I am pleased to hear that the training and supply of veterinarians is meeting demand, but that has not always been the situation. In my local area it has been hard to get veterinarians over the years. This bill has given people an opportunity to talk about veterinarians that they have known and met in their lifetime. Most of the veterinarians that I have run into have had an effect on my liver.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: They didn't treat you for liver fluke?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: They nearly caused it. Invariably veterinarians are leaders in the community. The great thing about them is that they are down to earth and they ground the people around them. Not many veterinary practice bills go through this House, so I take this opportunity to acknowledge three or four of the hundreds of veterinarians that I have bumped into over the years and that I have liked. About 1,000 years ago I rode with Bill Bradley. He went on to work in a small animal practice in Sydney and then in Brisbane. I also went to school in Crookwell with Rob Churchill. Jennie married Rob when they were both at a veterinary college. Jennie has written books on Edna Walling—

Dr John Kaye: It is a great book.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: It is a good book.

Dr John Kaye: I have read it; it is a fabulous book and she was a wonderful woman.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Edna Walling was a marvellous garden designer. Rob and Jennie Churchill currently own an Edna Walling garden at Kiloren in Crookwell and are veterinarians in Crookwell. Jennie Churchill was working for the dark side for a while, for a former Labor Minister—

The Hon. Rick Colless: She has come back to the good side. She is back in the light.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: She has now left that role and is back. Now that she is outside government circles this is my only opportunity to acknowledge that late one night she told me a great story about two dogs.

Dr John Kaye: What is that story, Duncan?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: It is a veterinary story. I went to school with a bloke named Reuben Rose—I never thought he would amount to what he did—who went on to great heights in veterinary education. They are all great people and wonderful community members. The primary purpose of the bill is to allow vets

who are registered in another State or Territory to practise as a vet in New South Wales. Vets whose interstate registration is subject to conditions or limitations will have the same conditions and limitations imposed on their deemed registration in New South Wales.

The Hon. Mick Veitch raised the question of suspended vets. The bill also provides for instances where a vet is suspended from practising or deregistered in another Australian jurisdiction. In that situation a person's deemed registration in New South Wales may be suspended or cancelled by the board. However, there may be reasons why the board would not want to replicate the decision made by another jurisdiction. One example would be where the offence that led to the suspension or cancellation was specific to that particular State. It is therefore appropriate to allow the board to have a discretionary power in relation to suspension or cancellation of deemed registration.

The amendments in the bill will enable the national recognition registration model to commence in New South Wales. The model is consistent with the principles of mutual recognition, and vets across the nation will benefit from these amendments. Importantly, the amendments will reduce red tape and costs for vets and will be particularly useful for those vets in regional areas who work across borders. Once the other States introduce similar legislation New South Wales vets will experience the same benefits in those States. An important aspect of these amendments is that they will ensure that New South Wales can call on interstate vets at a moment's notice during animal emergency situations.

The amendments are of the utmost importance in dealing with such disease emergencies as the equine influenza outbreak. Crises such as caused by this fast-moving, devastating disease are the precise reason we need to ensure that vets from other States can quickly assist in responding to emergency situations. I pay tribute to the amazing contribution made by New South Wales vets in controlling that disease. It should be noted that New South Wales is virtually the only place in the world not only to have controlled the disease but also to have eliminated it—a most remarkable achievement.

Livestock producers and owners of companion animals alike often need access to vets quickly and in different circumstances. The importance of the amendments in the bill becomes particularly clear in State border areas. Currently a vet across this State's border—perhaps only a few kilometres away—cannot go to the aid of an animal and its owner without registration in this State. That vet may be the only available vet in the district. The present restriction means that the owner and animal would be left without access to a much-needed service. The professional service standards offered by our veterinarians are determined by the quality of the training they receive. The veterinary profession supports the amendments in this bill. These progressive and farsighted amendments can only be of benefit to all users of veterinary services in this State. I commend the bill to the House.

Question—That this bill be now read a second time—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Leave granted to proceed to the third reading of the bill forthwith.

Third Reading

Motion by the Hon. Duncan Gay agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Bill read a third time and returned to the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

BUSINESS NAMES (COMMONWEALTH POWERS) BILL 2011

Second Reading

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX (Parliamentary Secretary) [4.05 p.m.], on behalf of the Hon. Greg Pearce: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011. The bill will help to cut red tape for businesses in New South Wales, especially for small businesses that operate across State boundaries. The bill is the culmination of an important national reform initiative, which will have significant and positive outcomes for the entire Australian economy. The purpose of registration is to ensure that consumers and traders are easily able to identify who is operating a business. This will ensure transparency and help to prevent dodgy operators from hiding behind a trading name.

Currently each State and Territory, including New South Wales, has in place its own legislation for registering business names. This means that a trader who wants to trade under a business name in multiple jurisdictions must register the name in each State, which is both costly and time consuming. Maintaining these multiple State and Territory registration systems imposes undue costs and administrative burdens on the business community and does not reflect the demands and realities of today's Australian economy. This situation is particularly frustrating for those people who operate their businesses along State borders. Nor does it take into account the growth of electronic commerce under which a business with a physical presence in only one jurisdiction may now operate online to provide goods and services throughout Australia. My family operates businesses in the Queanbeyan region that, in the past, have included business in the Australian Capital Territory. The different compliance arrangements required, including for business names, involved a frustrating process. Members from both sides of the House, and I, welcome these amendments to simplify those arrangements.

That is why, as part of the National Partnership Agreement to Deliver a Seamless National Economy, the Council of Australian Governments established the National Business Names Project in July 2008. An intergovernmental agreement for business names was signed in July 2009. The agreement provides that the States will refer their business names registration powers to the Commonwealth. In turn, the Commonwealth will establish a single national business names register under which a person may register a national business name. The establishment of a national register is only the first stage of longer-term national reforms that will ultimately make it easier for businesses to interact with all levels of government on many routine matters. This part of the project is known as the Business Online Service. The Business Online Service will enable a business to establish an online account that will provide a single portal for interaction with government. A business will be able to use this account to carry out many routine transactions, including searching for business licensing information, notification to government agencies of a change in particulars of a new business address, or renewals of different licences and authorities.

All jurisdictions have been working towards creating a single national business names registration scheme. This has required extensive consultation on the necessary legislation, the functional requirements of the new system, and the processes for transferring State and Territory information and operations to the Commonwealth. Establishment of a national scheme is a major step in the reduction of government red tape and will provide enormous benefits to the economy as a whole. It will reduce the regulatory cost burden, and the seamless online facility will streamline the whole process. I will now outline some of the key features of the new national business names scheme. It will be administered by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission and will provide an integrated system for the registration, renewal and searching of business names.

Applicants will have the choice of registering their name for one or three years. Traders will be able to register and renew their names online, which will mean that they can carry out a transaction at a time suitable to them. Of course, if they still want to fill in a paper form the Australian Securities and Investments Commission will allow for that. I cannot imagine why it would, but we must always remain flexible, particularly in the light of changing technologies and the slow take-up of some of those technologies, even for businesses that seek to compete in very competitive environments.

It will be essential to have an Australian business number in order to register a new name under the national scheme. The system will streamline this process by enabling a business to apply simultaneously for an Australian business number and a business name using the online facility. All existing business names on State and Territory registers will be migrated to the new system at changeover and will be deemed validly registered. Where a person has registered the same name in several jurisdictions it will be necessary for them to maintain only one registration in order to operate nationally under the new scheme. That is certainly a massive improvement. Where a business owner holds several different business names, all of which will be able to be used throughout the country, there will be a facility to enable a common renewal date for all of those names.

Fees are likely to be lower than under most current State systems, producing an additional saving for business. The Commonwealth legislation also provides that detailed information on the national register will

continue to be available to State and Territory licensing and law enforcement authorities. Where information about a person has been suppressed on a State or Territory register, such as for personal health or safety reasons, that information will be protected on the national register and not released to the general public without that person's consent. The Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011 provides the necessary New South Wales legislative framework for these important reforms. Firstly, it provides a text-based referral of the State Government's business names powers to the Commonwealth based on legislation introduced into the Tasmanian Parliament. Secondly, it deals with a number of transitional arrangements. These preserve the rights of existing New South Wales business name holders and, together with the Commonwealth transitional provisions, they allow for smooth transfer of administration so as to minimise disruptions to business. Thirdly, it makes a number of necessary consequential amendments to other New South Wales legislation.

I now turn to the detailed provisions of the bill. The bill refers certain business name matters to the Commonwealth by reference to the text of the Commonwealth's Business Names Registration Bill 2011 and the Business Names Registration (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Bill 2011, as tabled in the House of Assembly of Tasmania on 5 July 2011. Whoever said that good things do not come from Tasmania? The text of the two Commonwealth bills is defined in the New South Wales referral provisions as the tabled text. For ease of reference I shall refer to these respectively as the main Commonwealth bill and the Commonwealth transitional bill. The terms of the referral provisions in the New South Wales bill are as agreed by all States and are largely self-explanatory. However, I will mention a few key provisions.

In clause 3 the definition of "business name" is the same as that in the main Commonwealth bill. An Australian business number will be essential for registration of a new business name under the national scheme, and the definition clarifies that a business will not include any activity for which an entity is not entitled to an Australian business number. The term "exemption provision" refers to clauses 19 (5) and 20 (3) of the main Commonwealth bill. Clauses 19 and 20 are offence provisions concerning requirements to include a business name in written communications and to display a business name at places of business open to the public. However, clauses 19 (5) and 20 (3) provide exemptions, for example, if the display of a business name would be contrary to a Commonwealth, State or Territory law.

Clause 5 (2) of the New South Wales bill preserves these exemptions by providing that the Commonwealth will not be able to omit an exemption provision in its legislation without enacting an equivalent provision or otherwise limit the operation of an exemption provision. When allocating a new business name under the national scheme the Australian Securities and Investments Commission will not be able to issue a name that is the same as a name already allocated to an entity on a notified State register as defined. This will avoid confusion with entities registered under State laws, such as incorporated associations and cooperatives. Clauses 4, 5 and 6 of the New South Wales bill contain the substance of this State's referral to the Commonwealth. Clause 5 is a particularly critical provision. Clause 5 (1) specifies exactly what continuing business name matters within the power of the State are referred to the Commonwealth.

Just as importantly, clause 5 (2) sets out those matters not being referred to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth will not be able to restrict the ability of a New South Wales government body to carry on a business under a name or to impose restrictions on a government body to include a name in communications or to display a name. There are equivalent protections for legislation relating to notified State registers. The Commonwealth will not be able to restrict this State's ability to provide for an entity's name by way of the New South Wales legislation; nor will it be able to effect the imposition or payment of any taxes under our State laws. Clauses 6 and 7 of the bill provide for the formal referral of powers, with reference to the tabled text of the Commonwealth bills, and limit the Commonwealth powers to make amendments. Clauses 8 and 9 are formal provisions concerning the manner in which New South Wales may terminate its referral of powers. Clause 10 provides for evidence as to the tabled text in the Parliament of Tasmania.

I have already outlined the many benefits which the new national scheme will provide for businesses in New South Wales. However, it is particularly important to ensure a smooth operational transition to the new scheme and to protect the rights of existing business name holders under the current New South Wales Business Names Act 2002. I refer now to schedule 1 to the New South Wales bill, which provides the necessary savings and transitional provisions. These complement those in the Commonwealth transitional bill. Part 1 contains various definitions. Existing business names legislation is defined as the New South Wales Business Names Act 2002 and any regulations made under that Act, as well as the relevant provisions of the Licensing and Registration (Uniform Procedures) Act 2002.

Part 2 covers the operational transfers of functions to the Commonwealth. Clause 2 enables New South Wales to migrate data and provide information to the Commonwealth for the purposes of establishing the

national register. Clause 3 provides that the existing business names legislation ceases upon the changeover date except where some provisions continue in operation in order to finalise certain matters that are pending as at that date. Clause 4 preserves the operation of offence provisions where the conduct occurred before the changeover date. Clause 5 preserves the right to recover fees and charges payable under the existing legislation as at the changeover date, and enables fees to be charged under any provisions that continue in operation.

Clause 6 enables the Commissioner for Fair Trading to refuse to exercise certain functions during the transitional period before the changeover date. The practicalities of final data migration to the Commonwealth system may require New South Wales to close its business names register some days prior to the changeover date with no new matters accepted. I assure honourable members that there will be plenty of advance notice about any closure of the New South Wales register if that is required. Clause 7 covers the renewal of business names and reflects the Commonwealth transitional bill and operational arrangement made with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. The States will issue renewal notices for business names where the due date for renewal occurs before the changeover date, while the Australian Securities and Investments Commission will issue the renewal notices for business names with due dates on or after the changeover date.

Clause 8 is an evidentiary provision relating to certificates of business names and extracts from the New South Wales register issued before the changeover date. Clauses 9 to 14 cover the resolution of matters that are outstanding as at the changeover date. Clauses 9 and 10 enable completion of pending applications for registration, renewal or restoration of a name, or for variation of particulars. Clauses 11 and 12 preserve the existing rights of review and appeal, and pending proceedings in the Administrative Decisions Tribunal or a court. However, there is no appeal against a decision to refuse to carry out certain functions prior to changeover in accordance with clause 6. Clause 13 provides that all matters on hand but not yet completed will be notified to the Commonwealth as held matters and will be completed under the existing legislation.

This will include those matters where the review or appeal period has not yet expired. Once a held matter has been finalised the Australian Securities and Investments Commission will be notified as to whether the relevant business name is to be confirmed as registered on the national register or whether it is to be removed. Clause 14 preserves existing offence provisions to held business names. Part 3 of schedule 1, clauses 15 to 18, contains miscellaneous provisions relating to compensation, delegations, references to previous business name legislation and the making of regulations.

Schedule 2 provides for repeal of existing business names legislation whilst schedule 3 contains consequential amendments to other New South Wales legislation. The transfer of State-based business name powers to the Commonwealth is an important national reform that will benefit business across this country while ensuring that consumers remain protected. It is an important measure that will cut red tape and regulation for local business and make it much easier for them to expand interstate. This is exactly the type of measure New South Wales needs to get this State back up and running. The Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011 is a culmination of a significant national reform initiative that will provide real and tangible benefits to the people of New South Wales. It is a sign that the Council of Australian Governments can work and we must continue to ensure that it delivers for all the people of Australia and the people of this State—and I can certainly assure this House that it is the Government's strong commitment to ensure that red tape is cut that will sustain that into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS [4.20 p.m.]: I speak on behalf of the Labor Opposition and represent my colleague and shadow Minister Cherie Burton. The Opposition does not oppose the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011. We strongly support the bill and also the entire reform process. The background of the legislation is that the previous Labor Government commenced the process in July 2008 when the Council of Australian Governments agreed that all States would refer their business names and registration powers to the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth would establish a single national register for business names which would enable businesses to register a business name and obtain an Australian business number in one transaction.

In 2009 the Commonwealth determined that an Australian business number would be a prerequisite for obtaining a business name under the national scheme. This reform will cut red tape. It will save time and cut costs to New South Wales businesses. This is a very important and major national reform. It will help small businesses in a major way. The Federal Labor Government should be commended. These reforms will provide relief to New South Wales businesses that trade under a business name in multiple jurisdictions. At present businesses trading across borders must register the name in each State and Territory, which imposes undue costs and administrative burdens on the business community. In a modern economy such as ours this does not make

any sense and does not reflect the demand and growing needs of today's Australian economy. It also does not take into account the high growth of electronic commerce under which a business with a physical presence in only one jurisdiction may now operate online and provide goods and services throughout Australia.

The implementation of a national business names register is an important project designed to simplify business processes and reduce business costs. It will remove the need for a person to register a business name in multiple jurisdictions. The system will be, as the Parliamentary Secretary outlined, administered by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission and will be available online. As Minister Roberts outlined in the other House, there are protections for existing business name holders. All names currently registered in States and Territories, and in particular in New South Wales, will migrate to the new system and be protected under grandfathering provisions which will enable them to continue and be renewed. Where a person has the same name registered in several jurisdictions he or she needs to maintain only one of those registrations. In the case of identical migrated names being registered to different persons the Australian Securities and Investments Commission may include a distinguishing term on the register such as the location.

The Council of Australian Governments, as part of the national seamless economy partnership agreement, established the National Business Names Project in July 2008. An intergovernmental agreement for business names was signed in July 2009. The agreement provides that the States will refer their business names registrations to the Commonwealth at the time. In turn the Commonwealth will establish a single national business names register under which a person may register a national business name. The establishment of the national register is only the first stage of longer-term national reforms that will ultimately make it easier for businesses to interact with all levels of government on many routine matters, which is a great saving for local small businesses.

The referral of powers is a text-based referral based on the text of the Commonwealth Business Names Registration Bill 2011, the main Commonwealth bill, and the Business Names Registration Transitional and Consequential Provisions Bill 2011 tabled in the Parliament of Tasmania, which is the lead State. The referral provisions contain appropriate exclusions and protections for State laws. As the Minister outlined in his agreement in principle speech, the main Commonwealth bill contains concurrent operational provisions in relation to State and Territory laws. Commonwealth and State transitional legislation provides for a smooth operational changeover under which States will issue renewal notices for due dates before the changeover date and will complete all matters on hand as at that date. Existing appeal rights are preserved and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission will continue renewal notices for all business names with renewal dates after the changeover date.

The Parliamentary Secretary, the Hon Matthew Mason-Cox, has detailed the provisions of the bill very succinctly and we are all in agreement. The Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011 will provide these powers to the Commonwealth and contains the necessary provisions and consequential amendments to other New South Wales legislation. Passage of this bill is necessary to ensure commencement of the scheme in May 2012. As I outlined initially, the Opposition supports this legislation. Businesses will be able to look forward to a more streamlined process when registering business names and also when they have to deal with other matters in relation to their business and businesses across Australia. I commend the bill to the House.

Dr JOHN KAYE [4.28 p.m.]: The Greens do not oppose the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011. As previous speakers have outlined, the bill transfers powers in respect of the registration of business names from the State to the Commonwealth and in doing so creates a unified national system of business names and Australian business numbers aligned and operated by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, which we all know as ASIC.

The legislation will make life easier for small and medium enterprises operating across State borders. It will remove the need for multiple registrations and create a consistent set of regulations for the operation of those enterprises. This should be of advantage to employees and small and medium sized and large business operators here in New South Wales by increasing opportunities for trade and employment across State borders. Both the Law Council of Australia and Master Builders Australia Limited made submissions on the draft Federal bills for the scheme and they raised a number of interesting points. I might say from the outset that both organisations, coming from very different perspectives, supported the legislation and supported the transition to a unified national system. Each raised some issues that I would invite the Parliamentary Secretary to address. One of the issues of course is what information would be available on the register, and specifically for home-based industries. Home-based industries will have only their suburb and the State or Territory displayed on the free online register.

Businesses will be able to seek suppression of any other publicly available details upon request to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. This would suppress details on the public register but not to nominated government agencies. Concerns have been raised by the Law Council, and I would invite the Parliamentary Secretary to address those when speaking in reply. The Law Council raises the issue that when two parties are contracting it is important that they both fully know who is behind each of the parties and their business history. The Law Council believes that suppressing information will make it much more difficult to do so.

The issue is privacy concerns, which is important. The Small and Medium Enterprise Committee of the Law Council of Australia concluded that it was not convinced that privacy concerns should prevail over transparency, the protection and advancement of consumer protection, and business accountability. That committee of the Law Council is raising concerns about transparency. It is concerned that the capacity to suppress details will disadvantage consumers and other businesses seeking to contract with businesses that have suppressed their details. The committee makes a fair point, and that issue should be considered. When a business seeks to trade in the public domain and to engage with the public it is only reasonable, from a consumer affairs perspective and a business accountability perspective, that businesses or individuals who deal with that business understand who that business is and where it comes from.

This is about accountability should something go wrong. It is a fair trading matter in respect of tracking down a business. We regularly read about companies that sell products online or by mail order disappearing or not being real. The great virtue of the national database will be its advantage for individuals who seek to buy from a company. Recently a case was reported in the media about an exercise machine—which I have seen advertised at the gym that I go to—that was purchased by people but broke on the first use. Clearly, it was poorly designed and inadequately put together. Consumers who then sought to attain redress from the company from which they purchased the machine found that it did not exist or that it was impossible to track down. It had more or less done a midnight flit. That is a bad outcome for consumers who invested hundreds of dollars to buy these machines.

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: "Midnight flit" is a Glaswegian expression.

Dr JOHN KAYE: That shows I spent time in Glasgow, as did the Minister. This matter is serious, because consumers end up spending a lot of time trying to track down companies that have done the wrong thing by them. I invite the Parliamentary Secretary to address this matter in his reply. Perhaps he could explain the privacy provisions that are in operation, and how privacy, consumer protection and advance of business accountability are balanced out by the legislation of the Commonwealth, to which this House has been invited to hand over State powers.

The second issue relates to proposed business names that are identical to names already on the register. It is stated in a variety of Commonwealth materials that names already on the register will not be available for registration as another name. The Opposition spokesperson referred to this earlier. The idea would be that an identifying mark would be inserted onto the name where two names are equivalent. The Law Council makes the observation that for some companies that could be quite confusing and could cause them to re-sign their businesses—that is, put new signs on their businesses. If a name change or a mark is forced on their name, even though they have been operating with that name, in order to be easily identifiable through the register they may need to invest money to change their name.

The Law Council raises a particular issue with respect to the franchising sector. A number of franchisees across different States may have similar names. I understand—though I have not been able to check this out—that there is a McDonald's in Burwood in New South Wales and a McDonald's in Burwood in Western Australia.

The Hon. Sophie Cotsis: You don't like McDonald's, do you?

Dr JOHN KAYE: I thank the shadow Minister for reminding the House of my inherent dislike of foods that are rich in fat, salt and sugar, as indeed McDonald's foods are.

The Hon. Sophie Cotsis: And trans fats.

Dr JOHN KAYE: And trans fats—although I do not wish to make an allegation about McDonald's with respect to trans fats because I understand they have reduced the quantity of trans fats in their foods. The issue here is that one of the two McDonald's would need to change its name, and hence put up new business signs. This is not a straightforward matter.

The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox: Such as "McDonald's Burwood, NSW" and "McDonald's Burwood, WA".

Dr JOHN KAYE: The Parliamentary Secretary makes the observation that the franchisees could put "McDonald's Burwood, NSW" and "McDonald's Burwood, WA". The problem is that the signage on McDonald's in Burwood, New South Wales, is probably "McDonald's Burwood", and likewise "McDonald's Burwood" for the McDonald's in Burwood, Western Australia. So there are issues there, and I would invite the Parliamentary Secretary to respond to those. I accept that there are good reasons for not having two businesses, even when they are franchisees of a similar business, with the same name. But there are transitional issues associated with that, and I would invite the Parliamentary Secretary to make remarks in respect of that.

A national register is of advantage to consumers and businesses, subject to the two issues that I raised. One of the underlying issues is the identity of State-based businesses and how those will continue to be protected under a national register. In New South Wales we live in an economy that is increasingly operating on a national and a global scale. Maintaining relevancy for the State and maintaining a relevant role for the State will be challenging. I do not propose that we stand in the way of issues that go national where it is validly logical and rational that these issues do so. Where there are benefits for consumers, businesses and the community we should not stand in the way of that transition. That would be conservatism for the sake of conservatism.

However, this Parliament and this Government need to identify and understand the evolving role of the State. The worst thing that could happen is that we slowly hand over all powers to the Commonwealth and see the States wither on the vine. A number of members of this House share with me a commitment to three levels of government—Commonwealth, State and local government—and that there be validly defined roles for each of those levels of government. What is important—and this legislation invites us to think about this—is the need to accept that some roles will go the Federal Government and therefore that the State needs to think carefully about the way it works.

One of the key problems that the State faces is the dreadfully named but important vertical fiscal imbalance—the problems that the State faces with not having access to growth revenues, where our revenues grow at about 4 per cent whereas Commonwealth revenues grow at about 8 per cent. In part, but not entirely, that is driving the transition of powers to the Commonwealth. The other thing is the growth of telecommunications and transport, which means increasingly we operate not bound by the Tweed and the Murray and some arbitrary line to the west of the Darling, but that we are indeed operating on a continent that—

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Have you been reading my maiden speech?

Dr JOHN KAYE: I acknowledge the interjection. I have read the maiden speech made by the Government Whip on many occasions, particularly when I am feeling depressed, a little bit down or I am needing something to jolly me up. I then look for a good piece of humour and I read that maiden speech. I get a good chuckle out of it. I do not think I am the only person who has read the Government Whip's maiden speech to get a bit of a lift to the spirits.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Indeed all my speeches.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Indeed it is a rare speech from the Government Whip that does not bring a chuckle to the lips and a smile to the heart. His speeches are surely some of the greatest satire ever delivered in this Chamber. I doubt whether anybody could genuinely believe some of the things that the Government Whip says. I share with the Government Whip a belief in three levels of government. I share with the Government Whip—I may be putting words into his mouth—a concern about the way in which the State will define a future for itself. This legislation represents just one of numerous powers that have been handed over to the Commonwealth in the 4½ years that I have been a member of this Parliament. Some have been highly successful and others have had catastrophic consequences. The worst example was the former Government handing over the investment of wires and poles to the Australian Energy Regulator.

Prior to the transfer of powers, the regulation of investment in wires and poles was carried out by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, formerly the Government Pricing Tribunal. I must say that both the Government Pricing Tribunal and the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal did a remarkably good job of maintaining pressure on the State-owned wires and poles businesses to not gold plate their systems. The history of regulation in this State was one of world standard. For example, when one compares the California Public Utility Commission, the Texas Public Utility Commission and the New York State

Energy Regulatory Authority to New South Wales in the same period one sees that we were a world leader in maintaining pressure on the wires and poles businesses, the distributors and the transmission company to not gold plate their system.

When those four businesses escaped from State regulation into a newly emerging Commonwealth regulation catastrophe befell the State, with a \$17.9 billion investment over a four-year period, much of which was not needed. About one-third of it was needed for less than two days a year. It was a massive over-investment where other alternatives, demand management, energy efficiency and local distributed energy—such as renewable energy and cogeneration—would have been cheaper and better for the environment. I raise that matter in the context of this legislation to highlight the risks of handing over powers to the Commonwealth. That is not to say that this Parliament should not do so; it is to say that there are real risks.

This State has a tradition of high-quality regulation. When one looks at some of the State agencies—such as the Board of Studies and the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal—one sees that a number of them have a long tradition of quality regulation. I must admit that from time to time I have found it necessary to be critical of some of the decisions they have made. Nonetheless, they are high-quality regulatory agencies. It is not clear whether the Commonwealth has the same capacity.

The second inherent problem with Commonwealth-based regulation is that it is a lot further away from the agencies and the businesses that it is regulating. There is not a better example of that than the ill-fated and quite catastrophic home insulation program that was run by the Commonwealth Government. It was a great and essential idea, but it was a complete catastrophe. The Commonwealth did not trust the States and the States did not trust local government to do regulation. It works best at those levels. The Commonwealth should have provided money and policy direction. The States should have regulated the activities. Local government should have spent the money and ensured that the job was done properly. If the three levels of government work together we can get more than three times the efficiency of regulatory work. If one level of government ignores the capacities of the other two levels of government we get the sort of centrist catastrophe that came out of Canberra.

It was a great scheme and a great idea. However, the scheme was so poorly implemented that it tragically caused death and house fires. It had to be aborted. It also sullied the idea of home energy efficiency. Home energy efficiency is not only important for reducing greenhouse gas emissions but it is also a key component for bringing down household powers bills. That was an opportunity lost. That was an example of where handing over powers to the Commonwealth may not work and may work against our best interests.

I do not suggest that that is relevant in this case. It is fairly clear that the Australian Securities and Investments Commission has the infrastructure, capacity and experience to manage a database of this form and to regulate the allocation of business names. I do not think there is any evidence to say otherwise. However, the Minister for Fair Trading and the Office of Fair Trading should watch the matter carefully. They should watch those powers that have been transferred and the exercise of those powers to ensure that they are not being used in a way that restricts New South Wales businesses or, more likely, ignores the specific needs of businesses in New South Wales.

Recently I spoke to my dentist. He has been practising for many years and is a well-respected member of the profession. He talked about the transfer of dental regulation to the Federal body. His insurance was at risk—and hence his capacity to practise was at risk—because he could not get an answer out of the Federal dental regulatory body. He said, remarkably, that he thought the State body was excellent but the Federal body was not responsive to his needs. We agreed—as best I could with a number of dental instruments in my mouth—that that was a problem of distance. The Greens do not oppose this legislation. However, we ask the Parliamentary Secretary to refer to some of the matters I have raised in his reply and to watch carefully how this legislation is enacted.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL [4.48 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak in support of the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011. In August 2011 more than 501,000 business names were registered in New South Wales. Therefore, more than half a million business operators in this State stand to benefit from the introduction of a single national business names registration system. A key feature of the new system is that it will be available online. Through the one application, a person will be able to apply for both a business name and an Australian business number. There will be no more chasing after paper forms and no more attaching cheques and sending them to different departments, hoping they arrive in time. In future a prospective new business operator will be able to obtain both requirements by going to a single online portal.

Doing business online, at times that suit each individual, is now a way of life. We pay bills online, we compare home loans and obtain them online, and we renew our vehicle registrations online. We can submit our tax returns by E-tax and even have some of the necessary details filled in for us. And as we saw with the recent census, we can now even submit our census returns by electronic means.

Dr John Kaye: Did you do that?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I did not submit my census online. I filled out the form. I did it the old-school way because I chose to, and I will leave it at that. Governments at all levels have recognised the demands of business and private individuals for convenience in doing our day-to-day business. As my colleague the Minister for Fair Trading mentioned when introducing this bill in the other place, a national business names system is only the first part of several key national reforms that will make it easier for business to do business with governments in Australia. Another part of the reforms agreed to by the Council of Australian Governments is the business online system, which will enable a business to establish one online account and interact with many different government agencies through a single portal.

This initiative is being introduced in stages and will develop over time. Ultimately, it will enable business to obtain information about start-up requirements, to pre-fill and submit some forms electronically, and to undertake various other transactions with governments. One key feature of this service is a new national business licensing information system, which is planned for implementation during 2012. I am sure all members will be familiar with the many issues facing people wanting to start a business in this State. They need business names, an Australian business number, and they may need various licences, authorities and permits. They obtain some from the State Government, some from the Commonwealth Government, and others from their local council. Finding all this information and obtaining the necessary forms can be a minefield.

New South Wales, like other jurisdictions, has a Business Licence Information System. The system enables people to find out what State or Commonwealth licences or permits are required for a particular business. However, the current system does not provide information about New South Wales local government requirements. The new national system will provide information across all jurisdictions. The improvements will particularly benefit New South Wales business operators because the system will contain local council information for the first time.

This Government supports the businesspeople of our State. Many of them are small businesses with sole proprietors. The introduction of a national online business names registration system, followed by the gradual implementation of the other reforms I have mentioned, will produce cost and time savings for business. I am therefore pleased to support the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD [4.53 p.m.]: Having been involved in a small business in northern New South Wales for 23 years, I am pleased to speak in support of the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011. We experienced problems because of cross-border issues in our dealings with businesses and government in Queensland given the different regulations that apply to transport and the different accreditation of professionals we engaged from time to time. As a result, we incurred extra costs and had to deal with other complexities.

Ongoing microeconomic reform is essential for Australia to continue to build a strong economy into the future. A strong, efficient national economy is critical for driving jobs. The Council of Australian Government's National Seamless Economy Partnership Agreement includes a number of reform initiatives that are designed to make doing business easier. The need for certain business activities to be regulated through licensing and registration systems is clear. Registration and licensing schemes, in whatever form they take, help to protect consumers, other traders and the community as a whole.

However, we must constantly strive to reduce regulatory burdens where they are either unnecessary or the same result can be achieved using a better process. A national business names registration scheme does exactly that. It is appreciated that some type of regime to register trading names is warranted in the interests of consumer protection and the operation of a transparent market. However, what is unnecessary is for eight different business names registration systems to be in operation in a country that already has a highly integrated national economy. The introduction of a national business names register is a practical solution to the already widely known fact that Australian business operate in a national environment.

I am advised that New South Wales has more than 500,000 registered business names. Even if only a small proportion of these traders operate in more than one jurisdiction, or hold more than one name, the benefits

in time and money saved through a national register will quickly build up. Time poor small business operators will be able to register and renew their business names online at a time that suits them and their busy working day. As their business grows, their nationally recognised business name will be able to grow with them. For larger traders who have multiple business names across many jurisdictions, the saving in terms of time and money will be substantial. Less time, effort and resources will be spent complying with the law.

The Australian Securities and Investments Commission will become a focal point for a number of regulatory functions, not only business names but also company registrations and regulation, financial advice and consumer credit oversight. It will continue its ongoing role as a critical marketplace regulator. The commission's website and portals will enable people to search a range of business types and allow traders to register companies and company names. People will be able to simultaneously register a business name and an Australian business number.

While there are many benefits, national reform is not always easy. Governments have wrestled with how to integrate the Australian economy for years. Creating a national rail network out of a series of State-based railways with different gauged tracks was a problem that plagued the politicians of yesteryear. Steps have been taken to make the path to a national business names register less troublesome. To help smooth the way, the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011 includes a number of transitional arrangements. First and foremost, those traders who have an existing business name under New South Wales law will be able to carry the name over to the national system at the date of the changeover, even if the name is also used by a different trader in another jurisdiction. Where the New South Wales Government has in place restrictions on the display of a business name, such as in gaming venues, those restrictions will be able to continue. Likewise, the Commonwealth will not be able to restrict the ability of a New South Wales Government body to carry on business under a name.

Where a person's information is not disclosed publicly on the New South Wales register for health or safety reasons, that information will be protected on the national register. However, the important role the register plays in verifying who owns a business will continue. I am advised that in the lead-up to the introduction of the new national register in May 2012, traders will have access to a range of information on what the changes mean for them. This information will be in addition to the advice and educational material already available. It is my understanding that during the transfer of the New South Wales data to the Commonwealth if the State's business names register needs to be closed advance notice will be provided. Information will also be provided to those business name proprietors whose registrations fall due for renewal immediately before or after the changeover.

The referral of each State's business names powers to the Commonwealth makes sense. It makes sense for traders who will have the regulatory burden lessened. It also makes sense for consumers who will have the added protection of a complete national business names register rather than a disparate group of State-based and Territory-based information sources. Most importantly, it makes sense for the Australian and New South Wales economies. I commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS [4.58 p.m.]: I support the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011. As I am sure members are aware, a common feature on the wall of any local shop, delicatessen or drycleaners is a business name certificate. The business names registration system allows consumers to have confidence that if something goes wrong they will be able to identify the trader involved. New South Wales has had business names registration legislation in place since at least 1934. Over time the system has been reformed to meet the changes that have occurred in the marketplace. The Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011 is the next step in that evolution.

The advent of a national business names project occurred in 2008 when the Council of Australian Governments earmarked this important area of business regulation for reform as part of the National Seamless Economy Partnership Agreement. The project reflects that Australia's economy is different now than it was in 1934, in 1962 and again in 2002 when the legislation was significantly reformed. National infrastructure and communications advances mean that it is easy for businesses to reach across the country and the national business names project recognises that change.

The Commonwealth Government's new business names legislation—the Business Names Registration Bill 2011—will create a national business names register to be administered by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. In general, it will create one set of rules for all traders across the country—one set of rules, one register, one regulator, a streamlined process for registering and renewing business names and, most

importantly for traders, one business name that will cover the entire country, not only one State or Territory. The benefits for business are clear. If traders in New South Wales want to open a branch in another State it will be much easier for them to do so under a national business registration system. Likewise, if traders want to concentrate their business in New South Wales and sell throughout the country online, through mail order or in a virtual marketplace, the national business name project will make life easier. It is funny how members opposite are squawking about this. There is an old saying that success has many fathers. Opposition members are trying to take credit for everything that we are introducing in government.

As with any national reform project, it can only be a success if it is truly national. I am advised that all States will be referring their business names power to the Commonwealth as part of the scheme, which will also include Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory, which will also adopt the new scheme. There has been extensive consultation on the proposed new national business names register. The Senate has held an inquiry into the laws and stakeholders have been given an opportunity to comment. The Parliament of the first State to introduce a referral of powers bill—Tasmania—has also considered the legislation. New South Wales, like all other jurisdictions, has been involved in discussions on the new system, its transitional arrangements and what it will mean for the many businesses registered under the State system. This ensured that the views of the State with the largest economy have been heard at the table. The fact that all jurisdictions support this reform is a testament to the benefits it is expected to bring.

[Interruption]

The Hon. Penny Sharpe would be better off going back to tweeting—she is much quieter when she is tweeting and she gets her message across much more effectively. It is expected that the new national business names system will commence in May 2012. The Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill includes a number of transitional arrangements leading up to the May 2012 handover that will ensure that those traders with existing names will continue to be able to use them under the new system. If a business has a current business name at the time of the changeover, it does not need to do anything. Business names will transfer to the new system. If businesses have the same name registered in several jurisdictions they will only need to maintain one of those registrations. If they have a number of different names registered they will be able to seek a common renewal date. It is a win-win for traders. As the Minister has already noted, a national business names register is a significant reform initiative that will help to break down the artificial barriers to people getting on with the job of building our nation's economy and creating jobs. For this reason, I am pleased to support the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill, and I trust that those squawking members opposite will also support it.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS [5.02 p.m.]: Why do we need the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011? Some of my libertarian friends—sorry, I notice the presence in the Chamber of the Hon. Penny Sharpe and I am reminded that I have no friends. Some of my libertarian acquaintances might say to me, "Phelpsy, why do we need this bill? Isn't this simply a further government intrusion on our lives and the lives of ordinary businesspeople as they go about their daily business? Isn't this just an unnecessary impost on businesses? Why are you bothering?" I would be the first to admit that when there was an opportunity for de-legislation or deregulation, I would be there leading the charge. But sometimes there is a role for government, and I refer to no other than Adam Smith, who some 200 years ago made this point:

According to the system of natural liberty, the sovereign has only three duties to attend to; three duties of great importance, indeed, but plain and intelligible to common understandings ...

I will move to the second role, which is the key one:

secondly, the duty of protecting, as far as possible, every member of the society from the injustice or oppression of every other member of it, or the duty of establishing an exact administration of justice ...

The great thinker and Nobel Prize winning economist, Milton Friedman, expanded on this a little further. He said:

Adam Smith's second duty goes beyond the narrow police function of protecting people from physical coercion; it includes "an exact administration of justice." No voluntary exchange that is at all complicated or extends over any considerable period of time can be free from ambiguity. There is not enough fine print in the world to specify in advance every contingency that might arise and to describe precisely the obligations of the various parties to the exchange in each case. There must be some way to mediate disputes. Such mediation itself can be voluntary and need not involve government ... But the court of last resort is provided by the governmental judicial system.

Friedman expands on this:

This role of government also includes facilitating voluntary exchanges by adopting general rules—the rules of the economic and social game that the citizens of a free society play. The most obvious example is the meaning to be attached to private property. I own a house. Are you "trespassing" on my private property if you fly your private airplane ten feet over my roof? One thousand feet? Thirty thousand feet? There is nothing "natural" about where my property rights end and yours begin. The major way that society has come to agree on the rules of property is through the growth of common law, though more recently legislation has played an increasing role.

What does this mean? If we look at the name of a company we find that essentially it is an intellectual property right. It is a piece of property. When my property right trespasses on someone else's property right, some means are required to resolve that—and that is exactly what is happening in this case. This legislation does not extend or impose new obligations on businesses; it simply gives effect to existing common law. Existing common law has a rule called passing off. Passing off essentially is the use of a trade name or a business name by one person who does not have the right to use that trade or business name. In a sense, this is not an extension. Libertarians need feel no concern about this legislation because all it does is give legislative form to the previous existing common law tort of passing off. It actually transcends the need for the tort to be initiated because it prevents it from occurring in the first place.

I am pleased to support the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011. My colleagues have mentioned the many benefits of a national business names registration system and have outlined some of the other improvements planned as later parts of these national reforms. In supporting the bill, I mention one group of businesses that will particularly benefit from a single business names registration system. I refer to those businesses located along State borders, and invariably operating across them. As a member of the Legislative Council who happens to reside in Queanbeyan, as does the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox and the Hon. Steve Whan, we understand the nature of living next to a State border and the problems that can be occasioned by the fact that there is an arbitrary border.

Members will recall, with fondness no doubt on the Labor side, my inaugural speech in which I took a major digression into what is the nature of being a State in this day and age. What purpose does it serve when, in the large majority of cases, the lines on the map were drawn simply as arbitrary modes of demarcation between various colonial constituencies? The same applies to businesses in the twenty-first century. New South Wales shares borders with four other jurisdictions—Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. Many companies operating nationally will already have registered the same business name in all jurisdictions. Those businesses will immediately benefit from the national system because they will need only to maintain a single registration. However, it is often smaller businesses, like the many excellent small businesses which are to be found in Queanbeyan, that have faced problems with the existing separate systems. For example, a plumber operating a business in Queanbeyan at some stage will undoubtedly need to work in Hume or in other nearby areas in the Australian Capital Territory. A baker with a shop in Yass may wish to expand operations and open a second shop in Hall.

For businesses such as these, the existence of separate State and Territory business name systems poses problems. If they are physically carrying on their business in more than one jurisdiction, they need to register their business name in each of those States or Territories and this increases their administrative time and cost burdens—the sorts of things that true Liberals, the true conservatives on this side of the House, are against. In many cases it is an unfair burden on them because they are located on one side of a State border and many of their clients are based on the other side. But there are ways around it. For example, we could abolish the Australian Capital Territory—which would solve many problems—but the constitutional niceties of effecting that change may prove a little difficult in the short term.

Additionally, they may discover that the business name they use in one State has already been registered to another person in another State. For example, Amanda's Plumbing may be a name registered in New South Wales for a business located in Queanbeyan but if Amanda's Plumbing has already been registered to a different person operating in Canberra, the New South Wales Amanda may find, even if she is properly licensed as a plumber in both States, that she cannot use the same business name when working in the Australian Capital Territory, just a few miles away. A single national business names registration system will prevent this sort of difficulty for future names. If builder Sophie starts a business and registers her business name as Sophie's Fantastic Building Services, a fully unionised workplace comprising Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union members and Building Workers Industrial Union members, she will be able to use that name throughout Australia.

All currently registered State and Territory business names will be migrated to the new system, and they can then be used throughout Australia. Undoubtedly there will be instances when the same name is registered to different people in different States. However, no business will be forced to change its registered name. The changeover process provides that each of the names will be validly registered on the national system, and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission will be able to add an identifying term to the register in order to differentiate them. This might include the State or the location of the business. Customers will be able to confirm easily the identity of such a business through its Australian business number, which must be disclosed on invoices, receipts, orders for goods or services and other similar business documents. The introduction of a national business names registration system will be an important milestone in streamlining and simplifying business processes in Australia. It will produce many benefits to the economy, both immediate and in the longer term.

I digress to respond to some of the comments made by Dr John Kaye. The Government agrees that the three-tier system of government in Australia has worked very successfully for a long time, but we should not make work for ourselves simply for the sake of working. There are clear instances where we can have competitive federalism between the States, but in situations where we operate not only in a national economy but an international economy, the need for separate licensing restrictions for businesses legitimately operating in this nation is a complete and utter nonsense. To try and bring in the States' rights argument in a situation like this shows how bereft The Greens are of sensible argument in relation to industrial economic policy discussions. I welcome the initiative introduced by this great reformist Government and I commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. Sophie Cotsis: Say "thank you" to the Federal Labor Government.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN [5.14 p.m.]: Thank you, Sophie.

The Hon. Sophie Cotsis: To the Federal Labor Government.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Which one? I guess we could probably thank them for a carbon tax. On behalf of the Christian Democratic Party I make a brief contribution in support of the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011. The object of the bill is to create a unified business name register so as to enable the Commonwealth Parliament to make laws about those matters. The purpose of the registration is to ensure that consumers and traders are easily able to identify who is operating a business, and to save business costs by streamlining the registration process whereby businesses operating across State borders do not have to register their business names in multiple jurisdictions. The Australian Securities and Investments Commission will provide an integrated online system for the registration, renewal and searching of business names. All names currently registered in States and Territories will be migrated to the new system. Where a person has the same name registered in several jurisdictions, they will only need to maintain one of those registrations. The Christian Democratic Party applauds the Government for legislation that cuts red tape and unnecessary cost to local and interstate businesses. I commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX (Parliamentary Secretary) [5.15 p.m.], in reply: I thank all members for their erudite contributions to debate, which are much appreciated. I note that the House is in agreement that this is worthy reform. I acknowledge that the genesis of the bill occurred over a number of years but the Government is very proud of this reform, simple though it might be. The Government is proud to have introduced a bill to simplify business operations both in New South Wales and across the nation. It will reduce the cost of doing business and reduce the amount of red tape, particularly for businesses operating across State borders. It will also encourage businesses to expand.

I will briefly respond to a number of issues raised in debate. Dr John Kaye asked what would happen to any business names registered in different States which were identical. The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps made it clear that this issue is dealt with in the provisions of the bill. I note that all currently registered State and Territory business names will be migrated to the new system and that they can be used throughout Australia. Undoubtedly there will be instances where the same name will be registered to different people in different States. However, no business will be forced to change its registered name. The changeover process provides that each of the names will be validly registered on the national system and that the Australian Securities and Investments Commission will be able to add an identifying term to the register in order to differentiate them. This might be by way of location, namely, the State or suburb in which the business is located.

I can assure members that a unique identifying term will be used to avoid confusion as to business names in the future. Customers will be able to confirm easily the identity of a business through its location,

address or Australian business number, which must be disclosed on invoices, receipts, orders for goods and services and other similar business documents. Over time, when one of the identical names is not renewed, or the business closes down, no-one else will be able to register the name as an existing use of the name will still remain. This will result in a settling of the register and prevent later confusion.

Dr John Kaye also asked what details were publicly available in respect of the register. Some details will be available free online. Others will be available as an extract for a fee. The Commonwealth Government is looking at the issue of residential addresses for home-based businesses in particular. The register will disclose the address of a business for the legal service of notices. In the case of residential home-based businesses, whilst the residential address will not be publicly available for privacy reasons, if anyone has any legal concerns he or she can contact the Office of Fair Trading or the relevant consumer agency in each State, and that agency will have access to the details. Dr John Kaye also commented on the Australian Securities and Investments Commission collecting information about the names of business owners and the addresses of businesses. I note that the Commonwealth is considering how best to achieve a balance between privacy concerns versus providing the necessary public information on the register for consumers and other businesses. Finally, I thank Mr Anthony Roberts, the Minister for Fair Trading, for introducing this bill in the other place.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Roberts the reformer.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: Roberts the reformer. I also thank his departmental staff members who are present in the President's gallery, as well as the departmental officials. In particular I note the contribution of Ms Marilyn Beattie and Mr Tony McCarroll, who are in the Chamber. I thank them for their efforts in this regard; it is much appreciated. I also thank other New South Wales Fair Trading staff for their support and hard work with respect to this bill. In conclusion, as members have noted, this is real reform from a government that will be a new benchmark in reform. It is a great pleasure to represent the Government in this place, and I look forward to a ream of other reforms that this House will endorse as unanimously as the reform contemplated by this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Question—That this bill be now read a second time—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Leave granted to proceed to the third reading of the bill forthwith.

Third Reading

Motion by the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Bill read a third time and returned to the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

Financial Year 2011-2012

Debate resumed from 6 September 2011.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA (Parliamentary Secretary) [5.21 p.m.]: The first Liberal-Nationals budget since 1994 delivers on our election commitments and goes a long way towards rebuilding the State's finances. We will deliver 900 more teachers, 2,475 more nurses and 500 more police officers over the next four years, and we will deliver a record \$62.6 billion of infrastructure spend for New South Wales over the next four years—the biggest commitment in this State's history. We will invest more than \$17 billion on hospitals and patients in the next 12 months in the biggest health budget to be handed down in the history of this State. This year's health budget of \$17.3 billion—\$950 million more than last year—will build the State's health system, with \$1 billion allocated to capital works to expand and renovate the State's ageing hospitals to meet growing needs.

The previous Labor Government received so much money from the property boom but failed to invest in the future of this State. If the Federal Government's economic stimulus measures were excluded, the New South Wales budget would have been in deficit for two of the past three years. We have just learned that the State has taken a \$700 million hit due to the incompetence of Labor in its failed \$5.3 billion electricity fire sale prior to the election, and more shall be revealed from the public inquiry in process now. New South Wales residents know that they have received a dud deal. The gap between income and expenditure for the State-owned distribution networks has blown out by \$400 million since their retail operations were spun off.

Taxpayers are exposed to a further \$300 million liability as a result of the proposed State-run coalmining operation in Cobbora in western New South Wales. Coal from the mine has been promised to the holders of gentrader contracts by the previous incompetent and irresponsible Labor Government at a price that does not even cover our Government's cost in extracting it. And one wonders why Labor was rejected so soundly last March. Let us look at the infamous Solar Bonus Scheme. Labor shackled New South Wales households with higher power bills via the poorly monitored, poorly executed and poorly managed Solar Bonus Scheme. While the scheme was supposed to cost \$355 million, it is now expected to reach a total of \$1.75 billion.

New South Wales Labor created a solar industry built on the back of government subsidies, and we have been responsible, as a new Liberal-Nationals Government, in requiring that a future tariff be based on an Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal inquiry to ensure that any future arrangements are sustainable and affordable. While Labor might like to forget how it forced up power bills under the disastrous Solar Bonus Scheme, New South Wales households will never forget. Returning to the State's fiscal situation, Treasury reported that if no action were taken to control expenses the budget deficit was expected to reach \$2.4 billion by 2014-15. One does not have to be an economic guru to understand that one cannot keep spending more money than one is earning and believe that that will be sustainable into the future.

Our triple-A rating was quickly going to vanish, like so many Labor-held electorates, if decisive action was not taken early by the O'Farrell Government. This is at a time when sovereign debt concerns in the euro zone and uncertainty over fiscal settings in the United States have intensified, and our high Australian dollar has weakened conditions in some of our non-mining areas of the economy. The forecast for GST revenue alone has had to be slashed by \$395 million since the half-yearly review was handed down last December. So the previous Labor Government's public sector wages policy has had to be implemented and, with such reasonable controls, that will enable us to increase front-line services: 2,475 more nurses, 900 more teachers and 550 more police officers.

We are delivering 662 more hospital beds, purchasing 261 new buses and investing \$131 million in improving our police stations. We are expanding ferry services and spending \$102 million on more express train services. The New South Wales Government makes no excuses for increasing State mining royalties to offset the cost of the carbon tax on the New South Wales budget position. In the absence of an alternative compensation proposal from the Federal Government, such increases will apply only to those companies subject to the Commonwealth's proposed mining resources rent tax. Given the commitment of the Commonwealth to reimburse these companies for their State royalty liabilities, the Commonwealth will bear the cost, not the mining companies.

The Gillard Government's carbon tax will have a significant negative impact on our State's finances, and the people of New South Wales are entitled to compensation from the Federal Government for the loss of dividends to our State-owned electricity generators. The carbon tax is expected to cost New South Wales about \$950 million or more over the forward estimates, including reduced dividend income from State-owned electricity generators. The value of the State's generator assets are also expected to diminish by \$3.6 billion. New South Wales Treasury analysis confirms that New South Wales will face a larger negative impact than most other States and that some regions will face disproportionately adverse consequences, with the Hunter and the Illawarra expected to be hit particularly hard.

We are determined to stand up for the people of New South Wales. The budget delivers record infrastructure spending to address the building backlog left by Labor. Spending on hospitals and health capital works over the next four years is \$4.7 billion—50 per cent higher than over the past four years. This budget takes action to deliver on key transport projects, including more than \$600 million on the North West Rail Link and the South West Rail Link and upgrading the Pacific and Princes highways. This budget investment of \$2.8 billion in disability services is the most significant in Australian history and I am very proud of this. An additional \$2 billion under the new phase of Stronger Together over the next five years will boost capacity by an estimated 47,000 new places.

Since the election we have made good on our promise to fast-track the North West Rail Link, with \$314 million allocated this year to develop the line between Epping and Rouse Hill, including \$222 million for land acquisition. The budget includes the provision of \$292 million this year to continue work on the South West Rail Link, including a twin track between Glenfield and Leppington, two new stations at Edmondson Park and Leppington, car parking, and a train stabling facility at Rossmore. Delivering this record investment in infrastructure requires a new approach and a robust funding program. That is why we have moved quickly to establish Infrastructure NSW, which will improve the way infrastructure is assessed and delivered. As Treasurer Mike Baird has stated:

Given the backlog of essential infrastructure across the State, we are also delivering new funding options. We understand that many local councils are struggling under an infrastructure backlog so this Budget provides \$70 million over five years to address this and provides capacity for up to a billion dollars in additional investment by local councils.

Over four years \$350 million has been allocated to establish the Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund. Legislation has been passed to establish Restart NSW, the Government's key infrastructure fund. One-third of all funding provided for infrastructure projects will be quarantined to regional New South Wales. Restart NSW will be funded from a range of sources, including windfall revenues when in surplus, funds made available by the long-term lease of the Sydney Desalination Plant, and Waratah bonds. The lease of the Port Botany shipping terminal for 99 years will enable \$2 billion of proceeds to be directed towards the necessary upgrading of the Pacific and Princes highways. A shorter-term lease of the Sydney Water desalination plant over 25 years is expected to raise a further \$1.5 billion.

Both leases will provide a sustainable funding pool for major projects for years to come. Such measures, along with reducing our State's burgeoning public sector wages bill to effective levels, will deliver more front-line services for our constituents and assist New South Wales in maintaining its triple-A rating essential for future infrastructure borrowings but sadly neglected by Labor for 16 years. The people of New South Wales are pleased to see that this Government is getting on with the job of getting our house in order and moving ahead with extensions, improvements and repairs so that those living within it can have an improved life. Let us look at what the NRMA has said about our first budget. David Bentham, Motoring and Services Director for west and south-west Sydney, said:

It will go a long way to addressing some of the problems we have in this state—we believe it is a good budget that is going to produce roads for our 2.3 million members.

The worst blackspots and bottlenecks in New South Wales, including the Pacific and Princes highways, will be tackled. Coral Taylor, NRMA Director for north-west Sydney, said she was thrilled about the funding for the North West Rail Link. She said:

We have been waiting for this for many years and all the people of northwest Sydney are very frustrated at the lack of action in the past. This is one of the Government's key election promises. They have come out today and set it down in ink and the project will begin.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Delivering on our promise.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Delivering on our promise, as the Government Whip, the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps, has said. I turn to New South Wales Business Chamber Chief Executive Officer Stephen Cartwright. He stated with much praise:

This budget strengthens the balance sheet, takes control of expenses and translates this strength into significant investments in infrastructure. This is a strong budget that tackles unnecessary expenses growth, cuts down on bureaucracy and invests heavily in much needed infrastructure. The Treasurer is right when he says a government that loses control of its finances loses control of its destiny.

They are very salient remarks. Let us look at hospitals. Our Government is committed to \$139 million for the expansion of Campbelltown Hospital and \$147 million for the expansion of services at Royal North Shore Hospital over the next four years, along with the commencement of a \$170 million e-health project to improve medication safety. We have listened to doctors, nurses and health care workers around the State on this issue of medication safety. It was neglected for 16 years under the previous Labor Government. Coming from the pharmaceutical industry, I know that it is very important—we are living longer and as people age they take many medications and have chronic diseases—that we do everything we can to assist doctors, nurses, pharmacists and patients. People should be taking the correct medication. I congratulate Minister Jillian Skinner on that project.

Other capital works projects include developing hospital infrastructure at Campbelltown Hospital with \$139 million; Dubbo Base Hospital, \$79.8 million; Port Macquarie Base Hospital, \$110 million; Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, \$270 million; Prince of Wales Hospital Comprehensive Cancer and Blood Disorders Centre, \$47.2 million; and a new St George Hospital emergency department, \$35.5 million. Planning is underway for the South East Regional Hospital at Bega, \$170million, and the Tamworth Regional Referral Hospital, \$220 million. I note that the Hon. Trevor Khan is sitting in the Chamber. He in particular is ecstatic about Tamworth Regional Referral Hospital receiving \$220 million in the budget.

An additional \$55 million is provided to expand the Royal North Shore Hospital with 60 extra beds and to relocate maternity, mental health and other services that were left out of previous plans. This will cost \$147 million. We have responded to the concerns of the doctors, nurses and health care workers at Royal North Shore Hospital that were so concerned when the plans were being drawn up by the previous Government that these areas—maternity, obstetrics, mental health, other services—were completely disregarded, not consulted and not included in the plans.

Again I congratulate Minister Jillian Skinner on having consulted over many years; she listened and acted very quickly, decisively and appropriately with \$147 million to do the appropriate improvements that are much needed at the very busy Royal North Shore Hospital that services millions of residents in the area. Funding for planning, design and documentation for election commitments over the next four years include the Lachlan Health Service for Parkes and Forbes hospitals, the Illawarra-Shoalhaven Hospital, Blacktown-Mount Druitt Hospital, Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital and the new Northern Beaches Hospital. All of those hospitals will get very important planning, design and documentation costings so that we can move very quickly in future budgets to construction work.

Our Government is committed to \$139 million for the expansion of Campbelltown Hospital and \$147 million for the expansion of services at Royal North Shore Hospital over the next four years, along with the commencement of a \$170 million e-health project to improve medication safety. The Government has also covered funding for planning and land acquisition for the Hunter Valley Hospital and planning for the Northern New South Wales hospitals servicing Lismore and Byron Bay, and upgrades at Ryde, Gulgong, Mona Vale, Woy Woy and Wyong. There will be upgrades and equipment replacement at Cessnock, Maitland, Kurri Kurri and Wansey, in the Charlestown electorate, and acquisition of land at Waratah. Upgrades will also be made to car parking at the Nepean, Sutherland and Shoalhaven hospitals.

Whilst on the subject of Health, I congratulate Minister Jillian Skinner, the Premier and the Treasurer on their commitment to medical research, an area dear to my heart. We will invest a massive \$105.6 million in medical research in this budget alone. This includes \$32 million for the Medical Research Support Program, which supports infrastructure and operating costs for 17 medical research institutes across New South Wales. Medical researchers have been saying for many years that their voices and their appeals have fallen on deaf ears.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Labor didn't care.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Labor did not care about medical research. Its support was cursory and flippant and amounted to skimming across the top. This is a \$105.6 million commitment by the O'Farrell Government.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Point of order: I would like to complain about the wall of noise coming from members opposite.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell): Order! There is no point of order.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: I know medical research to be very important to Premier Barry O'Farrell, as it is to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. I congratulate them. I want to especially mention aspects of the budget pertaining to western Sydney, an area that is very dear to my heart.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Forgotten by Labor.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: All areas are dear to my heart, but western Sydney in particular, as the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps mentions, was forgotten by Labor. That is why Labor no longer represents electorates from Granville, Smithfield and Parramatta right out to the Blue Mountains and beyond, where The Nationals hold territory. Labor has lost everything. Why is that? Because this Government is servicing the people of

western Sydney. More than \$348 million will be invested in western Sydney, including planning work for the upgrade of the M5 between King Georges Road and Camden Valley Way, and \$100 million to continue upgrades to the Great Western Highway in the Blue Mountains at Lawson and Wentworth Falls East. Another \$25 million has been earmarked to complete construction of the F5 Freeway widening between Ingleburn and Campbelltown, and \$15 million will be spent on the four-lane upgrade of Camden Valley Way between Cobbitty Road and Narellan Road—an issue that is very important to the Hon. Charlie Lynn, who has been raising this issue on the M5 and the congestion on the roads in the south-west for 16 years. Finally, the people of the south-west will get action.

A further \$16 million has been allocated to start construction of the Erskine Park Link Road. All these major road projects in south-west and western Sydney have been promised in the past by Labor and never delivered. They were always on the drawing board, but real moneys were never allocated—whilst hundreds of thousands of residents poured into the regions building their homes in the outskirts of Sydney in order to try to provide a better lifestyle for their families. They are Labor's forgotten people, but they will not be forgotten by us. The Liberals and The Nationals will not forget them. We will stand to be judged at the next election if we fail them—but fail we will not.

Whilst on the subject of roads, I should say that there is more good news for the Illawarra, where more than \$103 million will be invested as part of the budget. The Illawarra is a vital regional area and we will provide essential infrastructure to support its continuing growth. More than \$35 million has been allocated for work on the Gerringong to Bomaderry upgrade of the Princes Highway.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Hear! Hear! Long overdue.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Very long overdue. This is an important start to the Government's commitment to deliver \$500 million towards this project in our first term of government. Widening the Princes Highway to two lanes in each direction between Mount Pleasant and Toolijooa Road will improve safety and travel times for all road users when completed by 2015. Work on Picton Road will also be given a boost with \$14 million for work to improve road safety, \$6 million for intersection improvements at Fig Tree to improve public transport and traffic flow through the Fig Tree shopping area, \$1.6 million to complete the upgrade of Hampden Bridge over Kangaroo River at Kangaroo Valley and \$300,000 for planning of climbing lanes on Mount Ousley Road. That will vastly improve road safety.

Closer to home, \$48 million has been invested in roads across the St George and Sutherland region. One of the key elements is the allocation of funding to continue planning for the future expansion of the M5 Motorway between King Georges Road and Sydney airport and between King Georges Road and Camden Valley Way. And \$26 million from the roads maintenance budget will be invested in important infrastructure, including the Captain Cook and Tom Uglys bridges.

Importantly, \$300,000 has been allocated to extend the dual right-turn bay from Marsh Street into the M5 at Arncliffe. This work will relieve congestion at this busy intersection by ensuring through traffic is not held up by right-turning vehicles. We have committed \$200 million to a four-year package to tackle congestion and safety on key routes, including investigating traffic issues through Heathcote. Work will also start on the design for widening Deadmans Creek Bridge on Heathcote Road, and up to \$4 million will be provided towards the widening of the bridge over the railway line at Allawah, a major congestion point in the St George area, as the Hon. John Ajaka will attest, having made representations to Ministers responsible for roads and transport about traffic congestion in the St George region over many years. And \$1 million will be delivered towards a pedestrian overpass of the Princes Highway at Heathcote, as part of our \$3 million commitment.

The Government is committed to a \$200 million four-year package to tackle congestion and safety on key routes around this State. As I deal with each region, I will indicate that. The sum of \$93 million will be invested in Central Coast roads, including \$9 million for planning and preconstruction for the upgrade of the Central Coast Highway at the intersection with Brisbane Water Drive and Manns Road at West Gosford; \$4.6 million to start major work on the upgrade of the F3 Freeway and Wyong Road interchange at Tuggerah; \$20 million to continue major work on the four-lane widening of the Central Coast Highway between Matcham Road, Erina Heights and Ocean View Drive, Wamberal; \$2.5 million to continue improvements to Terrigal Drive; \$1.2 million for improvements to the intersection of Victoria Street and Charlton Road, Woy Woy; \$1 million to continue planning the upgrade of the intersection of the Central Coast Highway and Wisemans Ferry Road at Kariong; and \$500,000 to continue planning to upgrade the Pacific Highway between Gosford and Wyong, a very important stretch of roadway.

More than \$888 million will be invested in roads across the Hunter region, including \$570 million for the Hunter Expressway to continue work between the F3 at Seahampton and the New England Highway at Branxton. A further \$32 million is being provided to continue major work on the Newcastle inner city bypass between Shortland and Sandgate and \$9.6 million to replace the Aberdeen Bridge over the Hunter River on the New England Highway to improve accessibility for high productivity freight vehicles. Another Hunter road project involves \$5 million towards upgrading the Hunter region wine roads as part of a four-year \$20 million commitment.

Our Hunter wine region, which creates so much employment and provides so many goods and services, puts New South Wales wines on the map. When driving on the roads to the wineries I was dismayed at the number of potholes and bad shoulders on the roads, which have caused many accidents. The situation is bad for residents and tourists. The Government's \$20 million commitment, with the provision of \$5 million this year for substantial work on the roads and \$5 million towards upgrading the Raymond Terrace to Dungog Road in the upper Hunter, is important.

Also allocated is \$1 million towards upgrading Lemon Tree Passage Road, Port Stephens, as part of a four-year \$5 million commitment; \$1 million toward the new Pennant Street Bridge at Glendale as part of a four-year \$15 million commitment; \$500,000 towards upgrading the Cardiff main street as part of a \$2.5 million commitment; and \$200,000 towards Cessnock roads upgrades as part of a four-year \$1.2 million upgrade. The news goes on and on. The former Labor Government was abysmal in so many portfolios and was pathetic at managing anything. I acknowledge the assistance of the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: A very fine Parliamentary Secretary.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: A very fine Parliamentary Secretary, as are all of our Parliamentary Secretaries in this House. They work extremely hard. It is wonderful to be part of the Liberal-Nationals Government's parliamentary secretary team. The budget overview shows that the Government has laid out infrastructure improvements across New South Wales. I reiterate my concern about western Sydney. However, the Government will achieve in western Sydney the continuation of major redevelopments of the Liverpool and Nepean hospitals. As I come from a health background in both the pharmaceutical industry and the diagnostics pathology industry I know they are amazing hospitals. Great improvements have been made in those hospitals over the years, but because of the growth in population the hospitals need major investment to service that population growth.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Did Labor do anything?

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Labor put in some cursory money here and there but, because of its bad management of our State finances, it could have invested a hell of a lot more. Instead of squandering the revenue from land tax and stamp revenue in the property boom the money should have been put into hospitals, roads and railways. That is why the people of New South Wales were so conclusive at the ballot boxes on 26 March. Further investment in infrastructure in western Sydney includes the new Westmead Millennium Institute receiving a great allocation of money for construction; a new public school at Oran Park; a new school for special purposes at Bass Hill; and major building projects at Cabramatta and Nepean high schools.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: We govern for all Australians.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: We govern for all Australians. We will never forget the forgotten people in western Sydney, because we are absolutely thrilled that they voted in a Liberal-Nationals Government. We will work extremely hard to deliver services for them. I have referred to educational needs in western Sydney, hence the new public school at Oran Park, new special school at Bass Hill, and the Cabramatta and Nepean high schools expenditure. Major building projects are being undertaken at Lidcombe TAFE. We will construct 1,189 social and crisis accommodation housing units for people with diverse needs and socioeconomic levels. Members of the Standing Committee on Social Issues heard a lot of evidence over four years about the great need in this area. I congratulate the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. Andrew Constance.

The commencement of the North West Rail Link is bringing joy and so are the South West Rail Link track extensions from Glenfield to Leppington, including two new stations at Edmondson Park, and the upgrade of the very busy Glenfield station with a new car parking facility. Indeed, last time I visited it was clear that it is

a catchment area for many commuters. Those much-needed car parking improvements can be completed. Further capital works include the Richmond line duplication; a new platform at Macarthur Station; and completion of car parks at Penrith and Schofields, again very needed. If we are trying to encourage people to use public transport we have to provide lots more commuter car parking. There will be continued planning and construction of new police stations at Liverpool, Parramatta and Riverstone; expansion of the Cobham Juvenile Justice Centre; and major new recycled water services at Hoxton Park, which has had a huge growth in population. It is important to have good water facilities.

Maitland mental health will receive many facility upgrades. Cessnock Hospital emergency department will be upgraded. Cessnock and Kurri Kurri will receive new equipment. Newcastle special purpose school will be funded for continuing building projects. There are major building projects at Muswellbrook and Maitland TAFEs. We have provided for the construction of 194 social and crisis accommodation housing units and are continuing with the planning and construction of police stations at Glendale and Raymond Terrace. Teagardens and Cardiff fire stations will be renovated. Funding is included for the Newcastle justice precinct, including additional courtrooms. Taree courthouse will be upgraded. The Hunter expressway will be extended from the F3 to Branxton. Thornton Railway Bridge is to be upgraded. A new western grandstand at the Ausgrid Stadium, Broadmeadow, which is used by many families in the area, will be constructed.

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

ADJOURNMENT

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX (Parliamentary Secretary) [6.00 p.m.]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [6.00 p.m.]: Tonight I will speak about some of the difficulties involved in providing public infrastructure. Obviously, this is an issue that troubles governments at all levels in this nation. Of course, the Commonwealth Government has more levers at its disposal to raise the financial resources it needs to pursue policies across the nation and to provide much-needed public infrastructure. The States have fewer levers and the range of taxes and charges they rely upon to finance services is very constrained. They face great difficulties when framing their budgets in balancing competing needs and providing resources for necessary infrastructure projects. Nowhere has that been more evident in New South Wales than in western Sydney.

Of course, the poor cousin in this scenario is local government. Local government infrastructure in many areas is ageing and in some cases is very much in need of renewal and replacement. At the same time communities are forever pressing their case for a response to unmet and increasing needs, particularly as demographics change. Areas that have more young families need different services and resources from those required in areas with an ageing population. Although councils receive various grants from State and Federal governments, they are still largely dependent on an antiquated system of property rating for their resources.

I am still a Blue Mountains councillor and of our \$135 million budget only \$44 million is rates revenue, another \$10 million or \$15 million is revenue collected through service charges and the balance is grant funding provided by the State and Federal governments. The council attempts to achieve its many goals using those funds. Having spoken to councillors and mayors from across the nation at various local government conferences, I know that it is not peculiar to Sydney, greater Sydney, western Sydney or even New South Wales as a whole. Given the restraints imposed on them, every local government faces difficulties raising funds to provide local infrastructure. There are no easy answers and obviously as a public policy issue it will be troubling us into the future.

Western Sydney is home to nearly two million people and it has an \$80 billion economy, which makes it the third largest economy in Australia. That means it is important not only economically but also socially. We still have no integrated transportation system, which suggests a significant need for infrastructure in that area. Governments at every level must deliver growth in jobs, housing and incomes while securing the appropriate levels of environmental and civic amenity that we have come to expect. The projected population growth in western Sydney will generate a demand for about 400,000 additional jobs and 300,000 additional homes. The

previous Government identified the major infrastructure requirements for western Sydney and obviously they are significant. We must deal with that in the wider debate about Australia's infrastructure needs and identify not only the gap but also how to bridge it. Very little attention is given to the public policy question of how to finance and govern investments. Infrastructure deficits are now manifesting themselves in lower economic growth— *[Time expired.]*

BYRON SHIRE EVENTS

The Hon. JAN BARHAM [6.05 p.m.]: Events portray a community's character. They present the culture of an area and are an important contribution to the social capital. They can also make a significant contribution to the economy, especially in tourist areas. On 10 September I attended the inaugural Sample Food Festival at Bangalow in Byron shire. The organiser, Remy Tancred, assembled more than 100 of the region's growers, producers, restaurateurs, and art and craft suppliers for a festival that celebrated and displayed the abundance and creativity of the North Coast. The event attracted approximately 8,000 people, who sampled and purchased the best and freshest of the region.

This event highlights the support for sustainable agriculture and the benefits of fresh, fine food. I raise this event and its success in the context of how the region maintains its attraction and diversity as a sustainable destination. There has been recent media focus on Byron Shire Council's seeking to retain a degree of control of its identity and proposing to limit the number of large music festivals held in the area. Byron shire is an iconic tourism and event destination. The challenge is how to maintain a quality of life for the community while being economically and socially diverse.

Local events such as Bluesfest and the Splendour music festival have attracted wide acclaim. The council and the community have been proud to host those events and the council has adopted a policy to support the continuation of two major music events annually. The aims of that policy are to recognise the contribution that events make to the diverse character and culture of the shire, to encourage event organisers to promote events that recognise and contribute to the evolution of this character and culture, and to manage events so that they do not adversely impact on the existing character.

The diverse talents and interests of the area embrace a broad platform of expression that is reflected in the range of events that continue to evolve. Local events are as varied as the community. They include the very popular and successful writers festival, film festivals, a billycart derby, a classical music festival, a vintage event, a kites and bikes event, underwater and surf festivals, a harmony event, a comedy festival, the woodchip event, the Starlight Wellbeing Expo, a triathlon, art expos, the Mullum Music Festival, Bluesfest and, in past years, Splendour in the Grass. This is in addition to the activities that are part and parcel of the peak tourism period and schoolies week. Organisers deliver an average of three significant events each month that attract visitors, local and regional residents, and many from the large Queensland population to the north, just an hour away, who come over the border to enjoy our cultural diversity and natural landscape.

The community supports a tourism focus, but one which respects the host community. The shire has a small population of fewer than 30,000 residents and a visitor population of more than 1.5 million. The proposed festival site at Yelgun, known as North Parklands, is the subject of an application to establish a dedicated event site to host multiple music events, not only the widely renowned Splendour festival. The application is currently awaiting determination by the Government under part 3A. An application for a trial event at the site was approved by the council but overturned by the court after an appeal was lodged by a community group.

The proponents then made an application to the State Government. The Government has said much about returning planning matters to the local level, but that did not happen on this occasion. The concerns of the community and the council about the potential environmental and social degradation caused by multiple music festivals have been articulated as has their desire to maintain a broad cultural diversity. The concern is that the area will be characterised as a party town. Already there is wide community concern about alcohol-fuelled events and antisocial behaviour and how these might deter people from visiting the area.

The Byron shire has been at the forefront of environmental protection and sustainable development for more than 30 years and it is its distinctive character that makes it so attractive to locals and visitors. The event limit is recognition of the need to consider the future rather than simply to let market forces take control and perhaps define and diminish the overall character of the town. The shire does not want to be known as a music festival destination alone. It has so much more to offer and it seeks to maintain and develop a diverse cultural character.

It is recognised that there are positives in terms of economic and cultural benefits from large music events, but there is also potential for impacts on the social amenity and the environment. The community is concerned that the rich cultural diversity is maintained and that space is provided for more local events to emerge and seek the support of the community. The events policy seeks to restrict the number of large events that operate in the shire to allow the community to continue to define what and how we reflect our cultural identity. The potential for approval of a site that increases the number of large music events in the shire would present the shire as a music festival hotspot, which is not a desired outcome for the community.

NEW SOUTH WALES YOUNG FARMERS

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL [6.10 p.m.]: Tonight I inform the House of a recent event held in Sydney by the New South Wales Young Farmers, a committee of the New South Wales Farmers Association. The New South Wales Young Farmers is a fantastic group of young people whose purpose is to educate, listen, advocate and interact in an environment that is ultimately fun. The Young Farmers Council serves the purpose of organising and implementing events of value to young members of the New South Wales Farmers Association and providing information and networks which are of benefit to young farmers.

Five focus areas have been identified by the Young Farmers Council. They are to develop a membership base of active young farmers and agribusiness professionals across New South Wales; to provide real value to members in personal, professional and business development, as well as greater representation within the New South Wales Farmers Association; to drive two-way information flow between the New South Wales Young Farmers presidential taskforce and the wider industry; to have the necessary means to achieve their goals; and to provide skills to members which set them in good stead to drive positive and effective industry change within the association and the broader community in the years ahead. I have been aware of the work of New South Wales Young Farmers for a few years. However, I had the pleasure of becoming more involved with the organisation in recent weeks. I was approached by the organisation to attend events that made up a two-day professional development forum that was being organised for its members.

Young farmers from across the State were invited to apply for the forum, which took place in Sydney on 25 and 26 August. The young farmers in attendance were: Hollie Baillieu from Moss Vale, who is the chair of the Young Farmers Council; Katie Bosanquet from Wellington, who is the vice chair; Stuart Austin from Burrumbuttock; Katherine Bowler from Holbrook; Brooke Cutler from Collarenebri; Brian Dampney from Narrabri; Sam Dennis from Stroud; Ally Dingjan, Manning Doughty and Simone Joliffe from Wagga Wagga; David Gale from Campbelltown; Ed Gebhardt from Harden; Tom Hooke from Wanganella; Jason Hunt from Moree; Mary Johnson from Boorowa; Lauren Jones from Lisarow; Tegan Nock from Bogan Gate; Sally Ormiston from Northmead; Lexi Sturrock from Carcoar; Rebecca Thistlethwaite from Sutherland; Eliza Jane Walton-Hassell from Armidale; Lucy Watson from Narromine; and, finally, Felicity Wheelwright from Crookwell.

The young farmers participated in many activities over the two-day event. The main highlights were a leadership and networking workshop, an innovation in agriculture workshop with a focus on biodynamics, and lunch with many members of Parliament in the rooftop garden at Parliament House, which I attended and which was enjoyed by all. It was great to see members from all political parties in attendance. The Deputy Premier, Andrew Stoner, and the Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson, attended and addressed the gathering. The young farmers were pleased that so many members of Parliament attended the lunch and were willing to speak to them about issues important to them. They also enjoyed individual group meetings with members of Parliament and appreciated the advice and support they received, particularly in relation to their Young Farmer Finance Scheme proposal. I acknowledge the Hon. Jan Barham, who has just left the Chamber. A number of young farmers who met her said that they were particularly impressed by her and their conversation. It was good to hear that they had a good meeting with the Hon. Jan Barham.

The delegates toured the Sydney Fish Market. I am told that, despite the early start—and the lingering fishy smell that hung around for the rest of the day—the young farmers enjoyed the tour. They said it was a very different type of farming from what many of them are used to. They particularly enjoyed seeing the dutch auction. There was a lot of discussion as to whether that style of auction could be used in other forms of farming.

On the Thursday night a formal dinner was held at Parliament House and I was thrilled to be invited to attend as guest speaker. One of my Nationals colleagues from the other place, the member for Dubbo, Mr Troy Grant, attended in his capacity as the Parliamentary Secretary for Natural Resources. He represented the

Minister for Primary Industries, Ms Katrina Hodgkinson. It was a great event and it gave me a wonderful opportunity to speak to the young farmers about my experience as a young woman from a regional community who has become involved in political life. We also talked about the importance of having young people involved in agriculture. I enjoyed attending the dinner and speaking to many of the participants. They were a dynamic group of young men and women who are passionate about their industry and the communities they represent. It was lovely to see that.

It was also pleasing for me to hear from the young farmers that they enjoyed their time in Sydney. I am told that they made some great connections and learned something new, which they will be able to take back to their farm businesses and communities. They are grateful to all members of Parliament who gave up their time to meet with them throughout the days that they were in Sydney. I thank members who made time to meet with the young farmers. It is important for us to encourage young people who are leaders in their fields. After meeting with the New South Wales Young Farmers delegates on that day, I am certain that the future of agriculture in this State is in safe hands.

RALEIGH DAIRY HOLDINGS NORTH BANK DAIRY DEVELOPMENT

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL [6.15 p.m.]: Recently I had the opportunity to visit two of my duty electorates—Port Macquarie and Oxley—and to talk to a number of locals about their concerns. One of the major concerns raised with me was the decision by the Liberal-Nationals Government to change public sector wages and conditions. They also expressed concerns about the loss of the independent umpire, the Industrial Relations Commission, about the Government's failure to implement a proper parliamentary budget office and about the Government shutting down debate in the upper House for the first time in 100 years.

I spent some time in Bellingen. A specific concern was raised about a development application placed with the Bellingen Shire Council by Raleigh Dairy Holdings North Bank dairy. The application seeks a large expansion of the dairy, which has raised serious concerns with the locals. Bellingen Environment Centre has been campaigning strongly against this development application, which now sits with the Bellingen Shire Council. I shall raise a number of issues in relation to it. This is a high-risk acid sulphate soil area. Due to previous irrigation practices, there is a vulnerability in the soil. Testing has indicated that high levels of sulphuric acid and aluminium are in the Bellinger River near where this dairy has two draining pipes.

The big danger in this development relates to the dairy wanting to increase the number of cows. The original proposal was for 1,500 cows. It has been reduced to about 800 cows, but it is only 80 metres from the Bellinger River and on a floodplain, which tends to flood twice, if not three times, a year. The risks to the local area are considerable. Locals have raised serious concerns. The new development application is 42 metres from a watercourse. It is close to oyster-growing areas on the Bellinger River. This is serious because the quality of water in the Bellinger River has at times meant that those oysters have not been able to be harvested.

There are great concerns about the loss of tourism income to local businesses, which brings with it the risk of loss of jobs and loss of residential amenities due to the noise, the smell and the flies. There will be additional costs of upkeep with traffic in the area and, if there is future flooding, there will be major environmental damage. There are views that Raleigh Dairy Holdings has in the past breached development application conditions and these breaches have not been properly prosecuted. There cannot be too many benefits in the dairy being expanded—at most it will create an additional three jobs in the area. After talking with the locals, I saw a change in the Bellingen area as it moves towards more environmentally friendly industries. There is a growth in the number of people interested in working with the environment and with the community.

The Hon. Charlie Lynn: It is a long way from the eastern suburbs.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Maybe the member should go up there for a change. It is certainly a changing environmentally concerned area. The locals are concerned about this proposal. I urge Bellingen Shire Council to listen to their concerns and to carefully consider the development application. Proposals such as this cannot be rubberstamped. We should not risk the health of the river and we should ensure that this development is not in a floodplain area. The council must listen to the local community, and Raleigh Dairy Holdings must earn the trust of the locals because up until now its actions have failed to convince them that this development is in their best interests. The locals rightly believe that the development will have significant economic and social impacts on them and that it should not be approved in its present form.

Perhaps a number of the farms along the river have not been using best practices, but this is an opportunity to ensure that a development does not proceed that will adversely impact the local environment. The development application comes at a time when communities are becoming more green sensitive and more environmentally friendly. They are conscious that decisions taken today will have ramifications for tomorrow. The Bellingen Shire Council needs to carefully consider what is going on in this area. It should ensure that appropriate effluent management practices are in place. This development application should not be approved until such time as it has been carefully considered and debated.

CATHOLIC CHURCH AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE [6.20 p.m.]: For more than two decades the Catholic Church, both in Australia and overseas, has been the subject of increasing numbers of claims that those in its care were sexually abused. Many of these claims related to abuse alleged to have been perpetrated in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. There is no doubt that in many of these cases the abuse occurred and that members of the church hierarchy were aware of the abuse at the time it was occurring. Victims of abuse deserve redress. They deserve justice. This is especially the case when they have been abused while in the care of an organisation or institution that was meant to look after them.

Proper redress can often include punishment of the perpetrators, if they are still alive. It can also involve sincere apologies and evidence that an organisation has taken steps to admit its error and change its behaviour to prevent abuse occurring to others. Justice must also allow for fair compensation for the hurt, distress and humiliation suffered by victims of abuse from those institutions which allowed—and, in some cases, even assisted—the abuse to occur in the first place. In New South Wales there is currently a serious impediment to the recovery of compensation by those whose abusers were clergy of the Catholic Church.

In 2007 the case of John Ellis set a terrible precedent in this area and this Parliament has a pressing obligation to remedy it. John Ellis was an altar boy at the Bass Hill Parish of the Roman Catholic Church. He claimed that in the period from 1974 to 1979 he was sexually abused by the assistant parish priest. In 2004 the assistant priest died and his estate left no assets against which the plaintiff could recover damages. Also in that year Mr Ellis brought a common law claim against the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church and against His Eminence Cardinal George Pell, Archbishop of Sydney, in relation to the abuse he had suffered. The trustees were appointed under the Roman Catholic Church Trust Property Act 1936, a New South Wales Act that establishes a trust that holds all the property of the Catholic Church in this State—property that has been estimated to be worth billions of dollars.

The trial judge in the Supreme Court initially found that the trust could be sued by Mr Ellis in relation to the abuse and granted him an extension of time to allow him to pursue his claim. The judge also held that as Cardinal Pell had not been appointed to that position at the time of the abuse he was not responsible for the abuse and therefore not able to be sued. The court dismissed Mr Ellis' claim against him. Both the trust and Mr Ellis appealed this decision. In its appeal the trust conceded that an arguable case had been established that the abuse had occurred. However, it alleged that the Catholic Church did not exist in New South Wales as a legal entity. The trust told the court that although it holds all of the Church's property—and had so at the time that Mr Ellis' alleged he was abused—that it was not responsible for the conduct of any member of the clergy. The trust submitted that, in effect, the church could not be sued as, in law, it did not exist.

Cardinal Pell maintained his position on appeal that he was not appointed at the time of the abuse. The cardinal who had been appointed at the time of the alleged abuse had since died, as had the alleged abusive clergy member. Cardinal Pell claimed Mr Ellis could not hold him responsible for the abuse. The Court of Appeal agreed with both the cardinal and the trust, and Mr Ellis' case was dismissed entirely. The court also ordered that he pay the legal costs of the church and the archbishop. The Catholic Church has organised its legal affairs so that, in effect, it is almost entirely insulated from legal claims by victims of abuse.

The law now states that the only entities that exist at law and can be sued by a victim are the individual member of the clergy who is alleged to have been the abuser and the archbishop or head of the relevant religious order at the time of the abuse. As the case of Mr Ellis proves, these defendants are often dead or penniless. Meanwhile, the church and all of its property is comfortably sheltered from compensation claims by a New South Wales law that places its property in its property trust. Mr Ellis took his case to the High Court, which refused him special leave. Mr Andrew Morrison, SC, who acted for Mr Ellis, told the High Court that the Catholic Church:

... has so structured itself as to be immune from suit other than in respect of strictly property matters for all claims of abuse, neglect or negligence, including claims against teachers in parochial schools at least prior to 1986.

The decision continues to have repercussions for survivors of abuse in New South Wales. The outcome is that in respect of child abuse dating back 20 or 30 years the Catholic Church knows when dealing with victims that it has a complete defence. Victims' lawyers are increasingly being driven to check nursing homes for elderly archbishops and bishops who may still be alive and can be sued, often years after they have left their office.

This year the Australian Lawyers Alliance called for urgent legislative changes to the so-called Ellis Defence so as to "hold the Catholic Church accountable for its paedophiles". Some of the responsibility for change can be borne only by the Catholic Church. Hiding behind a technical legal defence in the face of the serious abuse of someone in its care is not consistent with the church's stated commitment to addressing the serious blight of sexual abuse. As a Parliament we have a responsibility to remedy this unconscionable outcome now.

ILLAWARRA RUGBY LEAGUE CENTENARY

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA (Parliamentary Secretary) [6.25 p.m.]: Tonight I speak on the centenary of Illawarra Rugby League. I had the honour of attending the centenary dinner, which was held at the WIN Entertainment Centre, Wollongong, on Wednesday 20 July 2011. The comperes for the evening were Ken Sutcliffe, from Channel Nine, and Marty Haynes, a breakfast announcer on i98FM Wollongong. The special tribute was given by Wayne Bennett, the coach of St George Illawarra Dragons. The Hon. Graham Annesley, the Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Mr David Gallop were also present.

The first Illawarra teams to join the New South Wales Rugby League competition were formed two years after it commenced in Sydney. After three years a local competition had formed, with five teams participating: Dapto, Helensburgh, Mount Keira, Unanderra and Wollongong. The division has since expanded to nine teams in first and reserve grades and 11 teams in third grade. Internationally the Illawarra is known in rugby league as the "Nursery of Champions". With such an impressive history, it is easy to see why.

As part of the event the people's choice "Illawarra Team of the Century" was named in recognition of players whose achievements in Illawarra rugby league represent the pinnacle in rugby league. Graeme Langlands was chosen as fullback. He was also chosen in the Australian Rugby League, New South Wales Rugby League and Country Rugby League teams of the century. Graeme played 34 tests, 11 matches in two World Cups, one world championship and three Kangaroo tours—the last two as captain-coach. Ian Moir was chosen as winger. He played eight tests, four matches in two cups and one Kangaroo tour. Ian was the top scorer, with 13 tries in 16 matches.

Harry Wells Junior was chosen as centre. He played 21 tests, eight World Cup matches, one minor international and two Kangaroo tours. Paul McGregor was chosen as centre. He played four tests, 14 State of Origin matches, was the captain of Illawarra from 1997 to 1998 and co-captain of St George Illawarra in 1999. Other positions included: winger, Rod Wishart; five-eighth, Bob Fulton—whose great achievements are well-known: halfback, Trent Barrett; prop, Steve Roach; hooker, Kevin Schubert, prop, Craig Young; second row, Ron Costello and Craig Fitzgibbon; lock, Noel Mulligan; reserves, John Dorahy, Shaun Timmins, Bruce Olive and Ben Creagh; and coach, Harry Nolan. The Illawarra has seen 44 of its players represent Australia in international games. Bob Fulton and Graeme Langlands, both from the Illawarra, have also received rugby league immortal status.

In 1982 the Illawarra Steelers Rugby League Club was formed, taking its name from the region's close association with steel manufacturing at Port Kembla. In the years that the Steelers competed in the top level of rugby league the club made the playoffs on two occasions. A number of players from the Steelers went on to play for Australia in international games. The first captain of the Steelers was John Dorahy, who was named as a reserve in the Illawarra Team of the Century. He was elected as a Liberal councillor in the recent Wollongong City Council election. In 1999 the Illawarra Steelers merged with the St George Dragons, creating the St George Illawarra Dragons. They are the current National Rugby League premiers and the team most likely to win the 2011 National Rugby League Premiership. The Dragons maintain a strong presence in the Illawarra, with home games being split between WIN Stadium at Wollongong and Jubilee Oval at Kogarah.

In the junior divisions of the game, the Illawarra Steelers still play as their own entity. The first year of the joint venture earned the Dragons a place in the 1999 grand final and, as I have mentioned, they are the current premiers. I congratulate all the officials and players who have not only represented the Illawarra in the proudest fashion but have been a prime example to the youth in the area over the past 100 years. I wish the club continued success in winning this year's premiership.

ENGLAND RUGBY UNION TEAM

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ [6.29 p.m.]: I condemn the English rugby union team for wearing a black jersey, which is not its away strip, in its first game in the Rugby World Cup. Everyone knows that the black jersey belongs to the All Blacks rugby team. It was a slap in the face for the New Zealand community when the English team wore that strip. Historically the All Blacks have had a chequered career wearing the black jersey when competing in the Rugby World Cup. I wish the English team the same result.

Question—That this House do now adjourn—put.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 6.30 p.m. until Thursday 15 September 2011 at 11.00 a.m.
