

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday 8 March 2012

The Deputy-President and Chair of Committees (The Hon. Jennifer Gardiner), in the absence of the President, took the chair at 9.30 a.m.

The Deputy-President (The Hon. Jennifer Gardiner) read the Prayers.

PROPHET MOHAMMED

Motion by the Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) in this month of February, Muslims worldwide celebrate the Birth of the Prophet Mohammed Peace Be Upon Him, and
 - (b) as the messenger of God, Prophet Mohammed is considered by Muslims to be the last in a series of Islamic prophets and is believed to continue the monotheistic faiths of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and other prophets.
2. That this House congratulates Australian Muslims and the wider Australian community on the blessed birth of the messenger of Islam Prophet Mohammed Peace Be Upon Him.

SARGOOD CENTRE

Motion by the Hon. MARIE FICARRA agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) on Friday 24 February 2012, the Hon. Barry O'Farrell, MP, Premier of New South Wales, together with members of the board of the Sargood Centre turned the first sod at Collaroy for the building of the Sargood Centre, named in honour of Mr Frederick Sargood who originally bequeathed the site to the Royal Alexandria Hospital for Children in 1921,
 - (b) the Sargood Centre is a joint project of Sargood Ltd and the NSW Lifetime Care and Support Authority [LTCSA] and will provide transitional residential care services for people with a spinal cord injury,
 - (c) the centre is located above Collaroy Beach on Sydney's Northern Beaches, on land purchased from NSW Health by the Lifetime Care and Support Authority for \$6.014 million,
 - (d) the Government has provided an additional \$9 million in funding, being \$7.5 million from the NSW Motor Accidents Authority and \$1.5 million from the Lifetime Care and Support Authority on top of providing the land,
 - (e) a private philanthropic foundation provided the remaining \$5 million required to build the centre, which is expected to have 14 to 16 beds,
 - (f) work to build the centre is expected to take around 24 months and, once the centre is complete, it will be operated by Sargood Ltd but ownership of the property will remain with the Lifetime Care and Support Authority,
 - (g) the Sargood Centre is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee set up to run the centre, whose members consist of the Lifetime Care and Support Authority, a philanthropic foundation and the Friends of Sargood, a charity based in Collaroy which was formed specifically to support the centre,
 - (h) the current Chief Executive Officer of the Sargood Company, Mr David Bowen, was formerly the Executive Director of the Lifetime Care and Support Authority and is currently the Chair of the National Injury Insurance Scheme Advisory Group,
 - (i) the master of ceremonies for the event was Sargood Company co-patron Wendy Harmer, and the ceremony was addressed by the Hon. Barry O'Farrell, MP, Premier of New South Wales, and co-patrons Alan Jones, AO, and Rod Macqueen, AM, and
 - (j) the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop, MP, Federal member for Mackellar, the Hon. Brad Hazzard, MP, member for Wakehurst and Minister for Planning, and Mr Rob Stokes, member for Pittwater and Parliamentary Secretary for Energy also attended the ceremony, together with directors of the Sargood company, government officials from the NSW Lifetime Care and Support Authority and the Motor Accidents Authority, Friends of Sargood, local community leaders, past staff of the Collaroy Children's Hospital, donors to the foundation and members of the Collaroy Community Group.

2. That this House congratulates the patrons, board, members of Friends of Sargood, the Government, the NSW Lifetime Care and Support Authority and the local community for their work in contributing to this important project that serves the needs and interests of those with spinal cord injuries.

YESHIVA CENTRE GALA DINNER

Motion by the Hon. MARIE FICARRA agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) on 21 February 2012 members of the Jewish Australian community in New South Wales celebrated at the 2012 Yeshiva Centre Gala Dinner at Darling Harbour, New South Wales,
 - (b) the Gala Dinner is one of the Yeshiva Centre's major functions and peak events,
 - (c) the Yeshiva Centre has taught children and provided classes to a broad cross-section of the community, including men, women, young adults and retirees and has helped newly arrived Jewish migrants with settlement in Australia, and
 - (d) the Yeshiva Centre also makes a significant contribution to humanitarian projects through "Our Big Kitchen" and the Yeshiva Welfare Appeal.
2. That this House acknowledges:
 - (a) the work of Rabbi Pinchus Feldman, OAM, Dean and spiritual leader of the Yeshiva Yentre, and his wife, Rebbetzin Pnina Feldman, for bringing the Gala Dinner celebration to fruition,
 - (b) the host, Mr Harry Triguboff, AO, Chairman and Managing Director of Meriton Apartments Pty Ltd,
 - (c) those that attended, particularly:
 - (i) Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, AC, CVO, Governor of New South Wales,
 - (ii) His Excellency Mr Yuval Rote, Ambassador of Israel,
 - (iii) the Hon. Dr Mike Kelly, MP, and Mrs Rachelle Sakker-Kelly,
 - (iv) the Hon. Victor Dominello, MP, Minister for Citizenship and Communities and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs,
 - (v) the Hon. Chris Hartcher, MP, Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State and Minister for the Central Coast,
 - (vi) the Hon. Brad Hazzard, MP, Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW,
 - (vii) Mr John Robertson, MP, Leader of the Opposition and member for Blacktown, and Mrs Robertson, to whom we wish a speedy recovery,
 - (viii) Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, MLC, Assistant-President of the Legislative Council,
 - (ix) the Hon. Marie Ficarra, MLC, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier,
 - (x) the Hon. David Clarke, MLC, Parliamentary Secretary for Justice, and Mrs Marissa Clarke,
 - (xi) Ms Gabrielle Upton, MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Tertiary Education and Skills,
 - (xii) the Hon. Melinda Pavey, MLC, Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Health,
 - (xiii) the Hon. Luke Foley, MLC, Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council,
 - (xiv) the Hon. Paul Green, MLC, Temporary Chair of Committees in the Legislative Council,
 - (xv) the Hon. Greg Donnelly, MLC,
 - (xvi) Mr Andrew Fraser, MP, member for Coffs Harbour and Assistant-Speaker of the Legislative Assembly,
 - (xvii) Mr Robert Furolo, MP, member for Lakemba, shadow Minister for Roads and Ports and shadow Minister for Citizenship and Communities,
 - (xviii) Mr Bruce Notley-Smith, MP, member for Coogee,
 - (xix) Mr Charles Casuscelli, MP, member for Strathfield,

- (xx) Mr Chris Spence, MP, member for The Entrance,
- (xxi) Mr Glenn Brookes, MP, member for East Hills,
- (xxii) Mr Andrew Rohan, MP, member for Smithfield,
- (xxiii) Councillor Scott Nash, Mayor of Randwick Council,
- (xxiv) Councillor Shayne Mallard, City of Sydney Council,
- (xxv) Councillor Phillip Black, City of Sydney Council,
- (xxvi) Mr Yair Miller, President of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies,
- (xxvii) Mr Harry Triguboff, AO,
- (xxviii) Mr Vince Sorrenti,
- (xxix) Mr James Galea,
- (xxx) Mr Gershon Wachtal,
- (xxxi) Rabbi Dovid Slavin,
- (xxxii) Rabbi Yossi Feldman,
- (xxxiii) Rabbi Eli Feldman,
- (xxxiv) Rabbi Yossi Segelman,
- (xxxv) Rabbi Nochum Schapiro,
- (xxxvi) Rabbi Shlalom Feldman,
- (xxxvii) Rabbi Mendel Kastel,
- (xxxviii) Rabbi Levi Wolff,
- (xxxix) Rabbi Yaakov Leider,
- (xl) Rabbi Menachem Dadon,
- (xli) Rabbi Motti Feldman,
- (xlii) Rabbi Yanky Berger,
- (xliii) Rabbi Elimelech Levy,
- (xliv) Rabbi Danny Yaffe,
- (xlv) Rabbi Eli Cohen,
- (xlvi) Rabbi Alon Hazi, and
- (d) the work of the Yeshiva Centre in its efforts to enhance community life with its welfare services, day schools and kindergartens, outreach activities, adult education programs and chaplaincy services.

**SAN ANTONIO DA PADOVA PROTETTORE DI POGGIOREALE TRAPANI
SYDNEY LTD FESTA AND MASS**

Motion by the Hon. MARIE FICARRA agreed to:

1. That this House notes that on 29 January 2012 members of the Italian Australian community in New South Wales celebrated the forty-second annual San Antonio Da Padova Protettore di Poggioreale Trapani Sydney Ltd Festa and Mass at Five Dock, New South Wales.
2. That this House notes that:
 - (a) in 1969 a group of families that had migrated to Sydney from the town of Poggioreale, Sicily, decided to form an association for the purpose to help in maintaining and fostering the traditions of their homeland,
 - (b) in January 1972 the association brought in from Italy a statue of S. Anthony, patron of the Poggioreale in Italy and now patron of the Poggioreale in Sydney, to cement the bond between the people living in the two countries and to unite the people in the faith for the Saint,

- (c) the San Antonio Nursing Home, built with charitable fundraising by the community, provides a very high level of physical care, a chapel with a capacity of approximately 50 people dedicated to San Antonio that assists in providing spiritual care and a meeting place for the social activities of the association, and
 - (d) \$18,000 was raised at this year's Festa towards the operation of the nursing home.
3. That this House acknowledges:
- (a) the directors of San Antonio Da Padova for their dedication to aged services and Italian heritage and culture:
 - (i) Peter Maniscalco, President,
 - (ii) Ross Cutelli, Vice President,
 - (iii) Gino Paladino, Treasurer,
 - (iv) Joe Tusa, Vice Treasurer,
 - (v) Tony Scaltrito, Secretary,
 - (vi) Teresa Todaro Restifa, committee member,
 - (vii) Rose Williams, committee member,
 - (viii) Tony Battiato, committee member,
 - (b) those that attended, particularly:
 - (i) Mr John Sidoti, MP, member for Drummoyne,
 - (ii) the Hon. Amanda Fazio, MLC, Opposition Whip in the Legislative Council,
 - (iii) members of the Italian Australian community,
 - (c) those that provided entertainment, particularly:
 - (i) Our Lady Queen of Peace Maltese Band,
 - (ii) Club Marconi Choir,
 - (iii) Nick Bavarelli Band,
 - (iv) Roseanna Gallo,
 - (v) Nata Forte,
 - (vi) Angelo Di Bello,
 - (vii) Francesca Brescia,
 - (viii) Claudio Sandrelli, and
 - (d) the work of the San Antonio Da Padova Protettore di Poggioreale Trapani Sydney Ltd, including its efforts in providing support to many worthwhile community causes.

NSW GRAND PRIX CYCLING

Motion by the Hon. MARIE FICARRA agreed to:

- 1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) on 16 February 2012 NSW Grand Prix Cycling, an Australian cycling competition, was awarded NSW Event of the Year at the NSW Sports Awards at Waterview, Bicentennial Park in Homebush Bay,
 - (b) Mr Phil Bates, AM, the lead promoter of the series and long-time supporter of cycling in New South Wales, accepted the award on behalf of the NSW Grand Prix Cycling team,
 - (c) this race series was supported by Destination NSW and Skoda, taking place over the last weekend in November in Wollongong and Cronulla,
 - (d) the race was nationally televised by Network Nine for two hours each day, attracting 17 different world or Olympic cycling champions, including an immense array of professional cycling stars and teams from seven different countries,
 - (e) the competition included races in masters, women's and men's categories, and was won by Team Sky star Chris Sutton and national champion Kirsty Broun,

- (f) the event attracted a line-up of world-class cyclists and benefited from the support of Skoda, 2GB, Destination NSW, Network Nine, Wollongong City Council and Sutherland Shire Council, and
 - (g) the NSW Grand Prix Cycling event brought important investment through tourism as well as national and international exposure of the beauty and hospitality that New South Wales has come to be known for.
2. That this House congratulates:
- (a) Phil Bates, AM, and the NSW Grand Prix Cycling team for a successful event that showcased our State to the international cycling community, and
 - (b) Skoda, 2GB, Destination NSW, Network Nine, Wollongong City Council and Sutherland Shire Council for their support of a successful and award-winning sports event.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL CHRISTODOULOU

Motion by the Hon. MARIE FICARRA agreed to:

1. That this House acknowledges the outstanding work Community Relations Commissioner Michael Christodoulou, AM, has undertaken in New South Wales, particularly:
 - (a) as a Commissioner of the NSW Community Relations Commission and its nominee representative to various other bodies,
 - (b) as a board member of the Community Languages Schools Board of the New South Wales education department and the Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW, Chairperson of the Macarthur-Liverpool Regional Advisory Council, Chairperson of the Hellenic Emergency Relief Fund Inc, treasurer of the World Council of Hellenes Abroad, Vice President of the World Federation of Cyprus Communities, committee member of the World Cypriots Bi-Communal Rapprochement Committee, President of the Federation of Cyprus Communities and Organisations of Australia and New Zealand, Chairperson of the Illawarra Regional Advisory Council, Nepean Blacktown Regional Advisory Council and Hunter Regional Advisory Council, National President of the Justice for Cyprus Coordinating Committee, Secretary of the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW, trustee of the Casino Community Benefit Fund of the New South Wales Department of Gaming and Racing, Chairperson of the Cyprus Community "Home for the Aged", Director of Stanmore Hawks Soccer Club, Secretary of Cyprus Community of NSW, committee member of Justice for Cyprus, Co-ordinator of the United Nations Human Rights Day Committee, and Chairperson of the May Murray Neighbourhood Centre Inc, and
 - (c) in fundraising for the Christchurch New Zealand Earthquake Appeal, Queensland Floods Appeal, Victoria Fire Appeal, Timor Leste Relief Appeal, Greek Bushfires Appeal, Austcare Lebanon Crisis Relief Appeal, Tsunami Relief Appeal, Beslan Children's Appeal, Home for the Aged for the Cyprus Community and the establishment of a permanent Modern Greek Unit at the University of New South Wales.
2. That this House notes that in honour of Michael Christodoulou's devotion to the community, in 2009 he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia, in 2003 he was awarded the Centenary Medal and in 2001 he was awarded the International Year of the Volunteer Award.
3. That this House commends and thanks Michael Christodoulou, AM, for the extraordinary work he is doing in New South Wales.

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 3

Report: Rail Infrastructure Project Costing in New South Wales

The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones tabled, as Chair, report No. 26 entitled "Rail Infrastructure Project Costing in New South Wales", dated March 2012.

Ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES [9.36 a.m.]: I move:

That the House take note of the report.

Debate adjourned on motion by the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion by the Hon. Duncan Gay agreed to:

That this House at its rising today do adjourn until Tuesday 13 March 2012 at 2.30 p.m.

COAL SEAM GAS MORATORIUM BILL 2011**Second Reading****Debate resumed from 16 February 2012.**

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD [9.40 a.m.]: I speak against the Coal Seam Gas Moratorium Bill 2011, which ranks as one of the most facile, fearmongering and useless bills that I have had the fulsome pleasure to speak against in my 12 months in this place. It does not rely on the truth or the facts. The Government opposes the bill.

The Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government is taking a proactive and even-handed approach to the coal seam gas industry in this State. It has moved to introduce more stringent environmental planning assessments to address community concerns raised in regard to environmental standards for coal seam gas exploration and production. For the first time in the history of this industry in New South Wales the Government is taking proactive steps to regulate coal seam gas exploration and production to protect the environment. The Government has not granted a single coal seam gas exploration or production licence. Indeed, in this regard the current Government has done more in eight months than the former Labor Government did in 16 years.

Last Tuesday the Government released its draft Strategic Regional Land Use Policy, which gives particular consideration to land use conflicts between the coal and coal seam gas industries on agricultural land and water resources. The Government has always viewed the strategic management of our resources as essential. The launch of the draft regional land use policy and newly mapped regional land use plans by the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, the Hon. Brad Hazzard, and tough new conditions for coal seam gas exploration and production by the Minister for Resources and Energy, Mr Chris Hartcher, delivers on a key election commitment to protect this State's strategic agricultural land. The coal seam gas industry in New South Wales is now subject to the toughest controls in Australia.

The Government also released a landmark requirement, a draft code of practice, which will apply to licence holders to ensure that strong standards are set for the industry during the exploration stage. The code sets minimum standards of conduct expected of licence holders and, once implemented, the Government expects the industry to fully comply. The code of practice also establishes a best practice framework covering community relations, landholder involvement and the use and protection of water resources. It requires: licence holders to make immediate contact with landholders, both in writing and in person; licence holders to have an access arrangement with all landholders on whose land they will be exploring; licence holders to be willing to reimburse all reasonable legal costs to allow landholders to engage a solicitor to review any proposed agreement; compensation to be paid to offset any inconvenience, noise, and use of land; explorers to keep landholders informed of progress and variations in exploration activities; and explorers to fully rehabilitate discontinued well sites.

The code will be released for public comment for eight weeks to allow the community and stakeholders to have a say. The Government has also released new community consultation guidelines to improve interactions between communities and coal seam gas explorers. It is important for communities to be fully informed of projects in their area. Community engagement must be at the forefront of any proposed activity. Communities cannot be expected to come to an informed conclusion about proposed exploration activities unless they have immediate and ongoing access to accurate scientific facts and information. The new guidelines require advertisement of exploration licence applications, evidence of effective community consultation and annual reporting of community consultation.

The Hon. Walt Secord: Did John Anderson write that speech for you?

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: It is a shame that the duty member of the Legislative Council did not go to the Tweed during this process. The Government has also announced a doubling of penalties to ensure companies are held to account for any unauthorised activity during the exploration stage. In addition, the security bonds currently held by the Government are being reviewed to guarantee that there are sufficient funds to rehabilitate any potential damage to land. The announcements made on Tuesday sit alongside the controls put in place by the Government since the election. The Government has placed a moratorium on fracking, banned evaporation ponds, banned BTEX chemicals as additives during drilling, required groups of more than five exploration wells to go through a detailed planning assessment process, strengthened the environmental assessment for individual wells and completed a statewide audit of coal and coal seam gas licences and is enforcing a policy of 25 per cent reduction of exploration licence area upon renewal.

While the new code of practice, community consultation guidelines and penalty regime apply to exploration licences, there must be an acknowledgement that exploration is exactly that. Exploration is for data collection only and helps to determine the resource and to understand aquifers. The gateway process will apply to larger-scale coal seam gas exploration projects of more than five wells and will apply also to all coal seam gas extraction proposals on high-value agricultural land. Exploration may continue in areas of strategic agricultural land but under tougher controls and will be subject to the gateway process if a licence holder wishes to proceed to production. Resource industries can and do coexist with agricultural production and environmental protection. However, coexistence does require strong oversight of exploration and production activities, which the strategic lands policy works to achieve.

For the first time in the history of this industry in New South Wales, the Government is regulating coal seam gas exploration and production to ensure that the environment and high-value agricultural lands are protected. These actions are designed to strike the right balance between competing land uses in our regions, particularly our important agricultural, mining and coal seam gas industries. The Government will continue working with regional communities to arrive at the appropriate balance between mining and agriculture. For those sound reasons I oppose the bill.

The Hon. STEVE WHAN [9.46 a.m.]: I have looked forward to making a contribution to debate on the Coal Seam Gas Moratorium Bill 2011. The Hon. Scot MacDonald outlined the Government's recently announced draft Strategic Regional Land Use Policy but appeared to neglect some of the responses that have been received from constituent groups that may have been relevant to his contribution. For instance, the website of the New South Wales Farmers Association states:

The NSW Government has released its draft Aquifer Interference Policy and draft regional plans for the Hunter and New England/North-West. NSW Farmers believes that these represent a broken election promise.

It states further:

O'Farrell Government fails to protect NSW.

Clearly the New South Wales Farmers Association, like most groups and individuals in this State, believes that the Government has failed to live up to its pre-election rhetoric on coal seam gas. Prior to the last election the Coalition made a cheap attempt to buy votes by tapping into an issue of concern and made commitments that it never intended to live up to. The New South Wales Liberals and Nationals Strategic Regional Land Use Policy released before the election stated:

The NSW Liberals and Nationals believe that agricultural land and other sensitive areas exist in NSW where mining and coal seam gas extraction should not occur.

The policy released last Tuesday does not rule out any area from coal seam gas extraction. The policy released before the election also stated that, if elected, the Coalition would be:

... commencing an overhaul of the planning system soon after March 2011, with community input prior to the final determination of the D.A. This would include a thorough examination of enhanced buffer zones and "ring fencing", with particular reference to proximity to communities and effect on established industries.

During the election campaign a number of Nationals—George Souris, the member for the Upper Hunter; Kevin Anderson, the member for Tamworth; and Kevin Humphries, the member for Barwon—were trotting around the State trying to make farmers believe that they were going to ring fence and protect areas. They condemned Labor's policy before the election of committing to ring fencing some of the wine-growing areas in the Hunter in particular. That was made very clear. What we have witnessed is the ultimate in hypocrisy from the Government, which has failed to deliver on the expectations that it raised for people in New South Wales. That does not mean to say that there are not some positives in the Government's strategic land use policy, but predominantly there are a number of omissions. I certainly will not be kind to the proponent of this bill either, as I believe that the bill is about self-promotion rather than solutions. It is fundamentally flawed in a number of respects.

[Interruption]

The interjection suggests that the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham is fantastic at self-promotion. I am sure that every member would agree with me because it seems that is all the member is interested in at the moment. That is all we see from him. This is not a serious bill. That is not to say, however, that it cannot be fixed. The

bill is aimed at self-promotion not solutions. How can anyone seriously suggest that legislation should be introduced that bans coal seam gas extraction in Sydney and the Sydney catchment but ignores Newcastle, Wollongong, Narrabri, the Pilliga—

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Queanbeyan.

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: I acknowledge the interjection concerning Queanbeyan, but I do not think there is a lot of coal seam gas resource there.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: There is a lot of gold, which the member also opposes.

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: There is an approved goldmine near Major's Creek now which will be a huge boost to the local area through employment.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Did you support it?

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: I did support it quite strongly. Why would the Government introduce legislation that arbitrarily bans exploration permanently in the Sydney Basin and nowhere else in New South Wales?

The Hon. Scot MacDonald: Point of order: I cannot hear the member flip-flopping through his speech because of the level of noise in the Chamber.

The DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Jennifer Gardiner): Order! Members who wish to engage in conversations will do so outside the Chamber. The member with the call will be heard in silence.

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: There is no logic to an arbitrary ban for the Sydney Basin—except that Sydney is the base of many green votes. That is what this bill is about. The member is attempting to appeal to the \$130,000-average-income green voters. The Labor Party believes that it is not appropriate to arbitrarily choose an area and ban it forever for the purposes of coal seam gas extraction. If it is shown through investigative processes that coal seam gas extraction can be undertaken safely in the future, this bill would prevent the development of coal seam gas for cogeneration, which is an environmentally efficient way of undertaking energy extraction. It would prevent people in Sydney having access to cheaper gas than they might otherwise have available to them.

The other problematic aspect of the bill is the arbitrary 12-month nature of the ban itself. Why have a moratorium that runs for 12 months from the date of proclamation of the bill? What is the logic in that? It is simply for show. Labor's view is that a moratorium should apply as announced in Labor policy, which provides for a mechanism to have a moratorium lifted when it is deemed appropriate to do so. Labor is proposing a moratorium across the State initially, with legislation that allows the moratorium to be lifted in specific areas should an assessment by the Commonwealth's expert scientific committee find in favour of allowing the extraction of coal seam gas.

Labor will move amendments to the bill in Committee along those lines. There has been considerable development since this bill was first proposed, key among them the announcement by the Federal Government that it is willing to fund bioregion studies of areas, specifically including work on water catchment areas. Part of those studies will include the assessment of aquifers. One of the reasons that Labor can move these amendments is that yesterday the New South Wales Government agreed to bioregion assessments, including regional-scale water assessments, for the areas subject to coal seam gas and coalmining. As the Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson, has said, we need independent scientific advice on whether coal seam gas extraction is safe and whether it impacts aquifers. Federal Labor Government funding for bioregion studies will give this State the mechanism to obtain that scientific advice.

The Labor Party amendments to the bill will change the arbitrary 12-month moratorium to a moratorium that may be rescinded should bioregion assessments find that it is safe to conduct coal seam gas extraction in a particular area. That is the logical way to go about it. The amendment is tougher than the existing provision in the bill and it will ensure the safety of aquifers before the extraction of coal seam gas is undertaken. We have heard the Hon. Scot MacDonald speak about the measures announced by the Government. New South Wales farmers have experienced yet another broken promise from the Government. It has not honoured the promises made by the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, the member for Tamworth or the Minister for Mental Health during the election campaign.

Land use strategic planning is one aspect of the bill that may be useful in the long term. As the Government's web site acknowledges, the Government continued a process commenced by the Labor Party to arrive at this process. The land use planning strategies will be useful in the long term. It is important that areas of high agricultural value are identified in order that action can be taken for proper assessment before activity occurs in an area. There are flaws, locals are telling me, in the assessment of certain areas, for example, the wine country. Locals in the Upper Hunter are asking why the strategic land use plan identifies wine makers around Pokolbin and Broke but not the grape growers further up the region. As the strategic land use plan is a discussion document it is important that such concerns are raised. Any positives that emerge from the strategic land use plan will be a step in the right direction. As the Leader of the Opposition has said, scientific evidence that coal seam gas is safe for aquifer maintenance is required.

The Labor Party welcomes elements of the aquifer interference policy that include an assessment of the amount of water extracted from the aquifer and the possibility of interference with other aquifers or important water supplies. As the bill stands, until a development application is submitted such an assessment will not take place. In other words, a situation can occur whereby exploration is occurring, as is presently happening in the Pilliga, prior to the proposed interference legislation coming into effect. That flaw in the bill may, however, prove to be a step in the right direction when the bill is amended in Committee. As the moratorium reaches its end stage Labor will develop further policy seeking to extend the proposed aquifer interference legislation to encompass assessment before the commencement of coal seam gas exploration or extraction. Aquifer monitoring must be in place before that occurs.

We would look at extending to other areas of particular sensitivity the provisions applying to national parks so that coal seam gas cannot be extracted in those areas. That would be a lot closer to the Coalition's pre-election promise of ring fencing some areas. We would certainly be looking again at exclusion zones near residential areas. But we do need to acknowledge that in the longer term it is simply not in our State's interest to rule out the ability, once coal seam gas has overcome the hurdles ahead of it and proven itself, to use coal seam gas. If we do not do that we are likely to see shortages of gas in New South Wales in the long term and much higher prices for consumers.

We need to acknowledge, and I certainly do, that gas is an important fuel in a step down towards a lower carbon-emitting environment. People in New South Wales need to look very closely at The Greens' policy on this. What is The Greens' energy policy for the long term? If we listen to people like the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham we will hear that we cannot have coal, so we cannot have electricity from coal, we cannot have coal seam gas, we will not be able to have geothermal power because that involves fracking, which The Greens think is absolutely appalling—

The Hon. John Ajaka: Do not forget uranium.

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: They do not think we should use uranium either. Never mind, it is only a matter of time before The Greens turn against wind power. The Greens on a parliamentary committee, unlike Labor, voted for a three-kilometre buffer from wind turbines. The Greens are now Australia's nimby party and it is only a matter of time until they turn against wind power as well. They do not support biomass and they do not support biofuels. The Greens' energy policy leaves us, perhaps, with wave power if we are really lucky. But, let us face it, once someone starts putting wave power into estuaries that will be a problem for The Greens as well. We might be able to have solar power, but how are we going to be able to produce the solar panels if we cannot generate the power we need to produce the panels and the silicon?

The Greens are Australia's ultimate nimby party. Labor rejects such policies because we are the alternative government for New South Wales. We recognise that we need to work through this issue and get the community to see the evidence about coal seam gas. We need to prove whether it is or it is not safe to extract from aquifers and, on the basis that it is safe, ensure that it has the social licence that it needs to proceed in New South Wales. Without that social licence we acknowledge that it will not proceed. The scientific work has to be done first. I personally believe that we will find that coal seam gas is safe to extract in the longer term and that we will be able to show the community that it is safe. There is, in fact, no example in Australia of coal seam gas contaminating an aquifer. There have been problems with evaporation ponds and salinity issues, which need to be dealt with, but one of the things that is incredibly dishonest in this debate is the assertion, as we heard in the second reading speech on the bill, about shale gas in the United States being put on a par with coal seam gas.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: The infrastructure is the same.

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: The geological structure is completely different and that is one of the fundamental problems with the nimby party members, parading as The Greens now. They are not interested in working people and affordability of energy or energy policy; they are simply interested in saying anything that comes into their heads about this issue. The member who introduced this legislation was not interested in practical workable legislation with ways forward, which Labor is interested in, but was interested in self-promotion. The member is amazing in the naivety of his approach to these things.

We will vote for the second reading and then put forward amendments to turn his piece of self-promotion into a piece of serious legislation to address this issue. Then the bill will be tougher and better. It will not have just an arbitrary promotional 12-month moratorium and an exclusion for Sydney because The Greens voters are in Balmain and the inner city. The Greens do not give a rat's about the people who live in Newcastle, Wollongong, Narrabri and other areas. Shame on the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham, who lives in Orange, for pandering to the inner-city constituency. Any party that wants to be a serious government for New South Wales in the long term has to have a serious energy policy. The Greens will never have to address that because they are not a party of serious decisions and serious government.

A serious government cannot pursue the populism of The Greens. Labor is not a Tony Abbott-style opposition that will say anything just to get a good result at a future election. We will put forward a serious energy policy. We know that The Greens do not care about people in New South Wales having access to affordable energy because they do not actually have an interest in working people and people who have tight budgets. That is not their supporter base so they do not give a damn about them. We believe in a policy for the future. As I outlined earlier, we will move amendments in Committee. In the longer term Labor will promote better land use policy, improve the aquifer interference legislation and genuinely address farmers' rights over their land. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN [10.06 a.m.]: Some very interesting contributions have been made in this debate. The Hon. Steve Whan points out that the member who introduced the Coal Seam Gas Moratorium Bill 2011, the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham, being a country member should have thought more of the country. Also, the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham has worked with stone and knows a bit about density and so on. To confuse shale with coal is unforgivable for an ex-stonemason. The Greens do love to transport and transpose problems from one part of the world to the other. Their policies on marine science show that.

Most members of this House seem to understand our committee system. They understand that General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 is currently considering coal seam gas in New South Wales. They also understand that the first inquiry undertaken by a committee of the fifty-fifth Parliament was an inquiry into coal seam gas and was promoted by the member who introduced this bill. The member asked me whether the committee could self-refer and as the chair of the committee I brokered a bipartisan approach to get a decent set of terms of reference.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham is the deputy chair of that same committee. What does that say about his respect for the committee system of the House? I have been here a little longer than he has so I offer him a lesson. During the time of the previous Government when I was chair of a select committee on marine parks I introduced a bill dealing with that matter before the House. I delayed proceeding with my bill until the committee had reported. So there is no way that I am going to support a motion on a bill that seeks to second-guess a committee of which the member is a part, and, in fact, is the deputy chair.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA (Parliamentary Secretary) [10.09 a.m.]: I oppose the Coal Seam Gas Moratorium Bill 2011. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government believes the development of further gas supplies is an important part of the State's energy plan and is vital to reducing the State's carbon footprint. Dr John Kaye, as reported in *Echo News* on 10 December 2009 speaking on the issue of coal seam gas developments on the North Coast of New South Wales, said:

The potential for local gas generation should be factored into any planning for the Far North Coast's energy strategy.

Gas is the cleanest burning of all the fossil fuels. It has the lowest carbon dioxide emissions of any fossil fuel and produces lower greenhouse gas emissions. Internationally, gas has become the bridging fuel between traditional energy forms and a sustainable energy future. Gas is a key energy resource into the foreseeable future and its importance will grow due to highly efficient energy delivery to consumers and lower carbon emission combustion. While zero and low emission energy alternatives develop in the coming years, a lower carbon fuel will be required to meet growing demand for electricity as well as replace high carbon coal-fired generation. Economically, gas can enhance the efficiency, reliability and competitiveness of New South Wales businesses and industry by providing ready access to electricity and gas at cost-effective prices.

New South Wales produces just 6 per cent of its own gas demands and is heavily dependent upon imported gas supplies from the Cooper Basin in South Australia and Bass Strait through Victoria. The New South Wales gas distribution network supplies natural gas to more than one million consumers. Under a forecast medium growth scenario, the market operator predicts gas demand in New South Wales will triple by 2020. Based on these demand growths for gas in New South Wales, additional pipeline capacity may be required from as early as 2013 and additional production capacity may be needed from mid-2015. New South Wales has more than 250 years of available gas supply based on identified reserves. Imports are at risk with declining reserves in South Australia and Victoria: the remaining 1,200 petajoules of reserves in the Cooper Basin are expected to decline to around 300 petajoules over the next 20 years. The 7,000 petajoules of reserves in Bass Strait are expected to halve in the next 20 years. These figures do not take into account the effect of the carbon tax on the acceleration of the gas shortage, particularly with a brown coal phase-out in Victoria and South Australia.

With future electricity generation requiring gas to offset the present coal dependence of 80 per cent, domestic production is crucial. Coal seam gas projects in New South Wales have the potential to inject more than \$3 billion into the State's economy and provide over 1,000 new jobs. Cumulative private investment in the last five years in the domestic gas industry exceeded half a billion dollars. The cumulative onshore gas exploration expenditure figure for 2009-10 was a record \$140 million.

Coal seam gas is a recent entrant to the New South Wales energy and resources sector and a number of important issues need to be considered to avoid problems that have arisen in other locations, specifically Queensland. As part of the Government's Strategic Regional Land Use Policy a triple bottom line approach will be taken when considering development projects. Specifically, the Government has announced reforms to the planning assessment process as well as mining and coal seam gas legislation to protect strategic agricultural lands and associated water resources. These reforms will impact on gas exploration, production and pipeline infrastructure to ensure that our vital water and agricultural resources are protected.

The Government's draft strategic lands policy—announced by the Minister, the Hon. Brad Hazzard, on Tuesday—will set the framework within which future development will be assessed to ensure appropriate consideration is given to the environmental, social and economic characteristics of an area. The Government will responsibly manage the development of coal seam gas in New South Wales and is implementing new approaches to issues such as water and aquifer management as well as consideration of landowner property rights and community consultation.

Exploration for coal seam gas is subject to approval by the Division of Resources and Energy. The approvals process also requires an environmental assessment of impacts in accordance with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. An exploration licence only allows a company to undertake exploration, environmental assessments and feasibility studies. Coal seam gas production proposals are required to obtain development approval under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. As part of the coal seam gas production approvals process proponents are required to submit a comprehensive environmental assessment that addresses all potential impacts of the proposal, including potential impacts on aquifers and water resources as well as cumulative impacts. The coal seam gas approvals process now requires extensive consultation across a number of New South Wales government departments prior to approving any applications for drilling. Our approach is all about getting the balance right—managing our natural resources in a socially and environmentally responsible way that involves extensive consultation with the community and particularly farmers, as well as moving the industry forward to ensure a clean source of power well into the future. I oppose the bill.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE [10.16 a.m.]: I support the excellent work of my colleague the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham in bringing the Coal Seam Gas Moratorium Bill 2011 before the House and calling for a statewide moratorium on coal seam gas developments. The contribution of the Hon. Steve Whan to this debate was absolutely blind to the failure of Labor over 16 years to do a single thing to restrain coal seam gas development processes. Labor delivered licences to cover the entire State without a skerrick of environmental assessment. Documentation that Labor Ministers signed off when granting coal seam gas licences to cover the entire State shows they adopted a tick-a-box approach. There are standard form letters that the Minister appears to have given to the industry to sign off.

The Hon. Scot MacDonald: With a cheque attached.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: With a very substantial cheque attached to effectively buy rights to explore, with an implicit right thereafter to extract coal seam gas across the State with hardly an environmental consideration.

The Hon. Robert Brown: And no royalties.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And not a dollar in royalties to an already stretched State Treasury.

The Hon. Steve Whan: Eventually they did.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Sorry, eventually. It was only a five-year holiday on royalties, a mere five years of free access to one of the resources of this State given by the previous Government to the coal seam gas industry. Eventually they might have paid a dollar to the New South Wales taxpayer. I am sure the people of New South Wales would have been greatly relieved that half a decade on the coal seam gas industry might have paid a dollar to the New South Wales Treasury.

The Hon. Steve Whan: What is your energy policy? Why don't you explain it? It is just solar panels.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The Greens are aware of a range of comprehensive academic research from great State institutions such as the University of Newcastle that says that if we transition to a wholly renewable energy future for New South Wales we would produce more than 73,000 ongoing, green collar local jobs in the manufacture of key new green industries, such as wind turbines and solar thermal. The thousands of jobs created by going to a renewable energy future would dwarf the mere 1,000 jobs that the coal seam gas industry says it can create over three years in New South Wales with the expansion of its industry. For Labor members to preach to the House about the failures of Greens policy on coal seam gas when they presided over an unmitigated disaster in coal seam gas for 16 years is hypocrisy of the first order.

I am glad that Labor has now finally come on board and adopted The Greens position of having a moratorium on coal seam gas. It was about time Labor adopted our position, but it is a pity it did not do so while in government when it would have had the certain votes to get it through this House. If Labor had adopted the position The Greens have held for some time now, we would already have a moratorium in place on coal seam gas. But, of course, when in government Labor members did not do anything; they just took the cheques and signed the approvals.

That brings me to the current Government's approach to coal seam gas and why a moratorium is required. I heard the contribution from the Hon. Robert Brown in relation to General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5. As the honourable member knows, The Greens, including my colleague Jeremy Buckingham, are strong supporters of the work of General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 in looking at the future of coal seam gas in New South Wales. But a moratorium is entirely consistent with the work of the committee because the urgency with which this House moved to establish that committee recognised the need to do something right away to address coal seam gas. With the greatest will in the world, General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 has been travelling around the State hearing submission after submission and looking at the issues of coal seam gas. I do not believe that anyone who has reviewed the submissions or evidence before the committee could say anything other than that the citizens of this State are extremely troubled by the prospect of coal seam gas being rolled out.

Whether farmers in regional areas or people with a quarter-acre block in Camden, the citizens of this State know that the coal seam gas industry has the potential to poison their water and ruin their future food supply. They want urgent action. Until the scientific evidence is in that explains how or if coal seam gas can safely be extracted through our aquifers, which are essential for our future water and food security, there must be a moratorium. This bill establishes a 12-month moratorium. If at the end of 12 months it has become apparent that there is no scientific consensus on how to extract coal seam gas safely, of course we could extend the moratorium.

The Hon. Scot MacDonald: So we should shut down AGL Camden?

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: That brings me to the issue of AGL in Camden, as the Hon. Scott MacDonald so eloquently interjected. Why is there a prohibition in this bill in the region that includes Camden? It is because Sydney sits upon some of the largest coal seam gas reserves in the State. Although the Government has not told us, thanks to repeated efforts by community groups and Greens and others to get the information into the public domain we now know that AGL has very advanced plans before the Minister to build hundreds of coal seam gas wells in the Sydney region. Those gas wells will sit cheek by jowl with building blocks for which residents have paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to the State Government through Landcom and other

entities. Those residents bought their blocks in the hope of providing a future for themselves and their families, yet this Government is authorising coal seam gas wells to be drilled 200 metres away, in accordance with the requirements of Landcom.

The legal requirement in New South Wales is a five-metre buffer but, because of the great generosity of the Minister for Planning, these residents are getting all of a 200-metre buffer from hundreds of potential coal seam gas wells in Camden. It is a disgrace. It is a betrayal of trust by this Government to those people it sold housing blocks to through Landcom. And the Government is on its way to sell more housing blocks to residents in south-western Sydney, knowing full well that there will be hundreds of coal seam gas wells only a couple of hundred metres away from their back doors.

Why do we want a moratorium on coal seam gas in Sydney? Because Sydney is the scene of major conflict in terms of residential development and a mandatory halt to coal seam gas exploration is required. Of course, we would welcome the expansion of that prohibition to Newcastle and Wollongong and other regional centres such as Lismore and Grafton and Bega. If this Parliament were minded to join with The Greens and prohibit coal seam gas exploration and production in residential areas across New South Wales we would welcome that with open arms and support it. I commend the work of my colleague Jeremy Buckingham, who has raised the profile of the anti-coal seam gas campaigners across the State. I commend the work of ordinary farmers and citizens who are standing up to one of the most rapacious industries this State has seen.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Please be more hyperbolic—rapacious!

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I also commend the work of organisations such as the New South Wales Farmers Association who are standing up against—as the Government Whip so correctly notes—the rapacious coal seam gas and open cut coal industry. But what have those who have been sitting on the Government benches for the better part of 12 months done to restrain coal seam gas? To date they have done absolutely nothing, but they have released a draft strategic regional land use plan for the upper Hunter and for the New England north west. Before the election they said they were going to absolutely protect strategic agricultural land. They were going to put an iron fence around strategic agricultural land and declare that there would be no coal seam gas in those areas.

But what does the draft strategic regional land use policy for the upper Hunter do? How much land does it ring fence and protect from coal seam gas exploration? Not one square meter. What a betrayal of the people who voted for this Government following its rhetoric before March. Not one square metre is protected in the upper Hunter. And how much of the upper Hunter has been identified as strategic agricultural land? The upper Hunter is a beautiful part of the State that is full of rich agricultural regions, yet just 4 per cent of it has been identified as strategic agricultural land. Strangely enough, the area that is identified as strategic agricultural land is predominantly outside of the areas with the largest coal seam gas and coal reserves. What a coincidence. One would almost think the industry had mapped the strategic agricultural land in New South Wales and that the Minister for Planning and other Ministers just signed it off.

It is little better in New England and the north-west. Of all of New England and the north-west how much strategic agricultural land is ring fenced and protected? Not one square metre. And how much is identified as strategic agricultural land? A mere 12 per cent of that crucial part of our State's future food security and farming wealth for generations to come. All that says to farmers who have land within areas identified as strategic agricultural land is that the industry must have some environmental proof before the work proceeds. Why is that not the standard for the entire State? Why is that not the standard for everyone's farm, everyone's backyard, everyone's local river, everyone's aquifer?

It is because the Government has established for a tiny minority of the State regions identified as strategic agricultural land where the coal seam gas industry must carry out a preliminary environmental assessment. It is not a particularly vigorous assessment; we have not seen the guidelines and we do not know who will serve on the mysterious panel that will be established by the planning Minister. But at least in those areas there will be an initial preliminary environmental assessment for this tiny area of land, unless of course—and this is where part 3A rears its head again in this Chamber—Cabinet thinks the amount of coal seam gas and coal that the industry wants to extract is of some sort of State significance. If there is a whole lot of coal seam gas and coal under the strategic agricultural land the Cabinet—just like Labor before it with part 3A—can avoid all environmental controls, avoid the gateway process entirely and go straight to extraction because at some point it is politically convenient for Cabinet to give a gift to the coal seam gas industry.

Why would any government that was genuinely committed to good planning and good decision-making establish a process that puts in place environmental and aquifer interference considerations and then give a get-out-of-jail-free card to the industry by allowing the Cabinet to just sidestep the entire process? The only reason that get-out-of-jail-free card is being offered to the coal seam gas industry is that this Government knows it wants to use it and it knows it wants to sidestep those controls when there is a lot of money at stake for its friends in the coal seam gas industry. Again, it is a betrayal of the people of regional New South Wales whom the Government said in the lead-up to the election it would protect.

Lastly, the draft strategic regional land use plans that have been established by this Government, apparently with the cooperation of the planning Minister, have cut entirely across the statewide review of planning being conducted by that very same Minister. The statewide regional planning review is to consider how to conduct regional planning. One of the issues before that review is whether we should have State environmental planning policies and how local environmental plans should interact with State environmental planning policies or other regional and State planning policies. A comprehensive statewide review of planning is being undertaken and, blind to that, without even a reference to it, the State Government—with the active support of the planning Minister, who is allegedly conducting a wholesale review of New South Wales planning laws—has signed on to a flawed regional planning process and to the continued use of the extraordinarily flawed State environmental planning policy regime. Effectively, this means that the Minister, without requiring any community consultation or any expert consideration, is able to sign new State environmental planning policies into law as and when he or she sees fit. That is an extraordinary proposition.

One part of the Government is conducting a statewide planning review while another part of the Government has established these so-called strategic regional land use plans that are entirely at odds with the statewide planning review. No-one in the Government has explained how the two will fit together. That is clearly because no-one in the Government has a strategy about what to do with planning. The planning Minister cannot explain how these documents fit within his statewide planning review—he has not even tried to explain it. It is because they do not; they are separate—a gift to the coal seam gas industry. They are not designed for good regional planning or for good strategic planning; they are designed to make the Government look like it is doing something on coal seam gas when, in effect, it is delivering the whole of the State to ongoing exploration with minimal environmental considerations.

I commend the work of my colleague the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham for bringing this moratorium legislation before the House. Clearly, the people of New South Wales support a moratorium across this State. We must stop the industry in its tracks. Let the industry undertake scientific assessment. Let us see whether the industry can satisfy the people of New South Wales that it can extract coal seam gas safely. Until it does that, and if it does that, we need this moratorium. Parliament should act with some courage and support the bill.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY (Leader of the Opposition) [10.33 a.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Coal Seam Gas Moratorium Bill 2011 and indicate that Labor will support it. We will move amendments in the Committee of the Whole to improve and strengthen the bill. John Robertson, as New South Wales Labor leader, announced in November that New South Wales Labor is calling on the Government to suspend all current coal seam gas exploration licences to protect the State's precious water resources. On 10 November John Robertson said:

The Government must immediately suspend all Coal Seam Gas exploration licenses before irreparable damage is caused to ground water and aquifers. The NSW Opposition is also calling on the Government to cease issuing Coal Seam Gas extraction licences and refuse any applications to expand existing operations.

Until a water-tight regulatory framework is in place based on independent scientific research and conclusive evidence, we should not be allowing Coal Seam Gas mining to proceed unabated.

Mr David Shoebridge made some very critical comments of Labor's record in government with respect to the coal seam gas industry. John Robertson, as Labor's leader, has acknowledged that Labor was too slow in government to address growing community concern about the impact of coal seam gas mining on our water resources, on our agricultural lands and on our high conservation value lands. John Robertson has said that repeatedly. When your political party has suffered the heaviest defeat in its history, as New South Wales Labor did in 2011, you would have rocks in your head not to look at where you went wrong, and John Robertson and the State Labor Opposition has been candid enough to say that in government we were too slow to address growing community concern about coal seam gas mining.

I say to those who wish to harp on about Labor's record in government: What would you prefer? If you are serious about addressing the impacts of the coal seam gas industry on our water resources, our lands and our

environment would you really prefer that the State Opposition—a major political party in this State—did not move its policy position closer to yours? I often say that Mr David Shoebridge attacks the conservative side of politics out of duty but the Labor Party for pleasure. We know that the agenda of Ms Lee Rhiannon's faction of The Greens is to grow at the expense of the Labor Party.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: You are on a unity ticket on that one.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: I acknowledge the interjection of the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham. I think the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham has approached this issue in a constructive way. In his second reading speech introducing his private member's bill he welcomed the change of direction by State Labor on this issue. I say in response to Mr Shoebridge's over-the-top attack: We yield to nobody when it comes to our environmental achievements in government. I quote one of this State's leading environmental groups, the Colong Foundation for Wilderness. In March last year Keith Muir, the foundation's director—not a man who lightly praises governments—wrote:

It is fair to say that the major conservation achievements of the last sixteen years of Labor rule will probably never be equalled. Three million hectares of national parks added, a tripling of the wilderness estate by the addition of 1.5 million hectares, stopping the clearing of native vegetation, new threatened species legislation, and water and energy conservation schemes.

The Colong Foundation for Wilderness is the successor to Myles Dunphy's National Parks and Primitive Areas Council and is Australia's longest-serving community advocate for wilderness. They are the words of the group's director, so the Labor Party certainly will not yield to the likes of Mr David Shoebridge when it comes to environmental achievements.

I foreshadow that Labor will move amendments to this bill that we believe will strengthen and improve the moratorium advanced by the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham in his private member's bill. The amendments will do two things. Currently the moratorium proposed in the bill by the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham will be for 12 months. The bill is silent about what will happen in 12 months when the moratorium expires. The Labor Opposition proposes a moratorium that will apply across the whole State and will link to the work of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee on Coal Seam Gas and Coal Mining that has been set up by the Commonwealth Government. The committee will commission regional water assessments for priority areas. It is proposed that all research findings, including regional water assessments, will be made publicly available and should provide a valuable resource to continually improve the information base and provide further support to decision-making processes. My source for those comments is the independent expert scientific committee's guidelines for research that have been produced by the Commonwealth Government.

The moratorium proposed by the Labor Opposition would apply to the whole State, but when the independent expert scientific committee that has been established by the Commonwealth does its work and produces regional water assessments for various areas that will govern how New South Wales regulates the development of the coal seam gas industry. If the independent scientific committee produces a regional water assessment that gives a tick to coal seam gas in a particular region of New South Wales the moratorium will be lifted for that region. But until that expert scientific work is done by the Commonwealth a moratorium will apply. The Labor Opposition believes that is a better way to proceed than simply applying a catch-all 12-month moratorium. A simple 12-month moratorium prompts the question: What happens in 12 months time? The Labor Opposition is proposing a clear pathway whereby the independent expert committee of the Commonwealth Government is charged with producing regional water assessments, and those assessments will guide us in relation to where coal seam gas should be out or in.

In relation to the second matter, which is the proposal by the member who introduced the bill to prohibit the coal seam gas industry within the Sydney catchment, the Labor Opposition simply says that if, as the mover asserts, coal seam gas is a bad thing, why treat the rest of the State differently from Sydney? The Labor Opposition says we should treat the whole State the same. We will obtain regional water assessments from the independent expert committee and let its work govern where, if anywhere, the industry ought to be allowed to proceed in this State. The Labor Opposition welcomes this bill. I acknowledge the determined and conscientious work and campaigning done by the member who introduced this bill, the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham.

The Hon. Steve Whan: He is far nicer to you than I am.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: I acknowledge the interjection by the Hon. Steve Whan. It might just be that I am a far nicer person than he is.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Point of order: Is it appropriate for the Leader of the Opposition to mislead the House?

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! There is no point of order.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: We all have our moments. In the time remaining for my speech I will make some remarks about the draft strategic regional land use plans released this week by the O'Farrell Government. Two nights ago in this House I made a contribution about coal seam gas exploration in Putty Valley, which is in the upper Hunter region and part of the draft strategic regional land use plan for the upper Hunter that was released this week. Prior to the election the Liberals and The Nationals presented some very strong wording to the voting public regarding the future of coal seam gas in this State. They spoke explicitly about the notion of no-go areas and some areas simply being ruled out. I acknowledge that the Liberals and The Nationals, in the policy they took to the election, were hearing the voices of community concern across regional New South Wales, in particular about the coal seam gas industry and its impact.

The Liberal Party and The Nationals were very responsive to community concerns—perhaps more so than my party at that time—but it appears this week that that responsiveness lasted to 26 March 2011 and not beyond. This week we have seen draft rules that give no certainty of protection of environmental and agricultural values. The protection of strategic agricultural lands and high conservation values is left to a process that can sideline water protection and can be sidelined itself if the Government deems a project to be exceptional. There is no certainty for sustainable agriculture or threatened habitats. As shadow Minister for the Environment I take a particular interest in the impact of coal seam gas on high conservation land, as did the Liberals' and The Nationals' pre-election policy.

As we heard from Government members, the Government set up an independent gateway process for strategic agricultural lands, but of course not for areas with high biodiversity values. The Government's draft land use plans for the upper Hunter and New England's north-west do not meet the reasonable expectations of landholders and local communities. They do not provide clear and certain protection for iconic natural areas, public lands and water supply catchments. The plans carefully map high conservation value areas but then offer no clear legal means of ensuring their ongoing protection.

At estimates committee hearings I questioned the State's Minister for the Environment about coal seam gas mining in high-value conservation areas. I was disappointed that the Minister for the Environment, Robyn Parker, refused to rule out approving coal seam gas mining in high-value conservation areas. Of course, that places the iconic Pilliga forests at risk. I have been to the Pilliga with the Hon. Steve Whan. We met with miners, conservationists and farmers. It is the case that polluted water has been released from coal seam gas operations in the Pilliga into the Bohen Creek system, which flows into the Murray-Darling Basin. A report provided by Santos only two weeks ago admits that coal seam gas and water had been spilled, native bushland had been cleared, and creek systems that flow into the Murray-Darling had been polluted. Under questioning, Robyn Parker refused to rule out approving coal seam gas mining in State conservation areas. Coal seam gas mining has never been approved in any New South Wales State conservation area, yet this environment Minister refuses to rule it out.

Prior to the election the Liberal-Nationals members raised community hopes that they would address community concerns regarding the impact of coal seam gas mining operations. Those hopes have been dashed because what the Government released this week falls a long way short of its pre-election promise. The Labor Opposition supports a moratorium on coal seam gas mining in this State until more conclusive scientific evidence is available. New South Wales Labor is calling for all coal seam gas exploration licences to be suspended and no new extraction licences issued until we can be sure that the mining process is safe. We will support this bill and vote for a moratorium on coal seam gas mining. I flag that we will propose amendments that we believe will improve and strengthen the moratorium.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN [10.51 a.m.]: I support the Coal Seam Gas Moratorium Bill 2011 introduced by my colleague the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham. It was interesting to hear the contributions of the two Opposition members who have spoken so far in this debate: the Leader of the Opposition and the Hon. Steve Whan.

The Hon. Luke Foley: Why attack the Labor Party case? Why don't you get stuck into the Tories?

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I have to say something about the Labor Party, so I acknowledge the interjection of the Leader of the Opposition. He is aware that I was at the Nature Conservation Council for

about 5½ years under the Labor Government. I acknowledge that Keith Muir said that 16 years of Labor government resulted in some good conservation wins, such as more national park reserves, wilderness reserves and marine parks protection. But let us remember that this bill is about a moratorium on coal seam gas exploration. It was interesting to hear the Hon. Steve Whan say that some people did not know how coal seam gas was regulated. When I became a member of Parliament in this place and assumed responsibility for the coal seam gas and mining portfolio I met with the Hon. Steve Whan when he was the responsible Minister. The Greens wanted to raise the emerging concerns that the coal seam gas industry was incredibly unregulated and, essentially, able to explore across the State. That meeting with the Hon. Steve Whan, who as Minister was able to do something, was disappointing because of the Labor Party's lack of knowledge on this issue.

Dr John Kaye: You are being too kind. It was not a lack of knowledge; they knew how bad it was but they did it anyway.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I acknowledge the interjection by Dr John Kaye. The Labor Party knew how bad it was but did it anyway. I am glad the Labor Party is now seeing the light and supports a moratorium to some extent, but that was not the language the Hon. Steve Whan used in his contribution to this debate. He and members opposite said that this bill is about raising the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham's profile and that the reason we support a moratorium on coal seam gas exploration is to raise The Greens' profile. That is an insult to the many thousands of people across this State, including the vast majority from regional New South Wales who support this call for a moratorium because they are petrified about what this industry will do to their water supply. Members would have heard from them and visited them.

The Hon. Scot MacDonald: Because of the scaremongering.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: No. I acknowledge the interjection from the Hon. Scot MacDonald. This bill is not about scaremongering, and he knows it. This bill is about legitimate concerns regarding aquifers, water pollution, farming land, environmental conservation, biodiversity loss and greenhouse gas emissions. These legitimate concerns have not been answered sufficiently. Hence, we need a moratorium to see if, if, if, if, if—there are so many ifs—coal seam gas is safe.

The Hon. Scot MacDonald: There have been one million wells in the United States without any aquifer contamination.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: One million wells in the United States and, gee, there are a lot of problems in the United States. Let us remember also that when Tony Kelly was planning Minister he said that coal seam gas exploration essentially is like mining for coal seam gas. It is not like coal; the process is very invasive. Exploration can cause damage. We have all heard from many New South Wales communities, including in Sydney, that are worried about their water supply. That is what this bill is about. I am pleased that now the Labor Party is in opposition it has come on board. It would have been better if the Labor Party had done something before it sold half the State to mining and coal seam gas companies and got us into this bind.

Once exploration licences are granted it is difficult to retrieve them: it is difficult to protect that land. Obviously, I support those parts of the bill that protect Sydney catchment areas from mining. Some areas in the Sydney catchment are protected so much that we are not allowed to walk on them and no-one is allowed to enter them, but coal seam gas exploration is allowed there. We must think about the potential for water contamination and what is happening in the Pilliga forest. What has happened in the Pilliga forest? There is a lot of coal seam gas exploration and a lot of water pollution.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: A microscopic amount.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Maybe not every single exploration well will result in water pollution, but when the process means that there will be thousands of wells and that aquifer safety cannot be guaranteed we cannot proceed. We have now reached that point. We cannot press "go" on this industry. I do not think we will ever get there, to be honest, when we consider this industry and water pollution. We cannot risk it. This bill is sensible. It is not scaremongering or about raising profiles.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I remind the Government Whip not to yell across the Chamber.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: The bill proposed by the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham is about responding to genuine community concern, particularly in regional New South Wales and in Sydney, about this

industry. The community wants The Greens to respond to this issue. Farmers want a response to this. Farmers want to know that people are listening when it comes to their concerns about water pollution. The Opposition is not listening, the Government is not listening and The Nationals are not listening. While The Nationals are part of the Government, they are silent on this issue, which is surprising given that they are the farmers' voice. I am proud to be part of a party that has, since day one, consistently stood up to this industry. It is not doing it to grandstand and will not support coal seam gas until it is proven safe and will not pollute water supplies. I support the Coal Seam Gas Moratorium Bill and congratulate the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham on his fantastic work in this area.

Dr JOHN KAYE [11.00 a.m.]: I will contribute to the debate on the Coal Seam Gas Moratorium Bill 2011. I congratulate the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham on the work he and his staff have done in this regard.

The Hon. Scot MacDonald: Scaring the country.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I acknowledge that interjection. The Hon. Scot MacDonald has demonstrated a misunderstanding of the political process. The Hon. Scot MacDonald thinks the political process is about taking the loudest, most aggressive industry group one can find and representing it in this Chamber. The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham and his staff have talked to communities. They travelled around the communities and heard what they had to say. They looked at the scientific evidence and introduced a bill that addressed the issues surrounding coal seam gas. When I hear Coalition members making those sorts of statements I understand where the Government gets its information and instructions from. On this matter The Greens have taken instruction from local communities, who are terrified by what they see happening around them. They are not terrified by what the Hon. Scot MacDonald alleges but terrified by the reality of what is confronting them. They are looking for a voice in this Parliament and they found it in the form of a new Greens member. I congratulate the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham and his staff on making sure that that voice was heard in the Chamber. It is an important step forward.

I will not reiterate the appalling local environmental impacts of coal seam gas; my colleagues have done an excellent job in that regard. I totally agree with what they said with respect to local environmental impacts. I will not waste the time of the House by repeating what they said. I stand by their remarks. However, I will talk about a matter that will bring out the tinfoil hat brigade in the Chamber: the greenhouse consequences of a coal seam gas based future. With the mere mention of the words "greenhouse gas", some members will demonstrate the worst aspects of the internet age where one can Google any "fact". During my contribution there will no doubt be quality interjections from the Government Whip based not on science or the scientific process but on the internet.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! Members who wish to engage in conversations will do so outside the Chamber. The member with the call will be heard in silence.

Dr JOHN KAYE: It has been pointed out to me that one of the few positive aspects of the Government's new land use planning is an acknowledgment of greenhouse gas emissions, of the greenhouse effect and the potential impacts of anthropogenic greenhouse gases. I do not see how that fits with the Government Whip and his view of the world. It will be interesting to see how he deals with that.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I call the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps to order for the first time.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I am fairly sure that this matter will be debated and it will be interesting to see how the Government Whip talks about it. I shall refer to what is purported to be a solution to the greenhouse gas emissions challenge facing New South Wales, Australia and the industrialised world by replacing coal with gas. Constantly we hear about the idea that the coal seam gas and conventional fossil gas are a clean fuel. We are constantly told they are clean.

The Hon. Scot MacDonald: Cleaner.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Cleaner. The Hon. Scot MacDonald has admitted it is a cleaner fuel. It has roughly half the greenhouse gas emissions. I did not need to come in this morning; I could have rested my back and the Hon. Scot MacDonald could have given my speech for me. It has roughly half the greenhouse gas emissions—it is very "rough". The tailpipe emissions are about 50 per cent, and that is comparing the best available combined cycle gas turbine technology and modern best available coal burning technology. That is a 50 per cent reduction

at the tailpipe in the emissions that are released. Let us accept that for a minute. Let us put aside the fact, particularly with coal seam gas, but probably also with conventional gas, that there are substantial—and, I have to say, as yet unknown fugitive emissions—escape from around the well.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: Unknown unknowables.

Dr JOHN KAYE: They are knowable unknowns. Nobody has put the money into research and it is hardly surprising that is the case. The companies have not put money into research to work out what those emissions are. Let us be clear about those emissions. We are talking about methane—not carbon dioxide, but methane. Methane has a greenhouse gas impact over a 100-year cycle which is roughly 23 times that of carbon dioxide. It varies. There is increasing understanding of the 100-year horizon impacts cycle in comparison with carbon dioxide. Over the 15-year horizon the greenhouse gas impacts have been variously estimated at 73 times those of carbon dioxide. It takes only a small amount of methane in volume to leak to create a large greenhouse gas impact over a 15-year period.

If we factor in the fugitive emissions, and if those fugitive emissions are on the scale that has been predicted by some experts in the field, then burning coal seam gas to create electricity through combined cycle gas turbines will be a greater burden on the climate in the future than burning coal. That is not an argument for burning coal; it is an argument that says investing billions of dollars—probably about \$15 billion—to replace the New South Wales coal burning fleet with modern combined cycle gas turbines of the same capacity is not logical. That does not include the cost of building the new gas pipeline infrastructure required to transport the gas. For the generation technology alone the Government will spend \$15 billion to \$20 billion. What is the best we can hope for? Taking the 60 million tonnes of carbon dioxide that comes out of the coal-fired power stations each year and replacing it with 25 million tonnes. I am amazed by the way in which, when it suits their purposes, conservatives will ignore the economics of the situation and they will go for the least effective method. When it suits their mates they will go for the least cost-effective greenhouse gas abatement technology.

If we put the same amount of money into solar thermal, if we put the same amount of money into wind, if we put the same amount of money into energy efficiency, we would create about 10 times the number of jobs and secure an energy future of zero greenhouse. In respect of reducing greenhouse emissions, the cost effectiveness of burning fossil gas is a total and complete furphy. It does not work. It is simply flat earth economics to say that we should put money into buying plant that has a 25-year to 40-year life that still would land the State with 25 million tonnes of—

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! Government members will not yell across the Chamber.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Gas burning technology has a two-, three- or four-decade lifetime. Asking us to make that transition to bring down our greenhouse emissions by about only 55 per cent is extremely poor economics and bad science. The science tells us very clearly that if we are to save this planet, if we are to provide to our children and our grandchildren the same standard of living that we have enjoyed, then a 45 per cent reduction is not an acceptable outcome. We should be talking about a 100 per cent reduction, certainly from stationary energy. We have the technologies—the wind technology, the existing solar thermal technologies, and the emerging technologies such as wave generation and possibly hot rock geothermal.

When we put all that together we see the enormous economic benefits of making a transition to a clean energy future. For example, there are enormous benefits in respect of employment, particularly in rural and regional areas. The Country Party used to worry about rural and regional areas. There are benefits to rural and regional New South Wales as a result of making the transition to genuinely clean energy, not ersatz clean energy. According to the University of Newcastle, there will be 73,800 new jobs—ongoing jobs, quality jobs, jobs that will deliver for rural communities in a way that coal seam gas does not. During the election campaign I visited Gunnedah. I had a chat with a couple of the local manufacturers, who were absolutely opposed to a coal seam gas industry in their area.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: They hate it.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Why do they hate it? Because they know absolutely what the impacts of coal seam gas will be on their local economy. They are terrified that they will lose their skilled workforce, that local costs will be driven up and that they will be driven out by the manufacturing environment. If we want a rural and regional New South Wales with ongoing jobs and with a functioning economy that delivers for the households,

the farmers and the residents who live in that area, then coal seam gas is the last thing we would want. What will work for rural and regional New South Wales is a renewable energy based future that will disaggregate the electricity industry and create local generation and local jobs, particularly for communities that have suffered so badly over the last two decades in respect of job losses.

Why is the Coalition, and the Labor Party before it, driving this State towards a coal seam gas based future when we know it does not resolve greenhouse gas emissions? In fact, it is one of the least cost-effective mechanisms for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We know it destroys rural and regional economies. We know it is an environmental disaster. Why would we go ahead with it? There can only be two answers. The first is a complete lack of vision on the clean energy alternatives. Yes, they are more difficult. Yes, they require a greater degree of policy nous to make it work. Yes, they require investment in our public education system to create the skills. Yes, they require a sense of government that does not necessarily just reproduce that which has been—a government that can have vision and go beyond that which its forefathers and foremothers did, a government that has a vision for something genuinely different. But that is not what we got. We got more of the same. The Government's idea of innovation is, "Oh, well, as well as digging holes in the ground to extract coal we will drill wells into the ground to extract coal seam methane gas." That is not innovation. That is simply taking a foreign technology, applying it on our soils and devastating economies.

A second reason is the absolute power of the fossil fuel industry in this State. A former Treasurer yelled at a former Greens' member of this House and said that if she did not like coal she should get out of New South Wales. The former Government referred to it as a coal State. The only innovation in policy that has happened in energy resources in this State is that we have gone from being a coal State to being a coal State and coal seam gas State.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham will not yell across the Chamber.

Dr JOHN KAYE: It is not a step forward; it is a massive step backwards. I refer to an issue raised by the Hon. John Ajaka. I admire his research skills. He went back to the *Northern Rivers Echo* of 10 December 2009 and suggested, by selectively quoting me, that I was supporting coal seam gas in 2009. In fact, that is not true at all. If the member had been halfway open with the Chamber he would have acknowledged that I was talking about stopping a powerline coming in from Queensland that would have piped in coal-fired electricity from Queensland into northern New South Wales.

I said a lot of things about what needed to happen to stop the Lismore to Bonshaw powerline happening. One of the issues I raised was local gas generation. Let us be absolutely clear: the real potential for local gas generation on the North Coast is not coal seam gas. On a genuine economic analysis, it is an economic loser. There is potential for crop waste gas, sustainable gas, that is harvested from crop waste and used as a sustainable fuel. When used in trigeneration applications in urban areas it is a very low greenhouse gas solution.

In that article I talked about renewable energy and demand management as solutions for the region's future electricity needs. Suggesting that I was supporting coal seam gas speaks of the desperation of decent people like the Hon. John Ajaka, who has been given an appalling brief. Defending coal seam gas as an energy source. I genuinely feel sorry for him. I like the bloke. He is a clever bloke. It is a great shame he has been handed a sandwich with a filling he does not want to eat. He is busy trying to create a diversion by suggesting, absurdly, that at any stage I would have supported coal seam gas.

The reality of coal seam gas—and, indeed, of conventional gas—is that it is an economic, social and environmental dead end. Investing in the wells and infrastructure, investing in the energy transformation technology to turn it into electricity, is a total and complete waste of money. It will not resolve this State's appallingly high greenhouse gas emissions. It will not resolve the problems associated with rural and regional communities and the loss of jobs. At the very best, coal seam gas will create a few coal seam gas millionaires or billionaires in the form of multinational corporations. It will denude the State, strip out its economic heart, and leave us with higher greenhouse gas emissions than we already have from our disgraceful coal-fired electricity industry.

There is a way forward for this State if only the Government and its predecessor had the wit, the courage and the vision to take us to a renewable energy based future. That is what the people of New South Wales are looking for. That is what the communities under threat from coal seam gas want. That is what this

Parliament should be delivering. That is what the Coal Seam Gas Moratorium Bill 2011 takes us a long way towards achieving. This bill is a major step forward for the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I call the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham to order for the first time. I call the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham to order for the second time.

Debate adjourned on motion by the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD [11.20 a.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that Private Members' Business item No. 528 outside the Order of Precedence, relating to International Women's Day, be called on forthwith.

Today is International Women's Day. I believe members would welcome the opportunity to speak on issues of importance to the women of New South Wales.

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

Motion agreed to.

Order of Business

Motion by the Hon. Helen Westwood agreed to:

That Private Members' Business item No. 528 outside the Order of Precedence be called on forthwith.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD [11.21 a.m.]: I move

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) 8 March of each year is International Women's Day,
 - (b) International Women's Day is an opportunity to celebrate the vital role women play in the economic prosperity of their families, communities and countries and recognise women's crucial role in ending poverty, and
 - (c) International Women's Day is a time to highlight the need to remove the significant barriers women still face in achieving economic and social equality.
2. That this House notes that:
 - (a) 70 per cent of the world's poor are women,
 - (b) women earn less than 10 per cent of the world's wages, but do more than two-thirds of the world's work,
 - (c) women reinvest 90 per cent of their income into their families whilst men invest only 30 to 40 per cent, and
 - (d) in New South Wales:
 - (i) 3.68 million reside in the State,
 - (ii) in dollar terms, New South Wales women working full-time earn around \$10,710 less than men annually,
 - (iii) women receive 85¢ for every dollar earned by men on a weekly basis,
 - (iv) women in the New South Wales public service earn 6.7 per cent less than men annually,
 - (v) in 2007, women's average superannuation balance was over \$33,000 less than men's and women in New South Wales need to be able to participate meaningfully in respected roles commensurate with their skills and abilities,

- (vi) women are disproportionately represented in low paid casual and part-time work, making up 70 per cent of part-time workers in New South Wales,
 - (vii) women form less than 2 per cent of all people completing construction, automotive and engineering, and electro-technology and telecommunications apprenticeships,
 - (viii) women have 13.7 per cent of board positions nationally in ASX 200 companies,
 - (ix) 38 per cent of members of Government boards or committees are women,
 - (x) over 80 per cent of victims of domestic violence are women.
3. That this House calls on all levels of government and the corporate sector to develop and implement policies and strategies to remove the barriers to women achieving economic and social equality.

I begin by wishing you, Madam Deputy-President, and all of my colleagues and the women of New South Wales a happy International Women's Day. International Women's Day has always been an occasion for asserting women's political and social rights, for celebrating women's cultural activities, and for recognising the diversity of women and their interests. Whilst the celebration is important, we should not forget the history of International Women's Day. Its origins are firmly in the union movement. In fact, trade union and socialist women in the United States of America initiated International Women's Day on 8 March 1908 with demonstrations calling for the vote and other rights for women. The following year women garment workers went on strike for better pay and conditions. The decision to inaugurate International Women's Day was taken in 1910 at women's conferences in Copenhagen. The day was celebrated on 19 March 1911 with meetings and demonstrations.

In Australia the first rally purportedly was held just outside this place, in The Domain, in March 1928. That rally called for equal pay for equal work, an eight-hour day for shop girls, abolition of piece work, a basic wage for the unemployed, and annual holidays on full pay. Last year, in the centenary of International Women's Day, I hosted an exhibition in the Fountain Court of the New South Wales Parliament to mark that significant anniversary. The exhibition chronicled the themes of International Women's Day activities and campaigns that have featured year after year. Those are still very relevant today. That is because, despite advances, there is still much to do before we have true equality for women. One of the standouts is equal pay. Here we are in New South Wales 84 years after our first rally advocating for equal pay and we still do not have equal pay for women. That is a national disgrace. I quote the first female Justice of the High Court of Australia, Mary Gaudron:

We got equal pay once, then we got it again, and then we got it again, and now we still don't have it.

In 1984 Edna Ryan, the great labour feminist activist, wrote her book *Two-thirds of a Man* in which she described and analysed the first four arbitration cases involving women. In accounting for the lack of women's trade unions at the turn of the twentieth century she wrote:

It had been easier for men to unite and organise. They worked in larger enterprises. They congregated not only at work but after work in sheds, camps or pubs. Whatever their work, when the working day ended, men were free. This freedom was never available to women, who whether or not they earned a living, were expected to perform domestic work, help care for the sick, the young and the disabled.

The political and social conditions of the time Edna wrote about in *Two-thirds of a Man* were vastly different from those that exist today. To quote Edna, this was a time when:

The law forbade the advertising of birth control aids and the church banned their use: pregnancy termination was a heinous crime, especially for women in the working class.

It was a time when, to quote her again:

women working in factories were labelled as brazen, cheeky and immoral. They were conscious of the stigma that took away their self-esteem, leaving them even more vulnerable in the labour force. If society regarded them with contempt, employers need show them no respect.

There was very little that was fair for women in the time that Edna Ryan was writing about. Clearly, much has improved for women since that time. Those improvements were hard fought for. They were realised because women like Edna Ryan passionately advocated for reforms to address the political, economic and social inequities that disadvantaged women. I believe there is evidence that remnants of that culture that disadvantaged women over a century ago still exist in Australia today, and that is why in 2012 women in Australia still face gender-based inequities.

The theme for this year's International Women's Day is "Women's Economic Empowerment". It is a fitting theme in the aftermath of the GFC—not the GFC that has been in the news for the last few years but, as Anne Summers terms it, the gender fairness crisis. Here we are in 2012, 101 years since the first International Women's Day, and women in Australia and globally still faced gender-based inequities. One of those, as I have said, is equal pay. On 1 September last year we had Equal Pay Day—an important day, highlighting that women have to work an extra 63 days after the end of the financial year to match the earnings of men. Despite the fact that women in Australia won the right to equal pay in the early 1970s, to date we have not succeeded in turning that right into a reality. In fact, in recent years Australian women have gone backwards relative to women in other countries. Here in New South Wales there are 3.68 million women. In dollar terms, New South Wales women working full time earn around \$10,710 less than men annually. That means that for every dollar a man earns a woman in the same job receives only 85¢—for work of equal value.

Women in the New South Wales public service earn 6.7 per cent less than men annually. In 2007 women's average superannuation balance was more than \$33,000 less than men's. For this to change women in New South Wales need to be able to participate meaningfully in respected roles commensurate with their skills and abilities. Women are disproportionately represented in low-paid casual and part-time work, making up 70 per cent of part-time workers in New South Wales. Women form less than 2 per cent of all people completing apprenticeships in construction, automotive and engineering, and electro-technology and telecommunications.

In a matter of 12 months we have seen, regretfully, the appalling record of this Government's treatment of women. Name-calling of women parliamentarians, whether in or out of the Chamber, is despicable and tantamount to bullying. We need to call this behaviour for what it is, irrespective of political party. Anyone who idly witnesses and chooses to do nothing about such bullying is no better than the perpetrators. The job we women parliamentarians do here is a hard one, without being subjected to personal attacks. It is extremely distressing that the progressive programs and initiatives of the previous Labor Government have been largely torn down in less than a year.

This Government has effectively thumbed its nose at over 50 per cent of the New South Wales population. Neither the Premier nor the Minister for Women, Pru Goward, convened a single meeting of the Premier's Expert Advisory Council for Women, thereby blocking out vital expertise to the Government on important issues such as domestic violence, work-life balance issues, and high work casualisation rates of women. In fact, when the Government was copping some heat on this action its solution was to sack them. Given this Government's record, I know I should not be surprised; however, I was. I feel the need to offer this Government some important advice: It is imperative that the government of the day listens to experts in the area of women's policy or that government will risk losing touch altogether. That is evidenced by the retrograde steps I will now outline.

Barry O'Farrell moved the Office for Women's Policy from his own central agency, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, to the Department of Family and Communities. That undermines the role of the Office for Women's Policy in coordinating policy issues across government and sends a loud message to the women of New South Wales that their issues are not on the Government's agenda. There are further examples. Before the State election the Coalition promised to establish a Bureau of Women's Statistics. That has not happened. The Coalition promised to produce the first ever annual report on the status of women in New South Wales. After almost one year in office that has not happened. Also, \$52,000 has been cut from the funding available for local International Women's Day events. Despite promising to do so before the State election, the O'Farrell Government has refused to commit funding for equal pay for social and community service workers, the majority of who are women and are grossly underpaid. As part of the Government's draconian wages policy for public sector workers women will be forced to trade off lactation breaks for a pay rise. The O'Farrell Government has also excluded public sector workers who are surrogate parents and foster carers from receiving paid parental leave.

Since coming to office Barry O'Farrell has forced out seven senior women in the New South Wales public service. He also sacked Mr Roger Corbett, chairman of the Sydney Children's Hospital Network, out of revenge because he publicly criticised the way in which the Minister for Health removed one of those senior public servants. The Liberal-Nationals Government is now forcing nurses to pay \$10,000 for a course to re-enter the health system in order to ease the nurse vacancy epidemic currently crippling our public hospitals. Just how out of touch are Government members that they do not understand the impediment this cost presents to nurses re-entering the jobs that our public hospitals are crying out to have filled?

In what I may term as a final slap in the face—although I fear there probably is more to come—the New South Wales Woman of the Year awards have been cancelled. Not only were these prestigious awards cancelled, they were then denigrated in the media by the Minister saying on radio station 2UE that the awards were only for Labor's friends. It was further stated that the community should have the opportunity to nominate the person of their choice. These statements are false and at best are insulting to the women who were nominated or who received awards over the past 10 years. I know that everyone in this House realises that anyone can nominate a worthy woman for the award and, in fact, members did.

I will mention some of the fabulous female nominees from the past few years and the persons who nominated them. Helen McCue, AM, was nominated by Ms Pru Goward, MP. Fiona Zhou was nominated by Mrs Judy Hopwood, MP. Tara Cameron was nominated by the Hon. Catherine Cusack, MLC. Patricia Glasby was nominated by the Hon. Shelley Hancock, MP and Sharon Grocott was nominated by the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, MP. There is a long list of superb women who have been nominated by Liberal and National Party members of Parliament. Of course last year's winner was Barbra Asplet, nominated by Ms Shirley Lomas. Her biography reads:

Barbra Asplet is an inspirational woman who has helped to support 5,000 women and girls through Healing House. She has also been involved in reconciliation activities, and contributed to community efforts to establish aged care services for Aboriginal people.

Her nominator said that Ms Asplet has instilled in other Aboriginal women and girls a self-belief that they can strive for and achieve their dreams. I do not see too many Labor friends in this list. Perhaps Ms Goward should have checked that before she made such an outrageous allegation. This list demonstrates that to say that it is only Labor's friends who are nominated is a poor excuse for dumping the awards. That is a slur on the fine women who have been previous nominees and winners of the award.

I move on to another appalling statistic of this Government: the Coalition's choice of candidates for the 2011 State election. For the first time women's representation in the Legislative Assembly has gone backwards. Women's representation in the Legislative Assembly has fallen from 28 per cent before the 2011 election to 20 per cent after Mr O'Farrell's win. Only nine of the 51 Liberal members of the Legislative Assembly are women, representing just 18 per cent of those members. Only two of the 18 National Party members of the Legislative Assembly are women, representing just 11 per cent of those members. Only 11 of the 69 members of the Liberal-Nationals Government in the Legislative Assembly are women, representing just 16 per cent of the Government members in the Legislative Assembly. Nine of the 20 Labor members of the Legislative Assembly are women, which represents 45 per cent of the Labor Opposition in the Legislative Assembly. Currently 38 per cent of members of New South Wales government boards or committees are women. However, this has also come under attack as this Coalition Government has removed the requirement that 50 per cent of all new appointments to government boards and committees be women.

I commend the great work and programs initiated by United Nations Women but despite that work we are not that well placed globally. In 2006 Australia was number 15 in the world economic forum's global gender gap index. By 2010 we had slipped to number 23. Australian women now face bigger wage gaps than women in Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Mozambique. On average, Australian women today still earn 17.5 per cent less than our male counterparts—the largest gap in 23 years. The National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling estimates that on average a woman will earn almost \$1 million less over her lifetime than the average Australian man. She will retire with less than half the superannuation benefits simply because of her gender.

Six years ago the World Economic Forum created the global gender gap index. This index benchmarks national gender gaps on economic, political, educational and health-based criteria. Its rankings allow effective comparisons across regions and income groups over time. In the first global gender gap index report in 2006 Australia ranked 15th overall. As I have said, it has now gone backwards and we are, appallingly, ranked twenty-third. It is interesting to see where Australia is ranked in the indexes measured in the report. In economic participation opportunity Australia is ranked at 24. In educational attainment Australia is ranked at one, along with a number of other countries. In health and survival our ranking is 73 and in political empowerment Australia is ranked at 39. Of course, the political empowerment ranking measures the gap between men and women in political decision-making at the highest levels. Obviously, members will not be interested to hear that this is the ranking that most interests me. The preface of the global gender gap report states:

We are at a unique turning point in history. Never before has there been such momentum around gender parity on the global stage

Quite frankly, I doubted that such a lofty claim could be made about Australia's interest in the issue of gender parity. However, during the week of Equal Pay Day when the *Sydney Morning Herald* led with front page

articles and featured the issue of the gender gap in the Australian workforce for three days I had a little glow of hope in my feminist heart. The Goldman Sachs report entitled "Australia's Hidden Resource: The Economic Case for Increasing Female Participation" was outlined in an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that addressed the economic basis for closing the gender gap in workforce participation.

The authors argue that Australia needs to implement economic reforms in industry policies to encourage women into the higher paying and more productive sectors of the workforce such as mining construction and utilities. They make it clear that women are largely absent in the best performing sectors of our economy. In finding answers to the issue of pay equity in Australia I believe it is valuable to look at those countries that have reduced the gender gap. The global gender gap report states that in the countries holding the top 10 rankings it is the Nordic countries that have consistently held the highest positions in the index. Iceland still holds the top overall ranking and the report outlines the reasons for that as follows:

Iceland shows further gains in the area of political empowerment because of an increase in the number of women ministers, a near gender-balanced parliament and the continued tenure of a female prime minister. Iceland continues to hold 1st position on both educational attainment and political empowerment, and women's labour force participation in Iceland is among the highest in the world. However, there is still a significant difference between men's and women's salaries.

In March 2010 the Icelandic parliament adopted a legislative reform to promote gender equality on the boards of publicly owned companies and public limited companies having at least 50 employees; these companies must have at least 40% of both genders represented on their boards by September 2013. Moreover, companies with 25 or more employees are required to disclose the number of men and women employed as well as the number of men and women in management positions.

We have much to learn from Iceland, particularly in New South Wales, where women's political representation is at its lowest point for nearly two decades. That is clearly reflected in the Liberal-Nationals Government's appalling record on gender equity. Some interesting statistics are emerging on gender equity in our nation. A national report from the Australian Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry outlines the number of women starting their own business and states that that has doubled in the past few years. The report estimates that 900,000 women are very successfully running their own businesses in Australia and that 27 per cent of women business owners have an annual turnover of more than \$250,000. According to the chamber's chief, Yolanda Vega, equal opportunity from the perspective of entrepreneurship is still not a reality, despite the fact that women tend to be more successful in starting up their own businesses as their return on investment is far higher than men's. In short, investing in women makes good business sense. I challenge the Coalition Government to do just that and I commend my motion to the House.

The Hon. JENNIFER GARDINER [11.42 a.m.]: It is appropriate that all members of the House acknowledge that 8 March each year marks International Women's Day. The Liberal and Nationals parties are very happy to support this motion. It is also appropriate to acknowledge that in the New South Wales Parliament up until 1926 there were no women and only men debated and voted on legislation that directly impacted upon women's choices and freedoms and those of their families. International Women's Day is an opportunity to thank the women who campaigned for change in the status of women in our society and to honour their achievements. The best way we can honour those achievements is to continue to build on them.

The Liberal-Nationals Government aims to support women in accessing the prosperity that some parts of our economy are experiencing, and to do that we have outlined four key policy priorities. Before I run through those priority areas I will list some of the women who have been appointed to important offices by the O'Farrell-Stoner Government in its first year in office. I do that to counterbalance some of the mean-minded comments in this debate by the mover of the motion. First, the Premier was pleased to extend the term of the Governor of New South Wales, Her Excellency Marie Bashir—an outstanding woman appointed as the first woman Governor of New South Wales by a Labor Government. Her appointment has been extended by the incoming Government and I believe that has been to wide acclaim. We thank the Governor for her extraordinary work.

Dr Kerry Schott has been appointed to the Audit Commission. The new Director General of the Department of Education and Communities, Dr Michelle Bruniges, has been appointed by this Government. Maree O'Halloran and Katie Page have been appointed to the Public Service Commission Advisory Board. The Ministry of Health formerly had a woman as its Director General and her replacement is Dr Mary Foley. The chief executive officer of the new Destination NSW body that has been set up by the incoming Government is Sandra Chipchase. Two women have been appointed to the Audit Commission: Belinda Hutchinson and Dr Sue Page. Carolyn Kay has been appointed to the Infrastructure NSW board. Dr Elizabeth Coombes has been appointed Privacy Commissioner.

The incoming Government has set up a Small Business Commission and Yasmin King has been appointed as the Commissioner. Kristen Kegan has been appointed to the Hunter Infrastructure Fund. Carolyn Fletcher has been appointed to the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority board. Naseema Sparks has been appointed to Racing NSW. Trisha Dixon has been appointed to the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. Patricia Heaton has been appointed to the New South Wales Film and Television Office. To the Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District Board the Government has appointed Tanya Gadiel.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Tanya Gadiel?

The Hon. JENNIFER GARDINER: Yes, Tanya Gadiel. You would think that would be welcomed by those opposite. To the board of Destination NSW, which I mentioned has a woman chief executive officer, the incoming Government has appointed the Hon. Patricia Forsythe, a former distinguished member of this House, and my former Nationals colleague the Hon. Wendy Machin. Ita Buttrose has been appointed to the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust and also to the Bravery Awards Panel. Professor Veena Sahajwall has been appointed to the New South Wales Australia Day Council. Catherine Livingstone has been appointed chair of the Australian Museum. Former Senator the Hon. Helen Coonan has been appointed as chair of the Sydney Opera House Trust, and a great chair she will be.

The O'Farrell Government has appointed Kerry Clare to the Barangaroo board. Susan Lee and Victoria Qui have been appointed to the Multicultural Business Advisory Panel. Katie Lahey has been appointed to the New South Wales Export and Investment Advisory Board and Dr Diana Day has been appointed to the Sydney Water Board. There has obviously been a conscientious attempt by the Liberal-Nationals Government to ensure that we continue to improve the representation of women on various bodies to which the Government makes appointments. I am sure that will continue into the future.

The first priority the Government is working on in relation to its four key policy areas to support women in accessing the prosperity of the various parts of our economy is to increase the representation of women in the better-paying non-traditional roles, particularly women from lower socio-economic groups. That is particularly so for women in the lower socio-economic groups. The construction, automotive and engineering sectors that were mentioned by the Hon. Helen Westwood, who moved the motion, have almost no women participating in them, but they are high-paying, high-productivity industries characterised by jobs growth and skills shortages.

The Labor Government focused on some boards and on improving the lot of women lawyers, but the current Government wants to increase policy for the majority. For example, we are aiming to address the 70 per cent of generation Y women who do not go to university. We need to improve their choices and opportunities in the future. The Minister for Women, Ms Goward, recently announced the establishment of the New South Wales Council of Women's Economic Opportunity, comprising industry leaders who will provide advice and develop strategies to reduce the barriers for women entering non-traditional trades. The second priority is to support a strategic approach to reducing domestic violence. A key element of that will be development of a new framework that addresses domestic, family and sexual violence against women in this State.

I am sure that all members would be aware that the New South Wales performance audit of domestic and family violence was damning and that New South Wales as a State needs to do a whole lot better for women in regard to domestic and family violence. The same themes—poorly integrated service, challenges with information sharing, fragmented referral networks and limited focus on prevention and early intervention—are emerging as part of the inquiry on trends and issues in domestic violence, and we need to take heed of those trends. The new strategic framework also will address those issues. It will be developed in close consultation with the non-government sector, because that sector contributes very valuable insights and innovative ways in which to address the problems we face.

The third priority of the Liberal and Nationals Government is to build up its knowledge base on the status of women in New South Wales so that the debate about the role of women is informed by concrete data rather than just opinion. The Government will produce an annual report on the status of women in New South Wales, as well as more in-depth information, to inform government, non-government, business sectors and the community on these issues. As well the Liberal and Nationals parties are increasing representation of women on government boards and committees, which I referred to earlier, so that the Government is advised as best it can be, and to demonstrate to the commercial and business sectors that a significant presence of women is essential for sound decision-making and governance. The Office for Women's Policy is working closely with the Public Service Commission and the Department of Premier and Cabinet to achieve that outcome.

In contrast, Labor's strategies to encourage the appointment of women to government boards and committees were a bit shoddy. That is reflected by the fact that the former Premier, a woman, only announced the 50 per cent target on 2 February 2011—a matter of weeks before the election. The blokes who had been the Premier of New South Wales under Labor governments, the former Premier's predecessors, never got around to it. Women's economic independence, their freedom of choice regarding work and their right to live free from violence are issues that are of primary concern to the Government as a whole.

The Nationals, as a political party, acknowledge that we need to improve our performance in the number of women who are elected to four houses of two parliaments—the Senate, House of Representatives, the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly—and we are taking steps in that direction. The issue is a high priority one for our political party organisation and for the parliamentary party. As the Hon. Sarah Mitchell reminds me, The Nationals were the first party to have 50 per cent of our party room in the upper House comprising women, but proportionately we must do better than that, and we are working towards achieving that end. In relation to the overall topic of gender equality, I refer to the remarks made on 11 February 2012 by the Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, in the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

The research is clear that it's men taking the issue of gender equality to other men that will change the situation for women in Australia, particularly in the workplace. Because men make the rules at work—

not everywhere—

and, if we want those rules changed, we need men to change them. It's not about asking men to save us – we can save ourselves, thank you very much – but it's about engaging them to help create change. And recognising that men's and women's lives are totally intertwined, and that when women benefit, men benefit as well.

They are wise words and, as the Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner said, they are based on research and studying best practice on how we might improve the cause of women as equal participants in our society across the board. Those words are probably being echoed by others during various events that mark International Women's Day, and they are very wise words indeed. On behalf of the Liberal and Nationals Government I have much pleasure in supporting the intent of the motion that recognises that today is International Women's Day, by which we honour the work, the efforts and campaigns of women who have preceded us, including members of this House and this Parliament, in their efforts to improve gender equality and gender equity in New South Wales.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA (Parliamentary Secretary) [11.56 a.m.]: I do not wish to politicise this very important motion because it is too important to play politics with it. It gives me great pleasure to support the motion on International Women's Day, and even greater pleasure to take this opportunity to honour women and their achievements in society. On previous occasions in his House I have said, and wish to reiterate what the Hon. Jennifer Gardiner has said, that men and women need to work together to strive to eliminate ignorance, prejudice and exclusion that create tensions, violence and unhappiness in our communities on a local, State, national and global basis. That is why I and others have been honoured in past years—in my case, it has been for the past four years—to host the annual White Ribbon events in Parliament that have brought together men and women from a wide cross-section of society to raise awareness of violence against women and inequality issues.

I have a great deal of respect for the White Ribbon Foundation, which has been striving to eliminate ignorance, prejudice and violence. Through the efforts of people such as Professor Rosemary Calder, who is a White Ribbon Foundation board member, Libby Davies, who is White Ribbon's chief executive officer, Andrew O'Keefe, the chair of the White Ribbon Foundation, his fellow director, Charles Curran, and the many outstanding White Ribbon ambassadors who regularly go out to communities across New South Wales and work to prevent violence against women, White Ribbon is attempting to combat the shocking existence of violence against women in Australia, where one in three women report having experienced violence since the age of 15. Almost each week in Australia a woman is killed by a male partner or a former male partner, and that often occurs post-separation.

White Ribbon is making a difference. Supporters throughout the country have hosted 200 events. The campaign resulted in more than 2,000 media mentions, 4,000 My Oath swearings, 10,000 fans on Facebook, and 1,000 followers on Twitter. Importantly, that increased activity resulted in improved awareness and understanding of the issue of men's violence against women across all Australian communities. White Ribbon's social marketing campaign was so successful that it was awarded the Public Relations Institute of Australia [PRIA] New South Wales State Awards for Excellence 2011. Women have a natural instinct to nurture and care, and on International Women's Day we celebrate the presence of women and their voices, which are needed in so

many aspects of life—our businesses, our democratic institutions, our judiciary, our international affairs, our diplomatic corps and our peacemaking processes—to ensure that the values women hold so dear in their dealings with others are kept at the forefront of decision-making.

As members would be aware, International Women's Day has been observed since the early 1900s—a time of great expansion and upheaval in the industrialised world, with booming population growth and the rise of the suffragette movement. From that time critical debate amongst women started to gain momentum, and oppression and inequality were resisted vocally and physically. Many men joined the movement in campaigning for change, and indeed they still do. We cannot achieve equality without men's support. In 1908, 15,000 women marched through the streets of New York city demanding better pay, shorter hours and voting rights.

In 1910 an International Conference of Working Women was held in Copenhagen where a woman named Clara Zetkin, leader of the Women's Office for the Social Democratic Party in Germany, came up with the idea of an International Women's Day. Now, on 8 March every year we not only celebrate women's contributions to society but also use the day—indeed, almost the week—as a vehicle to press for more legislative, judicial and social changes at local, State, national and international levels. Premier Barry O'Farrell is a great supporter of female representation. On 22 February in the other place in respect of women's representation on public sector boards he was asked why it was necessary to remove the requirement that 50 per cent of new appointments be women. His response was:

There was no additional weighting in their pre-selections—

that is, for women—

which applies to female members opposite when there are special quotas as part of the process, and that is in part because our party does not affiliate with unions. Our party does not have a union affiliation, which is what ensures that the Labor Party and its members are so heavily male oriented.

The Hon. Sophie Cotsis: I thought you said you were not going to play politics.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: I am quoting the Premier. He continued:

There is a far better chance for women in the Liberal Party and The Nationals—whether you are the member for Maitland or the member for Nowra—to get into Parliament than it is for a woman in the Labor Party. Each of the women on this side of the House knows that she is here on merit, just as those who enter the Cabinet know that they are there on merit. Philosophically we have always been about merit.

Women can achieve this if men and women support them. On Wednesday I was delighted to attend the United Nation's Women's Committee breakfast at the Sydney Convention Centre. The Hon. Prue Goward, Minister for Women, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, Minister for Health, the Hon. Robyn Parker, Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Sophie Cotsis, shadow Minister for Women, Melanie Gibbons, the member for Menai, Leslie Williams, the member for Port Macquarie, and the Hon. Melinda Pavey also attended. I was proud to see so many outstanding women and hear about their life experiences and their thoughts, particularly those of the inspirational guest speaker, Sally Sara. After a year spent covering the war in Afghanistan, Sally has returned to Australia to become the ABC's regional and rural affairs correspondent. She has reported from the front line, embedded with coalition forces, covered terrorist attacks and political unrest, and followed the rebuilding of the country. Sally is a remarkable woman with a salient message about women's strength in the face of war and adversity.

Mona Baddah of Bankstown Girls High School and Sasha Khan from Redlands High School, who were representing young women, gave inspirational speeches. I am sure they are female leaders of the future. The Minister for Women, Pru Goward, a former Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Commissioner, was adamant in stressing that under NSW 2021—the State Plan—action to increase the number of women completing apprenticeships in non-traditional trades is a priority. Together with the Minister for Education and the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, Minister Goward is working on strategies to ensure that girls have a broader range of career choices. These outstanding and dedicated Ministers are working together to ensure that education and skills development pathways are available and working so that mentoring and supports are established to deliver quality job opportunities.

Last week Minister Goward announced the new Council for Women's Economic Opportunity to provide specialist advice to the O'Farrell Government. Council members have strong backgrounds in engineering, manufacturing, construction, training and mentoring. As I said earlier, it is essential for men and

women to work together for the greater good and to advance the cause of women. For the first time, men have been included on the New South Wales Women's Advisory Council, reflecting the Government's belief that gender equality is an issue for the whole community, not just for women.

I agree wholeheartedly with Minister Goward that the reasons women continue to be underrepresented in large sectors of society need to be examined thoroughly. It is paramount that industry leaders champion solutions that increase the participation of women in non-traditional jobs. I am delighted also that the new Council for Women's Economic Opportunity will identify strategies to make it possible for girls and women to consider non-traditional occupations, to access and succeed in training for those jobs and to remain in those fields. The O'Farrell Government also has three other priority areas. First, women's right to live free from violence, which means making a real change in the areas of domestic and family violence, and of sexual violence against women; secondly, getting more women into leadership positions, including on government boards; and, thirdly, building a stronger evidence base for policy and program decisions in New South Wales by collating data and hard evidence to drive change. We will report regularly on our success with those three priorities.

The Hon. Sophie Cotsis: When? The Minister said at the end of last year that all this would be revealed. There has been nothing.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: We are not scared; we will report. The process will be transparent and accountable. Reducing all forms of violence against women, particularly domestic and family violence, is a priority for the O'Farrell Government and a key priority in the State Plan. In order to meet this target, Minister Goward has initiated the development of a new framework addressing domestic, family and sexual violence against women in New South Wales. Minister Goward's initiative follows the New South Wales Performance Audit into Domestic and Family Violence, which revealed an appalling situation. Increasing the number of women on boards and in senior management positions is a passion of mine. I brought to the attention of this House previously that in 2009 the National Remuneration Survey of Local Government revealed that only 11 per cent of chief executive officer and general manager positions in local government were held by women and that at the second level—that is, senior managers and directors—only 20 per cent of positions were held by women.

Lower managerial levels showed increased participation by women, but close evaluation found that males in the corporate services areas generally are paid up to 15 per cent more than women. The data also revealed significant disparities in the number of females filling specialist positions. Sadly, not much had changed from the many preceding years. Much more needs to be done at all levels of government as well as in private enterprise. In 2010 in this place I noted that Associate Professor Peter McGraw of Macquarie University's Labour Studies Foundation identified in his study that very few women reach senior levels, and that the numbers are declining. Of the Australian Securities Exchange's top 200 companies for that year, only 9 per cent of directors were female. Although women make up half the population, this is not represented in the boardrooms of Australia. Indeed, more than half the top 200 Australian Securities Exchange companies have no women on their boards. In 2012 women make up a mere 38 per cent of New South Wales government board and committee members. This number has not shifted significantly in the past decade. Minister Goward has made it clear that her initiative is to increase the inclusion of women on boards. She said:

This is not about aiming for a target or simply promoting equal opportunities. It is about getting women on to all boards, especially those which are well remunerated and high profile.

It is about convincing leaders in both the public and private sectors of the benefits of women in leadership.

Inclusive and diverse boards benefit from wholistic perspectives, new ideas and broad experience.

We aim to break down barriers that prevent women from joining government boards and committees—and we are examining how we can build better networks and opportunities.

Minister Goward also stated that to convince those outside the women's sector of the need for continued efforts to bring about equality, there must be hard evidence to back this up. In particular, objective evidence and clear-sighted analysis provide the solid basis on which policy and interventions can be built. It also jolts people out of business-as-usual thinking. Later this year, Minister Goward will launch the O'Farrell Government's first annual report on the status of women in New South Wales. This report will provide baseline data on New South Wales women. It will focus on indicators that are worth measuring and where information can galvanise action. Above all, it will be a report for the women of New South Wales to consider, use, challenge and build on. Nominations open today for the New South Wales Women of the Year Awards, announced as part of our celebration.

The Hon. Sophie Cotsis: It's a bit late.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: It is not late. Pipe down. These new awards will properly acknowledge and recognise the contributions of women across the State. The Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women said the awards gave the community an opportunity to recognise the important role and achievements of women in New South Wales. Nominations can be submitted to www.womenoftheyear.nsw.gov.au from today. The community will be able to vote online at that site from Thursday 19 April after a short list is selected. The selection panel will be led by the Minister and will include other high-profile men and women who support the awards, including Jodie Fox, co-founder of Shoes of Prey; David Gallop, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Rugby League; and Major Paul Moulds, AM. I congratulate and thank all women and men associated with the recognition of International Women's Day locally, statewide, nationally and globally. I commend the motion to the House and hope that we can depoliticise this debate.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES [12.15 p.m.]: Like my colleague, I do not intend to politicise this debate or talk about glass ceilings, sticky steps or gluey chairs. I want to focus on the positive contribution that women have made but also acknowledge that there are challenges and barriers still to be overcome. Australia was a pioneer in the advancement of women in society and we have much to celebrate. Some 110 years ago Australia led the way by giving women the right to vote and to run for Australian Parliament. Today marks the 101st celebration of International Women's Day and this year's theme is supporting women's economic empowerment. Australian women have greater economic independence today than ever before. However, challenges for women in business and politics remain. Despite representing over half the population, women are a massively underutilised resource in the workforce, particularly in leadership roles.

The 2010 Australian Census of Women in Leadership reported that women represent only 3 per cent of chief executive officers. They hold just 8.4 per cent of board directorships and 8 per cent of executive management positions. In the Australian public service women are doing better, with over 33.4 per cent of women holding positions on Federal government boards and 38 per cent of women holding positions on government boards in New South Wales. It is unfortunate that the percentage of companies with no women board directors has increased from 51 per cent in 2008 to 54 per cent in 2010. But, as was mentioned previously, there is some good news. In the area of small business women are leading the way, with 33 per cent of small businesses operated by women. Unsurprisingly, women are choosing to work in small business because it provides flexibility to meet their needs and the needs of their families.

Women represent 45.3 per cent of the labour force and make up 55 per cent of university graduates. Our participation in the labour force is increasing, but ever so slowly, with trend data revealing little change in rates since 2002. Australian women still work on average six hours less than men per week and this is often by choice. Women earn 17 per cent less than their male counterparts, which is about \$1.2 million less over their working life. In 2006 the Productivity Commission released a report entitled "Role of Non-Traditional Work in the Australian Labour Market". It found that 38.9 per cent of women were engaged in non-traditional work.

When the first International Women's Day was recognised in 1911 more than one million women and men attended rallies, campaigning for the right of women to work, vote, be trained, hold public office and end discrimination. Women in Australia have more choices now than ever before. They can choose what subjects to study and whether to go to university; and they have the choice of working after they marry and returning to work after they have had children. The productivity report also found that women aged between the ages of 25 and 54 who choose to work casually were more satisfied with their life-work balance because they had more time for education and family.

To be truly competitive we need to make the most of our potential workforce. For this reason I welcomed the announcement last week by the Minister for Women, the Hon. Pru Goward, to establish the New South Wales Council for Women's Economic Opportunity. The council will provide specialist advice to the Government to identify strategies that make it possible for girls and women to consider non-traditional occupations. The term "non-traditional occupation" refers to jobs that have been traditionally filled by one gender. Although few jobs limit employment to only men or women, too often people will be overlooked—or will themselves overlook certain jobs—due to preconceived ideas of what is women's work and what is men's work.

The Government's NSW 2021 plan has made increasing the number of women completing apprenticeships in non-traditional trades a priority to ensure that girls have a broader range of career choices.

Women currently make up less than 2 per cent of the workforce in the automotive, engineering, construction and electro-technology trades in New South Wales. Compared with other industries where women have been making significant inroads, these figures are concerning. The New South Wales Government is serious about bringing change and ensuring gender equality, which is why the new council members will have strong backgrounds in engineering, manufacturing, construction, training and mentoring. The council will examine why women continue to be underrepresented in the workforce. These types of non-traditional roles might appear to be challenges but they need to be presented to more women.

The Government is committed to rebuilding the economy and is working with industry to secure a competitive labour market. In addition, men will be included on the advisory council to reflect the Government's belief that gender equality is an issue for the whole community, not just for women. I am confident the Government will develop further policies to help women reach their full potential and manage the pressure of balancing work and family. As International Women's Day is a global day, celebrating the economic, political and social achievements of women in the past and present, I welcome the announcement by the Minister for Women of the NSW Women of the Year Awards. These awards will honour women who have made a significant contribution to the community.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of one Liberal woman who was a pioneer for women in politics and a champion of policies for women. She was a mother of 12, the wife of a Prime Minister, the first woman to be elected to the House of Representatives and the first woman to hold a Cabinet position. She was Dame Enid Lyons, a trailblazer for her time, who in her maiden speech in 1943 said:

... any woman entering the public arena must be prepared to work as men work; she must justify herself not as a woman but as a citizen.

As I have said in this Chamber before, I do not support quota systems or affirmative action. I believe women need to use their energy not to complain that things are tough, but to work harder and smarter. We must identify the barriers that are preventing women from participating and develop practical solutions to encourage more women to take up positions. As Joan Rivers once said:

... If I can't make it through one door, I will go through another door—or I will make a door.

I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL [12.19 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak also in support of the motion, which has caused quite a lot of spirited and lively debate thus far—and I am sure there will be more to come. I congratulate, or acknowledge in her absence, the Hon. Helen Westwood on moving this motion today, because I think it is important that we discuss these issues on International Women's Day. I will refer to a couple of comments she made in her opening remarks in relation to the number of female members in this Chamber and in the other place. In her contribution the Hon. Jennifer Gardiner talked about how The Nationals have quite a good history in that regard, particularly in this Chamber. We were the first party to achieve gender equality, back in 2002 when we had a 50:50 split, and even now we are pretty close to that, with three women and four men. But it is something that we need to work on as a party, and I hope that during my time in this place we see more women come to this Chamber and the other place, representing all political parties.

The Hon. Helen Westwood mentioned the retraining of nurses. I acknowledge that the Hon. Paul Green, who is in the Chamber, was a nurse. However, I think he will agree that it is a predominantly female workforce and, in the spirit of International Women's Day, I think it is important to get some facts on the record in relation to the re-entry program. The facts are that this Government has delivered 1,011 more nurses since the State election. We have a record number of graduate nurses and midwives coming through in 102 hospitals statewide and we have introduced \$10,000 scholarships to cover the full cost of the re-entry program after a break of five to 10 years. National registration for the nurse re-entry program came into effect on 1 July 2010 and former Minister Tebbutt signed up to it. It is governed by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia and implemented by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. It is pleasing to know that there will be more support for nurses facing hardship. Those who are eligible to re-enter the workforce will be able to access the full \$10,000 scholarship to cover their costs. In the spirit of women and girl power, I am happy to put that on the record today.

I will not go too much into the history of International Women's Day as I think previous speakers have covered that quite well. But it is nice to have a global day to celebrate the economic, political and social achievements of women in the past, the present and hopefully the future. Obviously literally hundreds of events

have been taking place this week and in the months prior to International Women's Day across the world. I am very pleased to have been a part of a couple of such events. On Monday I attended a luncheon at Parliament House. It was hosted by the Smith Family Voice, Interests and Education of Women [VIEW] Club, and more than 300 women were in attendance. I sat at a great table with some ladies from VIEW clubs on the Central Coast and in Cooma. My colleagues and other wonderful female members of Parliament were also present. We heard from the Minister for Women, Pru Goward, and the Hon. Shelley Hancock, the first female Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. The Hon. Sophie Cotsis, the shadow Minister for Women, was also there. I think she will agree that it was a great event and it was really good to be in a room full of ladies who are very passionate about giving women a voice.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Two out of three ain't bad.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Now, now, girl power—that is what we are on about today. The theme of the luncheon was "Connecting girls, Inspiring futures." That made me think about some of the things that I have tried to do as a young woman in Parliament. Since coming to this place I have been fortunate to be asked to be involved in many events in my community through The Young Nationals, the Young Farmers and also a Tamworth women in business group that helps young women in my local area who are entering the workforce and trying to do their bit for regional communities. It was great for me to talk to those women. If I can inspire them and educate them about the political process and about politics then my time in this place will be worthwhile.

I will conclude by talking about a few women who have made a difference to my life. To use the words of the Hon. Helen Westwood's motion, we should "celebrate the vital role women play in the economic prosperity of their families, communities and countries". There are certainly three women in my life who fit that description. The first is my mum, Marg Johnston, who is watching online in Gunnedah. So I give a shout out to her. She is a wonderful lady. She was a small business owner when we were growing up, a working mum. She was certainly the centre of our family and raised three children. I think we have all turned out all right, so she did a good job—along with my dad, whom I love, but it is International Women's Day. She has shown me that it is possible to challenge oneself and to find a healthy work-life balance. I certainly keep her in mind while I am in this job.

The second person is my sister, Amber Donoghue, who is a wife, a mother and a teacher. She is about to re-enter the workforce to teach literacy and numeracy at our local TAFE. Despite doing all that, she also finds time to dedicate to the local community. She has founded a local charity called PaediatRic And Maternal Support [PRAMS]—which, coincidentally, I will speak about during the adjournment debate this afternoon. She has won a Gunnedah Australia Day award and she inspires me to remember that, no matter how busy one is, one needs to do something that gives back to one's local community and do what one can to help other women.

The third woman is actually a girl—my niece, Scarlett Donoghue. She is two and full of personality, joy and vigour—as most two-year-olds are. In a way, she is the most important person on a day like today because she reminds me why we are pushing this agenda for women and why we need to talk in this place about what we can do to make our society a better place for girls who are growing up now. It is my hope that she can grow up in a world where the barriers to equality no longer exist. They are women who inspire me on International Women's Day. I have enjoyed hearing from previous speakers about other women who have done great things, and I look forward to listening to the rest of the debate. I wish all my colleagues a very happy International Women's Day.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ [12.25 p.m.]: The Minister for Finance and Services, and Minister for the Illawarra might want to keep his field marshal's baton close to him because I think the Hon. Sarah Mitchell might be the sleeper on his side of the Chamber. She is vying for a place on the front bench.

The Hon. Greg Pearce: I tend to agree.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: I will not redo the history of International Women's Day as its origins are well known to every member in this Chamber. This information is for the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps. Despite the declaration by Margaret Thatcher that the battle for women's rights has been largely won, I think the jury is still out. Perhaps she meant the battle for her rights had been won, but I suspect she may have rethought the issue when Jacques Chirac said of her, "What does she want, this housewife? My balls on a tray?" Or perhaps when novelist Angela Carter said, "She coos like a dove, hisses like a serpent, bays like a hound [in a contrived

upper-class accent] reminiscent not of real toffs but of Wodehouse aunts." Only Sinn Féin's Danny Morrison appears to have given any equal treatment to Margaret Thatcher stating, "She's the biggest bastard we have ever known."

Then, as now, female Prime Ministers attract a lot of unnecessary comment. Despite Margaret Thatcher's protestations, there is little doubt we still have a long way to go. Certainly the decision to open up all field force positions to women in the defence forces is an indication of the milestones that are reached every day, making our society more equitable and opening up more opportunities to women in non-traditional trades. These decisions do not mean there will still not be hurdles for those women who want to take up those opportunities. I was most amused by Australia Defence Association Neil James' assertion at the time that women could not have front-line roles as they may be required to fight with their bare hands. I relished pointing out to him that Nancy Wake had certainly killed soldiers with her bare hands, so it was hardly a point that would exclude their service.

The release yesterday of extracts from the "Report of the Review of Allegations of Sexual and Other Abuse in Defence" is an indication of how hard it can sometimes be to work in non-traditional areas, often for men as well as women. The report received allegations from 847 different people. I have written previously of the types of offences—the 17-year-old soldier whose breasts were fondled while she slept, with no action taken; the infantry soldier whose Regimental Aid Post doctor was so sick of seeing him turn up every day beaten by his barrack "mates" that the doctor wanted to put him in jail for his own protection; and the notorious stories of abuse of apprentices during the 1970s and 1980s. I am not surprised that the report identifies a complaint going back to 1951 from a then 13-year-old boy. But the report also contains complaints about events during 2011—stories of female sailors self-harming by breaking their legs to escape the conditions on one ship are well known.

It is extremely disappointing that plenty of commentators, particularly ex-service, are willing to comment on the Kafer report about the decision to conclude unrelated disciplinary proceedings against a young woman who was filmed having sex with a male colleague while four other cadets watched in another room, but they were fairly silent on the DLA Piper report into abuses. I note the comments by the Hon. Jennifer Gardiner, who said, "It is about men changing the attitudes of men."

For women moving into non-traditional areas of employment it can often be a tough road on the way to getting some, not all, men in these environments to act in a more professional manner. While some may run this as a politically correct and nanny state argument, I would suggest it is just good manners not to denigrate and bully one's workmates, particularly when the so-called justification is that they are women and somehow their worth is less than one's own. In May 2007 I raised in this Chamber the issue of women moving into non-traditional jobs. I pointed to the highly successful Girls Can Do Anything campaign run in New South Wales schools in the 1970s. This, taken alongside role models such as "Charlene" the motor mechanic in *Neighbours*, saw women moving into non-traditional areas. How many young girls these days have a role model like Kylie Minogue in a non-traditional job as part of their mainstream television?

At the time I pointed out that trade unions such as the Transport Workers Union, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and the Electrical Trades Union had continued to work in the area of non-traditional trades for women. Yet even at that time the only significant contribution to apprentice numbers for women were as hairdressers. The New South Wales Office for Women, at the behest of the then Minister for Women, Sandra Nori, had indeed begun mentoring programs to increase the number of women chefs. This is an employment area in which one would expect women to have greater representation. Sadly, they do not.

I would be interested to know whether any member of this Chamber can name a television reality chef program that has a female presenter. My motivation at the time was the astonishing statement by the member for Goulburn, a former Sex Discrimination Commissioner, that the New South Wales Parliament was the most sexist workplace she had ever experienced. While I can assume that that the Hon. Catherine Cusack and the Hon. Melinda Pavey could have significant justification for feeling this way, given their dumping from the front bench despite their significant contributions in opposition, and the promises of Barry O'Farrell, today in this Chamber we are faced with a front bench of only men.

But it defies belief that the Minister, who held the office of Sex Discrimination Commissioner at a time of ongoing reports of abuse in the Defence Force, and who must surely have received significant complaints from women attempting to enter non-traditional areas, could believe that the New South Wales Parliament is the most sexist workplace that she has ever experienced. It must speak to her cloistered view of the world. A quick

scan of her contributions in this place reveals she has rarely touched on non-traditional areas of employment. Indeed her first contribution in the other House following her inaugural speech was to attack me over an alleged incident that I could have no knowledge of and which indeed occurred while I was a member of the Australian Regular Army posted at Singleton. This was part of her contribution on behalf of the sisterhood to reducing the sexist workplace she believes the New South Wales Parliament to be.

I note the Minister has decided to sack half the Premier's Advisory Council on Women, replace some of those people with men and task them to look into women moving into non-traditional trades where other members have argued in this Chamber the economic opportunities for women lie. I welcome the Minister for Women to the campaign. But I am greatly surprised that there appears to be a significant representation of businesspeople and little representation of those with actual experience in delivering and fighting for these programs. One might have thought that Rita Malia, President of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, and a bloody clever woman with significant knowledge of conditions in non-traditional trades, would be included. But one would be wrong.

The exception is perhaps Peter Brett from Lend Lease, which has had women successfully come through as blue collar workers and move on to management positions. But I would ask the Minister how many new apprentices Lend Lease has now and what the current state of the construction industry is. The reality is that construction has stalled. The collapse of Kell and Rigby and the problems with Reed Constructions point to the state of the industry. With the only project on the horizon being Barangaroo and the contractor for this site being none other than Lend Lease—although I am not sure who is building James Packer's new casino—it would be hoped that the Minister's newfound interest in this area is not just a bit of window-dressing. Perhaps she could fill us in on how the Tasting Success program is going.

I raise one other point. I was astounded to hear that one of the panel who will decide who will win New South Wales Woman of the Year awards is David Gallop, Chief Executive of the Australian Rugby League Commission. Now, David is a nice bloke, but quite frankly rugby league is not an area with a huge representation of women. New South Wales has a significant number of women in sporting fields, such as Tracey Menzies, Dawn Fraser, Layne Beachley and Ann Sargent. There is an endless list of women such as those who have a great knowledge of women's involvement in those areas. What possible justification can there be for putting someone involved in rugby league on the selection panel? I look forward to hearing an explanation from members on the other side.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell): Order! I welcome to the public gallery year 11 students from schools across Sydney attending a Young Women's Leadership seminar organised by the Parliament's Education and Community Relations Unit. Welcome to you all. It is quite appropriate that you are present to hear the debate on International Women's Day. I hope you enjoy your time with us today.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN [12.35 p.m.]: I too welcome young women leaders, indeed everyone in the gallery. A happy International Women's Day to everyone in the gallery and in the Chamber. I rise on behalf of The Greens to speak in support of the motion moved by the Hon. Helen Westwood. I hold The Greens portfolio of Status of Women. I speak also on behalf of my colleague the Hon. Jan Barham, who I think will be making an International Women's Day speech on the adjournment later today.

The Hon. Melinda Pavey: I note you are dressed in purple.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I acknowledge the interjection. I am dressed in purple. This morning I had the pleasure of attending an International Women's Day event—a breakfast here at Parliament House addressed by three fabulous and inspiring young women speakers. They spoke about the importance of acknowledging feminism, and that feminism is still very strong in women's lives, because women are still facing discrimination and sometimes find it tough to find their voice. Interestingly, it is more difficult for women to find their voice and feel empowered to speak out and take public roles; they must first go through something of a personal journey, as we heard this morning.

The young women who spoke were Samar Hadid, an incredible young Muslim Australian, who has been United Nations Youth Ambassador and held various other positions; Anna Rose, one of the founders of the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, who is very active in young people's campaigning on climate change; and Larissa Behrendt, a very inspiring Aboriginal academic and lawyer. Those three women acknowledged that celebrations of International Women's Day are very important, but that it is also important to remind ourselves that we have a long way to go, not just in Australia but internationally, regarding women's rights. I will touch on that towards the end of this speech.

International Women's Day has been born out of the ongoing campaign for women's full equality that has been waged here in Australia since the early nineteenth century. I think it is important to touch on some of the history of International Women's Day. We need to not just celebrate where we are as women, but refer to history to demonstrate how difficult it was for women in the early 1900s to be so "radical" at that time. I doubt whether many in this Chamber, if they were around in 1919 or 1932 and saw women protesting, would have supported what those women were doing. So, yes, indeed we have come a long way and it is appropriate to celebrate International Women's Day. International Women's Day historian and feminist Joyce Stevens writes that the first Australian International Women's Day rally took place in the Sydney Domain on 25 March 1928. I quote from some of her writings on the history of International Women's Day in parts of Australia:

This rally was organised by the Militant Women's Movement—

Some even react to the word "militant". I expect the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps would not like the word "militant" in the Militant Women's Movement—

and called for equal pay for equal work; an 8 hour day for shop girls; no piece work; the basic wage for the unemployed and annual holidays on full pay.

Against a background of increasing unemployment, which reached a peak of over half a million in 1932, and a number of intense industrial disputes sparked off by wage cuts and reduced working conditions, the Militant Women saw their International Women's Day activity as part of the small but militant socialist movement.

In 1929, in addition to a social and dance in Brisbane and a Sydney Domain rally, the militant women also organised an IWD rally in Sydney's Belmore Park in support of the wives and families of striking timber workers, where men were far more prominent than women in the audience.

1931 saw the first IWD marches in Sydney and Melbourne. In Sydney about 60 women headed a march of 3,400 people with many slogans and banners demanding equal pay for equal work—

that sounds familiar; I am sure that this International Women's Day we will be demanding the same thing—

and other special women's demands, as well as more general issues such as resistance to wage cuts, opposition to the Arbitration courts and solidarity with the Soviet Union. In Melbourne, 50 women led a march of 150 from the corner of Victoria and Russell Streets, with a lead banner declaring "Long Live International Women's Day", and others similar to the Sydney march.

The international history of International Women's Day is also inspiring for women everywhere and worth placing on the record. In 1960, on the fiftieth anniversary of International Women's Day, 729 delegates from 73 countries, including Queenslander Doris Webb from the Union of Australian Women, met at a conference in Copenhagen. The conference adopted a general declaration of support for the political, economic and social rights of women. From 31 August to 6 September 1975—not that long ago—the Australian Government held the first national conference on the status of women, Women and Politics, committing Australia to celebrating International Women's Day with other member nations of the United Nations. That is quite late in the history of International Women's Day considering that the day was first celebrated in 1911. The concept was proposed in 1910 at an international conference of working women in Copenhagen. Then on 19 March 1911 more than one million women and men attended International Women's Day events across Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. They were campaigning for women's rights, including the right to vote, work and hold public office.

The Charter of the United Nations, signed in San Francisco in 1945, was the first international agreement to proclaim gender equality as a fundamental human right. Since then, the organisation has helped create a historic legacy of internationally agreed strategies, standards, programs and goals to advance the status of women worldwide. Today a central organising principle of the work of the United Nations is that no enduring solution to society's most threatening social, economic and political problems can be found without the full participation, and the full empowerment, of the world's women. So let us remember our Aboriginal sisters this International Women's Day when the gap between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal life expectancy for women in Australia is 10 years.

I note that in her adjournment speech last night the Hon. Penny Sharpe mentioned the following report but I wish to place the details of it on the record during my contribution to this motion. The Sydney Women's Fund has just released the Two Ways Together report which found that Aboriginal mothers are more likely to be teenagers. A total of 18 per cent of Aboriginal mothers in west and south-west Sydney are teenagers, and 15 per cent in coastal Sydney compared to 3 per cent of non-Aboriginal mothers. They were also less likely than non-Aboriginal mothers to attend a first antenatal visit before 20 weeks gestation, more likely to give birth to low birth weight babies, less likely to breastfeed their babies and more likely to experience postnatal depression.

The report also states that hospitalisation rates of Aboriginal women for self-harm increased by 15 per cent in the period 2002-2003 to 2007-2008. This was 1.4 times the rate of hospitalisation of Aboriginal men throughout the period. By contrast, the rate for all New South Wales women decreased by 2.3 per cent. In New South Wales, Aboriginal women are 4.6 times more likely to be victims of personal crimes than non-Aboriginal women and 3.6 times more likely to be victims of sexual assault than non-Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women in New South Wales are six times more likely to be a victim of family violence-related assault than non-Aboriginal women, and eight times more likely in coastal Sydney. In 2008 a total of 2,382 Aboriginal women in New South Wales were victims of family violence. Aboriginal girls had a family violence victimisation rate more than twice that of Aboriginal boys. Both rates have declined since 2003 by 10 per cent for Aboriginal boys and by 12 per cent for Aboriginal girls.

It could be said that these statistics are just not good enough, but they are much worse than that. They are disgraceful. As women in this place we must do more to ensure Aboriginal women reach their full potential and that we close the gap. The motion before the House calls on all levels of government and the corporate sector to develop and implement policies and strategies to remove the barriers to women achieving economic and social equality. The Greens support this and believe that as women we need to ensure that these barriers are removed for Aboriginal women and women of all cultures living in Australia. Naomi Wolf was recently in Australia as part of The F-Word Feminist Forum. Her opinion on the progress of Western woman is as follows:

Western women are stuck in a new social role which is scarcely evolving, populating middle management and pink-coloured ghettos. A small fraction of elite women have fabulous careers supported by low wage child-care and domestic work and other women. Women remain 15% of bylines in major media, they own 5% of Fortune 500 companies and so on.

Meanwhile, of course, women around the world continue to get beaten and raped and tortured for being women, and many for speaking out as women and many are in areas of conflict. This is the challenge for twenty-first century feminism. To illustrate this I turn to our closest neighbour, Papua New Guinea. At the end of last year there was good news for the women of Papua New Guinea. On 24 November 2011 a bill was passed to amend the constitution to allow seats in the national Parliament to be reserved for women. It was called the Equality and Participation Bill. However, it could be implemented only if an amendment to the organic law on elections was passed by at least 75 per cent of parliamentarians. Unfortunately, this did not happen. About two weeks ago *Business Spectator* reported that that bill failed to pass Parliament 58 votes to one after 21 members of Parliament who were opposed to the historic law quit the Chamber.

A failed third attempt to pass the bill means it has to be reintroduced to Parliament. With campaigning for the June 2012 election soon to begin in Papua New Guinea women may not have a strong voice in Parliament at least until the 2017 election. Advocates of the bill say they will contest electorates despite the absence of the enabling laws. Dorothy Tekwie is the founder of PNG Women in Politics and a member of the Papua New Guinea Greens Party. She spoke at a parliamentary breakfast in Sydney early last year. She is an incredibly inspiring woman. When one considers what she and other women are fighting against in Papua New Guinea it is clear how far Australia has come. Regarding the Equality and Participation Bill Dorothy Tekwie said:

We have waited 36 years. Are we going to wait another five? We need to mobilise and we need to take the coming election on as our challenge. Absence of women has been part of the problem of why this country has been going down the drain and sold to the dogs, where no-one cares about our children, about social services, about human rights issues, and environmental destruction.

Dame Carol Kidu is a 15-year veteran of the Papua New Guinean Parliament. She is a white woman, the sole female member of that Parliament, and is fighting for more female parliamentarians. She said:

We're not asking to take away space from anybody. We are asking to provide extra space in a playing field that is completely uneven, completely uneven.

It is a stark reminder that our job is not done when inequality is so rife and women still do not have a voice in Parliament in Papua New Guinea. To ensure that our fight for women's rights is truly global and equal we must ensure that we are fighting for equal rights for women everywhere. Our fight for equal pay here must be matched with our fight to ensure that all women are able to vote and participate in their Parliaments. Our fight for equal pay and for equal access to the boardrooms must be matched with our fight to ensure women and children can live lives free from sexual violence, domestic violence and oppression. History shows that we have come a long way in Australia. That is to be celebrated. However, The Greens look forward to seeing progress in

the rights of women around the world in the coming years and decades so that International Women's Day can truly become a day of celebration for all women achieving their full rights. The Greens commend the Hon. Helen Westwood for moving this motion. We support the motion.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell): I welcome to the public gallery a second group of year 11 students from schools across Sydney who are attending the Young Women's Leadership Seminar, organised by the Parliament's Education and Community Relations Unit.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS [12.49 p.m.]: Happy International Women's Day to all the women around the world. To our young women in the gallery: Good luck on your studies. It is great to see you here today. I congratulate my colleague the Hon. Helen Westwood on bringing this motion to the House. I am inspired by the fantastic speeches made by members. Today is a very important day for women in Australia, New South Wales and across the world. This morning I had the great privilege to address a group of working women in Parramatta—women who work in logistics, in distribution, in pharmaceuticals and in stores, and women who work as packers. They are women who work in some of the non-traditional areas of work and they are a fantastic group of people. They are not only very good workers but they are also delegates who represent thousands of workers at the workplace and advocate on their behalf in relation to work conditions. They work in extremely difficult conditions and I congratulate them on their hard work. It was fascinating to hear some of their stories about what they go through at the coalface.

Today we celebrate the 101st anniversary of International Women's Day. This week I had the pleasure of attending a number of very important events. Events are being held around Australia and in New South Wales by community groups, local councils, unions, schools and other governments. Unfortunately, the New South Wales Government forgot to organise an event for today and is going to hold belated Women of the Year awards in a couple of weeks' time, according to the Government's website. It is a shame that the O'Farrell Government has been in office for close to a year and it forgot today is International Women's Day. The Government is not commemorating this important day—

The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox: Why are we having this motion?

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: The Government should commemorate this very important day to acknowledge the achievements of the unsung heroes in our community: the women who work in domestic violence, the women who work in our sexual assault services, the women volunteers at our hospitals selling raffle tickets to raise money for a cancer unit or the children's hospital. The majority of volunteers across New South Wales are women who are in paid employment, who are managing their families and who are the economic managers of their households. These women should have been acknowledged today. These women should have had their names in lights because the unsung heroes, the achievers in our communities, have very little opportunities in their life to be acknowledged by their Government.

It is shameful. The Minister for Women has not bothered to organise an event or a ceremony. Last year Premier O'Farrell was pleased to have happy-snaps taken here at Parliament House, but today the Government forgot it was International Women's Day and it is going to hold a belated event. I acknowledge that the Minister for Local Government and the Division of Local Government organised an awards event for Women in Local Government. I commend the recipients of those awards and all the people in the local government sector who acknowledged the hard workers in local government and the councillors in rural and regional communities.

Local government elections will be held on 8 September this year and in my role as shadow Minister for Local Government I encourage all women across New South Wales—women from non-English-speaking backgrounds, women with disabilities, women who volunteer—to put their hand up to run for their local council. I acknowledge the seven award recipients of Women in Local Government: Darriea Turley, Colleen Fuller, Alison Dench, Veronica Bird, Vicki Scott, Sue Weatherley and Vanessa Creighton. Those are seven fantastic women who received awards yesterday and I congratulate them on their contributions.

A major challenge will confront us over the next few years: The baby boomer generation is retiring, and many of them will retire with little or no superannuation. Women continue to live longer than men but are doing so with much less money to get by on. All levels of government need to work to support women of the baby boomer generation. I believe these women have a lot to contribute and it is important for governments

across Australia and local communities to do what we can. We need to raise awareness of this issue. It is a passion of mine that we do not leave our women pioneers, who fought very hard for the rights of women in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, with only \$10,000 or \$12,000 in superannuation when they retire. It may mean that they will not be able to stay in Sydney and they will have to live in remote and isolated communities. I have had a number of discussions with key stakeholders about the seriousness of this challenge ahead of us.

I also want to raise the issue of casual workers, who make up almost a quarter of our workforce, and other workers who are facing the limitation of fixed-term contracts due to independent contracting labour hire. Many of these workers in casual employment are women and they are denied a reliable income or permanency in their employment. It is important that casual employment is available, but for a very long time we have seen many of these workers continue to be on long-term casual contracts, which means if they want to buy a home or get a loan they do not have the security of permanency of work.

An insecure work inquiry is taking place currently and the inquiry recently visited Bathurst to hear from casual workers in the Central West about their experiences. Many of those workers claim to have been bullied, denied resources and have struggled to pay their bills. On Monday I had the opportunity to attend a hearing at the State Library and I met with a number of clothing outworkers who talked about their very bad working conditions and their very low pay. One worker told me that they are working non-stop for 14 hours at \$7.00 an hour. That situation has to be addressed.

Dr John Kaye: Did you say \$14 an hour?

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: No, \$7 an hour. The other issue that has concerned me this week is that the Government has abandoned the Premier's Expert Advisory Council for Women. The council, by whatever name it has been called—the Women's Advisory Board or the Premier's Council for Women—was a body established by the Coalition Government in 1975 and for the past 40 years it has provided expert advice to governments of all persuasions. It was a body made up of independent experts and it sat at the centre of government—it sat in the Department of Premier and Cabinet—and it was the central agency that works across all policy areas to bring those areas together. The council reported to the Premier, it provided advice to the Government and it was essential in ensuring that women in housing, health and education have a voice to the central agency. It is astounding that the Minister for Women has abolished that council.

I have heard the Minister for Women talk about getting women into non-traditional trades. We have been doing that for a long time—the campaign has been going on since the 1970s and we are happy to support it. The former Minister for Women, Sandra Nori, set up a number of programs and we are happy to support them. However, it is only one piece of the puzzle. We must examine the constraints that militate against women obtaining employment in the mining and construction industries. We should talk to people on the ground about why the constraints and barriers exist. Is it because women do not have access to childcare services? Is it that they are hampered by discrimination because they are female? This is the type of information we need.

I would like to know the process of eliciting expressions of interest leading to appointment of people to this new body. One person that the Minister for Women did not consult is Rita Mallia, the President of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union [CFMEU], who was referred to by my colleague the Hon. Lynda Voltz. Rita Mallia is the first female president of the union. She has been working in the industry for approximately 17 years. She has been working at the coalface, with management and with the industry. Her union and the industry currently are examining ways of introducing more women to working in the construction and mining industries. As Ms Mallia informed me, and as is stated on the union's website, this is about getting women into the construction and mining industries, which have decent pay and conditions. But the issue is how we get women into those industries.

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

[The Deputy-President (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones) left the chair at 1.01 p.m. The House resumed at 2.30 p.m.]

The President (The Hon. Donald Thomas Harwin) took the chair at 2.30 p.m.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

FORMER MEMBER FOR CLARENCE

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: I direct my question to the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice. Why did it take six months for the Department of Attorney General and Justice to decide that the former member for Clarence, who walked into a police station to confess his crime, would not be charged with signing a false statutory declaration?

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members will cease interjecting. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The Leader of the Opposition has asked why it took six months. The answer is: That is the time it takes when the police and the judiciary act independently—when no-one interferes. Does he want us to interfere? Is that what he is asking for? He is putting the sledge on and the sleaze out about an honourable member who stood aside, unlike his lot in the Labor Party in parliaments across this country. Unlike members of the Labor Party, the former member for Clarence is an honourable man. He did something wrong, he fessed up to it, and he stood aside. Labor members would not know honour if they walked over it.

ROAD FLOOD DAMAGE

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will he update the House on recent rain and its effects on our road network?

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Tim Flannery is out there in his tinnie.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the Hon. John Ajaka for his question and acknowledge the interjection about Tim Flannery. That is why we call it Roads and Maritime Services [RMS]. It is not *Two Men in a Tinnie*—the whole State is in a tinnie. Frankly, today has been a terrible day for transport services in Sydney and across the State. The rain started yesterday and, except for a couple of small breaks, has not stopped, causing widespread damage to the Sydney road network. Between 100 and 125 millilitres of rain has fallen on Sydney in the past 24 hours. Managers at the Transport Management Centre [TMC] tell me this is the worst day since the centre began operating 15 years ago. With 106 millilitres recorded at Oatley, 116 millilitres recorded at Sans Souci and 109 millilitres recorded in the central business district, rain of such volume was always going to cause major problems, and it did. The intensity of the rain has been astonishing. Roads have been flooded, not by centimetres but by metres.

Members would have experienced this staggering amount of rain on their way to work today. It has caused major disruptions to Sydney's public transport network, with road closures affecting buses, flooding affecting tracks, necessitating the closure of some train lines, and dangerous conditions on Sydney Waterways playing havoc with ferry services. And, as we know, the rain has not been confined just to Sydney. In the Riverina and the State's Central West the State Emergency Service [SES] has been working overtime to evacuate affected areas, notably Griffith and Forbes.

In regional New South Wales just some of the major roads that are closed in part due to flooding include the Sturt Highway in east Wagga Wagga, the Newell Highway near Forbes, the Snowy Mountains Highway at Brown Mountain, the Lachlan Valley Way near Cowra and the Kamilaroi Highway between Walgett and Bourke. There are far more road closures across the State than I can mention—indeed, too many to list in this place—but motorists who want up-to-date information on road closures should log on to the Live Traffic website at www.livetraffic.com.au.

I take this opportunity to warn members and the public that strong and damaging winds are forecast for later this afternoon in the Sydney metropolitan area. There are genuine concerns that the heavy rain will loosen soil around trees and that they might fall across roads or dwellings. I am urging motorists to drive according to the conditions. Currently everyone available from Roads and Maritime Services, the Transport Management Centre, police and local councils are engaged in managing road closures. I thank the people who have been out in the rain in very difficult conditions and doing such hard work. They are out there suffering so that the rest of us can live a relatively comfortable life—although it has not been comfortable for most of the people who were commuting today.

Key roads that have been affected by flooding today include Parramatta Road at Leichhardt, Victoria Road at Rozelle, The Wakehurst Parkway at Oxford Falls, Heathcote Road at Holsworthy, which is quite unusual, and Deadmans Creek at Sandy Point, Bexley Road at Wolli Creek, the Hume Highway at Warwick Farm and the Camden Valley Way at Leppington. I urge motorists to drive carefully and, unfortunately, to expect significant delays as there is congestion across the network, especially all major roads heading into the city. However, I just spoke to the Premier, who is on his way back from Tamworth, and he said he had a really good run into the city centre from Bankstown.

FORMER MEMBER FOR CLARENCE

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Attorney General. Why did it take six months for NSW Police and the New South Wales Attorney General to realise that the statutory declaration filled in by the former Nationals member for Clarence was on a Commonwealth form? Why has this evidence not been provided to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: It is a technical issue and it is one for the police and the Commonwealth Attorney-General. If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has any concerns he should contact them.

WINMALEE WASTEWATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Will he update the House on the Winmalee Wastewater System Improvement Project?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I thank the Hon. David Clarke for his question. I acknowledge that it follows questions asked yesterday by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Hon. Helen Westwood. Opposition members have barely scratched the surface on this issue. At the outset let us not forget that the former Labor Government had plenty of opportunities to fix this problem. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition would like us to believe this problem arose only since 26 March 2011. However, for 16 years those opposite were happy to represent the people of the Blue Mountains, take them for granted and address community concerns at a snail's pace. As a reward for Labor's neglect, the people of the Blue Mountains thoroughly rejected the Labor Party, with a 15 per cent swing to the Liberals on 26 March last year.

[Interruption]

The Leader of the Opposition is right. In 2009 the former Labor Government, through the Hon. Phil Costa, who was then Minister for Water, finally responded to concerns about the emergency relief structure proposed upstream of the Lawson Road drop shaft in Springwood. Sydney Water then committed to review all options for the project and consult further with stakeholders. That was in 2009. Under our Government we are expediting and getting on with the matter. In May 2011 Sydney Water started consulting with the community on three options to improve wet weather overflows in the Blue Mountains area. The three options include a diversion structure upstream of the Lugarno Avenue drop shaft, which would transfer flows through to a new emergency relief structure at Bednal Road, at a cost of around \$11 million.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: What's a drop shaft, Greg?

The Hon. Eric Roozendaal: He doesn't know.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: The second option is a new, larger drop shaft in Lugarno Avenue and a new emergency relief structure at Lawson Road, also at a cost of around \$11 million. The Hon. Eric Roozendaal would know all about drop shafts. He spent a lot of time in Sussex Street opening the trapdoor of the drop shafts. More recently, he and his mob have opened the trapdoor of the drop shafts for Morris Iemma, Nathan Rees and what's-his-name—Kevin Rudd. The third option is new, larger drop shafts at Lugarno Avenue and Lawson Road, duplication of the inlet carrier to the Winmalee wastewater treatment plant and a new bypass around it, at a cost of at least \$21 million. The option the member opposite suggests is the third one, at a cost of \$21 million, instead of the other two, at \$11 million each. Sydney Water is evaluating the various options. Clearly, the cost differential is a factor to be taken into account. Most importantly, an environmental impact statement is required before the project proceeds. As that will involve further stakeholder engagement, there will be plenty of opportunity for the Leader of the Opposition to run some scare campaigns about this project.

CAWARRA WOMEN'S REFUGE AND INDIGENOUS YOUTH SERVICE

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for Family and Community Services. Will the Minister clarify the issues surrounding the Cawarra Women's Refuge and Indigenous Youth Service in Penrith relating to the termination of the service agreement with the department in November 2008, the request by Housing NSW for the four properties to be vacated, and the subsequent Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal hearing?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I thank the member for her question, which, as always, is a thoughtful one. I am advised that Housing NSW has been seeking the return of four properties from the Cawarra Women's Refuge since its funding was withdrawn by the former Labor Government through the Department of Community Services in 2009. Cawarra is not a registered community housing provider and, despite numerous requests from Housing NSW, has refused to return the properties. As both informal and formal negotiations have been unsuccessful, legal action has now commenced. A directions hearing date at the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal has been set for 27 March 2012 in order to assess whether the matter is ready to proceed to a full hearing. I am advised that, hopefully, that will take place in April 2012. I am advised further that Housing NSW intends to transfer the properties leased to Cawarra to an alternative registered housing provider and continue to house homeless Aboriginal people.

Penrith Domestic Violence Services Inc. has been funded by the Department of Family and Community Services to provide support services to the tenants of these properties. Finally, I am advised that Housing NSW remains committed to maintaining and increasing the supply of housing linked to appropriate supported accommodation. Cawarra's existing tenants will suffer no disadvantage, provided they remain eligible for supported accommodation. The funding was withdrawn by the previous Labor Government in 2009. I am sure the tenants will be looked after.

NATIONAL PARKS

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for the Environment, and follows the question that my colleague the Hon. Robert Borsak asked yesterday. Is the Minister aware of calls by the Western Division Group of Councils to lease parts of former properties, such as Toorale near Bourke, for a grazing trial? Will the Government commit to selecting several national parks, perhaps in the more remote areas of the State, to make them partly commercial to determine whether the suggestion is practical and can work to the benefit of both the environment and struggling rural communities?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I appreciate the question from the Hon. Robert Brown. As I indicated yesterday, although it is not my portfolio responsibility, I am very interested in these matters. Last year I indicated that I would like to visit these areas myself so that I can discuss these matters directly with the agencies and the Minister. As I was reminded yesterday, I needed to organise my diary. I did that this morning and we will try to get out there sometime around the middle of the year. We will be contacting the Hon. Sophie Cotsis—if we have not already done so—to see whether we can decide on a mutually convenient date so that we can all go and enjoy ourselves, get to the bottom of the issue, and then return and engage in some negotiations.

FORMER MEMBER FOR CLARENCE

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Attorney General. Will the Minister direct the Director of Public Prosecutions to review the result of the investigation and the delay in laying charges against the former Nationals member for Clarence, Stephen Cansdell?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The remnants of the former Government sitting on the losers' lounge have not learnt a thing. The question asked me, the Minister for Roads and Ports, to direct the Director of Public Prosecutions. That is what would have happened under the Labor Party. But there has been a change of government. That sort of stuff does not happen anymore.

HEAVY VEHICLE ROAD SAFETY

The Hon. JENNIFER GARDINER: My question is addressed to the Minister for Roads and Ports.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call Mr David Shoebridge to order for the first time. I remind the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham that he is on two calls to order and the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps that he is on one call to order.

The Hon. JENNIFER GARDINER: Will the Minister update the House on government operations to catch and sanction rogue truck drivers and companies?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the member for her question. I would have thought that is the sort of question that would come from the Opposition—not asking whether the Minister for Roads and Ports will direct the Director of Public Prosecutions. The Opposition needs a question time committee, and the Hon. Mick Veitch should be in charge of it. As we all know, trucks are speed limited to 100 kilometres per hour for the safety of their drivers and other motorists. While most truck drivers do the right thing and obey speed and chain of responsibility laws, there are those who blatantly break the law. As we have seen over the past couple of weeks—and as recently as Monday on the Hume Highway with the speeding Scott's B-double from Mount Gambier, South Australia—this Government is determined to catch and weed out rogue drivers and transport operators. In relation to the incident on the Hume Highway in the past 48 hours, police and Roads and Maritime Services have joined forces with their interstate colleagues in Victoria and South Australia to locate and inspect 31 trucks belonging to the Scott Group of Companies. It is not a company associated with Scott's Refrigerated Transport, whose head office is in Sydney.

Disturbingly, the Scott Group investigation has resulted in the issue of six speed limiter breaches, 25 defect notices and 15 fatigue-related violations as well as one overload offence, three vehicles being grounded and one driver detected allegedly driving under the influence of drugs. Furthermore, last week the truck driver involved in the horrific Menangle crash was charged with three counts of dangerous driving occasioning death. When the truck was inspected, investigators found that the speed limiter had been tampered with. While I am loath to speculate on the exact cause of the Menangle crash, it is simply not good enough for a small number of truck drivers to put others at risk of injury or death by barrelling down a highway at reckless speeds. It is beyond belief to think a few drivers and owner-operators condone tampering with speed limiters to allow their vehicles to travel beyond the 100 kilometres per hour limit.

While a little leeway needs to be given to trucks travelling downhill on cruise control, I have directed Roads and Maritime Services to work with the NSW Police Force to develop a policy that will see trucks detected speeding above 115 kilometres per hour grounded until a thorough compliance check has been completed. I have also asked Roads and Maritime Services to convene a leadership forum to ensure that the industry is involved in taking the lead to stamp out this dangerous behaviour urgently. I know that peak industry groups such as the Australian Trucking Association and NatRoad share the Government's goal to crack down on the rotten apples—they give everyone else in the industry a bad name. We now have more inspectors on the road targeting chain of responsibility breaches. Parties in the supply chain—whether a consignee, such as a retail outlet, or a consignor, such as a manufacturer—are on notice: You need to know your obligations under the legislation to ensure that trucks working with your businesses are not speeding.

I applaud the major trucking organisations and the companies and drivers who have contacted my office and Roads and Maritime Services to applaud what we are doing. The majority of the industry is doing the right thing. If you are travelling at over 115 kilometres an hour you are deliberately breaking the law. I do not care whether you are an angel heading down Goulburn hill or you have tampered with your speed limiter, you will be pulled up and inconvenienced. I do not need, nor does the community—*[Time expired.]*

NEW ENGLAND STRATEGIC REGIONAL LAND USE PLAN

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Primary Industries. Will the Minister explain to the House why under the Government's draft strategic regional land use plan for the New England north-west there are no identified strategic agricultural lands within a 50-kilometre radius of Tamworth, within a 100-kilometre radius of Wee Waa and in the areas around Gurley and Bellata?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: What I can tell the honourable member, and he will not like—

The Hon. Walt Secord: He is whispering again: we can't hear.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thought you only went blind. What I can tell the honourable member—and he will not like it—is that this Government has put out the best policy ever, the strongest policy of any Government. To hear the hypocrisy of the loser on the losers' lounge talking about what those opposite are going to do now they are in opposition—

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: Point of order: I refer to relevance. The question related to why no strategic agricultural lands have been identified within a 50-kilometre radius of Tamworth or a 100-kilometre radius of Wee Waa or within the golden triangle around Gurley and Bellata.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I have the gist of the member's point of order. The Minister was being generally relevant. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: He started by saying, "I'll tell you this."

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: That is how you answer questions. Mr President, the situation is that we have put forward the best policy that has ever been instituted in Australia. It is streets ahead of the policy of any other State, and it is certainly streets ahead of what was in place under the previous Government. Despite doing nothing for 16 years, Labor now has a whole list of ideas that it wants to implement from opposition. We took a policy from opposition into government when there was no policy. The Government has a structured role on strategic lands and it has a structured role on aquifer interference. This is such a good Government that it went beyond the promises made—by me as shadow Minister—before the election and added a 12-month moratorium on the granting of licences. A promise that the Government did not make prior to the election has nevertheless been implemented. That was a request that those opposite used to bleat across the Chamber, "When are you going to have a moratorium?" It has been instituted—12 months—and not one member opposite has said thank you.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: That is the first thing I said in this House.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Be quiet and listen—you are learning something. We put it to the community for people to consider and provide feedback on. When did that ever occur under Labor? When did that ever occur to The Greens?

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: Point of order—

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: You do not like the answer.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: You have not given one. Again, my point of order is relevance. The question related specifically to strategic agricultural lands within a 50-kilometre—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The member will resume his seat. I have the gist of his point of order. The Minister was being generally relevant.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: If Shenhua wishes to express that view and has concerns about that particular area he should attend the community meetings.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: You sold out.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham mouths platitudes and claims that the Government has "sold out". The Government delivered something The Greens could not do with its mates in the Labor Party and they are jealous that the Government was able to do it. It does not suit The Greens' political agenda one iota. The Greens are the whingers and the whiners who do not believe in helping farmers. The Government has done something practical and those opposite have done nothing. If The Greens had a genuine concern they should attend the community meetings. [*Time expired.*]

FORMER MEMBER FOR CLARENCE

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports.

The Hon. Greg Pearce: What is wrong with me today?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You do not answer the questions. Minister, in an earlier answer you called the disgraced former member for Clarence "honourable" and implied that his actions should not be condemned. As Minister for Roads and Ports, do you believe it is appropriate for you to condone the signing of a false statutory declaration relating to a speeding offence?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Do you not love them? Even the nice ones are shovelling it today. This is a man who did something wrong. This is a man who confessed to doing something wrong. It is not Eddie Obeid.

The Hon. Rick Colless: It is not Craig Thomson.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: It is not Craig Thomson. It is not even Eric Roozendaal.

The Hon. Eric Roozendaal: Point of order: First, if the Minister wishes to make claims against any member of this House he should do so by way of substantive motion. The second issue is relevance. I ask you to direct the Minister not to mislead the House. He well knows that the member in question was forced to go to the police because a staff member dobbed him in.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The member will resume his seat. Points of order are not an opportunity to make debating points. The standing orders do not relate to former members of this House. Obviously, any imputation about a current member of the House is disorderly. The Minister has concluded his answer.

ABORIGINAL GRAVES DESECRATION

The Hon. WALT SECORD: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Premier. Will the Government support the creation of a new offence of racist graffiti following the disgusting attack on an Aboriginal burial site at Fingal Head cemetery in the Tweed earlier this week, where memorials and graves were daubed with Nazi slogans and swastikas?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the member for that question. It is a good question and it is a very serious question. I am unaware of that incident. But if the facts are as indicated, it is quite horrendous and horrific and we certainly need to try to catch the perpetrators. But I remind the member that there is a graffiti bill before Parliament that he and his colleagues refuse to support.

The Hon. Walt Secord: Point of order: My point of order goes to relevance. My question is about the creation of a specific offence for racist graffiti.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister was being generally relevant. The Minister has concluded his answer.

WORKCOVER

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Will the Minister update the House on the length of current workers compensation claims?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I thank the honourable member for her question. As I have indicated on several occasions, the WorkCover scheme deficit has increased by almost a billion dollars in the six months to June 2011. The scheme deficit is a real problem that requires real solutions. One of the key challenges for the scheme is the long tail of claims stretching over a number of years and the fact that the scheme has a poor record of getting long-term workers compensation claimants back to work. WorkCover has given me some statistics. It is estimated that in excess of 2,600,000 claims have been incurred over the life of the scheme. There are currently more than 36,000 claimants in receipt of weekly payments in the scheme. A total of \$796 million was spent by the scheme on weekly payments in the 2011 calendar year and a total of \$14,269 million—that is \$14 billion—was expended by the scheme on weekly payments between June 1987 and June 2011. That is in 2011 dollar values.

Prior to 2001, a larger proportion of claims accessed common law rather than weekly payments. Restrictions on common law access from late 2001 had the effect of increasing the proportion of claimants who accessed weekly payments. I understand that approximately 17 per cent of these weekly claims are for injuries incurred before 2002. The average duration of a claim in New South Wales now is around eight years, with a wide variation between claims. Return-to-work outcomes have deteriorated since 2008-09, with claimants remaining on weekly benefits for longer. I emphasise the point that, while the number of claims is decreasing, the cost of the claims is increasing steadily because injured workers are not getting back to work. The total cost of weekly payments has increased sharply since 2006-07 and weekly benefits account for around 40 per cent of the scheme's gross cost. Weekly benefit recipients of course also access other scheme benefits, such as medical benefits, further inflating costs to the scheme over time.

The scheme's coverage for the most benefits is of course life long. The current scheme commenced in June 1987 and I am advised that the longest claims in the scheme are now 24 years old. As the scheme ages, so

will the oldest claims in the scheme. Of the claims that are currently receiving weekly benefits, 38 per cent have been receiving them for three years or more. I am advised that, once workers have reached this point, experience tells us it is highly unlikely that they will return to work and so the scheme ends up with a rump of claims from claimants who—

Mr David Shoebridge: You are going to cut workers off after three years?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Three years. Those claimants are not likely to leave the scheme. The Government has to think of new ways of incentivising claimants to return to work. We are looking at ways in which rehabilitation practices and return-to-work schemes can be improved. We want our scheme to aspire to best practices and, once again, I appeal to the Opposition to support the Government in its efforts to fix this mess. I again suggest that The Greens embrace a constructive role in the Government's efforts to build a sustainable workers compensation scheme. I want a scheme that better assists workers in returning to work and rebuilding their lives, and I hope the Opposition and The Greens share that vision. It is vital that action is taken to reform the scheme and bring it back in the black. That is why the Government considers the improved management of the scheme is a matter of the highest priority.

ROADS AND MARITIME SERVICES STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Given that today is International Women's Day, will the Minister inform the House what the current gender balance is in senior management positions within Roads and Maritime Services, and what he is doing as Minister to ensure improved opportunities for women to fill senior management positions within Roads and Maritime Services?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the member for that very important question. I do not have the exact details to hand but I will get them as soon as possible. Off the top of my head, I am aware that certainly at least three of the key deputy directors general that we have just appointed in Transport for NSW are women. They are in the highest echelon. Beyond that, my co-Minister, who is an absolute cracker of a Minister—and I know the Opposition and the Hon. Sophie Cotsis will concur—is the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian. I do not have the details here. But it is a valid question and I will seek the details required.

VEHICLE SAFETY COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATION SCHEME

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will the Minister update the House on recent reforms to ensure that modified vehicles do not pose a risk on our roads?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the member for his question. I wish the Hon. Amanda Fazio was here because I know she shares a joy of modified vehicles. The Vehicle Safety Compliance Certification Scheme, which started last December, provides an improved level of safety to the New South Wales public and a greater level of confidence that significantly modified and individually constructed vehicles do not pose a risk on the road. Under the scheme, the Roads and Maritime Service licenses third parties to inspect non-standard vehicles on behalf of the Government to ensure that they satisfy appropriate national and State vehicle standards. It is important to highlight that the Vehicle Safety Compliance Certification Scheme does not change existing vehicle standards; it simply improves the way that vehicle modifications are checked and certified. It replaces the Engineering Certification Scheme that started in the 1970s—an old paper-based scheme that was experiencing an increasing number of alarming problems. For instance, under the old scheme up to 30 per cent of vehicle examiners were either under-insured or not insured at all.

Under Labor, this issue was a ticking time bomb waiting to explode. I cannot stress enough how crucial it is for vehicle certifiers to hold the right categories and levels of insurance to cover claims arising from any negligent certification work. The new scheme also has tougher provisions to prevent the risk of compliance certificates being issued fraudulently. Indeed, under the old scheme a number of prosecutions for fraudulent activity have taken place.

In summary, the Vehicle Safety Compliance Certification Scheme ensures government service providers are appropriately qualified and experienced, act in accordance with the highest professional standards and hold appropriate insurance. Opening up the market to new certifiers also means that service fees will now be more open to competition. The old engineering scheme had 52 active examiners, while the new scheme already has 48 licensed certifiers and a dozen applications currently being considered. To date, more than 1,000 vehicle

certifications have been issued under the Vehicle Safety Compliance Certification Scheme since December. The new scheme is supported by the Australian Confederation of Motor Clubs, the Motor Traders Association, the NRMA, the Insurance Council of Australia, the Institute of Automotive Engineers and the Australian Automotive Aftermarket Association.

There were some teething problems with the scheme, and a number of concerns were expressed by the industry, not the least of which were represented by the member who asked the question, the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox. Roads and Maritime Services had done a terrific job in working with the automobile associations to overcome those concerns. Just two weekends ago I attended Eastern Creek and met with many of the more than 500 associated club members out there who are performance car enthusiasts. They are now a lot happier with the scheme.

It is understandable that these people had concerns because they are not a problem in our society. They respect their vehicles and collect historic cars and do modifications to their vehicles, and it is indicative of their standing that Shannons Insurance charges a fraction of normal comprehensive insurance premiums to insure their vehicles. If these people were out there doing the wrong thing, that would not be the case. I was pleased to indicate to the enthusiasts that I knew every make of Holden from the 48 series 215 through to HD and HK and the XR and XT Falcons. A good day was had with some terrific people and families. [*Time expired.*]

CYCLISTS AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Recent media reports show a growing number of cyclists on the road—although I note that the Hon. Charlie Lynn said there were no cyclists on the road today—

The Hon. Charlie Lynn: No push cyclists.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: A growing number of cyclists on the road are disregarding basic road rules, such as stopping at red lights. Since this behaviour can pose a hazard to pedestrians and other road users, I ask the Minister what provisions are currently in place to identify cyclists who break the law. Has the Minister considered the use of identification plates on bicycles or some other method to assist in the identification of these lawbreakers?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the member for his good question, which raises an issue that perplexes a lot of people. I am sure a number of members of this Chamber have seen courier cyclists or a small but growing number of people who cycle every day and do the wrong thing. Mr Scruby from the Pedestrian Council would be able to tell us what a threat these cyclists are to pedestrians. Even Clover Moore has pondered in her letters to me how we can overcome this problem. Many cycling clubs say we should not register cyclists and that they do not need to be licensed, yet a small but growing number indicate there is a need to take responsibility and somehow weed out the small minority of people who are doing the wrong thing. The Government does not have a simple solution to the problem. We have been looking carefully at this matter. A lot of work has been done, particularly by the Roads and Maritime Services safety section, to come up with ways to address this issue. There is no simple single answer to this problem.

Mr David Shoebridge: Have you addressed the premise of whether there is an increase in unlawful incidents?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The safety section of Roads and Maritime Services is looking at matters such as that. One needs to be sure there is an increase in the incidence, et cetera. Anecdotally, given that there is an increase in the number of cyclists, anyone will tell you that, whilst the percentage might not have increased, the increase in the number of people cycling suggests there has been an increase in the number of cyclists doing the wrong thing. But I do not want to overstate it; it is a very small minority. It is like talking about truck drivers and trucking companies and speeding. Some people are doing the wrong thing, but it is a very small minority. Similarly, it is a very small minority of people who modify their vehicles and do the wrong thing. People who modify their vehicles enjoy and respect their vehicles and it is very much a family activity.

PUBLIC SECTOR MATERNITY LEAVE

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Will the Minister guarantee that full-time public servants who return from maternity leave will be guaranteed a job if their former position no longer exists?

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: It is International Women's Day. Be careful.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: It is International Women's Day, and I join other members of the Government in suggesting to women and all members of the community that they should participate in the associated activities. This is a very important day. Matters such as that raised in the question are covered by individual awards and by the Government's wages policy.

SYDNEY WATER PRICES

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. What is the Minister doing to limit future increases in water bills for Sydney's water consumers?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I thank the member for the question. I assure the House that this Government is very concerned about the effect of rising utility prices on New South Wales households. Rising water, gas and electricity prices mean families and those on fixed incomes struggle to meet their household bills. To respond, we are already taking a number of steps to put downward pressure on the cost of living. This is a key goal of NSW 2021, our plan to make New South Wales number one again. Finding ways to contain increases in the price of water in Sydney is an important part of this. Last November a Government submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal set out a series of measures to mitigate future increases in Sydney Water's prices. It also set out measures that might encourage innovation by Sydney Water and the Sydney Catchment Authority.

The PRESIDENT: Order! While members have strong views on this subject, they will listen to the Minister's views. I am finding it exceedingly difficult to hear the Minister's answer.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Mr David Shoebridge's gushing forth is very interesting. I have now taken steps to encourage innovative cost savings at the Sydney Desalination Plant, with the benefits to be shared across Sydney Water's customers in Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Illawarra. This will be achieved through an efficiency-sharing mechanism being developed by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal to apply to the company that leases the plant. The mechanism will allow the Sydney Desalination Plant to retain the benefit of any savings for four years after commencement. After that, the savings benefit will be redistributed to customers, including Sydney Water, through lower prices for desalinated water. This creates an incentive for the plant to make efficiency savings at any time in a price determination period.

Under the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's current approach, savings are not retained when prices are reset at the beginning of the next determination. As a result, there is a strong incentive to achieve savings only in the first year of a determination, and retain the benefit for the rest of that determination. The incentive to make savings then decreases until the end of the determination. The new efficiency-sharing mechanism removes this disincentive. Last week I issued revised terms of reference allowing the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal to implement this mechanism for the Sydney Desalination Plant. If it proves successful it could be implemented for other Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal determinations.

The revised terms of reference will also enable the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal to pass through to customers certain benefits or costs associated with the Sydney Desalination Plant's existing energy contracts. This mechanism will apply when the desalination plant is not required to operate and will potentially allow significant cost savings to be passed through to customers. This is appropriate to ensure that the cost of providing desalinated water is borne by those who receive the associated water security benefits. Sydney Desalination Plant's contracts for electricity and renewable energy certificates include minimum volume commitments. This ensures that the Sydney Desalination Plant has enough electricity to operate when required and that it continues to meet planning approval requirements to be 100 per cent powered by renewable energy. When not operating, the Sydney Desalination Plant can sell the surplus certificates.

Independent forecasts suggest that market electricity prices will rise significantly in the future, while Sydney Desalination Plant's electricity contract has fixed real prices. In the circumstances it is appropriate that Sydney Desalination Plant's customers benefit from the gain on the sale of surplus electricity. The revised terms of reference will allow for gains to be passed through to consumers in the form of lower water prices. Similarly, any significant losses would be passed through. This mechanism means that the gains and losses from the electricity contract negotiated for the desalination plant belong to the plant's customers, not the company that leases the plant.

ASBESTOS VICTIMS COMPENSATION

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. When will the Government move to adopt the recommendations of the 2011 Law Reform Commission report on asbestos damages and get rid of the offensive Strikwerda principle that sees widows and dependants of deceased asbestos victims have the damages payable to them by companies such as James Hardie unfairly reduced?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: This matter is currently under discussion. I will take the question on notice and provide the member with an answer.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT NSW STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Deputy Premier and Minister for Trade and Investment. Has Trade and Investment NSW announced that it will be retrenching staff from offices in Tweed, Coffs Harbour, Broken Hill and Goulburn? How does the Government justify that in light of its pre-election promise to create jobs in regional New South Wales as part of its so-called decade of decentralisation?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I am certainly unaware of that statement. As the member would know, I am a passionate supporter of jobs in regional New South Wales and I will seek to get a full and detailed answer to his question. I will also establish the validity of his question with the Deputy Premier.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I ask a supplementary question. In light of the Minister's answer, will he inform the House what consultation took place with him regarding the announcement?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The Hon. Peter Primrose is usually an erudite and astute man. He must not have heard my statement that I was unaware.

STRATEGIC REGIONAL LAND USE PLAN

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for Planning. This morning the Minister for Planning said on ABC radio that the Government had included a provision in the strategic regional land use plan for Cabinet sign-off on exceptional coal and gas resources because "we could be at war".

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox to order for the first time.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: Is this Government secretly planning to declare war on the Australian Capital Territory or the New South Wales Farmers Association, or will it simply continue its war on its own credibility?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: That question is as stupid as today's press release from Luke Foley.

CROSS CITY TUNNEL

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Which law firm provided the Minister with advice on whether the owners of the Cross City Tunnel are liable for stamp duty totalling approximately \$60 million?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I have not had advice as Minister on the liability of that particular company in relation to that transaction and nor would I receive that advice, except in some sort of extraordinary circumstances, because the stamp duty system is managed and run by the commissioner. The commissioner has independent powers under the legislation to administer the tax system. I have been briefed that the commissioner has obtained expert valuation advice and expert legal advice in relation to those matters and that the commissioner has acted in accordance with his advice and experience, and in accordance with the law.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: I ask a supplementary question. The Minister advised that he has been briefed. Can he inform the House which law firm gave him advice?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: As I said, I have been briefed on the matter and the answer is that the commissioner has received expert valuation and legal advice. I do not know which law firm it was.

The Hon. Luke Foley: It was Freehills.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: If it was Freehills, it would have been very good advice.

ELECTRONIC MOTORWAY USER PASS

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will the Minister update the House on a new initiative to make using Sydney's toll roads easier for regional, interstate and international visitors?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: What a great question on a day when the Hon. Luke Foley issued a press release that talked about "ming-boggling stupidity from a senior O'Farrell Government Minister". I do not know where the Leader of the Opposition has been. Maybe he has been in southern China and he is talking about some sort of dynasty. I suspect he might have meant "mind", but he obviously does not check his press releases, just like he does not check the statements he makes in the House.

In late December I announced a new initiative—a new system to make using Sydney's orbital motorway network easier with the introduction of the eMU Pass. The electronic motorway user, or eMU, pass has been rolled out across hundreds of petrol stations and convenience stores along highways and major routes to help make travelling through Sydney's tollways as simple as possible. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government has listened to what motorists want and has provided a more convenient way to pay tolls on Sydney's motorways. People can pick up a pass at service stations on the way into New South Wales and set up an account to cover their travel on toll roads for up to 30 days.

The eMU pass will be valid for a month, so it is ideal for anyone coming to Sydney for business or for a holiday who needs to travel on any of the eight toll roads. It is simple to set up and it can even be activated up to 48 hours after travelling on a toll road. The eMU pass is available for just \$5.95. Once people have their eMU pass they call 13 18 65 to activate the card. Major participating service stations that currently stock the eMU pass include BP, Caltex, Shell, United and Mobil. A full list of outlets can be found on the Roads and Maritime Services website. It is great news for tourists to Sydney as it will remove any problems travelling across the city's toll roads.

Since the launch almost 3,750 passes have been sold. The top 10 sellers are located at Boambee, Normanhurst, Eastern Creek, Mount Victoria, Marulan, Heathcote, Gosford West, Taree South, Yass and Wyong. Roads and Maritime Services is looking at expanding the service to more people around New South Wales in the lead-up to the Easter school holidays. A few months ago I stopped at the Marulan service station. When I went inside to pay for my fuel the man behind the counter said, "Dunc, it's good to see you in here. I wanted to talk to you."

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Did he know who you were?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: They do know who I am, because it is near my home. He told me that his service station needed something such as this pass for the tourists going to Sydney. Marulan is one the first places they come to as they head north from Victoria. They may either arrive after hours and cannot go to a post office, or they may think of it on the spot as they are filling up with petrol. I took the man's suggestion back to the terrific staff at Roads and Maritime Services. They developed the eMU pass in a matter of weeks. In about six weeks we had addressed this issue for tourists and regional people. For 16 years the people of this State were reeling because Labor did not address this issue. The eMU pass is wholly good news. I went back to Marulan to see whether the service station manager was pleased. He said at that stage his boss had not got them in, but I notice they now have them. That is good news and I say well done to the man who manages the Marulan service station.

The time for questions has expired. If there are any more questions I suggest members place them on notice.

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

The House continued to sit.

ABORIGINAL GRAVES DESECRATION

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Earlier during questions without notice I was asked an important question by the Hon. Walt Secord about Aboriginal graves in the Tweed area that had been vandalised by racists. I am able to indicate that the Government has only preliminary reports at this stage but they are quite shocking, as the member indicated. I am advised that the graves of Aboriginal Australians at Fingal Head were desecrated on the morning of Tuesday 6 March. To make matters worse, the hateful vandalism involved white supremacist and Nazi messages and symbols.

The Hon. Mick Veitch: It is absolutely disgraceful.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: As I indicated earlier, I am sure everyone in this House feels as sick as I do about this. As the Hon. Mick Veitch indicated, it is absolutely disgrace. I frankly did not believe that something such as this could happen in our State in 2012. This conduct is even more inconceivable because it comes so soon after the desecration of tombstones of fallen Australian and other soldiers from World War II by Libyan extremists.

Police inspector Gary Cowan from the Tweed Byron Local Area Command said, "We are throwing all available resources at it to try and get the result we need." We wish Inspector Cowan and his investigating officers every success in the hunt for the offender or offenders. I am also informed that under the sentencing principles set out in the legislation it is an aggravating factor if an offence is motivated by hatred for or prejudice against a group of people to which the offender believed the victim belonged. Although the immediate victims of this discretion are deceased, I trust the court will be sensible enough to see that the families of those Aboriginal people whose graves were attacked are also victims in this case. Indigenous people across the State are no doubt profoundly dismayed by this event and the Premier has asked me to assure them that we share their hurt and outrage.

Questions without notice concluded.

ADJOURNMENT

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY (Minister for Roads and Ports) [3.34 p.m.]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

TOXIC CHEMICALS REGULATION

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN [3.34 p.m.]: I focus on what should be a basic human right—to live in a pollution-free environment—as well as the urgent need for adequate information to protect our right to life, health and clean water. The protection of the environment is a vital part of contemporary human rights doctrine. The International Court of Justice has found that damage to the environment undermines all human rights in the universal declaration and other human rights instruments. Every day we are exposed to toxic chemicals through pesticide spray drift, air pollution and emissions from products, including children's toys, contaminated soil, drinking water and food.

Persistent organic pollutants [POPs] are chemicals that remain intact in the environment for long periods, become widely distributed geographically, bioaccumulate in the fatty tissue of humans and wildlife, and have adverse effects on human health or on the environment. Persistent organic pollutants are generally created by humans in industrial processes for common products such as pesticides, solvents and pharmaceuticals. According to a World Health Organization paper on food safety released in November 2011, human exposure to some compounds and scenarios, even to low levels of persistent organic pollutants can lead to, among other things, increased cancer risk, reproductive disorders, alteration of the immune system, neuro-behavioural impairment, endocrine disruption, genotoxicity and increased birth defects.

Some persistent organic pollutants are considered to be endocrine disrupting chemicals. Endocrine disrupting chemicals disrupt the network of glands and organs in the human body that secrete hormones that regulate growth, metabolism, reproduction and physiological functions. Endocrine disrupting chemicals can mimic or block a hormone, which is of particular concern for unborn babies as their development depends on the availability of certain hormones at certain times. Endocrine disrupting chemicals have been linked to health problems ranging from acute childhood leukaemia and other cancers to neuro-behavioural effects, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder [ADHD], as well as effects on the reproductive and immune systems.

The World Health Organization has stated that approximately three million children under the age of five die every year due to environmental hazards. This is not limited to developing countries. Children in both the developing and the developed worlds are affected by exposure to hazardous chemicals. In 2004 the European Union's Ministerial Conference on Children's Environmental Health concluded that reducing exposure to hazardous chemicals could save the lives of many children. In July 2010 the National Toxics Network and the World Wildlife Fund Australia released a list of Australia's most dangerous pesticides, more than 80 of which are prohibited overseas because of the risks they pose to human health and the environment. The National Toxics Network states on its website:

The list includes 17 chemicals that are known, likely or probable carcinogens, and 48 chemicals flagged as having the potential to interfere with hormones. More than 20 have been classified as either extremely or highly hazardous by the World Health Organisation yet remain available for use on Australian farms.

This appalling situation is evidence that Australia's regulatory system for chemicals is failing to keep us safe from dangerous exposure. European pesticides regulation is founded on the precautionary principle designed to protect human health and the environment before profits. As a result, many dangerous chemicals have been removed from the market. Through reforms in farming and food processing European governments are supporting programs for farmers to switch to biological approaches to farming instead of relying on pesticides. The European Union is widely recognised as the world leader in chemical regulation, employing a systematic approach to reappraising chemicals to ensure public health. Consumers are encouraged to make educated choices via European Union policy marks—labels indicating geographic origin, use of traditional methods or ingredients and organic inputs.

Australia's approach to chemical regulation is very different to Europe's approach and involves a multitude of authorities at various levels of government. The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority is responsible for regulating pesticides. On its website, the authority assures consumers that new products are subject to a rigorous scientific assessment process before they are registered. Older registered chemicals undergo a review, but only if new information suggests there is a risk. The review process can drag on for years, and there are several potentially highly toxic chemicals that have been under review for 10 years or more.

Australia is lagging far behind the precautionary principle many other countries use to safeguard public health. Here, use of a pesticide is permitted unless there is conclusive scientific evidence that its approved use is hazardous to human health and it persists as an environmental pollutant. The highly toxic insecticidal ingredient endosulfan, for example, continued to be used on a wide range of citrus fruit, vegetables and cereals in Australia, despite having been banned in more than 60 countries, including New Zealand, the European Union and several Asian and West African nations. It was finally and belatedly banned by our Federal pesticides regulator in October 2010 and distribution companies have been given two years to run down their supplies.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority must surely recognise that while Australia may have unique wildlife and different farming conditions, the toxicology of these dangerous pesticides is the same. If smoking causes cancer in the United States, it will also cause cancer in Australia. It is the carcinogens that matter; not the country. If a pesticide is too dangerous to use in Europe, it is too dangerous to use in Australia. It is up to governments to ensure that the chemicals used on our crops and in our homes are safe and that the community knows the potential impacts of exposure. The Greens call on both State and Federal governments to ensure our regulatory regime keeps chemicals deemed too dangerous away from our food and away from us.

PAEDIATRIC AND MATERNITY SUPPORT

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL [3.39 p.m.]: I inform the House of the fantastic work done over the past five years by the Gunnedah-based organisation known as PaediatRic and Maternity Support, or PRAMS. Formation of the group occurred about five years ago as a result of a simple idea from its founding secretary, Amber Donoghue, who I am proud to say is my sister. When Amber was in the Gunnedah hospital awaiting the birth of her son, Oscar, the thought occurred to her that the local maternity ward could be improved with a little time, a lot of energy and some good ideas. The plan was simple: get some other mums on board and see what could be done. Amber called on a few of her friends, who were also young mums who had recently had babies in Gunnedah hospital, and together they formed PaediatRic and Maternity Support to improve our local facilities.

The girls got busy fundraising. Since its formation PaediatRic and Maternity Support has held a range of community events including movie premieres, musical events and the Clear the Shed Sale. The girls have

catered for local bull sales, run the cheesecake stand at Gunnedah's Porchetta Day, and last year had their first annual charity golf day, of which I was proud to be one of the sponsors, along with my colleague from the other place the member for Tamworth, Kevin Anderson. The committee also looked to the wider Gunnedah community for assistance and formed an army of more than 100 helpers, including me, that is known as the Friends of Paediatric and Maternity Support. Together we work with the committee to help PaediatRic and Maternity Support achieve its goals.

PaediatRic and Maternity Support also received substantial funding from the Shenhua Watermark Community Fund and a lot of support from many local businesses in Gunnedah by way of either donated equipment, monetary donations or in-kind support. The PaediatRic and Maternity Support committee is incredibly grateful to all individuals and businesses that helped the cause. I am delighted to report that through the committee's fundraising efforts, donations and other initiatives the PaediatRic and Maternity Support committee has now raised in excess of \$400,000 for our local hospital in Gunnedah, which is an extraordinary achievement. And the funds have been spent very wisely indeed.

The first significant investment from the fund was the arrival of the new state-of-the-art labour bed and foetal monitor to replace ageing equipment. This has been an amazing change for both the midwives and patients and helps to ensure the comfort and safety of both the mother and infant during pregnancy and delivery. There also has been a complete overhaul of the maternity ward at the hospital. I encourage all members of this House to visit Gunnedah and have a look through. The ward has been newly painted, and essential items such as clocks, bed screens, the baby nursery bench and sinks have been installed. The bathrooms have all been improved. Each patient now has his or her individual television. The waiting room is now a comfortable lounge with couches, a flat screen television, and a large fridge to chill the bottles of champagne that are often part of the celebration of a new baby.

The ward also received a touch of greenery with some new plants, and there is also magnificent wall art with inspiring quotes about parenthood, and beautiful pictures of the babies of the PaediatRic and Maternity Support girls now adorn the walls. The overhaul has created a lovely atmosphere for both parents and their children, and has been equally welcomed by new mums and dads and the medical professionals in Gunnedah. The work of PaediatRic and Maternity Support has not stopped with the interior of the maternity ward; a new outdoor playground was also installed. I was present for some of this installation. I have to say that some of the husbands, fathers and helpers had a few moments of utter confusion when reading the instructions as they tried to put the outdoor playground together. And there still may be a crooked pole or two but, in the end, it all looks amazing and it is enjoyed by the children.

With so much achieved it would be easy for the girls to finish their work and be justly proud of their accomplishments. But they are now working with the Gunnedah District Hospital Auxiliary on further improvements to the general wards. I am sure they will not stop until Gunnedah has the best hospital in this State. I believe that the PaediatRic and Maternity Support story is wonderful example of how a group of women with a community focus can bring out the very best in a town's spirit. I acknowledge the current PaediatRic and Maternity Support committee—Amber Donoghue, who, as I mentioned, is my sister and who is now the chair, and other members Rebecca Heath, Olivia Brown, Heidi Mainey, Lauren Robertson, Alysha White, my mother, Marg Johnston, and my aunty, Pam Duff. They have all worked so hard and they have achieved amazing things for our town.

I also acknowledge the nurse unit manager of the maternity ward, Katrina O'Brien, who is a passionate advocate for our local hospital, a credit to the nursing profession, and a supporter of PaediatRic and Maternity Support from day one. PaediatRic and Maternity Support has made it possible for mothers in Gunnedah to enjoy the precious moment of welcoming a baby into the world in a beautiful space. I am so proud of all the work that it has done, the Gunnedah community is so proud of the work it has done, and I am equally proud to acknowledge its efforts in the House.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The Hon. JAN BARHAM [3.43 p.m.]: Today marks the 101st International Women's Day anniversary. I thank the Hon. Helen Westwood for initiating debate to mark the occasion this morning. Millions of women around the world will mark the day with a variety of events to celebrate the economic, political and social achievements that women have courageously accomplished over the decades. It also provides an opportunity to identify the work still required for equality and an improved way of life for women in society. This year's International Women's Day theme is "Supporting Women's Economic Empowerment", and all of us are being encouraged to support the improved economic position of women.

This morning at The Greens International Women's Day breakfast gathering, which I had the pleasure of co-hosting with my colleague the Hon. Cate Faehrmann, three inspiring women, Larissa Behrendt, Samah Hadid and Anna Rose, were guest speakers and they told their personal stories of activism. One of the issues raised was the work and financial imbalance that women experience: despite doing two-thirds of the world's work they receive just 10 per cent of the world's income. According to statistics from the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs there is still an inexcusable disparity between economic conditions for men and women in this nation.

In February 2010, for every dollar earned by a man working full time a women working full time would earn 82¢. Compared with similar Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] countries, Australia has the fifth-largest gender pay gap. The recent Fair Work Australia determination for the Australian Services Union was a historic step forward in addressing the gender pay gap. The union put forward its case to Fair Work Australia and argued that pay and conditions for employees in the Social and Community Services sector were grossly undervalued. Gender discrimination is a significant contributor to the situation, given that of the 150,000 workers in the sector 120,000 are women.

The decision of Fair Work Australia in favour of the union's case was an outcome that recognised the concerns of many in our society. As a result many of the key workers will now receive pay rises of between 19 and 41 per cent. Those workers are at the frontline of community work. They care for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people within our community. They work in challenging jobs that often are physically and emotionally demanding. Yet, instead of valuing and appreciating the work they do, we literally undervalue their work. I express my appreciation to those who work in this sector, who are the people we all entrust with caring for our loved ones and the most vulnerable in our society.

There are other areas of disadvantage and discrimination for women in our society that deserve greater attention. I was shocked to be made aware of the findings of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare national data collection report for 2010-11 that identified that more young women seek support for homelessness than any other group in society. In 2010-11 more than 10,000 females in New South Wales aged 15 to 24 years sought support from homelessness agencies. The national figure is 32,500. The plight of these young women is best summarised by Jannine Jackson, chief executive officer of the Sir David Martin Foundation, who said:

For many of these young women, homelessness is the start of descent into drug abuse, mental illness, prostitution and abusive relationships.

More often than not these girls are escaping domestic violence, abuse and family breakdowns. Many have never experienced a stable home life and have disengaged from education. With few resources and little support, they are an easy target to prey on.

Australia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008. The obligation of governments is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all people with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. But when Australia's progress was reviewed by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women it urged the Australian Government to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the situation of women with disability, and highlighted key issues as requiring urgent and immediate attention, including: women with disability are almost entirely absent from key leadership and decision-making positions; women with disability experience higher rates of violence than women without disability, particularly those living in institutions or supported accommodation; and women are still subject to non-therapeutic sterilisation without consent. It is apparent that there is a lot of work still to be done and plenty of challenges ahead relating to gender equity. On future commemorative occasions for International Women's Day, I look forward to discussing improved conditions for women.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD [3.48 p.m.]: On this, the 101st Anniversary of International Women's Day, I congratulate the Australian delegation to the Fifty-sixth Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women who are currently in New York. The theme for this year's session is the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges. The commission is the leading international body addressing gender inequality and this session comes at a time when, unlike our New South Wales Government, the Australian Government has moved in a progressive direction by introducing legislation to improve gender equality in the workplace and by approving the Australian Services Union [ASU] pay equity case increases. The United Nations event gives Australia the

opportunity to highlight our successes on the global stage and to promote equality between women and men as well as to consider what more needs to be done to create a more equal society—and none more so than in New South Wales where the status of women has now shifted into reverse gear.

In New York Ms Penny Williams, Australia's Global Ambassador for Women and Girls, delivered Australia's address to the commission titled, "The Empowerment of Rural Women and their Role in Poverty and Hunger Eradication, Development and Current Challenges." The address covered the important role women fulfil in sustainable development and food security, education and training, leadership and decision-making, and violence against women. This last subject is of significance to me. Women in rural and remote areas certainly have a multitude of disadvantages, including the added burden of isolation. They do not have the same access to safe houses, health care and judicial processes, and too often in rural domestic violence situations there is nowhere for women and their children to take refuge and no transport to get them there. The delegation will have the opportunity to hear how other countries are empowering their women to overcome poverty and eradicate hunger. We could possibly learn from their experiences.

Our Australian delegation is headed by the Office for Women and includes Ms Penny Williams, Global Ambassador for Women and Girls, and Ms Elizabeth Broderick, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner. The delegation also includes three representatives from the community sector sponsored by the Australian Government. They are Ms Kaylene Rawlings Hunter, a trainee lawyer and acting President of Tarwirri, the Indigenous Law Students and Lawyers Association of Victoria; Ms Rosemary Norman-Hill, Director of Kirrawee Indigenous Corporation; and Ms Darriea Turley, President of the Australian Local Government Women's Association [ALGWA] and President of the National Rural Women's Coalition and Network. These outstanding women bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience in issues affecting rural women and are wonderful ambassadors for our country.

I have known Darriea Turley for a number of years. She is a ferocious advocate for her remote community of Broken Hill and for women in local government. She is passionate about advancing women at all levels of public life and in promoting women's participation. As President of the Australian Local Government Women's Association, Darriea was instrumental in securing funding for the 50:50 Vision—Councils for Gender Equity Program and chairs the national steering committee. In 2009 Darriea was appointed vice chair for the Year of Women in Local Government 2010. As President of the National Rural Women's Coalition she was invited to be on the steering committee for the National Rural Women's Summit. She was a previous member of the now defunct Premier's Expert Advisory Council for Women. Currently Darriea is on the New South Wales State Executive of the Local Government Association and just yesterday was awarded a Minister's award for local government in the rural category.

Also in New York, Australia will host and co-host three side events in the first week of the Commission of the Status of Women. The events include impact of domestic violence against rural women, pathways from education to work for rural women, and rural women with disabilities. These events will be run in cooperation with the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the non-government organisation Women with Disabilities Australia. I congratulate these fabulous women on this International Women's Day 2012 and look forward to their return to Australia to hear about their experiences. The New South Wales Parliament certainly should be proud of their great achievements, particularly those of councillor Darriea Turley from Broken Hill Council. She is a great advocate for rural women and a great ambassador for New South Wales.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED WHEAT

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM [3.52 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the current situation regarding genetically modified [GM] wheat in Australia and Canada. I question Australia and New South Wales being interested in going down the risky path of commercialising genetically modified wheat. It is reasonable to suggest that an air of secrecy surrounds plans to commercialise genetically modified wheat. Australian media coverage is not comprehensive on the issue. The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation [CSIRO] certainly wants to take advantage of this concerning situation. Last year the organisation provoked an outcry among international scientists when it announced for the first time plans for human health trials of genetically modified wheat. Wisely, warnings came from around the world urging Australia not to rush into any human trials, because of the lack of long-term animal studies to assess genetically modified wheat as safe and not of significant risk to human health.

However, the human health trials remain as an extension of the organisation's current study of feeding genetically modified wheat grown in the Australian Capital Territory to rats and pigs. The Office of the Gene

Technology Regulator granted licences for genetically modified wheat trials in South Australia, Western Australia and Narrabri in New South Wales. Obviously, this is happening to the great delight of international biotech companies such as Monsanto. Thanks to a partnership with our Government, Monsanto sees its dream coming true to commercialise genetically modified wheat in Australia by 2015. The Greens remain completely opposed to the commercialisation of genetically modified food crops after the segregation disaster in Western Australia. We wait to see what will eventuate in the canola-growing regions of New South Wales, such as the Lachlan Valley. The Greens ask: Why is the Government so receptive to Monsanto's will when we know that other countries have rejected on reasonable grounds the commercialisation of genetically modified wheat?

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Because we're opposed to starvation.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: They are not starving in Canada. In 2004 the Canadian Federal Government announced that it was abandoning its partnership with Monsanto and no longer would fund the development of genetically modified wheat seed. This decision was justified with a multitude of reasons that remain strongly relevant today, including the loss of trust by the Canadian population in its Government after the partnership became public. People rightly asked how the Government could handle the intrinsic conflict of interest that arose after regulating a product it had helped to develop. Farmers' and consumers' concerns have been increasing for years, considering the contamination, health and environmental risks that genetically engineered crops raise. There is also the substantial issue of herbicide resistance that is emerging in crops with a double rotation of genetically modified wheat or genetically modified canola. It would be a disaster for our farmers if they could not use one of the less toxic herbicides in their armoury, that is, glyphosate.

The concerns of the Canadian wheat growers association were confirmed, as well as those of the Canadian Wheat Board, which already suspected consumer backlash. On a broader scale, the Canadian Wheat Board still fears a loss of international markets and of Canada's reputation as a provider of high-quality wheat if genetically modified wheat is authorised. This is why Canada continues to resist the commercialisation of genetically modified wheat. This comparison is important because Canada, like Australia, is amongst the world's top wheat exporters. Canada is one of Australia's most aggressive international competitors. Since many of our key export markets in Asia and Europe are highly reluctant to accept genetically engineered wheat, Australia therefore is clearly leaving its markets open for competition from genetically engineered free competitors if it goes down the genetically engineered path.

A delegation of Canadian farmers confirmed to me last week that they would love Australia to go down the genetically engineered path because then all the non-genetically engineered markets would be left open to Canada. Australia should reject genetically modified wheat. We should not be conducting any trials, and certainly not human health trials, of genetically modified wheat in Australia.

TEXTSTYLE EXHIBITION

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES [3.57 p.m.]: I will speak on the 2011 Texstyle Exhibition. Last week I attended the awards held at the Muse at the Technical and Further Education New South Wales Sydney institute. It was an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of so many talented young individuals. The class of 2011 certainly lived up to the theme of the Texstyle Exhibition to inspire, innovate and create. Thirty-four outstanding works have been shown from last year's Higher School Certificate textiles and design students. For their exams students must complete a major textile project and make an item of apparel, piece of furniture, a costume, create textile art or other item that is not apparel. They are judged on the design inspiration, design development, manufacturing specifications and experimentation with materials and manufacturing equipment. The students involved in the exhibition used their innovative talent to create so many special pieces of an extraordinary scale using vibrant colours, themes and images from Shakespeare, the Roaring Twenties, the environment and indigenous cultures.

The Texstyle Exhibition brings creative minds together and offers a rare opportunity to profile young Australian talent. Through their work and amazing talent they are helping to shape the changing attitudes of Australians towards fashion and culture. Since 2005 there has been an increase by 35 per cent in enrolment in textiles and design and it remains one of the fastest growing subjects. As it is International Women's Day I think it is worth mentioning that 98 per cent of textile and design students are still girls and it is obviously seen as a traditional career for women. During 2012 the Texstyle Exhibition can be viewed at a number of locations in Sydney and regional locations. Smaller exhibitions will be displayed this month at the Powerhouse Museum as well as the craft and sewing show at Rosehill racecourse. In addition, it will be displayed at the craft and quilt fair in Sydney in June and Canberra and Newcastle in August 2012.

For the first time textiles will also be collaborating with Design Tech at an inaugural show at the Albury regional gallery in May. These regional tours, which have gone to several towns in the Riverina and northern New South Wales, provide an opportunity to showcase designs by local students and it is an opportunity for the community to appreciate the outstanding quality of work produced in our schools across New South Wales. Design Tech is an exhibition featuring a selection of 21 outstanding major design projects from the 2010 Higher School Certificate design and technology students. The works represent an extensive variety of designs from fashion and graphics to product systems and packaging designs.

In addition to Textstyle the New South Wales Government supports a number of Higher School Certificate exhibitions including Artexpress, which is an exhibition of outstanding and diverse artworks created by the students in the area of visual arts. The works represent a broad range of subject matter, approaches, styles and media, including painting, photo media, drawing, print making, sculpture, graphic design, ceramics and time-based forms. In the area of music, ENCORE is a program of outstanding performances and composition by Higher School Certificate students and is held annually at the Sydney Opera House. These exhibitions and performances give us a rare opportunity to recognise and appreciate these young artists for their creative and technical expertise as much as for their commitment to excellence. I congratulate all the students involved. Innovation is not just about having a good idea; one must also have the skills and resources to turn those ideas into products and services that Australians and the world will want to buy. The visual arts, craft and design sector continues to make an important contribution not only to Australian society but also to our economy.

GLOBAL WARMING

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS [4.02 p.m.]: On this most sodden of days I remind this House of certain comments made by Tim Flannery on 10 June 2005. Members will clearly remember that this is the same Tim Flannery who is now the \$180,000 per year, three-day a week climate commissioner. In 2005 Mr Flannery stated that changes are, "Quite considerable and look to be permanent rainfall drops across most of southern and eastern Australia." He further stated:

... if you look at the Warragamba catchment figure, since 98, the water has been in virtual freefall and they've about two years of supply left.

Further he stated:

... these rainfall declines, and they do seem to be of a permanent nature. I don't think it's just a cycle. I'd love to be wrong, but I think the science is pointing in the other direction.

These are not Mr Flannery's ideas; he is talking about the science, the sly science of the global warming alarmists. The same people who said that we may get the odd good rainfall event but they will be much less frequent than in the past and will be in a different climatic regime. What does he say now? Only last week in the *Telegraph* he was trying to slide his way out of it. He said:

Over the past couple of years our dams have been filling up and are now overflowing.

Some people in the attack global warming climate alarmist community want us to forget these statements. We have not.

[*Time for debate expired.*]

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

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 4.04 p.m. until Tuesday 13 March 2012 at 2.30 p.m.
