

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday 29 March 2012

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

The President read the Prayers.

SING TAO DAILY

Motion by the Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) Mr Simon Ko, Chief Executive Officer of *Sing Tao Daily*, studied in the United States from 1969 and returned to Hong Kong in 1975,
 - (b) in 1975, Mr Ko commenced work at TVB television station in Hong Kong,
 - (c) Mr Ko later worked as Advertising Director for the Hong Kong MTR metro transport company,
 - (d) in 1980, Mr Ko commenced work with *Sing Tao Daily* Hong Kong branch as Executive Director, where he was in charge of seven non-media companies under Sing Tao newspaper group, including hotels, retails and film companies,
 - (e) in 1998, he migrated to Australia and was posted to work in *Sing Tao Daily* in Australia as manager, and later Chief Executive Officer,
 - (f) *Sing Tao Daily* is the largest Chinese language newspaper in Australia, with a history of 30 years of service since its establishment in 1982, and
 - (g) *Sing Tao Daily* and Mr Simon Ko himself have made great contributions to charity work by providing help to the local Australian communities and participating in overseas disaster relief activities through Red Cross.
2. That this House congratulates *Sing Tao Daily*, its owner, staff and Chief Executive Officer, Mr Simon Ko, on keeping the Australian Chinese community well informed on local, national and international affairs for the past 30 years.

TRIBUTE TO MR LES EDGAR

Motion by the Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) on Wednesday 7 March 2012, Mr Les Edgar received a Mayoral Certificate of Recognition for 27 years of loyal service and commitment to Rockdale City Council,
 - (b) during his employment with Rockdale City Council, Mr Edgar achieved many great things, with being a member of the project team that prepared the original concept plans and design for the Wolli Creek Redevelopment Area being amongst his proudest achievements,
 - (c) Mr Edgar prepared the Infrastructure and Section 94 Contribution Plans for the Wolli Creek area and the Bonar Street Precinct, and
 - (d) Mr Edgar played an integral role in closing 10 years' of negotiation between Council and the Discovery Point development to ensure the delivery of \$17 million worth of public infrastructure in Wolli Creek.
2. That this House notes Mr Edgar's wonderful contribution to the people of Rockdale and wishes him all the best in his retirement.

TRIBUTE TO MR DANIEL TONG

Motion by the Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) Mr Daniel Tong, Editor in Chief of the *Australian Chinese Daily*, obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism in Taiwan in 1982,

- (b) after his graduation, Mr Tong returned to Hong Kong where he was employed in various positions in media until 1988 when he became deputy news editor and editor of international finance,
 - (c) Mr Tong migrated to Australia in 1989 and enrolled at the University of New England, graduating with a Diploma in Financial Management,
 - (d) in 1990, Mr Tong joined *Sing Tao Daily* as a reporter and remained until 1996, when he left *Sing Tao* to join the *Australian Chinese Daily* as Deputy Chief Editor, and
 - (e) in August 2010, Mr Tong became Editor in Chief of the *Australian Chinese Daily* until today.
2. That this House congratulates Mr Daniel Tong on 30 years of journalism and for his contribution to Chinese Journalism in Australian.

TRIBUTE TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS KING GEORGE TUPOU V, KING OF TONGA

Motion by the Hon. MARIE FICARRA agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
- (a) on 18 March 2012, His Majesty King George Tupou V, the Head of the Kingdom of Tonga, passed away, and
 - (b) His Majesty will be remembered with admiration and appreciation, as it was through his guidance that Tonga achieved democratic reform in 2010.
2. That this House acknowledges:
- (a) that the flags at Parliament House were lowered to half-mast on Tuesday 27 March 2012 as a mark of mourning and respect following the death of His Majesty King George Tupou V, and
 - (b) the work of Tongans in New South Wales, who have contributed in so many ways to the State's rich multicultural life.

TRIBUTE TO HIS HOLINESS POPE SHENOUDA III

Motion by the Hon. DAVID CLARKE agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
- (a) on 17 March 2012, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church passed away,
 - (b) on 19 March 2012, members of the Coptic Orthodox Church, representatives of other churches and many community and civic leaders gathered in mourning at St Mary and St Mina's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral, Bexley, New South Wales, and
 - (c) His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, a charismatic and revered spiritual leader, will be remembered as a champion of religious tolerance and peace.
2. That this House extends its condolences to the many thousands of Coptic Christians in New South Wales on the death of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III.
3. That this House acknowledges:
- (a) those who attended the service, including:
 - (i) the Hon. Victor Dominello, MP, Minister for Citizenship and Communities and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
 - (ii) the Hon. Marie Ficarra, MLC, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier
 - (iii) the Hon. David Clarke, MLC, Parliamentary Secretary for Justice
 - (iv) the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, MLC
 - (v) the Hon. Amanda Fazio, MLC, Opposition Whip
 - (vi) Mr Mark Coure, MP, member for Oatley
 - (vii) Mr John Flowers, MP, member for Rockdale
 - (b) the Coptic Christian community in NSW for its many religious, cultural, educational and social outreach programmes which contribute so much to the life of our state.

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

Motion by the Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX agreed to:

That this House notes:

- (a) that as at 27 March 2012, 109,570 people have joined the "Every Australian Counts" campaign to support the urgent introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme in Australia,
- (b) that on Monday 30 April 2012, the "Every Australian Counts" campaign is hosting the biggest rally of people with disabilities this country has ever seen in six capital cities around Australia so that the National Disability Insurance Scheme becomes a reality as soon as practically possible, and
- (c) the strong bipartisan support for a National Disability Insurance Scheme in both the Parliament of New South Wales and the Commonwealth Parliament.

WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY

Motion by the Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX agreed to:

That this House notes that:

- (a) World Down Syndrome Day was celebrated on 21 March 2012,
- (b) this year marked the seventh anniversary of World Down Syndrome Day and, for the first time, in 2012 this day was officially observed by the United Nations,
- (c) World Down Syndrome Day takes place on 21 March every year because this date, 21/3, represents the three copies of chromosome 21, which is unique to people with Down syndrome,
- (d) the Patrons for World Down Syndrome Day included Damon Hill, OBE, 1996 Formula One World Champion; Muttiah Muralitharan, record breaking Sri Lankan cricketer; and Liam Neeson, OBE, Oscar nominated actor, and
- (e) this year's celebrations were unprecedented and on a truly global scale with activities and events showcasing the abilities, talents and accomplishments of people with Down Syndrome whilst also sharing the important message of inclusion and participation in society.

TRIBUTE TO MR DON FELTIS

Motion by the Hon. MARIE FICARRA agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:

- (a) Mr Don Feltis has dedicated his life to rugby league in the Penrith area for the last 42 years,
- (b) Mr Feltis played rugby league from 14 years of age at Penrith, St Marys and Richmond,
- (c) Mr Feltis has coached junior teams at Penrith, St Marys, Richmond and Emu Plains and also coached district representative teams through to 1980,
- (d) Mr Feltis has served in various positions in junior league, including being elected by his peers in 1983 as president, having also served as vice president, representative secretary of district representative teams, executive officer and treasurer of the Penrith Junior League and secretary of St Marys Rugby League,
- (e) Mr Feltis has also served on the New South Wales Rugby League Policy Committee and Strategic Planning Committee,
- (f) Mr Feltis has managed many teams of all ages and was rugby league manager of the Panthers Club in 1991 when Panthers First Grade won the Winfield Cup, and he managed the club's team to England in the World Cup Championships,
- (g) in 2002, Mr Feltis was elected to the board of Penrith Panthers and in 2009 was elected chairman, a role he has performed with distinction to the present day,
- (h) during the major period of his time in rugby league, Mr Feltis also served in the NSW Police Force and was stationed at Penrith, St Marys, Blacktown, Mt Druitt and Warragamba, during which time he gave considerable service to the community both in rugby league as well as the Police Force,
- (i) Mr Feltis is now a Life Member of the Police Association of NSW, having retired from the New South Wales Police Force at the rank of inspector in 1986, and

- (j) in recognition of Mr Feltis's outstanding service to the community over the last 42 years, he was conferred the Australian Sports Medal by then Prime Minister the Hon. John Howard, AC, in 2000, honoured on the Penrith City Wall of Achievement in 1999, bestowed Life Membership of the New South Wales Rugby League, New South Wales Junior Rugby League, Penrith Panthers Club and Penrith Junior League.
2. That this House acknowledges the outstanding work of Mr Don Feltis in the community over the last 42 years and commends him for his continuing extraordinary service to rugby league and western Sydney.

TRIBUTE TO MS PAT WOODLEY

Motion by the Hon. JOHN AJAKA agreed to:

1. That this House congratulates New South Wales Seniors Week Ambassador, Ms Pat Woodley, as an inspiration to seniors in New South Wales.
2. That this House notes that:
 - (a) Pat Woodley, recognised for her outstanding artistic abilities, is one of this year's 15 New South Wales Seniors Week Ambassadors,
 - (b) the Pat Woodley Exhibition was held on Wednesday 21 March 2012 at Parliament House as one of the 54th New South Wales Seniors week events held between 18 and 25 March 2012,
 - (c) Seniors Week is the largest festival for seniors in the Southern Hemisphere, and
 - (d) the New South Wales Seniors Week theme for 2012 is "Live Life", in the aim to promote positive ageing and encourage seniors to actively participate in the community.
3. That this House notes that:
 - (a) the Pat Woodley exhibition featured pencil drawings of media personalities, athletes and politicians,
 - (b) drawings included radio star Alan Jones, swimming champion James Magnussen, the Hon. John Howard and the Hon. Barry O'Farrell, MP, Premier of New South Wales,
 - (c) Pat Woodley studied art in Australia and abroad for the past 50 years, and exhibits her work throughout the State, and
 - (d) the Pat Woodley exhibition is one of more than 900 events being held during New South Wales Seniors Week.
4. That this House congratulates the significant achievements of Pat Woodley and her inspiration to senior citizens, as recognised by New South Wales Seniors Week.

GREEK NATIONAL DAY

Motion by the Hon. MARIE FICARRA agreed to:

1. That this House notes that on 25 March 2012, members of the Greek community of New South Wales celebrated Greek National Independence Day in Sydney.
2. That this House acknowledges:
 - (a) the work of Mr Jack Passaris, OAM, and the Greek community of New South Wales for bringing this event to fruition,
 - (b) those that attended, particularly:
 - (i) His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in Australia,
 - (ii) His Grace Bishop Seraphim of Apollonias, Assistant to the Archbishop,
 - (iii) Mr Ioannis Corantis, MP, and Mrs Evdokia Corantis, representing the Hellenic Parliament,
 - (iv) His Excellency Mr Alexios Christopoulos, Greek Ambassador,
 - (v) His Excellency Mr Yannis Iakovou, High Commissioner of Cyprus,
 - (vi) Mr Vassilios Tolios, Consul General of Greece,
 - (vii) the Hon. Anthony Albanese, MP, Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, representing the Prime Minister,

- (viii) the Hon. Philip Ruddock, MHR, Federal member for Berowra, representing the Federal Leader of the Opposition,
 - (ix) Senator the Hon. Kate Lundy, Federal Senator for the Australian Capital Territory,
 - (x) the Hon. Barry O'Farrell, MP, Premier of New South Wales,
 - (xi) the Hon. Victor Dominello, MP, Minister for Citizenship and Communities and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs,
 - (xii) the Hon. George Souris, MP, Minister for Tourism, Arts, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing,
 - (xiii) the Hon. Marie Ficarra, MLC, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier,
 - (xiv) the Hon. David Clarke, MLC, Parliamentary Secretary for Justice,
 - (xv) the Hon. John Robertson, MP, New South Wales Leader of the Opposition,
 - (xvi) the Hon. Carmel Tebbutt, MP,
 - (xvii) the Hon. Sophie Cotsis, MLC,
 - (xviii) the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, MLC, and
- (c) the work of the Greek community of New South Wales, including its efforts in promoting Greek culture and diplomacy between our two countries.

ORDER OF MALTA

Motion by the Hon. JOHN AJAKA agreed to:

1. That this House recognises the remarkable achievements and contributions of the Order of Malta to the poor and sick, regardless of race or religion.
2. That this House notes that:
 - (a) the Sovereign Order of Malta is an order of the Catholic Church delivering healthcare, emergency aid, training and support for those "in greatest need",
 - (b) the Order of Malta is active in over 120 countries, a Sovereign Entity in more than 100 countries, with 59 organisations, over 12,500 members, 80,000 permanent volunteers and 20,000 medical personnel worldwide, and
 - (c) the Order of Malta is constantly providing humanitarian support and emergency aid, exemplified by their efforts in Timor-Leste and Myanmar's Cyclone Nargis.
3. That this House notes that:
 - (a) in 2009, David C. Scarf presented his credentials to His Excellency President Jose Ramos-Horta, becoming the Order's first Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, and
 - (b) amongst the many significant contributions being made in Timor-Leste, the Order of Malta are:
 - (i) Supplying medicines, dressings, consumables and children's clothing to mission clinics across the country,
 - (ii) Funding the construction of a birthing clinic at Malabe,
 - (iii) Supporting a palliative care program run by the Carmelite Sisters in and around Dili,
 - (iv) Funding the education of 30 disabled children in association with ASSERT.
4. That this House notes that the Order of Malta's assistance to 2008 Cyclone Nargis victims in Myanmar included:
 - (a) first aid, medical treatment and safe drinking water were provided immediately following the disaster,
 - (b) the emergency arm, Malteser International, provided water treatment plants and emergency health stations in camps housing 12,000 people, and
 - (c) a total of 200 villages and more than 120,000 people received assistance during the three year program.
5. That this House acknowledges the Sovereign Order of Malta for their worldwide ongoing contributions and assistance to those most in need, without distinction of race or religion.

NSW SENIORS WEEK ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Motion by the Hon. MARIE FICARRA agreed to:

1. That this House acknowledges that:
 - (a) Sunday 18 March 2012 marked the beginning of Seniors Week in New South Wales, now in its 54th year of celebrating New South Wales seniors and acknowledging their important and ongoing contributions to our community,
 - (b) over 250,000 seniors attended more than 900 local events throughout our State, 30,000 of which attended the Premier's three gala concerts held at the Sydney Entertainment Centre,
 - (c) 59 seniors were also recognised in six different categories for their outstanding achievements by the Hon. Andrew Constance, MP, in his capacity as Minister for Ageing, and 10 of the 59 recipients were over 80 years of age,
 - (d) award categories included Business, Community Service, Lifelong Learning, Health and Wellbeing, Environment, Science and Agriculture, and Intergenerational Understanding,
 - (e) among the many recipients recognised was 70 year old former Wallaby player Mr John Dowse in the category of Health and Wellbeing,
 - (f) at age 70, Mr Dowse is the oldest qualified personal trainer in New South Wales and is dedicated to instructing the over 55's in safe and effective exercise,
 - (g) the theme of this year's Seniors Week is "Live Life", which reflects the aim of the campaign to encourage seniors to actively participate in the community, learn new skills and remain healthy and active in the community as they age, and
 - (h) 15 Ambassadors were selected who embody the philosophy of continuing to improve the lives of others by freely giving their time and talents for the betterment of our society and as role models for the over 60s community.
2. That this House acknowledges:
 - (a) the impressive accomplishments and contributions of all 59 award recipients, particularly Mr John Dowse,
 - (b) the Hon. Andrew Constance, MP, for his leadership and advocacy on behalf of seniors as Minister for Ageing, and
 - (c) Ageing, Disability and Home Care for their outstanding work in coordinating Seniors Week.

BOOKS BONUS PROJECT

Motion by the Hon. Hon. MARIE FICARRA agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) the Government recently launched the Books Bonus Project in an effort to boost literacy and encourage reading by expanding children's access to quality books,
 - (b) the Books Bonus Project is designed to help students grow their public library by raising funds and participating in the Premier's Reading Challenge, now the largest book club in Australia,
 - (c) Dymocks Children's Charities, an Australia-wide charity led by Ms Jacque Stratford that raises funds to help underprivileged children, is also a partner in this project, and is eager to put quality books in New South Wales schools and libraries, and
 - (d) according to estimates by Dymocks Children's Charities, if every student who participated in the Premier's Reading Challenge the previous year raised \$20, they would be able to put \$4 million worth of new books into New South Wales schools.
2. That this House acknowledges:
 - (a) the Honourable Barry O'Farrell MP, Premier of New South Wales, for his commitment to education and improving the literacy of the children in New South Wales, and
 - (b) Ms Jacque Stratford for her leadership as Managing Director of Dymocks Children's Charities and her dedication to providing a better future for disadvantaged children in Australia.

WORKCOVER PROSECUTIONS**Production of Documents: Dispute of Claim of Privilege**

The PRESIDENT: I report to the House that on 27 March 2012 the Clerk received from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition written correspondence disputing the validity of a claim of privilege on documents lodged with the Clerk on 14 March 2012 and 28 March 2012 relating to WorkCover prosecutions. The Clerk received from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition further written correspondence disputing the validity of a claim of privilege on two additional documents lodged with the Clerk on 28 March 2012. Pursuant to standing orders, a retired Supreme Court judge, Sir Lawrence Street, was appointed as an independent legal arbiter to evaluate and report as to the validity of the claim of privilege. The Clerk has released the disputed documents to Sir Lawrence Street for evaluation and report.

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

That this House at its rising today do adjourn until Monday 2 April 2012 at 2.30 p.m.

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

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that Private Members' Business item No. 588 outside the Order of Precedence, relating to His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, be called on forthwith.

Order of Business**Motion by the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane agreed to:**

That Private Members' Business item No. 588 outside the Order of Precedence be called on forthwith.

TRIBUTE TO HIS HOLINESS POPE SHENOUDA III

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE [9.46 a.m.]: I move:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) His Holiness Pope Shenouda III was born on 3 August 1923 in the city of Asuit in Upper Egypt and was given the name of Nazeer Gayed,
 - (b) His Holiness received his education from the University of Cairo and was very active in his church, for which he received significant recognition for his service to the Coptic people of Egypt and in the Diaspora,
 - (c) His Holiness enjoyed writing and was a remarkably literate man as evidenced by the many books he has written,
 - (d) on 18 July 1954, His Holiness was given the name of Father Antonious El-Syriani and for six years, from 1956 to 1962, he lived a life of solitude in a cave away from the monastery, dedicating all his time to meditation, prayer, and asceticism,
 - (e) in 1962, he was ordained by the late Pope Cyril VI as Bishop of Ecclesiastical Education and was named President of the Coptic Theological Seminary, where he was given the name of Bishop Shenouda on 30 September 1962,
 - (f) on 14 November 1971, His Holiness was enthroned as Pope Shenouda III, the 117th Pope of Alexandria, and successor of the See of Saint Mark, and
 - (g) His Holiness passed away on 17th of March 2012 aged 88, and
 - (h) Pope Shenouda will be remembered for his inter faith dialogue and for his commitment to peace and religious acceptance.
2. That this House notes Pope Shenouda's lifelong commitment to promoting mutual respect and peace during challenging and troubled times and offers its condolences to all Copts, other Christians and all people of faith in Australia and around the world for the loss of such a great man of peace.

I thank my colleagues for giving me the opportunity to move this condolence motion and to farewell His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. I note the absence today of Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, who is in his sick bed and could not be here; he wanted so much to make a contribution to this debate. I wish him a speedy recovery. I also note the support of my colleagues the Hon. David Clarke and the Hon. Paul Green, both of whom wanted to move a similar motion but agreed to mine proceeding. I thank them for that. I also thank the House for the opportunity to speak about the life and times of a truly historic figure. I thank you, Mr President, my Labor Party colleagues, and Government and crossbench members for allowing me to bid farewell to His Holiness and to express my condolences to the Coptic community of Australia and around the globe, as well as to people of faith worldwide, on the loss of a distinguished human being.

His Holiness distinguished himself in the fundamentally constructive role he played in the Arab and Islamic world, the orthodox churches of the East, and the Catholic church. For decades His Holiness has been fundamental to peace and harmony in Egypt and, in particular, to the wellbeing of all Copts around the globe. His death has broken the hearts of millions of people in Egypt and of millions more throughout the world. His demise will leave a vacuum that will be hard to fill as His Holiness was a true protector and a guiding force of the Copts of Egypt. He was their mediator and conciliator. He maintained harmony between Egyptian Copts and Egyptian Muslims. His Holiness was the shepherd and the leading light to all. He has been described as "a distinguished and prominent religious leader, a profound theologian, a gifted preacher, a talented author, a spiritual father, a man of God his entire life". His life was filled with achievements that assisted his ascendancy to papacy.

His Holiness was born Nazeer Gayed on August 3, 1923 and at the age of 16 he became active in the Sunday school movement of the Coptic Orthodox Church. His church and religious involvement deepened with the Coptic Orthodox Seminary, and while at the University of Cairo His Holiness joined the faculty of the seminary. In 1954 His Holiness chose the solitude of the Egyptian desert. He became a monk, and later a monk priest carrying the name Father Antonious El-Syrani. Living in complete solitude and in devotion to his creator, he became a hermit, living in a cave for six years. In 1962 he was consecrated bishop by the late Pope Cyril and so became Bishop Shenouda. On 14 November 1971 His Holiness was consecrated as His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, the 117th Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St Mark.

Under his guidance the Coptic Orthodox Church witnessed remarkable growth. He has achieved much throughout his life and I will refer to just some of his many achievements. His Holiness was a literate man; he authored more than 100 books on a variety of subjects, many of which were translated into a number of languages. He has ordained many metropolitans and bishops and hundreds of priests, monks and nuns. He established many monasteries, convents and churches in and outside of Egypt—in the Middle East, the United States, South America, Brazil, Bolivia, and many other parts of the world, including throughout Asia. My friend Father Augustinos, who is in the public gallery today, serves the Coptic Church in Japan.

With the growth of the Coptic churches around the world His Holiness was able to spread his message of peace and commence dialogue with Orthodox and Catholic churches, as well as with other religions of the world. The work of His Holiness in this regard led to an important commitment to Christian unity; unity of faith. In the name of unity His Holiness visited many Orthodox churches across the globe. In 1973 His Holiness was the first Coptic Orthodox pope to visit the Vatican in over 1,500 years. During this visit His Holiness Pope Shenouda III and His Holiness Pope Paul VI signed a common declaration establishing joint commissions for dialogue on unity.

His Holiness was also just as eager to promote interfaith dialogue and harmony between all religions, making a special effort to ensure some semblance of harmony and respect between Christianity and Islam. But His Holiness was a politically astute man as well and stood in solidarity with the people of Palestine. Today there is much uncertainty in Egypt and the demise of His Holiness leaves a vacuum in the hearts and minds of millions of Egyptians and such feelings are compounded by added fears about the future and the destiny of the country's Copts in a volatile post-25 January revolution and a rapidly changing Egypt. This is particularly so given the political ascendancy of hard-line political parties in Egypt and elsewhere in the world. Unfortunately such political hardliners have interpreted Islam in a way that does injustice to the religion of Islam and to all Muslims around the world who simply wanted to practice their faith in peace and respect.

His Holiness is highly respected and valued by many people around the world, particularly here in Australia. Pope Shenouda, who visited Sydney a number of times, was much-loved by his Australian Coptic community and he will be sorely missed for the leadership he provided. The Coptic community of New South

Wales, a well-established and well-respected sector of our multicultural society, has been guided well by the wisdom of its religious leader. I had the privilege of meeting His Holiness when he visited Rockdale, where I live. I found him to be a truly inspiring leader with a great passion for peace and humanity.

I am always impressed by the church and the ability of the church to be—if I may say so—a mini institution. It is the place of God; it is the school and the place of education; it is the social place; it is the community hall; it is the place for marriage; and it is the place for young and old to receive advice on all things spiritual, practical, financial and theological. His Holiness gave special attention to the youth of the church. His Holiness said many times—and I have heard it many times at every Coptic community event I have attended, whether at St Marks Coptic Church in Arncliffe or at St Mary and St Mina at Bexley:

A church without youth is a church without a future, and youth without the church are youth without a future.

I congratulate the church for following the words of His Holiness to the letter in looking after the youth of the Coptic community, who are now looking after their church. I am certain His Holiness would be proud, as I am sure he would be proud of the way his churches are run and the care his priests give to their parishioners. I wish to acknowledge the work of my friends at St Marks Coptic Church, in particular Father Jacob, Father Augustinos and Father Ishak. I take this opportunity to extend to Father Jacob my condolences on the first anniversary of the passing of his wife. The words spoken by his children at the memorial church service for his wife were most loving, reflecting the love of a dedicated mother and a loving father—Reverend Father Yacoub Magdy.

I acknowledge also the priests of St Mary and St Mina Cathedral at Bexley: the Very Reverend Father Samuel Guirgis, the Very Reverend Father Mikhail Mikhail, the Very Reverend Father Stephanos El Antony, Reverend Father Youssef Fanous, His Grace Bishop Daniel of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Sydney and affiliated regions, and the Very Reverend Father Tadros Simon, Vicar General of the Diocese of Sydney and affiliated regions. At this juncture I wish to state on the record how proud I was to stand up for the development of St Mina's Church at Bexley. I was most proud to stand in the face of sometimes abusive remarks from a small but vocal minority that vehemently opposed the relocation of this church from Marrickville to Bexley and the development application in relation to it that was subsequently lodged with Rockdale City Council.

I was proud too to take part in the ceremony to lay the foundation stone for the St Mary and St Mina Church, and continue to be proud of its expansion and the provision of the services so needed by the Coptic community. As I said earlier, the Coptic Church is not only a place of worship; it is also a school and a place for young and old to socialise. Today it is a beautiful cathedral, and for some years now I have sought to have it heritage listed as testimony to its presence and beauty. Under the leadership of His Holiness, the Coptic Orthodox Church has witnessed tremendous growth in Australia and New Zealand, where there are currently of the order of 28 churches. In 1999 the Coptic community witnessed the enthronement of his Grace Bishop Suriel, head of the Diocese of Melbourne and affiliated regions, and later the enthronement of His Grace Bishop Daniel, with whom I have established a great relationship. I state without hesitation that he is a true friend.

His Holiness passed away on 17 March 2012 after more than 40 years as the Pope and Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Under his guidance, the Coptic Church flourished and his legacy will live on. Before concluding, I would like to welcome members of the Australian Coptic community who are with us this morning in the public gallery. Those in attendance include members of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Sydney and Affiliated Regions; the Australian Coptic Association; Mr Michael Rochdi; Mr Medhat Attia; Reverend Father Bishoy El Antony from St Mary and St Mina Coptic Church, Bexley; Reverend Father Augustinos from St Marks Coptic Church, Arncliffe; Reverend Father Mikhail Mikhail from Bexley; Dr Mona Mikhail; Mr Yassar Ghattas; Mr Tadros Hanna; Mr John Marcos; and members of the Australian Coptic community. In conclusion, I note Pope Shenouda's lifelong commitment to promoting mutual respect and peace during challenging and troubled times. I offer my condolences to all Copts, all Christians, and all people of faith in Australia and around the world for the loss of such a great man of peace.

The PRESIDENT: I welcome to the public gallery members of the local Coptic community, including members of the clergy mentioned by the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane. I welcome them to the Legislative Council for the important occasion of remembering the life and contribution of Pope Shenouda III.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN [10.00 a.m.]: On behalf of the Christian Democratic Party I pay tribute to His Holiness Pope Shenouda III—a man of great perseverance, courage and faith, and the Patriarch of the

Coptic Orthodox Church. It is with great regret that the Christian Democratic Party notes the sad news of the passing of His Holiness. We are well aware of his tireless efforts for more than 60 years in religious life. He was the spiritual leader of his people for four decades.

His Holiness was an amazing example of Christian virtue under the flame of Christian persecution—something that is all too common in many parts of the world. He truly shared in the suffering and persecution of his people. Their suffering was his suffering. His Holiness took a stand for his persecuted brethren. He was a voice for the voiceless, and he encouraged others to remain strong in their faith and to trust in the Lord. Because he spoke up and defended those who had no voice, he was exiled by President Sadat in relation to arguments that the President was not doing enough to deal with growing Islamism in Egypt and growing attacks against Coptic Christians. He remained in exile and under house arrest for more than three years at the St Bishoy Monastery. President Mubarak eventually released His Holiness from his exile, but his and his people's persecution continued to be a growing concern in Egypt.

As members are no doubt aware, for centuries sporadic attacks and petty discrimination have been imposed on the Christian community in Egypt. However, over recent years, there has been a steady rise of increased attacks, suppression, religious intolerance and sectarian violence against the Coptic Christians. I particularly note recent reports of forced deportations, mob violence and targeted murders. Last year, 26 Coptic Christians in Egypt were killed for their faith. There were reports that Egyptian soldiers drove armoured vehicles over protesters and fired live ammunition into crowds of Coptic Christians who had assembled to peacefully—I emphasise "peacefully"—protest the Government's failure to respond to the burning of a church. Despite his obvious deteriorating health, His Holiness presided over the funerals of the victims of that massacre. In the Gospel of St Luke 6:44 our Lord Jesus said, "Every tree is known by its fruit." There is no doubt that the fruit of the life of His Holiness was evident. As St Paul said to the Galatians, in Galatians 5:22-23:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

These fruits were evident in the life of His Holiness, and they shone especially during times of trial, exile and during the time he shared in the suffering of his people. On behalf of the Christian Democratic Party, and in particular, the Reverend the Honourable Fred Nile, MLC, I offer our condolences in this very sad hour. Reverend Nile, who would be in my position presenting this message of condolence but for a short illness, conveys his apologies. We know that the eight million Coptic Christians in Egypt—and millions more worldwide—have lost their Patriarch in a most difficult time in their history. We also know that the Australian Coptic community looks to events in Egypt with great anxiety for their fellow faithful.

The Christian Democratic Party particularly extends our prayers and condolences to Bishop Daniel, who is the Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Sydney and Affiliated regions; Bishop Suriel, who is the Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated regions; and Bishop Anba Daniel, who is the Bishop and Abbot of St Shenouda Coptic Orthodox Monastery, Putty, New South Wales. The prayers of so many Christian brothers and sisters in New South Wales and Australia will be offered for you during this difficult time. As the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane said, when we think about our life and the words that will be spoken about us when people reflect on what our lives have meant, most of us would like to think that the terms of that reflection would be a legacy. Everyone hopes that they will leave a legacy. There is no doubt that His Holiness has left a great legacy to his people. The greatest legacy anyone can leave is to our young people, and there is no doubt that His Holiness did that. We commend the soul of His Holiness to the Lord.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE (Parliamentary Secretary) [10.06 a.m.]: It is with profound sadness that I join with other members of this House in supporting this important and worthy motion to express our sorrow at the passing of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, the Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark and spiritual leader of millions of Coptic faithful around the world and to extend our condolences to the Coptic community. Only two days after the passing of His Holiness, a memorial service was held at the Coptic Cathedral of St Mary and St Mina in Bexley, where a number of members of this Parliament and numerous church dignitaries from various denominations, together with community and civic leaders and the Coptic faithful, gathered to mark Pope Shenouda's passing. A motion regarding the memorial service was moved by me to mark the occasion, and that was passed by this House today.

This fine motion moved by the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane summarises many of the achievements of the late Pope Shenouda and his influence for good, but, of course, it can serve only as a fleeting and incomplete summary of the illustrious life of His Holiness—a life of heroic virtue. His Holiness was a man of peace. He was a man of holiness and saintliness and spirituality. He was a man who so much exemplified the monastic

tradition with which the Coptic Church has become so identified. His Holiness was looked upon as a loving father by many millions of the Coptic faithful. He had a bearing and sanctity of an Old Testament prophet. The authority he held as a priest and as a bishop and as the Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark is authority that came down to him in an unbroken line through St Mark the Evangelist, beginning and emanating from the Lord, Jesus Christ. It is an unbroken line of some 2,000 years.

The word "Coptic" means "ancient Egyptian". The Copts are the indigenous people of Egypt. They were builders of the pyramids of Giza, the temples of Luxor and the Great Library of Alexandria. Their ancestors were the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt. Their history is one of achievement for humanity for 5,000 years or more. They were pioneers in medicine and science and in astronomy and mathematics, as well as in so many other fields. For the last 2,000 years they have been steadfastly faithful to their Christian faith. Their martyrs to the faith number in the millions. Coptic saints abound in Heaven in great numbers: among those who have suffered persecution in its severest form for their Christian faith, the Copts most assuredly will be found there. To that fact history testifies beyond a shadow of a doubt.

What a terrible and shameful thing it is that the Copts, the indigenous people of Egypt, have suffered and continue to suffer such persecution in their own homeland. In recent times we have heard much spoken about what is known as the Arab spring that has been moving through the Middle East. But for Coptic Christians in Egypt there has been no Arab spring; for them there has been further and intensified persecution to add to the discrimination and persecution they have experienced to varying degrees over many hundreds of years. I cannot help but feel that the great sorrow His Holiness Pope Shenouda felt at the increased plight of Coptic Christians contributed greatly to his physical and spiritual burden in recent times.

This House has put on record its condemnation of the ongoing persecution of Coptic Christians in Egypt. Some members of this House have spoken out in the media or at large public protest meetings. The passing of His Holiness Pope Shenouda should focus us to intensify our efforts. Those who may be in a position to bear influence on events or on personalities or community leaders in Egypt need to speak out and use whatever influence they have. The passing of Pope Shenouda is a time of grieving for the Coptic community to add to the ongoing grief they feel each and every day with their continuing plight in Egypt. The passing of their Pope will further sanctify them in their struggle and in their faith. I join with others here in expressing my condolences to the Coptic community in Australia. His Holiness Pope Shenouda III is now in the beatific and everlasting presence of our heavenly Father. He is now a saint in Heaven.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO [10.11 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by my colleague the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane. At the outset, I acknowledge the absence today of Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile. As we all know, Reverend Nile and his late wife, the Hon. Elaine Nile, were very strong supporters of religious freedom and, in particular, the rights of Coptic Christians in Egypt to follow their religion without persecution. In speaking to this motion, first, I want to say that when I attended the memorial service at St Marys and St Mina's Cathedral in Bexley on Monday 19 March 2012 I was struck by the obvious affection with which the congregation held Pope Shenouda III, especially the young people who were in attendance. Anyone who has researched the work of Pope Shenouda III would know that one of the major features of his work was that he nurtured his church and flock to the extent that he was the first person in his position to be given authority over North America.

At the time, in 1971, there were only four Coptic parishes in the United States. Now there are more than 200 Coptic churches in the United States, 23 in Canada and one in Mexico. That is just one example of the extent to which Pope Shenouda III nurtured and nourished his flock and his congregation. That is worth noting. It has been well commented upon that Pope Shenouda III encouraged young people in his church. We should recognise his work in establishing schools for Coptic students, not only in Australia but throughout the world, so that young Coptic Christians could have a good Christian education, in the same way that so many people of faith are able to attend religious schools of their denomination. It was appropriate that the school captains from the Coptic schools in Sydney spoke at his memorial service, given the emphasis Pope Shenouda III placed on encouraging young people in his church.

Pope Shenouda was well respected in the Muslim community. He was a strong supporter of the ecumenical movement to unite Christian faiths, and it is well recognised that he provided great comfort to the Copts in Egypt during their recent trials and tribulations. Pope Shenouda was a frequent visitor to Australia and he was held in great esteem, not just by the Coptic community in Australia but by all Australian Christians, dignitaries and members of Parliament. Again, that is a mark of the respect in which Pope Shenouda was held in Australia. Pope Shenouda was devoted to his writings, teachings and actions to spread and propagate the

understanding of peace, dialogue and forgiveness. The respect with which Pope Shenouda was held and the strength of affection for him in the Coptic community was demonstrated by the attendance of an estimated more than 100,000 mourners to St Mark's Cathedral in Cairo to view Pope Shenouda III lying in state. The queues were so long that they caused traffic jams for kilometres. People wanted to say farewell to their church leader who had given them such strength and comfort.

Apart from being well regarded within the Coptic Church and in the wider Christian community, in 2000 Pope Shenouda III was awarded the UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Prize for the promotion of tolerance and non-violence by UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura on the recommendation of an international jury. The award was "for promoting exchange and understanding between Christianity and Islam in today's Middle East and his deep concern to pursue dialogue with all the great religious faiths and his major role in forging ecumenical links with all other members of the Christian family throughout the planet." That shows the high standing in which Pope Shenouda III was held internationally. I conclude my contribution by quoting from a statement made by the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, on the passing of Pope Shenouda. President Obama said of Pope Shenouda:

We will remember Pope Shenouda III as a man of deep faith, a leader of a great faith, and an advocate for unity and reconciliation ... a beloved leader of Egypt's Coptic Christians and an advocate for tolerance and religious dialogue.

He added that his wife and he were:

... saddened to learn of the passing of Coptic Christian Pope Shenouda III, a beloved leader of Egypt's Coptic Christians and an advocate for tolerance and religious dialogue. We stand alongside Coptic Christians and Egyptians as they honour his contributions in support of peace and cooperation.

His commitment to Egypt's national unity is also a testament to what can be accomplished when people of all religions and creeds work together.

For the sake of Coptic Christians in Egypt I hope that signifies a shift in United States policy to provide greater support to Coptic Christians, those of Pope Shenouda III's flock who still face persecution in Egypt. I felt honoured to be able to attend the memorial service and to witness in person the great affection with which Pope Shenouda was held by his congregation in Australia.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA (Parliamentary Secretary) [10.17 a.m.]: It is a great honour to be able to join with my colleagues from all parties to pay our respects to the late His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. I acknowledge all the dedicated and loyal followers of Pope Shenouda and, indeed, the clergy of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Sydney. I also pay tribute to my colleague the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane for bringing this motion before the House, the cooperation shown by the Hon. David Clarke, and the mutual respect shown by these members in the way they have dealt with this condolence motion. It is wonderful to see that all party members pay honour and respect to such a great man. To celebrate Harmony Day, last night the New South Wales Government held celebrations to commemorate the successes of multiculturalism in New South Wales at the Waterview Restaurant in Bicentennial Park. It was wonderful to see 600 great Australians from all different cultures come together to celebrate multiculturalism. This motion today, moved by the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, the first Islamic member of Parliament in New South Wales, is testimony to the success of multiculturalism in this great State.

It is with sadness I speak of the loss of His Holiness Pope Abba Shenouda III, Coptic Pope of Egypt, the Patriarch of the Holy See of St Mark and the 117th Pope of Alexandria, who passed away on 17 March 2012 at the age of 88. Pope Shenouda served in religious life for 60 years. He was the spiritual leader of his people for four decades. I was honoured, with other members of this Parliament, to attend the Coptic Orthodox church, the St Mary and St Mina Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Bexley, on 17 March 2012 to commemorate the departure of His Holiness. It was clear from the many who attended that he was much loved by his community, due to his selfless service to humanitarian works on a global basis. As the Hon. Amanda Fazio has pointed out, it was touching to see the young people and their genuine love for this great man, their faith and the Coptic religion.

His Holiness was born on 3 August 1923 in the city of Asuit located in upper Egypt on the western bank of the Nile River. He was the youngest of eight children and his mother died shortly after his birth. His Holiness was given the name Nazeer Gayed Roufail and by the age of 16 he was already active in the Coptic church, serving as a Sunday school teacher. He attended university in Cairo where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in history in 1947. Upon graduation His Holiness completed his military service and worked as a high school English and social studies teacher in Cairo, while attending night classes at the Coptic theological seminary. After graduation in 1949 he was selected to teach the New Testament and later appointed as a teacher

in the monastic school. His Holiness and other servants of the Lord worked tirelessly for several years to establish a thriving Sunday school and youth program at St Anthony's church in Shobra, resulting in hundreds of devoted servants who would go on to establish youth groups in neighbouring Persia.

At an early age His Holiness displayed an affinity and talent for writing, particularly poetry. His literacy was remarkably evident in the more than 100 books that he would go on to write. Additionally, he was a long-time editor-in-chief of the Sunday school magazine. During this time he continued his education at the seminary in archaeology. In 1954 His Holiness entered monastic life at the El-Suryan monastery in the western deserts of Egypt where he was given the name Father Antonious El-Syrani. For the next six years, beginning in 1956, he lived a life of solitude in a remote cave and dedicated his life to meditation, prayer and abstinence.

In 1962, at the age of 29, His Holiness was ordained by the late Pope Cyril VI as Bishop of Religious Education, and given the name Bishop Shenouda. His Holiness was made president of the Coptic theological seminary. In his capacity as seminary president he doubled the enrolment of full-time students, while the part-time enrolment increased by 10 times its original number. Additionally, during his term as president women were admitted for the first time and several were appointed as lecturers. His Holiness's efforts were formally recognised in 1969 when he was elected president of the Association of the Middle Eastern Theological Colleges.

On 9 March 1971 His Holiness Pope Kyrillos VI entered eternal life and the Holy Synod met on 22 March to select candidates for the next Pope. Among the three candidates nominated was Bishop Shenouda. On 14 November 1971 His Holiness was enthroned as Pope Shenouda III, the 117th Pope of Alexandria and the successor of the Holy See of St Mark. His Holiness became the first Patriarch of Alexandria since the fifth century to have formally served as dean of the theological seminary. His Holiness presided over a worldwide expansion of the Coptic Orthodox Church and during his papacy he appointed the first bishops to preside over the North American diocese, which now contains over 200 parishes—an increase from four in 1971.

There are now over 200 parishes in the United States, 23 in Canada and one in Mexico. His Holiness appointed the first bishops in Australia and South America. Pope Shenouda was known for his commitment to ecumenicalism and since the 1970s had advocated interdenominational Christian dialogue. He devoted his writings, teachings and actions to spread understanding, peace, dialogue and forgiveness. In order to meet the growing demands of the Christian education in Egypt His Holiness established branches of Coptic seminaries in Egypt as well as three graduate institutes, biblical studies, hymnology and Coptic language.

On 29 November 1993 he officially opened the Institute of Pastoral Care. Among his many academic achievements His Holiness was awarded four honorary doctoral degrees in theology: three from a variety of American universities and one from a German university. In 1978 the Browning Institute awarded him honours for the best Christian preacher in the world. His homilies were renowned for their ability to reach out to all souls in need. His Holiness had the distinct honour of establishing general bishoprics, including the first bishopric of youth, and ordaining more than 70 bishops, more than 400 priests and a multitude of deacons for Cairo, Alexandria and various churches the world over. These efforts were paramount in extending pastoral care to every city, village and family throughout the See of St Mark.

His Holiness made the status of women in the Coptic Orthodox Church one of his priorities and saw great value in the work of women in the church, not only as Sunday school teachers but also as nuns, who choose to dedicate their whole life to God, and women involved in Coptic laity. His Holiness did not limit his ministries to Egypt and became the first pope to establish Coptic monasteries outside of Egypt. Additionally, he oversaw the establishment of the Sunday school curriculum in Egypt and continued to work with Sunday school teachers to establish a Sunday school curriculum for churches abroad. During the social and political upheaval in Egypt in the late 1970s His Holiness was forced into exile by the Egyptian Government after protesting the growing violence against the Coptic Christian church's businesses and followers.

Prior to his death His Holiness protested against the recent violence in Egypt. Despite being forced to spend 40 months away from his flock, His Holiness continued in his resolve to care for his church and saw the circumstances as an opportunity for spiritual retreat. His Holiness wrote 16 books during that time. After 3½ years of protest from the Coptic Orthodox Church, His Holiness was allowed by the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to return from exile. His Holiness's return to St Mark's Cathedral in Cairo was met by 10,000 joyous Egyptians who filled the cathedral to receive the Pope.

His Holiness has been a pillar of faith, courage and hope for the millions of Coptic Egyptians and Copts around the Middle East facing persecution. There is growing religious intolerance and violence against Copts,

including murders, grievous bodily injury, abductions, rapes, and the burning of churches and monasteries. The violence continues and has escalated. Pope Shenouda III was so vocal, as the Coptic Church was here in Australia and around the world, against this lack of tolerance. Upon his return from exile, His Holiness worked tirelessly to improve relations between Christians and Muslims in Egypt in an effort to establish a peaceful social environment to dispel sectarian divisions.

In May 1973 His Holiness Pope Shenouda visited His Holiness the late Pope John Paul VI in Rome. This marked the first meeting between an Alexandrine and a Roman pontiff since 451 A.D. During the meeting both Popes signed a common declaration that contained, amongst other things, a profession of common faith. In his welcoming remarks to His Holiness Pope Shenouda III in Rome, the late Pope John Paul VI stated:

You are indeed the head of a church whose origin goes back to the evangelist Mark and which had in St Athanasius ... the invincible defender of our common Nicene faith, that is, faith in the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Upon His Holiness's passing, the very Reverend Father Tadros Simon, Vicar General of the Diocese of Sydney, stated:

His Holiness served for over 40 years as Pope of the church; and in this time with the grace of God he has impacted profoundly on the lives of those who are within and outside the church. He will be remembered as a charismatic spiritual leader of this era, "Athanasius of the 21st century".

The Very Reverend Father Tadros Simon ended with a reading from the Second Epistle of Paul to Timothy, 4:6-8:

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

May he rest in peace.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY (Leader of the Opposition) [10.30 a.m.]: As Leader of the Labor Party I express my condolences at the passing of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. Today we reflect on the extraordinary life of His Holiness, a life that has bequeathed great legacies not only to Coptic Christians but to people of all faiths. His Holiness left this world with an impressive title which, in full, reads: 117th Pope of Alexandria and the Patriarch of All Africa on the Holy Apostolic Seat of Saint Mark the Evangelist of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria. He was the head of the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria.

However, he was born to far humbler circumstances. He was born Nazeer Gayed Roufail on 3 August 1923 in the small town of Asuit in Upper Egypt. He was the youngest of eight children, sadly losing his mother shortly after his birth. His early life and education were not remarkable. However, like many in the town of Asuit, the young Nazeer had a close connection with the Coptic Christian Church. He was strongly involved in his local church as a youth and, while working as a teacher, commenced study at the Coptic Theological Seminary. While he initially balanced both civic and religious life, this changed in 1954 when he entered the Syrian Monastery of Scetes. This marked the start of a life of total dedication to his church.

His period of monastic life showed incredible discipline and dedication, including the six-year period of isolated living and meditation. This isolation concluded when he was called by Pope Cyril VI to share his devotion, and his knowledge, with the world. Pope Cyril VI appointed him Bishop of Christian Education and Dean of the Coptic Orthodox Seminary. It was at this point that he took the name Shenouda. The choice of name was significant as it honours not only two previous Coptic popes but also arguably the greatest scholar and writer in Coptic history, Saint Shenouda the Archimandrite. The reference and the honour in that naming would prove to be both apt and prophetic, as Shenouda commenced a life of great spiritual and intellectual leadership both in and out of his church.

Shenouda proved to be an inspiring and charismatic advocate for his church, articulating a renewed sense of identity and pride in the Coptic faith. He helped forge a new sense of identity among growing generations of Copts; and they literally voted with their feet, with enrolments to the Coptic Seminary tripling. At the passing of Pope Cyril VI in 1971, Shenouda's record of great and popular leadership within his church saw him as a natural successor to the papacy. His vision for democratisation of the Coptic Church, and his desire to see it integrated into a more democratic and proud Egyptian civil society, now truly had a chance to thrive. And it did. Under his leadership, monasteries—an institution that the Copts introduced to the world 1,600 years

ago—found themselves overflowing with novices. The Coptic Church, and the Coptic identity, flourished in Egypt and across the world as hundreds of new churches were consecrated to represent an expanding Diaspora. Pope Shenouda appointed the first ever bishops to preside over North American dioceses as well as bishops in Australia. I note that during his papacy the Coptic Church in Australia has grown to dozens of parishes, with over 70,000 Coptic Christians in Sydney alone.

But the legacies we note today have relevance far beyond those of our citizens who count themselves as Copts, because arguably Shenouda's greatest leadership lay in his ability to integrate Coptic life with civic life, and Coptic faith with the three great Abrahamic religions: Christianity, in all its denominations, Islam and Judaism. Shenouda was known for his commitment to ecumenism, that is, promoting a common Christian church in which central faith triumphs over interpretations or jurisdictions. In 1973 he became the first Pope of Alexandria to meet the Pope of Rome in over 1,500 years. The result is the historic Common Declaration on Christology, signed by both Shenouda and Pope Paul. This document reads today as almost radical in articulating an approach to relationships between followers of varying beliefs. It is something of a blueprint for describing the curious, open and charitable relationship between faiths that makes a society like Australia possible.

I was particularly struck by how the two Popes highlighted the central Christian value of charity, a value that all major religions share, and articulated how this charity includes charity of belief; that is to say, that a Christian philosophy includes being charitable in how we accommodate and accept the beliefs of others. I note that this value is higher than that of simple "tolerance", a word we hear so much of today. Pope Shenouda III and Pope Paul VI did not call on us merely to tolerate each other's beliefs, but to welcome them. For just as welcoming a stranger into our home does not make us that person, so too welcoming a different belief into our life does not change our own. With this in mind the pontiffs expressly called for a prohibition on proselytising, that is, seeking to convert people from one faith to another, which they regarded as the antithesis of charity.

This 1973 landmark signalled a papacy dedicated to interfaith dialogue and to support for multiple faiths within the rule of law. Shenouda devoted his writings, teachings and actions to spreading understanding, peace, dialogue and forgiveness. In the process he not only earned the respect of leaders of many faiths but also helped contribute to Egypt's journey to a more democratic space. Today that journey is incomplete and imperfect. Egyptian Copts continue to face persecution, particularly from radical Muslim elements which have only flourished in their intensity with the so-called Arab Spring. It is no wonder that the death of Shenouda has been taken so personally and deeply by Copts around the world, for he was not only their spiritual leader but also their voice in a period of ongoing political and societal change.

I remain confident of two things. First, that Egypt's progress to democracy, while under challenge from those whose interests serve to resist it, will ultimately succeed. Democratic revolutions may be delayed, frustrated, disrupted or oppressed but seldom are they stopped. Secondly, when that democracy, with full respect and in accordance with the rule of law, does settle in Egypt it is certain that history will judge Shenouda's contribution to it to be substantial and transformative. The idea of citizenship itself, underpinned by the belief that all Egyptians are united and equal, has flourished during the reign of Pope Shenouda. Indeed, his funeral was notable for the attendance and respect of leaders from across the Egyptian and Arabic communities.

But there is no doubt that the greatest loss that Pope Shenouda's passing represents is to Coptic Christians. Because Shenouda achieved his transformation of the Church during a period of upheaval and struggle in Egyptian society he came to personify the struggles of the Copts themselves. Accordingly, his death is felt very deeply by the Coptic community as a whole. I am sure that members have seen the moving images of hundreds of thousands of mourners amassed outside the Coptic Cathedral in Cairo. Here in Sydney, where His Holiness visited no less than six times during his papacy, that loss is felt just as deeply. Indeed, his philosophy and his achievements strike as particularly true in New South Wales where we have long understood that the charity of belief that Shenouda sought is never an affront to one's faith but it is an enrichment and strength to all our personal faiths, and it is a foundation of our civil society. It is one of the greatest beauties and strengths of New South Wales.

While Pope Shenouda could not live to see that strength fully achieved in Egypt, his contribution to its progress is undeniable. Hence today this democratic institution pauses to note not only a great spiritual leader but also a great democratic pioneer. We celebrate his life for both those reasons. I am sure that all members will join me in advocating that Egypt's progress to democracy must continue. Coptic Christians have been suffering persecution since the eleventh century, and they continue to fear for their safety. But it is my sincere hope that, thanks to his great works, Pope Shenouda's successor may yet preside over a Coptic Church that is free from the

persecution that always weighed on his mind. May the next Pope of Alexandria ultimately provide leadership not to a spiritual minority but to equal citizens of Egypt, America, Australia and many other countries who proudly and freely call themselves Coptic.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN [10.45 a.m.]: On behalf of The Greens and as the spokesperson on multiculturalism, I express our sincere compassion for and commiserations to the Coptic people of Egypt and the community in New South Wales on the passing of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. My contribution will be brief. I note the contributions of other members to this motion and the eloquent contribution of the Hon. Luke Foley. The Greens recognise that the Coptic community in Australia, like all culturally diverse groups in our great multicultural nation, makes a significant contribution to the social fabric and value of our community—from education to social outreach and cultural celebrations—and this motion is a great symbol of that.

The Coptic community consists of around 10 million in Egypt and two million in other nations across the globe. New South Wales has a community of 21 churches and, as we have heard, there are more than 60,000 Coptic Christians in Sydney alone. We acknowledge the special place and importance of the community's beloved and respected spiritual leader, Pope Shenouda III. Our thoughts are with the Coptic community in Australia and overseas as they grieve. On behalf of The Greens I extend our deepest condolences to the Coptic Orthodox faithful after the passing of Pope Shenouda.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA (Parliamentary Secretary) [10.46 a.m.]: I join my colleagues in supporting the motion moved by the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane on the passing of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. I note the presence of Fathers and members of the Coptic community in the gallery, and my good friend the former councillor at Sutherland Shire Council Magdi Mikhail is present today. I also note the earlier motion of the Hon. David Clarke and the importance of this motion to Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, who is not here today due to illness. I too wish Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile the very best for a speedy recovery.

His Holiness was the 117th leader of the Coptic Orthodox Church, and in his 41 years as Pope he worked to strengthen the church and its relationship with other faiths. His Holiness was born on 3 August 1923 as Nazeer Gayed in Asuit, Egypt. He died on 17 March 2012 aged 88 years. His Holiness took an early interest in his faith and, as a teenager, attended services and Sunday school. In 1947 he completed a Bachelor of Arts in English and history at the University of Cairo and spent his summer vacations at the monastery of St Mary. His Holiness then completed his military service and went on to work as an English and history teacher at the Coptic Theological Seminary. He completed a Bachelor of Theology and was subsequently appointed as a lecturer in the Old and New Testaments and thereafter a lecturer at the Monastic College in Helwan.

His eagerness to strengthen the church community was apparent from an early age when he, amongst others, laboured to establish a solid Sunday school and youth group at St Anthony's Church, Shobra. He spread his spirit through his popular service, which produced hundreds of devoted servants who began establishing youth groups in their parishes. His Holiness was ordained as a priest in 1954. He modelled himself on St Anthony, the third ascetic, and took to a monastery in the eastern Sahara. In 1956—the year that I was born—he lived a life of solitude in a desert cave for six years. One can only imagine what it must have been like to live in a cave for six years in complete solitude. It is reminiscent of the stories of various saints who did similar things. He dedicated all his time to meditation and prayer and in 1959 he was summoned to become private secretary to Pope Cyril VI.

In 1962 His Holiness was ordained by the late Pope Cyril VI as Bishop Shenouda and named President of the Coptic Seminary. He then published the first issue of the Arabic magazine *El-Keraza* in 1965 and remained editor-in-chief. As Bishop, he was entrusted with running the Coptic seminary and advocated heavily for the inclusion of young Christians. During his term applicants to the seminary tripled. On 14 November 1971 His Holiness Pope Shenouda III was elevated to Patriarch of the See of St Mark, and enthroned as 117th Pope of Alexandria. He was the first Patriarch of Alexandria since the fifth century to have been Dean of the Theological Seminary.

His Holiness envisaged a peaceful, undivided Egypt, and so continuously strived to improve the relationship between the Christian and Muslim faiths. He enjoyed good relations with former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and was a friend of moderate Islamic cleric Sheikh Mohammed Sayyid al-Tantawi. He continuously appealed to his congregation for tolerance and often began sermons and public speeches by saying, "In the name of the one God whom we all worship." In 2011 during Orthodox Christmas ceremonies held at Cairo Cathedral His Holiness was joined for the first time by Islamist leaders. At that time he stated, "They all agree on the stability of this country and on loving it, working for it and working with the Copts as one hand for Egypt's sake."

His Holiness was eager to meet the expanding ministry of Christian education, establishing branches of the seminary across the country, as well as the graduate institutes of biblical studies, hymnology, and Coptic language. He continued to lecture at the seminary in Cairo, Alexandria, and abroad at the Higher Institute of Coptic Studies. In 1993 he opened the Institute of Pastoral Care. In recognition of his erudition in theology and scripture, His Holiness was awarded four honorary doctoral degrees in theology from American and German universities. His Holiness worked to acknowledge women and the services they provide to the Coptic Orthodox Church, as well as to expand opportunities for women to become valuable contributors. He said, "We felt a great need of the work of women and we wanted women to have a certain order and service in the Church, not only to have girls as Sunday School teachers who give a part of their time whenever they can, but we want girls and women to give their whole life to God and serve the church."

His Holiness did not confine his efforts to Egypt, and became internationally acclaimed for his spiritually uplifting, enlightening and educational sermons. Subsequently, in 1978 the Browning Institute awarded him a prize for being the best Christian preacher in the world. He instigated significant international growth of the Coptic Orthodox Church, increasing the number of churches outside Egypt from seven to more than 150. In Australia there are 24 Coptic Orthodox churches, two monasteries, a theological college, two secondary schools, one primary school and a nursing home. There are approximately 100,000 Coptic Orthodox Christians in Australia, the majority of whom are found in Sydney. The Australian Coptic Orthodox community, led by His Grace Sayyidna Bishop Daniel—I am honoured that he considers me a personal friend—shared a great love for His Holiness.

During his six visits to New South Wales, His Holiness demonstrated his commitment to the church and inspired and strengthened the community. The tireless work of His Holiness is an example of the tolerance we seek to promote as a multicultural, multi-faith country and State. His words and actions should be looked to in the aim to defeat prejudice and to bring about harmony and inclusion. My favourite quote from him is, "I would like to do my best to deepen love, peace and reconciliation between the Church and the State, between the Church and our Muslim citizens. We are like organs in the one body." Like my colleagues, I send my condolences to the Coptic community. Again I thank the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane for affording us this opportunity to speak about the life of an extraordinary man.

The Hon. WALT SECORD [10.55 a.m.]: As a Labor parliamentarian I support the motion and formally express my condolences to the New South Wales, Australian and international Coptic community upon the passing of their spiritual leader, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. In 1923 Pope Shenouda was born into a devoutly Christian family in Upper Egypt. He graduated with a history degree from Cairo University and began attending Coptic theological classes at night. In 1962 he was ordained as a bishop. Nine years later he was enthroned as Pope Shenouda III. As pontiff of the Coptic Orthodox Church he led Egypt's Christian minority for 40 years in the largely Islamic nation. His passing on 17 March has resulted in an international outpouring of grief. I understand it will take months to select his successor.

About 10 per cent of Egypt's 85 million people are Coptic Christians. During Pope Shenouda's leadership, the Coptic Diaspora has flourished around the world. In New South Wales alone there are about 70,000 people who identify as Coptic Christians. It is a well-established community, with many Coptic Christians having migrated to Australia in the 1950s and 1960s. Unfortunately for them, and for their brethren in Egypt, the death of the pontiff has further fuelled a feeling of uncertainty. This uncertainty follows the recent rise to power of Islamists in Egypt and a growing conservatism in the nation's politics. To the Christian minority in Egypt, the pontiff was seen as a seasoned protector of their rights. He was a skilled diplomat and public figure who ensured there was a Christian place in the mainly Islamic nation. For the record, I would have politely and respectfully disagreed with him on Israel, but I understand his heartfelt support for the Palestinian people.

However, there is much upon which I would have agreed with the pontiff. I point to his pioneering work in the area of ecumenical dialogue. Colleagues are well aware of my interest and support for interfaith dialogue. Members will also recall that last October this Chamber formally resolved to condemn the attacks on the Coptic Christian minority in Egypt during the developments leading to the so-called Arab Spring. Last year, initially, there was much optimism within the Coptic Christian community about the developments in the region. Sadly, we are seeing a reactionary surge of extreme Islam occurring alongside a resurgence of extreme Arab nationalism. Unfortunately in Egypt this has morphed into a concerted effort to drive out the Christian and other minorities.

Islamists now dominate Egypt's two political Chambers. There is considerable concern about the composition of the 100-person panel that has been charged with drafting the new constitution and the direction

the nation will take. But I believe that a new Egypt must ensure that Coptic Christians have full and equal rights to other Egyptians. That is a prerequisite to any claim to legitimate democracy in the new Egypt. I have spoken before in this Chamber and members will already know my views on the rights of individuals and families to practice the faith of their choosing. Members will also be aware that Copts have a long and proud history as Christians, dating back to the fourth century. But as a minority, Coptic Christians in Egypt have experienced centuries of discrimination. For many years I have followed the plight of the Christian minority in the Middle East and Africa as they respond to and grapple with a brand of strident, rising Islam.

It is a basic human responsibility that we respect one another's beliefs, even if they are different. It is a human right that we can expect our beliefs to be respected in return. While beliefs of faith are individual and personal matters, the respect we afford one another to pursue our own faiths is a matter of democratic respect necessity. I therefore take this opportunity to reaffirm my solidarity with the Coptic Christian faith in New South Wales, in Australia and in Egypt. I also acknowledge the leadership provided to them by the Pontiff during periods of great political and civic upheaval. We had all hoped the Arab Spring would have brought his people greater freedom. Unfortunately, it has not.

In conclusion, my thoughts are with the Coptic Christian community as they mourn the loss of their spiritual leader. One day I hope that Coptic Christians in Egypt can experience the same freedom of faith that we experience in Australia. I thank the House for its consideration. I thank my colleague the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane for moving the motion. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE [11.01 a.m.], in reply: I thank all members for taking the time and effort to prepare their well thought out speeches to pay tribute to His Holiness Pope Shenouda III. It shows the respect in which we hold this great man, a spiritual leader, a leader in charity, a leader in inter-faith dialogue who was loved by all. I especially thank the Labor Party leader in the House, the Hon. Luke Foley, for his distinguished speech, his eloquent words and his eloquent thoughts. I thank all members who contributed to the debate, including you, Mr Deputy-President [The Hon. Paul Green], the Hon. David Clarke, the Hon. Amanda Fazio, the Hon. Marie Ficarra, the Hon. Luke Foley, the Hon. Cate Faehrmann, the Hon. John Ajaka and the Hon. Walt Secord, and all members in this House for supporting this motion.

I pay my respects and condolences to the Australian Coptic community and all of its parishioners across the globe. I also pay my respects and condolences to the bishops, reverend fathers and distinguished members of the Australian Coptic Church in Sydney, Melbourne and elsewhere. I pay tribute to the reverend fathers in the public gallery this morning. I pay tribute to Father Bishoy El Antony, Reverend Father Mikhail Mikhail, Reverend Augustinos and members of the Coptic Orthodox diocese of Sydney and affiliated regions of the Australian Coptic Association, including Mr Michael Rochdi, Mr Medhat Attia, Dr Mona Mikhail, Mr Yassar Ghattas, Mr Tadros Hanna, Mr John Marcos and former councillor, Councillor Mikhail, and other members of the Coptic community.

I conclude by once again noting Pope Shenouda's lifelong commitment to promoting mutual respect and peace during challenging and troubled times. I once again offer my condolences to all Copts, all Christians and all people of faith in Australia and around the world for the loss of such a great man of peace. He will be sadly missed. May he rest in peace.

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

Motion agreed to.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES RESEARCH STAFF

Debate resumed from 15 March 2012.

The Hon. STEVE WHAN [11.04 a.m.], in reply: I moved this motion in September last year. Therefore, we started to discuss this issue some time ago. A number of members contributed to the debate on Thursday 15 March. I am pleased to speak in reply and I thank the members who contributed to the debate. This important motion refers to staff at Forests NSW. Since I moved this motion a number of other developments have occurred in respect of staff at the Department of Primary Industries facilities, which have been mentioned by Government members and Opposition members and which I will refer to shortly.

The Hon. Rick Colless commenced his contribution with name calling directed at me—as The Nationals members so often do. I do not really mind that because I understand that that is often all The Nationals

have to fall back on. I am sure the Hon. Rick Colless is frustrated by the performance of the Minister for Primary Industries. I am sure he thinks he could do a better job, but I doubt that he will ever get the opportunity to do so. The honourable member talked about the memorandum of understanding between the Department of Primary Industries and Forests NSW and several Coalition members talked about the competitiveness of Forests NSW and benchmarking. However, they all failed to understand that while we can set up a structure in Forests NSW and benchmark its commercial opportunities against the private sector, it must retain a number of public interest functions. Many of those functions are currently funded out of consolidated revenue separately and recognised as such by Treasury.

We need to continue to fund work in scientific areas, such as the work people are undertaking at Pennant Hills. That work could have contributed to research on the Hendra virus. It is not good enough to dismiss that work by saying, "We are doing a lot in other areas", as some members did. Yes, the Government is doing a lot of work on the Hendra virus. In fact, I issued a press release complimenting the department on its activities in that regard. However, that does not mean we should remove the only bat specialist. The Hon. Niall Blair said that the bat specialist was researching small bats. In fact, that person said that he had done work relevant to the Hendra virus. I am not sure whether the member was suggesting that person was lying in his discussion about his work. I would hope not.

Since I moved my motion in September the Government has made moves to close the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre. That has been a disgraceful process, driven by ideology and the desire for The Nationals to make it look as though they are decentralising. Incredibly, despite three formal requests, the Minister still refuses to see staff. The *Cronulla Magazine* recently reported:

Similarly, Deputy Premier Andrew Stoner, the state leader of the National Party, has avoided discussing the matter with Cronulla MP Mark Speakman.

That is incredible that a Government member of Parliament cannot talk to the Deputy Premier about the closure of an important facility in his electorate. It is farcical that many of the staff are being moved not to regional New South Wales but to Mosman. That demonstrates this Government's ineptitude. That is in stark contrast to the former Labor Government. From 2000 onwards, the former Government decentralised more than 1,500 State government positions to regional centres, including Murwillumbah, Bathurst, Gosford, Nowra, Maitland, Lithgow and Wellington. We had a successful record in that area.

The Coalition Government came to office promising that it would increase jobs in regional New South Wales. Unfortunately, it has already cut jobs in critical areas. Of course, these Pennant Hills jobs are in Sydney, but their dislocation will impact directly on regional New South Wales. We have seen the closure of small business offices in Goulburn, Tweed, Broken Hill and Coffs Harbour and jobs have been axed from Forests NSW nurseries around the State. Jobs have also been axed from Trade and Investment NSW and in the energy sector in the Upper Hunter. Corrective Services jobs have also been axed at Kirkconnell. The member for Bathurst had the hide to suggest either that he did not know it was coming or that he was fighting against it. Clearly he was fighting a losing battle. I urge the House to support this excellent motion. [*Time expired.*]

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 18

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

Noes, 20

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

Pair

Mr Donnelly

Mr Gallacher

Question resolved in the negative.**Motion negatived.****NATIONAL PARK ESTATE (SOUTH-WESTERN CYPRESS RESERVATIONS) AMENDMENT BILL 2012****Bill introduced, and read a first time and ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Robert Brown.****Second Reading****The Hon. ROBERT BROWN** [11.18 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Shooters and Fishers Party is pleased to introduce the National Park Estate (South-Western Cypress Reservations) Amendment Bill 2012, which simply revokes the reservation of certain land—the bed of Meroo Lake recreational fishing haven—as part of the Meroo National Park. Members who were present in the last Parliament would remember that transferring that Crown land into the National Park Estate as part of Meroo National Park was hidden in Government legislation called the National Park Estate (South-Western Cypress Reservations) Act 2010, which was passed in the second last sitting week of the previous Parliament. It was a deal between the previous Government and the Greens—one of many they did—that they thought would result in a flow of green preferences to Labor prior to the 2011 State election. But guess what? After The Greens got the bed of Meroo Lake and the river red gums, they changed their mind. They took the land and kept their preferences.

On the other hand, it was left to the Shooters and Fishers Party and the Liberal-Nationals Coalition to oppose this Labor-Greens deal, which we did. I note that during the debate the Hon. Catherine Cusack stated that using the entire bed of Meroo Lake Recreational Fishing Haven as an offset in the Merry Beach Caravan Park land transfer was contentious because Meroo Lake had been declared a recreational fishing haven—one of many that were funded by \$20 million from the fishing licence trusts. The honourable member also pointed out that it was not one of the main issues in the bill, but was slipped into the back end of a bill that was debated in virtually the dying days of the Labor Government.

The Shooters and Fishers Party led the charge in opposition to this bill—the development of which was marked by a lack of consultation with recreational fishers—because of the virtual alienation of this fishing haven, which was to be achieved by the installation of locked access gates. This is a repeated theme with national parks across New South Wales—lock it up and leave it. What a ridiculous idea to block access by installing a gate and forcing fishermen to go all the way to Ulladulla, pay a fee to get the key to gain access and then return the key after each day's fishing. As Homer Simpson would say, "Duhhhh."

I visited the site at the behest of local fishers and was appalled at the effect of the declaration on the access track that the National Parks and Wildlife Service had allowed to occur. It was simply disgusting. The track barely allowed access by four-wheel-drive vehicles. It is like the premature removal of the recreational fishing haven signs on the Princess Highway. The authorities got a bit ahead of themselves. They decided they would take down the signs before the bill even hit the House. Maybe that was part of the original plan to keep fishers out. The Coalition opposed the bill when it was before the House. The Shooters and Fishers Party would like to believe that the Coalition's earlier concerns about the fishing haven are still valid, that it is still concerned about recreational fishers in New South Wales and that it will show that support by voting for this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

COUNTRY AND REGIONAL LIVING EXPO

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL [11.23 a.m.]: I move:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) the Foundation for Regional Development hosts the Country and Regional Living Expo annually at Rosehill Gardens Racecourse,
 - (b) the 2011 event marked eight years of the expo in New South Wales,
 - (c) the expo provides Sydney residents with information on employment, real estate, education and lifestyle opportunities in regional New South Wales,
 - (d) the expo allows Sydneysiders to "Walk New South Wales in a Day", experiencing the tastes, sounds and tempting offers from country and regional businesses, communities and organisations represented at the expo,
 - (e) over 50 exhibitors participated in the expo at Rosehill Gardens Racecourse between 5 and 7 August 2011, and
 - (f) over 9,000 people, including many young families, attended the event over the three-day period.
2. That this House:
 - (a) recognises the dedication and initiative of the board and management of the Foundation for Regional Development who organise the expo, particularly the Chief Executive Officer, Peter Bailey, and Chairman, Anthony Fox, and
 - (b) congratulates the O'Farrell-Stoner Government on introducing the \$7,000 Regional Relocation Grant, the Jobs Action Plan and Restart NSW, all of which were well received by both exhibitors and visitors at the expo.

I am proud and pleased to speak to this motion, which is the first item of private member's business that I have moved in this place as a proud member of The Nationals, I cannot think of a more fitting motion for my first item on a private member's day than one that recognises the great event that is the Country and Regional Living Expo.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: That living legend, Peter Bailey.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will get to him. As the motion states, 2011 was the eighth year of the event in New South Wales. It is appropriate to speak a little about how the expo came to fruition. The creator was that legend, as the Hon. Duncan Gay just referred to him, Peter Bailey who lives in Armidale. Peter's passion for his local community and regional communities in general led him to initiate Country Week, as it was then known. The idea was it would be an expo that promoted the benefits of country living to city residents.

Peter is a very proud country man. He has often said that, in his opinion, the best view of Sydney was when he was driving out of it and he saw it in his rear-view mirror. The problem as he saw it was that there was an influx of people going into Sydney and it was hurting not only his home town of Armidale but most inland cities and communities. After selling his business, he decided that it was time to do something about that problem and he convinced his wife, Jenny, to put a mortgage across their house. They came up with the concept of running an expo in both Sydney and Brisbane called Country Week.

The idea behind Country Week was it would be an event where country communities could come together and promote the virtues of leaving the city to live in a regional community or, alternatively, to invest in or relocate to a regional area. That essentially was the genesis of the event. Of course, a large-scale event like the Country and Regional Living Expo is not easy to organise. As such, Peter has formed the Foundation for Regional Development, which is a dynamic and innovative organisation that has been established to promote country and regional Australia particularly to people and businesses who may want to move there. It partners with communities, government, development organisations and industry to achieve its objectives. It assists with investment and expansion of business in country and regional Australia, and it provides a platform and voice for the development of regional Australia.

The foundation was formed in 2009 and evolved from Country Week which, for the previous six years, has facilitated the Country and Regional Living Expos in Sydney. My visit to the event in Sydney last year was my first. I had heard about the event for many years, and many of my colleagues had spoken highly of it for a long time. I was thrilled to have the chance to attend. I went with my Nationals colleagues the Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Don Page, who officially opened the event, the member for Bathurst, Paul Toole, the member for Lismore, Thomas George, the member for Myall Lakes, Stephen Bromhead, and my colleague

in the upper House the Hon. Rick Colless. I acknowledge that there were some Labor members at the event. I know the Hon. Mick Veitch went along with the Hon. Steve Whan and, I think, the Leader of the Opposition. It was great to see politicians from all sides supporting the event.

One of the great things I noticed was that there was free parking and entry. That might sound like a trivial fact but in this day and age that is a great way to attract visitors to something that does not cost any money and provides a real insight into the lives of those who live in regional communities. Members who have not been to the expo before will see a massive exhibition centre filled with many stalls, and people representing a wide range of areas from local councils to charities. It is a very vibrant and welcoming atmosphere.

The Hon. Mick Veitch: There is a meat wholesaler this year.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I acknowledge that. There is a meat wholesaler this year. The event attracts more than 50 exhibitors annually. One of the main catchphrases is that it allows Sydneysiders to walk New South Wales in a day, so they can experience the tastes, sounds and offers from regional businesses, communities and organisations. Essentially, the event sells the message that the towns and cities in country and regional New South Wales provide boundless opportunities for investment in many areas including manufacturing and trade, property development, tourism and hospitality, construction and engineering, and other boutique industries including wine, food and fibre production.

We are very lucky in New South Wales that we have so many vibrant and sophisticated regional centres where residents enjoy great facilities and opportunities without the enormous mortgage payments, huge fuel bills, overcrowding and commute times that some of our city cousins have to suffer through every day. New South Wales also boasts beautiful, clean and uncluttered coastline and beaches. The smaller country towns, like my hometown of Gunnedah, have a real sense of community and caring and easy living is available.

Last year the expo had a business focus and there was an opportunity for attendees to discover the business and investment opportunities available in the region through the Business and Investment Board, which was essentially a jobs board. It was a great initiative. When people walked in the door during Country Week, the first thing they were able to see were the hundreds of jobs listed on the jobs board. The jobs available ranged from trades, such as plumbers, to accountants, solicitors, doctors and nurses. Underneath the jobs that were available, there was an indication of where the jobs were located and the location of the corresponding stall. For example, if a plumber walked in and thought that he might like to move to Orange or Bathurst he could see whether a job was available. There was a link to the council site and he could talk to the representatives about the job and what the community might offer him. That is a great initiative and it is a great way to fill the shortage in the job market that we have and let people know there are a diverse range of jobs available in the regions.

As the duty member of the Legislative Council for the Northern Tablelands it was a great opportunity for me to catch up with some of the local shire councils. I will touch on a couple of them. Mayor Barry Johnson was at the Inverell site, where they had rubber charity bracelets that promoted the local community of Inverell. Given that my husband is from Inverell, I feel like an honorary community member. It was great to catch up with them and talk about how successful the expo had been for them. I chatted to some of the members from Guyra. I acknowledge the Hon. Scot MacDonald who is a Guyra resident.

Two of the residents, Liz and Alan St Clair, had a great idea to have badges made which said, "I made the move." The idea behind that was that they could talk to people at the expo about relocating because they were originally city dwellers and had decided to move to the Northern Tablelands area. They could speak personally about their experiences. I have been told that the interaction they had with a lot of the visitors to the expo was phenomenal. They were able to say, "This is my personal experience, it was great and you should consider it too." The Guyra stand had lovely tomatoes free to give away. For those who have not tried Guyra tomatoes, they should look into it sooner rather than later.

As a proud Gunnedah girl it would be remiss of me not to mention the Gunnedah stand. Mayor Adam Marshall did a great job with his troops from the tourism board in Gunnedah. They had life-size posters of Miranda Kerr. She is a proud Gunnedah girl. She attracted a lot of interest to our site. It was a very clever marketing tool. If the chance that they might run into Miranda Kerr does not make young blokes move to Gunnedah, I do not know what will. It is also the best place in the world to live.

In addition to local councils, some charities had stalls at Country Week. One of the groups I got chatting to was the Royal Far West group. We talked about the buses that come out to regional communities to

help country kids gain access to medical services. I am passionate about that project. I have been in discussions with their chief executive officer, Lindsay Cane, about the bus coming to Gunnedah. We are working towards putting together a group of Gunnedah kids who may have medical issues and can benefit from a visit from the Royal Far West group. That was a great networking opportunity that came out of being at the expo.

The Nationals had a stand for the first time this year at Country Week because we are the party for regional New South Wales. The Nationals were extremely well received, particularly many of our policies, at the country and regional living expo. I will discuss some of those policies that are mentioned in the wording of this motion. The first is the \$7,000 Regional Relocation Grant.

The Hon. Mick Veitch: That is going well, isn't it?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I acknowledge the interjection. It is going really well. It is about this Government standing up for regional communities and encouraging Sydney families to relocate to a regional community with a \$7,000 grant to help them to do so. It is extra motivation to make the move. By moving to places such as Inverell, Gunnedah, Armidale or Guyra, families can escape the high cost of living and congestion of life in the big smoke and come out to our beautiful communities. As a Government, we are very proud to be supporting regional New South Wales by encouraging Sydney families who are considering the tree change.

I also mention the Jobs Action Plan, which has specific benefits for regional communities in New South Wales. It works by providing a payroll tax rebate of \$4,000 per full-time employee for the first 100,000 new payroll tax-paying jobs created in New South Wales. One of the best things about this plan is that it will encourage the creation of long-term sustainable jobs. The final program I want to talk about is mentioned in the motion: Restart NSW. It is a fund dedicated to delivering vital infrastructure projects such as public transport, road improvement, and freight and hospital upgrades. The best part about this program is the fact that 30 per cent of it is dedicated to projects in rural and regional areas. I am proud and pleased to be part of a Government that is achieving positive results for regional New South Wales and that has policies that will help regional and remote communities grow and prosper. That really is what the country and regional living expo is about. It is about selling a positive message.

What the organisers have found is that, unfortunately, there can be ignorance about the opportunities that exist in regional New South Wales. A lot of country people visit Sydney. When I was growing up we used to come here for holidays and for the Royal Easter Show, and I attended university in Sydney. Country people spend a lot of time involved in Sydney life and we understand what is happening in Sydney, but unfortunately it does not happen so much in reverse. The best thing we can do in Country Week is give Sydney people an opportunity to see what is out there and encourage them to come out to regional New South Wales, firstly as tourists and then hopefully as residents. That is the true genius behind the Country and Regional Living Expo. We have so much to offer in our communities. As regional residents, we have a responsibility to tell people what is great about where we live. If we did not think it was wonderful, we would not be living in regional New South Wales. We need to pass this message on to our friends who live in Sydney.

Since the expo began there have been real benefits for regional communities, with many factual and anecdotal stories of people who went to the expo and decided on the day to make the tree change and come to a regional community. It is very clear that it is a great event that helps promote regional communities—otherwise it would not be in its eighth year. The fact that there were over 9,000 visitors last year is an indication of the success of the event. Events like this do not happen in isolation and the organisers should be given proper credit. I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks that any debate on this motion would not be complete without recognising the dedication and commitment of Peter and Jenny Bailey. I know Peter and Jenny very well. Everybody in the House would agree one would be hard-pressed to find another couple more dedicated to the future of regional communities. Peter, as Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation for Regional Development, is a wonderful advocate and has a great enthusiasm for regional development and supporting our communities. He has lived and worked in regional Australia most of his life and that shows in the dedication and commitment he brings to this event.

I also acknowledge Anthony Fox, Chairman of the Foundation for Regional Development. He is also a passionate advocate for regional development and a founding board member. He made the tree change to Armidale in 2004, after a successful career as a partner in a law firm based in Sydney. He is well able to give his perspective on relocating to regional New South Wales, having moved from Sydney to a country area. I also acknowledge Sam Notley, who is a director of the Foundation for Regional Development. He was born and

raised in Glen Innes, attended the University of New England and became a partner in one of the largest regional accounting firms in Australia. He provides key financial advice to the board and is an ardent supporter of the expo.

In concluding, I would like to mention the staff of the foundation, commencing with Lynne Price-Purnell, another tree changer. Lynne not only moved her home and family to Armidale but also changed careers. Jess Uphill plays a trainee, administration and events role in business. It is great that they have put her through a certificate 4 course in administration and given her the opportunity to learn on the job. Jenny Bailey, a consultant to the foundation, rounds out the team. Jenny does a great job promoting the foundation, as well as supporting her husband. It is very clear that this team of people has worked and will continue to work hard for the foundation. They have become passionate advocates for not only country and regional New South Wales but for their expo.

Members who have not been to the expo—whether they are in the Chamber now or elsewhere listening to the debate, or will read it in *Hansard*—should make the effort to attend this year's event. It will be held again at Rosehill Racecourse on 3, 4 and 5 August. I will be attending, as I am sure will many of my colleagues from both sides of the Chamber. I urge all members to give serious consideration to going to the expo. I know that it will be another successful event. As I said at the outset, I am very proud that this motion is the first that I have moved on a private members' business day. I expect all members will support the motion, because this is a great event and that should be recognised in this House. I commend my motion.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH [11.41 a.m.]: It is important to acknowledge that this is the first motion moved by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell on a private members' business day. I recall moving my first motion many years ago, with all the associated adrenalin, anxiety, emotions and issues that come with having to deal with the associated mechanics of this place: first, to win chook lotto to get the motion on the books, and then to have the patience while waiting for it to come on. I am sure other members would acknowledge that from the outset. I note also on the *Notice Paper* a notice of motion about country New South Wales. It is interesting that most of the members now in the Chamber, from both sides, are country members of Parliament.

The Hon. Marie Ficarra: Well, sort of: Cronulla is not really country, but I go to the country occasionally.

The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox: It's a shire.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes, a shire. Next it will be a television show. I appreciate that a number of members, country- or city-based, will want to speak on the motion moved by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell. It says in paragraph 1(a):

The Foundation for Regional Development hosts the Country and Regional Living Expo annually at Rosehill Gardens Racecourse.

That is a great venue for the expo. When I was station master at Rydalmere, I often travelled by train past Rosehill Gardens Racecourse, a wonderful venue for an event such as this. A few years ago the expo was held at the same time as the races. Obviously that was to attract more visitors; while at Rosehill having a punt they could also look at the wonderful lifestyles in country New South Wales. I am not sure how successful that was, because in more recent years it has not been held at the same time as a race meeting. It is nonetheless a wonderful venue. The motion says in subparagraph (b):

The 2011 event marked eight years of the expo in New South Wales.

This is a critical point. Since I became a member of Parliament I have been to most of the expos; I cannot recall one that I have not attended. I have been a strong supporter of the Country and Regional Living Expo. In fact, whenever I meet with people in a local government area I check to find out whether they have a stall at this wonderful event. If not, I will prompt them with, "Why haven't you got a stall? Talk to your neighbouring councils about this, because I think you will find they are doing quite well from it." I know other members in the Chamber have discussed why some councils have stalls at the expo and some do not. My council, Young shire, had a stall for a while and then dropped out, but last year it returned with a stall. I noted in the local *Young Witness* newspaper a recent article about a family that moved to Young, identifying that their move was predominantly because of the expo. So there are benefits for country and regional New South Wales from the expo.

Those who speak to Peter and Jenny Bailey will hear about the issue of trying to substantiate the success of the expo because there are no records identifying that people have moved to the country because of the expo. Of course, governments of all persuasions know, because they have to deal with Treasury, that Treasury would like measurable outcomes of its funding. This is a conundrum that the foundation is working through: how to provide quality data that substantiates the success of the expo. Subparagraph (c) of the motion notes:

The expo provides Sydney residents with information on employment, real estate, education and lifestyle opportunities in regional New South Wales.

The Hon. Steve Whan and I attended with the Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson, who is a former electrician. In fact, he gloats about the days when as a sparky he wired Parliament House all those years ago. We noticed on the jobs board that there were a number of jobs for electricians.

The Hon. Melinda Pavey: What are you saying, Mick?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It is an interesting and important part of the expo that it will attract tradespeople to country New South Wales. Whether you are a sparky, plumber or builder, we would all want to promote the jobs opportunities in country New South Wales. This is a critical aspect of the expo. The list of jobs on the jobs board shows the significant opportunities for tradespeople as well as professionals in country New South Wales, not to mention the lifestyle. Talking to country members in this Parliament, people know that we all love where we come from; we gloat about our own patch of New South Wales. It is pretty hard to beat Young, but I know the Hon. Melinda Pavey will talk about the benefits of Coffs Harbour. If we could move Sapphire Beach to Young as part of a political promise at some stage, that would top off the wonderful lifestyle that is Young.

The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox: There will be more people talking about Queanbeyan than anywhere else.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Let me put on the record that some places in New South Wales are over-represented in this place; and I have to tell the House that Queanbeyan has far too many members representing it in this Chamber. I would like members representing Queanbeyan to refute that. The motion also notes in subparagraph (d):

The expo allows Sydneysiders to "Walk New South Wales in a Day", experiencing the tastes, sounds and tempting offers from country and regional businesses, communities and organisations represented at the expo.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell referred to the tomatoes, which were absolutely fantastic. But there was a lot of other terrific produce to be seen by anyone walking round the stalls. One thing that was noticeable is that country people, particularly people of my persuasion, like to have a chat; the people on the tomato stalls like to talk about how they grow their tomatoes, and so on. So it can take quite a long time to get around the expo if people want to engage with all the stallholders about their wonderful produce, which I would encourage them to do. We got stuck at the Northern Tablelands stall talking with the family of the member for Northern Tablelands and people from Regional Development Australia. They were exuberant about the Northern Tablelands of New South Wales.

The Hon. Steve Whan: Everyone there was related to him.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That was the problem: as we went through that stall we noticed that they were all related to the member for Northern Tablelands. Clearly, it is a big family. The motion also notes:

Over 50 exhibitors participated in the expo at Rosehill Gardens Racecourse between 5 and 7 August 2011.

Visitors to the expo must allow themselves plenty of time to speak with and engage the exhibitors. Some exhibitors take up a large space. I was quite impressed that one of the councils, Muswellbrook, had two or three stalls with very good displays. Its exhibit was significant. Clearly a lot of work goes into the expo, not just by the organisers of the event but also by councils and exhibitors. They put in a lot of effort to make sure their stalls and exhibits are attractive and will encourage people to drop in and say g'day. People can walk away with a lot of business cards and so on if they take the time to stop by the stalls. Also noted in the motion is that:

Over 9,000 people, including many young families, attended the event over the three day period.

The importance of attracting people to country and regional New South Wales is that if an area or region can attract families to the lifestyle that is country New South Wales those families will stay, particularly if they are provided with jobs to support their relocation to regional New South Wales. Paragraph 2 of the motion is:

That this House:

- (a) recognises the dedication and initiative of the board and management of the Foundation for Regional Development who organise the expo, particularly the Chief Executive Officer, Peter Bailey, and Chairman, Anthony Fox.

In my time at Parliament I have had numerous dealings with Peter Bailey. I want to put on the record that he is passionate about country and regional New South Wales. He is a larger-than-life figure; he certainly makes a presence in a room. He is extremely passionate about the expo and regional development in general. I put on record my appreciation for all the assistance Peter has provided to me as a country-based member of Parliament. He is very quick to pick up the phone—and he is probably listening to this debate now—to say what he thinks about a particular policy or issue, particularly in relation to job losses and encouraging people to move to country New South Wales. Peter is undoubtedly one of the great characters in country New South Wales. However, I raise an issue with paragraph 2 (b) of the motion.

The Hon. Steve Whan: The Government shouldn't politicise it.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: This is a fantastic resolution up to paragraph 2 (b). It is a shame that it has been politicised in this way because it makes it difficult for members on this side of the House to support the whole motion. Paragraph 2 (b) reads:

- (b) congratulates the O'Farrell-Stoner Government for introducing the \$7,000 Regional Relocation Grant, the Jobs Action Plan and Restart NSW, all of which were well received by both exhibitors and visitors at the expo.

The Hon. Duncan Gay will recall that when the roles were reversed in this Chamber and we were on the Government benches, we brought resolutions such as this. The former Opposition would say that a particular motion was good and that they would support it but for the fact we were congratulating ourselves. So too does this part of the motion create an issue for this side of the House. As at Thursday 23 February 2012 the Regional Relocation Grant program had allocated 7,000 places for the full financial year and 383 people had accepted the offer. It is important to note also that 48 people had applied for the grant but were denied. My maths is not that good, I was an old shearer, but that is about a 7 per cent take-up rate.

The Hon. Rick Colless: If you were counting down the sheep—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: If they were coming out of my pen, I would be counting them.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: If you could count to 60 that would be your day.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Some days, that is right. I did not say I was a good shearer; I said I was an old shearer. By any measure, this program is not working. In my view, the \$49 million—or even the \$1 million for advertising and promoting the program—would be much better spent on the maintenance of jobs and the creation of new jobs programs in country New South Wales. This would encourage people to move to country New South Wales. People will move when they have a job to go to. That is our issue with regional relocation.

It is important to note that the expo was first funded in 2004 under the Carr Government with a grant of \$100,000. The New South Wales Labor Party had the vision to fund the project after very strong lobbying by Peter Bailey. As I said earlier, anyone who knows Peter will understand how passionately he pursued this project with the Government. The expo was funded every year after 2004 with \$100,000, and that funding was increased by 20 per cent by the Hon. Eric Roozendaal when he was Minister for State and Regional Development. The contract was renewed for 2011-12 because we recognised the value of the expo. That is clearly what the Hon. Sarah Mitchell was saying in her contribution to the debate: this expo adds value to the marketing of rural and regional New South Wales.

When we were in government we made a long-term commitment to the expo. I am worried that if the expo does not maintain bipartisan support, Treasury will start looking at where the dollars can be better spent, and that is a real risk for the expo. It is critical that we all support this initiative and speak about the value of the expo. The expo is a great opportunity to meet people, and it was beneficial to have the leader of our party there. That is another critical point: if all sides are going to support the expo, it makes sense that the leaders of all the political parties attend.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Even The Greens? The Greens would have to find a leader first.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I acknowledge that interjection. There may be an issue with The Greens—

The Hon. Duncan Gay: Do you think Jeremy is lost for time?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Maybe the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham will make a contribution to this debate. It is a shame that the motion has been politicised. Peter and Jenny Bailey have conducted an outstanding expo for many years. The expo should enjoy multi-partisanship support across the whole Parliament. Unfortunately, the Opposition will not be able to support the motion in its current form.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD [11.55 a.m.]: I support the motion. It is a shame that it has been turned into a political ping-pong match. The Opposition should look at the thrust of the motion, which is to support the Country and Regional Living Expo. I congratulate the Hon. Sarah Mitchell on her private member's motion. I missed attending the expo this year, for which I apologise. The Hon. Sarah Mitchell mentioned that Guyra had a stand at the expo. I believe they have had a stand there most years. I had a small input into that as a member of the Guyra Chamber of Commerce and we supported it with a financial contribution—which I believe is substantial, in the thousands of dollars.

The expo is also supported by my local council, and councillors attend the expo with volunteers. The representatives include mayor Hans Hietbrink, Helen St Clair, Martha Weedon and Renee Lockrey, who put in a good two or three days. What impresses me about the Guyra stand is—

The Hon. Mick Veitch: The tomatoes.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: Yes, the tomatoes are obviously very important, but I am impressed that the volunteers who man the stall take follow-up action. I attended a meeting after the expo where they talked about the leads and follow-ups. They contact everybody who expressed an interest in the Guyra stand and invite them back to Guyra. I believe that action has been reasonably successful and that one or two people they contacted have made the move to Guyra or are close to moving to Guyra. Moving to Guyra is, of course, underpinned by jobs. The Hon. Mick Veitch mentioned tomatoes. Tomato farming is a real economic anchor for Guyra, providing 300 jobs.

The Hon. Mick Veitch: It's not the only attraction in Guyra.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: Me? Those 300 jobs, skilled and unskilled, in a small town anchor the town economically. From memory, the people who are moving to Guyra and who hope to work at the tomato farm are electricians and plumbers. I congratulate Peter and Jenny Bailey; they do a wonderful job. They do not accept no for an answer and they plug their expo of regional New South Wales at every opportunity they get. I have said to Peter that the expo is obviously a wonderful event and does a magnificent job in showcasing New South Wales, but it can be sustained only with real jobs and real opportunities in regional New South Wales. It is not just about picture postcard stuff; people will move to regional New South Wales only if they have a job. That is the reality. The Liberal-Nationals Government is providing that opportunity. My town has suffered depopulation, particularly after the loss of the abattoir in 1995, but the wheel is turning. In Guyra rent is low, there is no unemployment and people are working in either Bindaree Beef in Inverell or at the tomato farm in our town. People will move to regional areas on the promise of real jobs, not just on a hope and a prayer.

I will continue to support the Country and Regional Living Expo in symmetry with supporting the creation of real jobs. This Government is assisting in that through things such as regional relocation grants, Restart NSW and payroll tax incentives. These initiatives will assist small to medium-sized businesses to get over the line in creating real jobs. I am equally determined that we maintain our regional development. I am an unashamed supporter of mining. With the appropriate safeguards, the future development of coal seam gas will turn around regional New South Wales. It is a game changer. I look forward to many more successful Country and Regional Living Expos. I commend the Hon. Sarah Mitchell for her fine motion. It is a shame that those on the opposite side cannot see the value of this motion.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY (Parliamentary Secretary) [12.01 p.m.]: I add my support to the motion moved by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell—a great motion that acknowledges many years of hard work by the people who organise Country Week and the Country and Regional Living Expo. This is the ninth year that the expo

will be held. The genesis of the expo shows the strength and the character of the organisers Peter and Jenny Bailey. In 2003 Peter Bailey ran for the seat of Northern Tablelands as a National Party candidate. He did that because he has a passion about regional New South Wales, job growth and the future of communities such as Armidale. He constantly argues that Armidale has a population of nearly 30,000 people but has a water supply for 100,000. Armidale has some of the best schools in Australia, both private and public, and the University of New England is magnificent. Armidale also has wonderful architecture, history and natural beauty. For all those reasons, Peter Bailey was passionate while running against the current Independent member for Northern Tablelands, Richard Torbay.

I must say Peter suffered a pretty bruising defeat in that election but he did not spend too much time licking his wounds. Although he did not fulfil his wish of becoming a member of Parliament to fight for regional New South Wales, he decided to pick himself up by his bootstraps and devise this wonderful concept. It is a testament to his ability to work with everybody for the betterment of his community. Over many years a lot of good people in this Chamber have supported him, such as Christine Robertson. Tony Kelly was in charge of the purse strings at the time, which resulted in the first expo in 2004. I remember attending that expo and being immensely proud. Many of us in this Chamber understand the increased quality of life and the benefits that come with living in a smaller community where there is less tension and pressure than in congested cities such as Sydney.

Regional New South Wales offers many great opportunities. I acknowledge the comment of the Hon. Scott McDonald that there should be opportunities for people in regional New South Wales. With the mechanisation of farming, jobs that existed 20 to 40 years ago are simply no longer there but other jobs are coming on line in regional New South Wales. Statistically regional areas run the best call centres as they maintain the staffing levels. We will be pushing to get call centres in regional areas as there is less staff turnover in regional areas than there would be in city locations.

One of the best things to happen every year during Country Week is something that cannot be analysed for Treasury. As the Hon. Mick Veitch said earlier in his contribution to debate on this motion, during the wonderful showcasing of country living \$250,000 or so of sponsorship is provided in the Sydney marketplace—a reminder for people to reconnect with their roots. Many people who live in Sydney have some connection with country and regional New South Wales. It is important to remind them of that, to encourage them to go to Rosehill and to walk around the expo. They will see that they can still earn the same salary as a teacher or a nurse in country New South Wales but they will have far greater spending power. I note the comments by the Hon. Mick Veitch about those things that cannot be measured. It is difficult to measure to what extent people's visits to the Country and Regional Living Expo impact on their decision to move to a regional location.

The Country and Regional Living Expo is a great initiative. I am sure all members think that their communities are the best places in which to live. I am from Coffs Harbour but as an upper House member I have covered extensively many parts of regional and country New South Wales. There are many worthwhile locations in rural, remote and coastal New South Wales of which I would love to be a part which have great public education facilities, public hospitals and access to other services such as telehealth. There is no reason why we cannot enjoy a better quality of life in regional communities and have all the benefits that are enjoyed by people living in Sydney. I congratulate the Hon. Sarah Mitchell on moving this great motion and I also congratulate my good friends Peter and Jenny Bailey.

The Hon. JENNIFER GARDINER [12.05 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I support the motion moved by my Nationals colleague the Hon. Sarah Mitchell which is in the following terms:

1. That this House notes that:

- (a) the Foundation for Regional Development hosts the Country and Regional Living Expo annually at Rosehill Gardens Racecourse ...

I think I have been to all the Country and Regional Living Expos since the inception of that event. I might have missed one but that would be about it. I look forward to attending this year's expo at Rosehill racecourse. As other speakers have mentioned, last year was the eighth year in which the expo was conducted with a view to promoting the benefits of living, working and doing business in regional New South Wales. It provides Sydneysiders in particular with information on jobs, real estate, educational and lifestyle options, including cultural attractions across New South Wales. There are usually over 50 exhibitors and many regional councils also participate. Visitors can "Walk New South Wales in a Day" and experience the tastes, sounds and opportunities of different parts of this State.

The expo is organised by the Foundation for Regional Development under the leadership of Mr Peter Bailey of Armidale, with the able assistance of his wife, Jenny. Their daughter, Sophie, takes leave from her work as a registered nurse to assist her parents throughout the expo. Other people also take leave from their commitments in various parts of the State, such as Guyra, to come to Sydney to help Jenny, Peter and the chairman of the foundation, Anthony Fox, in the intensive work of conducting the expo after a whole year's preparation. As others mentioned, Jenny and Peter are both passionate about the promotion of country and coastal regions in this State and indeed all parts of Australia outside its metropolises. They draw on a lot of the expertise and knowledge that they have built up over the years from endeavours to promote regional areas in other parts of Australia, in particular, Queensland and Victoria. If members want to know the benchmarks for that type of work Peter and Jenny are the people to whom they should talk.

Many communities competing for potential tree changers or sea changers can put their best foot forward at the expo and encourage visitors to their booths or exhibitions. Exhibitors then engage their visitors by following up those who are interested in making the move to a regional location. For example, last year the Cowra community looked to the expo to help fill vacancies within the bounds of the Weddin and Cowra shires where there was a shortage of skilled workers. Last year, Parkes Shire Council value added to its exhibit with the attendance of Roy Billing, the star of *The Dish* and *Underbelly*. He has a property in the Parkes district. He came to the expo to promote Opera at the Dish and, of course, the Elvis Festival which is held in Parkes each January.

That is a demonstration of how each community has an opportunity to promote its particular points of difference at the expo. The unemployment rate in Muswellbrook shire was as low as 1.7 per cent at the time of last year's expo. It was seeking to find 120 people to fill jobs in Muswellbrook, which is a major service town for the Upper Hunter mines. Muswellbrook shire was looking for electricians, boilermakers, fitters, auto mechanics and taxisdrivers as well as people to fill vacancies in administrative roles. During the expo it was pointed out that a spray painter or a panel beater in Muswellbrook can earn over \$100,000 per annum.

Moree shire, headed by its dynamic and character-filled mayor, Katrina Humphries, was at the expo promoting that district's agricultural and tourism sectors, as well as housing developments that are going on in Moree. Armidale, of course, promotes its many educational options from primary school to post-graduate university education, as well as its stunning cultural attractions. Go-ahead Gunnedah shire is a regular exhibitor at the expo and Mayor Adam Marshall, like many other mayors and community leaders, personally fronts up at his community's booth at Rosehill. Many of the councils see the expo as the premier forum for this type of engagement with potential residents and ratepayers.

Mike Foster of Cowra said that the Country and Regional Living Expo has built a first-class reputation for delivering the right crowds to a well-equipped and well-run convention pavilion. The location enables easy access for exhibitors and participants alike and is only a few kilometres from the geographic centre of Sydney. The venue provides plenty of parking, there is a train station at the door and exhibitors who have to stay at the venue for a few days can find accommodation nearby. I assure members that after hours exhibitors have a lot of social interaction as they exchange information that has been collated during the expo and gather ideas for the next one. Once the visitors have been delivered to the venue it is up to exhibitors to put on the show and to convince them of the benefits of country living—something that country people do with ease. They display the energetic, genuine and likeable natures that represent the characters in our non-metropolitan centres.

As one enters the expo the demographic profile of visitors to the expo is on display, which makes for an interesting analysis. Most of those who visit and respond to surveys have jobs in the metropolitan area, with the largest segment of jobs being held by those in the health and medical sector. In some of our regional towns and cities the health sector is the major employer. Most respondents are aged 55 and under and most are thinking about relocating from Sydney within a year or so. The range of exhibitors includes shires, city councils, chambers of commerce, health stakeholders from various government agencies, including education and community services, and it also includes service groups such as the Royal Far West children's organisation, regional development organisations and other government agencies with a special responsibility for rural and regional areas.

The program of each expo includes seminars on topics such as the latest government initiatives to encourage relocation to rural and regional New South Wales such as the regional relocation grant of \$7,000. As other speakers have mentioned, the expo has enjoyed bipartisan support from successive New South Wales governments. Last year the expo was opened by The National's Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Don Page, who addressed exhibitors and visitors on the special focus of initiatives for regional New South Wales

which he said are "embedded in the DNA of the new Liberal-Nationals State Government". I acknowledge that one year Premier Iemma opened the expo and on another occasion it was opened by the Hon. Steve Whan. On all the other occasions on which the expo was held during Labor administrations a Minister of the Crown always opened the event.

The bipartisan support Peter and Jenny Bailey have been assiduous in cultivating religiously to ensure that they keep in touch with our opponents in government or in opposition is important to the development, vitality and future prosperity of regional areas in this State. I have great pleasure in supporting the motion moved by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell. I congratulate the Baileys, Anthony Fox and others, all the volunteers and paid employees from time to time on the delivery of eight successful expos to date and I wish them well for the future. I genuinely believe that this extremely important initiative must continue in the future.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY (Minister for Roads and Ports) [12.16 p.m.]: I was in the Chamber at the commencement of debate on the motion moved by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell which makes reference to my good friends Peter and Jenny Bailey but I had not prepared a speech or had any intention of speaking in debate. I now have an opportunity to do two things: first, to pay tribute to the Baileys for what they are doing with a passion in regional New South Wales and, second, to compliment the previous Labor Government—something that I do not do very often—because a number of Labor Ministers recognised the Baileys' passion and the validity of their work. One does not need Google to establish that the Baileys are passionate members of The Nationals. On this occasion I pay tribute to the former Labor Government for supporting and encouraging the Baileys in their betterment of this State—a testament to those Labor Ministers who took that leap of faith and a testament to the Baileys who pursued their cause with passion. I support the motion moved by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell.

The Hon. STEVE WHAN [12.18 p.m.]: Earlier the Hon. Mick Veitch outlined Labor's position.

The Hon. Mick Veitch: And comprehensively too.

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: As the Hon. Mick Veitch said, he comprehensively outlined Labor's position on the motion moved by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell. The Country and Regional Living Expo, which promotes country New South Wales, is something that Labor has consistently supported. As members who contributed to debate on this motion have said, there is bipartisan support for this important motion. I am sure that Peter and Jenny Bailey, Anthony and all those involved in the expo would prefer it if this motion received bipartisan support, which it will do with this simple amendment. I move:

That the question be amended by omitting 2 (b) and inserting instead:

- (b) welcomes the establishment of the Federal Regional Australia Institute, an independent think tank dedicated to regional issues, and looks forward to that body interacting positively with the Foundation for Regional Development.

The amendment recognises that there has been some movement on regional issues at a Federal level, which is very much in sync with the sort of case Peter Bailey has been pushing and why he has established the Foundation for Regional Development—a body that will focus on regional issues and on the development of policy. Every country member, and I am sure other members, would have received calls from Peter about engaging in those issues and developing positive policies. Indeed, plenty of free policy ideas come through as well. The motion could be enhanced by genuine bipartisan support and a unanimous vote. I was beaten to the punch by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell who gave notice of this motion ahead of me. However, I will be delighted to support the motion before the House, if it could be amended in the manner that I have suggested.

I also congratulate Peter and Jenny Bailey, Anthony, and the whole team who organise the expo. It has been a terrific part of efforts to convince people or assist people to relocate to regional New South Wales since 2004. I have attended most of the expos. As has already been mentioned, I opened one of them, in which I took great delight. I also attended the expo that was opened by Morris Iemma, and I think Tony Kelly might have opened one as well at one stage. One of the terrific things about this expo is that it draws regional and rural councils to a place where they have the opportunity to show people something of country and regional living. When the Hon. Mick Veitch, John Robertson and I visited the 2011 expo, we took the opportunity to talk not just to exhibitors but to some of the people who attended to find out what their interests were.

Afterwards I spent some time waiting for a train—fruitlessly, I have to say; I ended up catching a taxi—talking to a couple who had visited the expo and who were taking home some of the produce in their bag. They were there because one of their children and his or her partner were interested in moving, and they were doing some of the legwork for them about where they might move to in regional New South Wales. That is

terrific. I think we would all agree that one of the most important objectives of a comprehensive regional development policy, of the type that the Hon. Mick Veitch and I will be formulating over the next few years, is making country towns attractive to families, particularly families who have children. Families bring in not just the person who gets a job in a country town—and there are plenty of jobs—but also a partner who can fill another position in the community and children who can boost enrolments at the local school.

Residents of regional New South Wales know that the lifestyle is incredibly desirable for families, but sometimes, for members of a city family, the stretch of moving out of their comfort zone needs to be addressed by assurances that there are services such as health and education and lots of opportunities and things to do, such as arts, sports, leisure and cultural opportunities. What influenced me greatly in my thinking about moving to a regional area was that I was part of the Regional and Rural Task Force with the member for Northern Tablelands, Richard Torbay. A lot of the feedback related to the breadth of appeal of the regional lifestyle, not just jobs.

People were interested in recreational opportunities that would attract families to a town. Approximately a week ago I spoke at a mining conference in Mudgee and told the miners that we would love to receive feedback from them. Often they have the challenge of persuading their families to move with them to a job in a country community. What we should be hearing from people who have achieved that successfully is exactly what they think we should do to get the message across that country towns are great places in which to live. That message is especially important for their partners, who may live in Sydney and who might be slightly nervous about a move to country areas of New South Wales.

The Country and Regional Living Expo has been a really positive part of the promotion of regional New South Wales. As it was the brainchild of Peter and Jenny, they deserve huge credit. The Minister was correct earlier in saying that Labor noted the political affiliations of Peter, but he is probably one of the few Nationals who was invited to one of our Country Labor meetings when we were in government, and we always took great delight in his presence. Labor is always open to great ideas for country New South Wales, irrespective of where they might come from. That is really important. I hope a couple of points I wish to raise will be addressed during reply. The key point is that we have heard the history of funding from the State Government. A couple of years ago the Labor Government increased funding to \$120,000, which represents a 20 per cent increase, and that funding was locked in for two years. I know that people who attend the expo would like to hear a commitment by the Government today about long-term funding for the expo. They would like funding to be locked in for more than just the next year.

I hope that that commitment will be made today; alternatively, we hope for a long-term funding commitment in the budget—but a commitment today would be even better. I know that there was discussion of this topic within government before the motion was placed on the *Notice Paper*. People who attend the expo would also like a commitment that one of the senior members of the Government will attend the expo. It would be great to see the Government back up its pre-election policies on relocation to regional New South Wales by having the Premier or, failing that, the Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, Andrew Stoner, as the most senior Minister responsible for regional development, opening the expo, talking to people and showing the Government's support for it.

Without trying to introduce a negative tone to the debate, I certainly received comments from people that they would have liked Andrew Stoner to be there. Although he is not the person I would have loved to have seen at the expo, other people were certainly keen to see him there. I will now discuss the reasons why I moved the amendment. I notice that some discussions are taking place on the government side of the Chamber. I do not know what the outcome is.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: You will be happy with them.

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: I am pleased to hear that. I endorse the comments made by the Hon. Mick Veitch relating to the regional relocation grant that has been criticised by the Labor Party, and with good reason: The grants have no performance criteria. The Hon. Mick Veitch outlined figures relating to the take-up, and even on the meagre level of take-up there is nothing to indicate whether people who took up the grant were not already intending to move to regional New South Wales. The Labor Party wants to see public funds used wisely, which is of paramount importance. However, I will not belabour the point because I sense a feeling of bipartisanship from across the Chamber, and I would not want to destroy that. I am unable to hear what the Minister for Roads and Ports is saying under his breath, but I hope that he will attend this year's expo in August at Rosehill. It will be good to see him there.

At the expos I have attended, I have been delighted to see the exhibitors. I take this opportunity to encourage council representatives from the south-eastern part of the State to become more engaged with the Country and Regional Living Expo. For the first few years a number of councils participated, but several stopped. I think the expo is very worthwhile and presents a good opportunity to effectively sell the benefits and the great desirability of living in places such as Queanbeyan—which of course is the jewel of country New South Wales—and the fantastic lifestyles of places such as Jindabyne, Cooma and Bombala. The location of those towns facilitates fantastic access to services in Canberra. If people like to ski or like bushwalking, they also provide access to mountains and bushwalking tracks as well as quick access to coast in summer—at least, when the Minister for Roads and Ports completes a speedy repair work on Brown Mountain, there will be quick access to the coast.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Of course. He does it all himself. He will be out there with the D9.

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: I do not expect the Minister to be on the end of the shovel. I would like to see Palerang council promoting the benefits of living in country areas of New South Wales, in places such as the heritage-listed town of Braidwood.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Bungendore.

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: Bungendore seems to have pretty healthy population increases all by itself, but certainly the benefits of its region could be well promoted by community representatives turning up to the expo. I have seen some really effective stands at the Country and Regional Living Expo. One sticks in my mind from a few years ago. It had a series of clocks on the wall with a sign to the effect, "Living in Sydney: Leave for work 6.30 a.m. Get to work 9.00 a.m. Leave work 5.00 p.m. Get home 8.00 p.m. Kiss the kids as they are asleep in bed."

[Interruption]

The Hon. Charlie Lynn is trying to make this debate political again. Maybe he has been on his motorbike through country New South Wales. That town's exhibit said, "Leave for work 8.50 a.m. Get to work 9.00 a.m. Leave work 5.00 p.m. Get home 5.10 p.m. Play outside with the kids." I thought that was a nice way to illustrate living in the country. Many stalls brought together a number of agencies. For example, they would have real estate agents and jobs available in the local area, and people could match up a job with their skills, find a place to live, and find out about the other services and facilities available in the town. That was a fantastic way to let people know the opportunities available.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: You should take Eric Roozendaal to find a job.

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: The Minister is interjecting about sending Eric. I thank the Hon. Eric Roozendaal for his support for the Country and Regional Living Expo when he was Treasurer. He provided the increased funding for it. I hope the current Treasurer can match him by committing long-term funding for the expo. This motion provides an opportunity for the Government to reinforce the great words we have heard from Government members. It should commit to long-term funding. The Premier or Deputy Premier, or both, should commit to going to this year's expo and future expos. They could alternate if they wanted to. I am sure Peter Bailey would love to see them.

As I was saying, there have been some terrific exhibits from councils and communities. When the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Mick Veitch and I were there we had a lovely chat with the ladies at the Country Women's Association stall. They wanted to show partners of those who wanted to move to the country that there are social structures that help people who come to an area to get involved and make links. That is the fabulous part of country communities—people have a neighbourhood, friends and communities who make them feel welcome and valued, and who support them in times of need. [Time expired.]

The Hon. RICK COLLESS [12.32 p.m.]: I congratulate the Hon. Sarah Mitchell on moving her first private member's motion in this Chamber. I also congratulate her on the motion in its own right; it is an excellent motion worthy of debate in this Chamber. The Foundation for Regional Development, as it is now known, has been in existence for nine years and has hosted the Country and Regional Living Expo—formerly known as Country Week—on eight occasions. This year will be the ninth.

Over the years I have attended many of those expos, and each year it gets bigger and better. The expo's purpose is to provide Sydney residents with a range of information on issues such as jobs, real estate, education,

health and lifestyle opportunities that exist in regional New South Wales. Sydney people can experience what has been called "Walk New South Wales in a day" and see the wide-ranging tastes, sounds and experiences available in various communities across New South Wales. Last year some 9,000 people attended the expo. While there are not really accurate figures on how many people have moved to regional New South Wales as a result of attending the expo—as the Hon. Mick Veitch mentioned—many families have taken that opportunity and have taken the big step to move out into the bush.

Many members have spoken about the driving force behind the event—my good friends Peter and Jenny Bailey, and the board chairman, Anthony Fox. I have known Peter and Jenny for more than 25 years at least. In those days they had a successful retailing business; they were retailing business machines—photocopiers and faxes, and so on—in Tamworth. The 2012 expo will be held on 3 to 5 August this year, again at Rosehill Gardens Grand Pavilion. It is interesting to look at some of the statistics coming into this year's exhibition. For example, 98 per cent of the 2011 exhibitors have committed to coming in 2012. To get return business to that extent is a sign of a successful operation. It is extraordinary.

The Hon. Mick Veitch: Make sure Treasury knows.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: I am sure Peter Bailey has advised Treasury in his own way. Free parking, easy access and accommodation for exhibitors make this an ideal spot for such an expo. In addition to the 98 per cent exhibitor return, many Sydneysiders come back year after year. Maybe one day they will take that final big step and make the move to the bush. This year there will be a farmer's direct market. Last year there were a couple of stalls. I think there was a wholesale meat seller.

The Hon. Mick Veitch: That was popular.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: It was popular. A lot of people took advantage of that. This year there will be an expanded farmers direct market, which will be open to producers of various products made or grown around New South Wales. That will help to bridge the divide between city and country, and showcase what is grown and produced in regional New South Wales. Sydneysiders coming to visit the expo will be able to purchase farm-fresh beef, chicken, lamb, eggs, milk, potatoes, apples—anything that is grown in regional New South Wales, and that is where all our food comes from. They will be able to go home and fill their fridges and freezers with some of that farm-fresh produce from regional New South Wales.

This has been a tremendous event over the years, and I am sure it will be a great event again in 2012. I would like to see all members in this place and in the other place, particularly those whose areas of responsibility are in the Sydney Basin and the Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong areas, publicise this event and travel to Rosehill themselves on 3, 4 or 5 August to experience the expo and fill up their fridges and freezers with the wonderful produce that comes from New South Wales. It is a shame that the Hon. Steve Whan wants to amend this motion, accusing us of being over-political and then suggesting an amendment that is equally as political to his side of the Chamber. I move:

That the amendment of the Hon. Steve Whan be amended by omitting all words after "2 (b)".

With those few words and that amendment, I commend the motion. I again congratulate the Hon. Sarah Mitchell on moving her first private member's motion in the House.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR [12.38 p.m.]: I also speak in favour of the motion and acknowledge that I support the amendment moved by the Hon. Rick Colless. This motion is too valuable and important for the people of regional New South Wales, particularly Peter and Jenny Bailey, not to go through with bipartisan support. It is a great initiative. I congratulate the Hon. Sarah Mitchell on moving the motion. Unlike the rest of my Nationals colleagues, I do not have a long history with Peter and Jenny Bailey. I met Peter when I recently became a member of this place. When I first met Peter his passion was pretty clear, not only for Country Week and the Country and Regional Living Expo but also for the lifestyle and the future of regional New South Wales.

I had the pleasure of having dinner with Peter Bailey and the Hon. Sarah Mitchell and discussing the concept of the regional living expo. I have committed to attending the 2012 regional living expo. I was unable to attend the regional expo in 2011 as I was enjoying the other aspects of regional New South Wales, but I will be there this year. The expo does not just focus on what jobs are available in regional New South Wales, which is a key difference and why it is worthwhile; the expo gives a complete picture of what families need to know to relocate, whether they are making a sea change or tree change. They need to know they have a job and there are

good schools and social opportunities. The Hon. Steve Whan spoke of the social engagement of people who move to regional communities. People need to know whether there is real estate to rent or buy when they move to these regional towns. They are important fundamental things.

It is something that, on a different scale, I was involved in when I worked with Integral Energy. We sent a team to England to attract line workers to move to western Sydney to fill a shortage in that industry. Because I was the training manager for that organisation I was part of the human resources team that put together the brief to send over with our team. Through research and talking to people it was made clear to me that people will not move just for a job. They need to know what else is available for them and their families to enable them to become part of the community, to settle into that regional community or another area. That is the good thing about the expo: It does not focus just on what jobs are available; it gives a complete picture of what regional New South Wales can offer families that are willing to leave the metropolitan areas and resettle. It shows one of our best selling cards: the lifestyle opportunities.

I liked the Hon. Steve Whan's example of the stall with different clocks on the wall comparing city and country life. I can provide another practical example that sums up our lifestyle opportunities. Like other members, over the Christmas break I enjoyed some quality time with my family, but I did not need to go away. I live in a part of regional New South Wales where during the Christmas and new year period I enjoyed horse riding in the morning with my wife and son—we would go for a two-hour or three-hour ride. If it was a warm day we would drive 50 minutes and surf in the afternoon. My son received a surfboard for Christmas. We were living the dream: Horse riding in the morning and going to the beach in the afternoon. To top it off, I would run into the Hon. Peter Phelps at the fish and chip shop at Gerringong when we were picking up our dinner. That meeting was not on purpose, but highlighted that the spoils of regional New South Wales were not just being enjoyed by my family but were also being enjoyed by other members of this place. Other members were taking in the wonderful parts of the South Coast and enjoying the fine fresh produce from the area.

It is important that we give people a complete picture of what regional New South Wales can offer. The regional living expo does that. I commend the local councils that are involved. Like other members of this place, I feel some disappointment in councils that I know should have been at the expo and were not. I congratulate the councils that attended. I would congratulate the councils that are working together on their expeditions. Across the Riverina councils are not going one-out; they are getting together and providing a group stall. Some of the services and activities that people need to access in regional areas are often not provided by one local government area. For example, I lived in Leeton for many years. Griffith is only 56 kilometres away. It is used by those living in Leeton to access a large number of resources and services. It is important that those local councils work together. I acknowledge the initiatives that some councils have come up with to attract people to their area over the past eight years. It is good, positive competition. Gwydir Shire Council ran a raffle and offered as first prize a sizeable block of land in Warialda.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: A great place.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: It is a great place. The raffle created a lot of excitement. Claire Coulton, who works for me, is a proud Warialda girl. She encouraged me to mention it today as a great initiative by a council thinking outside the box. Other councils provided \$1 rent to get people to regional New South Wales. Late last year I spoke about a business owner in Leeton that was offering free commercial rent for any business that wanted to relocate to that town and take occupancy of the old State Bank building in the main street. I congratulate all of those involved. Credit has been flowing across the Chamber for different things that both sides have done over the years. I acknowledge the Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast, Don Page, who opened the expo last year. I am sure that he will speak to his Cabinet members and encourage them to attend the expo in 2012. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO [12.45 p.m.]: I acknowledge the good work of the Hon. Sarah Mitchell in moving this motion. I support the amended motion as proposed by the Hon. Richard Colless. I congratulate Peter Bailey on his vision and commitment to promoting growth in regional New South Wales. He was the founder of Country Week, which is now the Country and Regional Living Expo. He has always had a strong interest in regional development. He has served on the Tamworth and District Chamber of Commerce, the industry board and was president in the early 1990s.

When the Bailey family moved to Armidale Peter served on the Armidale Development Corporation and was the chair for two years. In early 2003, after discussions with the New South Wales Department of State and Regional Development, Peter and Jenny Bailey's vision of Country Week came into existence with

sponsorship of \$100,000. The Country Week expo was all about providing a venue in Sydney where communities from across regional New South Wales could unite to showcase what was on offer for Sydney residents and businesses who were interested in living, working and relocating to regional areas.

It was cost prohibitive for country communities to market themselves individually or even in small neighbourly collectives. The first expo gave people from across New South Wales and the metropolitan area a chance to get together and see what opportunities existed that they could mutually benefit from. When Peter Bailey came to the New South Wales Labor Government for support for this proposal Country Labor wholeheartedly supported him and continued to do so for the rest of the time we were in government. As was stated earlier, there was no partisan politics. Peter's connections with The Nationals were not relevant. His innovative concepts and his passion and drive to promote country New South Wales were relevant. Not only did the former Labor Government support Country Week when it was in government, it also supported regional jobs through a number of initiatives.

The former Government held a New South Wales job summit in February 2009. More than 250 key business and community leaders, major employers, and education and training experts came together to consider actions that government and industry could take to support jobs. A regime of regional job summits was undertaken following that summit. The first of those was held in the Illawarra in April 2009. The aim of the regional job summits was to support jobs in regional areas. The Government committed to a series of summits. The summits drew on local expert advice, identified opportunities and impediments to job generation, and developed specific proposals for action in regional New South Wales. The Government developed a policy for a unified, informed strategic approach to create regional jobs and to support struggling communities in regional New South Wales. The former Government introduced an \$85 million Building the Country package to stimulate regional New South Wales. It had a target of creating 4,000 new jobs in regional New South Wales each year through regional investment programs.

I want to detail some of the support that Country Labor gave to Peter Bailey. To do so, I will go through some of the minutes and agenda between the end of 2003 and the end of 2006, which is the period that my records cover. We had 12 meetings over that period with representatives from Country Week to talk about what they were proposing and to run through the reports of how successful the program had been. It is worthwhile noting that we were happy to support this event because it was such a good idea. At one stage we even took out a stall at Country Week. However, we found that most people attending were interested in jobs and were not bothered with political parties. I do not know whether The Nationals still have a stall, but they used to have one at Country Week. It was very handy; we got lots of pens from The Nationals stall. It upset a lot of Nationals people when they saw us writing with them.

As has been noted, there was a Country Women's Association stall, just to let people know what else apart from jobs was available. I was interested to find that their Sydney branch is located in Haberfield, near me. One of the reasons that we were happy to support Country Week, now the Country and Regional Living Expo, is the professionalism of the people who put the expo together, and the fact that they were able to come back to us with quantified results of the number of people who attended, where they came from and their backgrounds, and information about the job inquiries that were made. That was an effective way in which to achieve this relocation of skilled workers to fill vacancies in country areas, and it had strong support from exhibitors and positive responses from those who attended.

I want to talk particularly about the event targeting filling vacancies, because there have been, particularly in the Central West, some schemes to encourage people to relocate from the city to the country with very cheap rents for housing. That is fine; it keeps up the school numbers, retaining the two or three teachers at the small school. But, as I have been advised by some of the major welfare providers in the Central West, that leads to families with high needs moving to those areas. So it might keep up school numbers, but the high needs of some families swamp existing welfare services. The idea of attracting skilled workers to fill vacancies is very good. I hope to see the County and Regional Living Expo continue into the future because I think it is a pretty good program, for which Peter Bailey is to be commended.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL [12.52 p.m.], in reply: I begin my reply to the debate by thanking members who have contributed to it: the Hon. Mick Veitch, the Hon. Scot MacDonald, the Hon. Melinda Pavey, the Hon. Jennifer Gardiner, the Hon. Steve Whan, the Hon. Rick Colless, the Hon. Duncan Gay, the Hon. Niall Blair and the Hon. Amanda Fazio. It has been a great debate, and it expressed due recognition to the Baileys. I would like to touch on comments made by some of my colleagues who spoke in the debate. I start with the Hon. Mick Veitch's reference to the Rosehill Gardens Racecourse being a great venue for the event. I agree with the member. My first trip to Rosehill was to attend the expo last year. But I had the pleasure of returning there on the weekend for Myer Ladies Day. I understand the expo has been run at the same time as the race day. Having been there, I can see a real advantage in that.

I would like to note that, while not being much of a punter, I did have a bit of a flutter on the weekend. I took my dad's tips. They were absolutely shocking, and I will never do that again. But I had a win on the last race, because I backed that great jockey Hugh Bowman who, as many in this House will know, is the grandson of the former member of the other place Roger Wotton. Hugh won the last race, and I walked out with a bit of extra cash in my pocket. So I am open to the idea of perhaps one day having the living expo on the same weekend as the races. I agree with the Hon. Mick Veitch's comments about talking up the value of the expo. I completely agree that regional members need to do that. He spoke also about the fact that it is difficult to put together firm quantitative or qualitative data. We need to keep that in mind also.

The Hon. Melinda Pavey spoke about being proud of her community of Coffs Harbour, adding that upper House members are free to talk about and appreciate other communities as well. I completely agree. As I have said, I am a proud Gunnedah girl, but my family have lived in Grafton and Kyogle, and I was a resident of those towns. My husband and I also lived in Moree. So I appreciate the range and diversity of communities in New South Wales, that all of them have a lot to offer, and we should be giving equal support to all regional areas of New South Wales. The Hon. Jennifer Gardiner commended Sophie Bailey, the daughter of Jenny and Peter. It is appropriate that Sophie has been recognised in today's debate, because I know she does a lot to support her mum and dad both while the expo is running and throughout the year.

The Hon. Niall Blair did a great job in his contribution to explain that the expo provides information about the entire living experience in the bush. It was also great that he commended local councils. I was remiss in not mentioning the councils earlier, because they also put enormous effort into their stalls, and they are deserving of recognition. I spoke about Lynne Price-Purnell, who works with the Baileys in Armidale, and that she made the tree change. I thought it would interest the House to know that I recently met her daughter Jessica, who is in her twenties. She also is from Melbourne, but moved to Armidale to go to the University of New England and has stayed in the community. She opened and is running her own public relations firm. Jessica is young, dynamic and is involved in and making a real contribution to the community. It is nice to see a second generation tree changer coming to a regional area as part of the Country Week promotion.

I conclude by talking about the amendments to the motion. The amendment moved by the Hon. Steve Whan was subject to an amendment by the Hon. Rick Colless. I will be pleased to support the amendment moved by the Hon. Rick Colless. Criticism was made about politicisation of the motion. While I believe the regional grants initiative, Jobs Action Plan and Restart NSW are good policies and initiatives, and that they were welcomed by visitors to the event, I did not intend that the original motion be contentious. The Hon. Mick Veitch acknowledged that the essence of the motion is support for the expo.

In the interests of all members in this House showing their full support for Peter and Jenny and the expo, I am more than happy to support the amendment; I would not like to have to ring Peter after the debate today and say the original motion was not supported by Labor because I know that that would not be a fair reflection of the debate and the consideration given to it. Therefore, I am happy to support the amendment with a view to seeing the motion passed unanimously. I am most proud of the fact that through this motion Peter and Jenny Bailey and the expo will be accorded the recognition they deserve. I thank all members for their support.

Question—That the amendment of the Hon. Rick Colless to the amendment of the Hon. Steve Whan be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment of the Hon. Rick Colless to the amendment of the Hon. Steve Whan agreed to.

Question—That the amendment of the Hon. Steve Whan as amended be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment of the Hon. Steve Whan as amended agreed to.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.

[Deputy-President (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones) left the chair at 12.58 p.m. The House resumed at 2.30 p.m.]

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

POLICE RESOURCES

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. When will the Minister make the so-called operational strength of all local area commands publicly available on the New South Wales Police website, as he has promised on numerous occasions, including at budget estimates hearings last year?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his landmark question. Today is a special day as this is the first question I have had from the Leader of the Opposition. I congratulate him yet again on giving me an opportunity to talk about policing in this State. The accolades have been forthcoming. Over the past few days the strongest accolade pertaining to policing numbers came from my friends and colleagues at the Police Association. My comrades are backing and congratulating this Government on what it has done in parts of this State. This Government will continue to do that. I am grateful to the Leader of the Opposition for giving me an opportunity to talk about the excellent work that is being done by the New South Wales Police Force to ensure that the numbers of police across the State are kept at levels the likes of which we never saw when the Labor Party was in government. Quite simply, the former Labor Government neglected police and our communities. It is now trying to forget its past, but it cannot do so.

Three hundred police officers from the December class will be going to country and regional areas in New South Wales that have been calling out for resources. I wish Opposition members could have seen the look on the faces of Police Association delegates to whom I spoke on Tuesday when I told them that, after the Commissioner of Police had examined the assessments of all local area commanders, he agreed to deploy 12 additional police officers to Tamworth following the 10 who were deployed in December—a total of 22 police officers for Tamworth. What a disgrace that the former Labor Government did nothing to maintain police numbers. This Government will continue to allocate money to the Police Force and provide it with the support it needs to deploy police officers where they are needed the most.

On 4 May an additional nine police officers will be deployed to Fairfield. We have heard nothing from Opposition members; they have not congratulated the Commissioner of Police or the Government on these additional police resources. On 4 May an additional nine police officers will be deployed to Bankstown; eight officers will be deployed to Burwood; seven officers will be deployed to Liverpool; five officers will be deployed to Marrickville; eight officers will be deployed to Parramatta; six officers will be deployed to Penrith, and the list goes on.

This Government will continue to support the NSW Police Force and ensure that police officers are deployed where they are needed. There has been a significant turnaround in morale in the NSW Police Force. This Government will continue to ensure there is transparency in everything it does—something that people in New South Wales have come to expect from this Government. After 16 years of neglect people in New South Wales now have transparent government. I thank the honourable member for his question and I remind him that this Government will maintain the operational strength of local area commands. I will make those numbers available to the Hon. Luke Foley but he and his colleagues will just have to wait.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: I ask a supplementary question. Could the Minister elucidate his answer by addressing the topic at hand and advising us precisely when the operational strength of all local area commands will become publicly available on the website as he has previously promised?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I thank the Hon. Luke Foley for giving me another opportunity to reflect on the fact that we have a massive amount—90 per cent—of operational strength in local area commands in New South Wales, which again exposes the neglect, incompetence and sheer arrogance of the former Labor Government, which failed to acknowledge and neglected the NSW Police Force and communities throughout this State. The member asked me when the operational strength numbers will become publicly available. This Government will continue to work with the NSW Police Force to ensure that those figures are publicly available. I have told members where police from the next class will be deployed and I have told them also where police officers from the December class were deployed. Those figures will become publicly available at an appropriate time.

NSW POLICE FORCE EXPO

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Can he inform the House about plans for the Police Expo to be held at Darling Harbour this weekend?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: This Government likes to comply with deadlines, dates and things like that. On Sunday 1 April 2012 the NSW Police Force will continue its 150th anniversary celebrations with the Police Expo to be held at Darling Harbour. The expo will include displays in the Sydney Harbour Convention Centre, as well as demonstrations of equipment and crime-fighting techniques in Tumbalong Park and on the water in Cockle Bay. I have been invited, along with the Premier, to officially open the expo. A law enforcement torch relay will carry the flame of hope from Barangaroo, along King Street Wharf and over the Pyrmont Bridge to the Sydney Harbour Convention Centre, and one of our special Olympians will light the cauldron.

The day will include exhibits from a variety of police units. These include a crime scene, a drug laboratory, a display of police and offender weapons dating back to the First Fleet, a display of police heroes past and present, and a collection of old and current police vehicles, uniforms and equipment. A highway patrol unit with radar equipment will be on show and children can have their running speed over 20 metres checked by radar. Policing demonstrations will further the ongoing mission of the NSW Police Force to inform the public about activities the force gets up to on a daily basis. It is fitting that the men and women of the Police Rescue Squad will be on show at this weekend's expo. The Police Rescue Squad celebrates its seventieth anniversary this year. Abseiling demonstrations and a simulated rescue from a wrecked vehicle located in the exhibition centre are planned.

The public order and riot squad and tactical operations police will show off some of their equipment, vehicles and tactics. Weapons trainers will provide an overview of operational equipment and simulated training exercises on a range of police firearms. A crowd favourite, as always, will be the police dogs, which include puppies, and police horses, both of which will be on show all day. Those units have a long history of service to New South Wales. A police dog capability display in the morning will show the unique and integral role they play in police investigations, including most certainly the recent operation to capture the fugitive Malcolm Naden.

Alongside the demonstrations, the day will provide an opportunity for the NSW Police Force to share its history and stories with the public. Without wanting to spoil the details for members who will attend, the stories will include details of operations such as Strike Force Tuna—an incredible 10-year homicide investigation that resulted in 14 offenders being arrested and more than 100 charges being laid. Heroic tales from past and present police officers who have been recognised with national awards for bravery and courage also will be told.

The expo is not just about informing the public about what the police do to prevent crimes: a discussion on internet safety and cybercrime is aimed at empowering the public to take preventative measures to protect themselves. Finally, it is important to acknowledge the police and community youth clubs official ceremony at the expo to celebrate their seventy-fifth anniversary. Mitchell Pearce, Anthony Minichiello and Paul Sironen will be on hand to witness demonstrations of dance, boxing, gymnastic and basketball and to further acknowledge the important role that police and community youth clubs play in the NSW Police Force. I wish the NSW Police Force well on what will be another well-organised and informative day.

POLICE RESOURCES

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: In directing my question to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, I refer to an answer he gave earlier and to an answer he gave yesterday in which he outlined the locations to which new police recruits will be sent when they attest in two months time, and I ask: Why was there no mention of more officers for the Hurstville Local Area Command which, according to current figures on the NSW Police Force website, has fallen to 40 officers under the 90 per cent strength that he has claimed is the appropriate level for each local area command?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for his question and assure him that commands that are not over 90 per cent operational are within a couple of percentage points below 90 per cent operational. Aside from the fact that Labor members are about to cause trouble and muck

take, they should not criticise the Commissioner of Police by attacking the allocation of police resources. The Commissioner of Police allocates the police resources throughout New South Wales. He sits down with each of the local area commanders and examines the commands to determine where the officers will be allocated.

If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has a criticism of the New South Wales Commissioner of Police, he should stand up and say so, and offer a suggestion as to where he thinks the commissioner should have pulled resources. The fact is that Government members support the commissioner and the police. Moreover, the communities who will benefit from additional resources, and who will continue to do so, welcome the support they receive from this Government.

GRAFTON BRIDGE

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will he confirm that the Government has managed to hone the 41 options for the long-planned second crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton down to just six and that, of those, five came from community meetings and the sixth came from Roads and Maritime Services? When will a decision be made on which crossing will be used? Has funding been set aside to ensure that work can commence as soon as possible?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the Hon. Robert Brown for his very good question. Off the top of my head, the statistics he cited appear to be accurate, but I will have to check because lately I am not certain of what has been included and what has been excluded. A very strong community consultation process was undertaken on this project. Many members of the House are aware that the cast iron bridge across the Clarence River at Grafton follows the railway line—in fact, it was built on top of the railway line—and that there is a dogleg bend in the middle of the bridge that must be approached with a great deal of caution. At first glance the bridge gives the impression that it is not of very sturdy construction or destined to be long lived.

The Hon. Jennifer Gardiner: It is quite scary.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: As the Hon. Jennifer Gardiner says, it can be intimidating for motorists when they drive across it. However, I assure the Chamber that, despite its appearance, it is a very robust structure and it will serve the community well into the future. As part of the 2011-12 State budget and to fulfil an election commitment, unlike the former Labor Government which is now in opposition, the New South Wales Coalition Government allocated \$4 million to continue planning for a second bridge over the Clarence River at Grafton.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: Is that all?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: It is a lot more than the former Labor Government allocated. The existing crossing of the Clarence River at Grafton was opened for traffic in 1932 as a combined rail and road structure, as I mentioned earlier. The current approaches to the bridge are generally four lanes which merge into a two-lane bridge. In 2010 the crossing carried an average of 27,500 vehicles on a week day and motorists experienced long traffic queues and delays during morning and afternoon peak hours. An additional crossing of the Clarence River is being investigated to relieve congestion and accommodate the projected traffic increase in the Grafton area over the next 30 years.

To address these issues, for many years the local community has been advocating for an additional crossing. In June 2011 Roads and Maritime Services released a feasibility report that describes the assessment undertaken by it of the 41 route suggestions that were identified following the announcement of the revised process in December 2010. As the Hon. Robert Brown indicated, the report identified 25 preliminary options within five strategic corridors to go forward for further engineering and environmental investigation. In January 2012 the 25 refined options were reduced to a short list of six route options. They will be investigated further as part of the process to identify a preferred location for the crossing. The next step in the process is to undertake technical and environmental investigations on the six shortlisted options. The report of the investigations will be displayed for community comment.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer by providing further details?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The investigations, community comment on the report and the outcomes of a value management workshop will be considered when making the decision later this year on a

recommended option. The strategic cost estimates for the shortlisted options range from \$163 million for a site that is approximately 800 metres upstream of the existing crossing to \$390 million for a site that is approximately 2.5 kilometres downstream from the existing crossing. At this stage, planning work, including discussions with the community and project investigations, actively continues to identify and preserve a road corridor. The Government has placed a priority on selecting and finalising the preferred location so that the project can be prepared for construction as soon as possible in the current term of this Government, in line with our commitment.

YOUNG DRIVER ROAD SAFETY

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: My question is addressed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will he update the House on the new course being developed to assist learner drivers to become safer drivers?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the member for his question and acknowledge his continuing role as the best Parliamentary Secretary I have ever had. Recently I announced a new course which I strongly believe will provide young drivers with the chance to become safer drivers. The safer driving course, which the Government took to the election, will give learner drivers the skills they need to improve their safety on our roads as they progress through the driver licensing scheme. Essentially, learner drivers who complete a safer driving course will have their logbook requirement reduced from the current 120 hours to 100 hours. That is a reduction of 20 hours in the required logbook hours.

The first step in the development of the course will be the establishment of a board of independent road safety experts and an advisory panel that will make recommendations on the design of the course. There will be representatives from a range of interest groups, including Transport for NSW, Roads and Maritime Services, the NSW Police Force, NRMA Motoring and Services and other young driver experts and stakeholders. It is anticipated that the course will be a combination of classroom and in-vehicle activities and will focus on driver attitude and safe driving behaviour. The board also has the job of considering a further reduction in required logbook hours to 80 hours if the learner completes the safer drivers course in conjunction with the current three-for-one structured professional driving hours logbook scheme. The board will also consider further options to assist learner licence holders in remote, lower socio-economic and Aboriginal communities to meet learner driver logbook hours. I note the support we have received for this course from key stakeholders like the NRMA and AAMI. NRMA President Wendy Machin said:

The NRMA commends the decision by the New South Wales Government to develop an education course that helps teach young drivers the skills and attitudes they need to be safer on the road.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The level of conversation in the Chamber is rising. I ask members to listen to the Minister in silence.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: AAMI Skilled Drivers program manager Tony Barber said:

AAMI supports any program which makes the roads a safer place for all drivers and other road users.

Importantly, groups like the Youth Action Policy Association, which represents young people's interests, welcomed our decision to establish a safer driver course and said:

This is a great step forward to achieve two things—to reduce the number of hours that young people have to complete to get their Ps, but also make sure that they are safe and capable drivers.

The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Coalition is committed to reducing road crashes, injuries and fatalities among young people, and this new initiative will help to do that. This is about treating young people with respect and it is about educating them properly so that they understand the vehicles they are driving. This is not about making young people criminals before they become licensed drivers; it is about understanding their psyche, their problems and respecting them.

ANZAC DAY

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: My question, which is directed to the Hon. Charlie Lynn, relates to motion No. 587 on the *Notice Paper*. Given the Premier's recent comments, "As someone who is sitting—"

The Hon. Duncan Gay: Point of order: If the member wishes to ask a question of another member, my understanding is that standing orders dictate he must detail in what capacity that question is being asked.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: I said—

The Hon. Duncan Gay: Just relax, Sunshine.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The member should not interrupt another member who is taking a point of order. The Minister should not respond in such a manner.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: It was the nicest thing I could think of. So far the member has not detailed in what capacity he is asking that question.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: To the point of order: I said that my question, which I directed to the Hon. Charlie Lynn, related to motion No. 587 on the *Notice Paper*.

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: No, in what capacity?

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: And I have not finished my question.

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: No, you have to state in what capacity.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: As the mover of the motion.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Standing Order No. 64 (2) states:

- (2) Questions may be put to other members relating to any matter connected with the business on the *Notice Paper* of which the member has charge.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham's question is in order. Unfortunately, the time for the member to ask the question has expired. The member should seek the call later in question time.

PARSONS REVIEW

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Why did Mr Peter Parsons, as part of his audit, meet with the members for Lismore, for Barwon, for Murray Darling, for Clarence, for Tamworth, for Orange, for Myall Lakes and for Dubbo but failed to meet with any members from western Sydney, including the member for Toongabbie, the member for Fairfield, the member for Liverpool or the member for Parramatta, who also made submissions?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I thank the member for his question. I will endeavour to obtain an answer from Mr Parsons if he sees fit to answer the question.

MACQUARIE PARK LAND REDEVELOPMENT

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Will the Minister update the House on the redevelopment of land at Macquarie Park?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I thank the Parliamentary Secretary, the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox, for directing a question to me when, halfway into question time, the Opposition and members on the crossbenches do not have any questions.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting. The Minister will cease inciting interjections.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I had to give Opposition members a good blooper. One can make a lot of money out of bloopers. Many television shows are based on bloopers. I can report that recently, along with my colleague the member for Ryde, the Hon. Victor Dominello, and the mayor of the city of Ryde, I announced a specialist task force to advise on the redevelopment of government land at Macquarie Park and opportunities to work with the private sector and tertiary sector to maximise the potential for urban development and jobs growth. Macquarie Park is one of Sydney's premier high-technology business parks, close to the Epping to Chatswood rail link, next door to Macquarie University, and close to retail and other services.

The Government has significant landholdings in the area, including a social housing estate and surplus land acquired for the construction of the Epping to Chatswood rail link. The State Property Authority has a

3.9-hectare parcel at Macquarie Park approximately 180 metres from Macquarie Park station. The Land and Housing Corporation owns a public housing estate where some 260 public housing units are set on 8.3 hectares of land. Other major landholders in the immediate environs include the AMP Society, which owns the Macquarie Centre shopping centre, and Macquarie University.

Being so close to employment, education opportunities and transport, the landholdings provide an excellent opportunity for urban renewal and revitalisation. To ensure the community gets the best outcome we are forming a specialist task force which will bring together government agencies and other stakeholders in the area to recommend ways to best use the land. The Macquarie Park Taskforce membership will consist of representatives from the Department of Finance and Services, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Infrastructure NSW, the New South Wales Treasury, Transport for NSW, the Ministry of Health and Housing NSW.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: You're closing off the corridor from Parramatta to Epping, is that what you are doing?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I will respond to the Hon. Penny Sharpe later. The City of Ryde has a long-term vision for a new town centre at the intersection of Herring Road and Waterloo Road, adjacent to Macquarie University station. City of Ryde Council and Macquarie University will also be invited to participate as two significant local stakeholders. The key job of the task force will be to explore development options for the land with the private sector and tertiary sector and prepare any required master plan for the area.

The group has been advised that any recommendation should not lead to a loss of social housing in the precinct. I emphasise that the social housing tenants and the rest of the community will have every opportunity to be involved in planning for the area. In the event that social housing tenants need to be relocated they will be given ample notice of any move and their housing needs will be taken into full account when selecting alternative housing, as they were when the former Government undertook renewal.

I thank the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Victor Dominello, for his support of the plan. He kindly said that the redevelopment will bring new life to significant pockets of the Macquarie Park precinct and provide opportunities for work and new housing. The Minister said it is a great opportunity that will further enhance Macquarie Park as a premier commercial, retail and education precinct.

ANZAC DAY

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: My question is directed to the Hon. Charlie Lynn. I refer to his motion No. 587 on the *Notice Paper*. I refer to the Premier's recent comment:

As someone who in this city mixes with many community groups, I've never once heard anybody criticise the commemoration of Anzac Day.

Will the honourable member withdraw his motion? Will he apologise to ethnic communities in New South Wales for suggesting in his motion:

Sections of the multicultural community in Australia would seek to use this significant Anzac Day commemorative period as a point of division in our free society.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The member has asked his question. Members will listen to the answer in silence.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: I returned from Vietnam in 1967. We were attacked many times by greens and lefties. Demonstrators threw paint and swore at us.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: Point of order—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I will not hear the point of order until members cease interjecting. The clock will keep running.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: The question related to the honourable member's motion and his slur on ethnic communities, who are members of our defence forces, not to his experiences—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The member will resume his seat. His use of the word "slur" is a debating point. He is making a reflection on a member. He will not do so.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: You called him "gutless" earlier.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: He is gutless.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: Point of order: The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham called the Hon. Charlie Lynn "gutless". A veteran of Vietnam could hardly be called gutless.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: To the point of order: The member was responding to an interjection from the Hon. Duncan Gay.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I thank the Hon. Linda Voltz and the Hon. Duncan Gay for springing to the defence of various members. The Hon. Charlie Lynn has the call. If he wishes to respond to the accusation made by way of interjection, he has the call to do so. If members take points of order to take up his time it limits his capacity to respond.

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: I found it offensive when we were attacked by greens and lefties upon our return from Vietnam. They are still doing it today. I find it just as offensive today. It is my responsibility to look after the interests and the welfare of the veteran community. The member tries to introduce a slur about ethnic communities. I remind him that I attended a Harmony dinner last night. I could have sung *Kumbayah* in 56 languages last night. It is a wonderful community. The Greens have an undertone of racism in their speeches. During my time in this House I have employed people from various ethnic backgrounds: I have employed a Chinese female, as well as people from Vietnam, Indonesia and Syria. You name the nationality, and I have employed them. I like to work with and enjoy their communities. I spend most of my time working with ethnic communities. There is a small minority in the ethnic community—just as there is a small minority of The Greens—who hate Australia and will use anything to attack it and divide.

They went on strike during the Vietnam war because their unions wanted more pay. They would not load the ships during the Vietnam war and they would not load the ships during World War II. They were traitors then and they are traitors now. I find it offensive that The Greens would use something like this to try to cause division, with undertones of racism and political correctness. They are a disgrace. I will continue to fight against anything that brings up division within the veteran community. I thank the member for his question.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: I have a supplementary question. Could the member elucidate his answer?

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: I look at members of the Liberal Party, The Nationals and the conservatives within the Labor Party, and I see a great ethnic mix representing the Australian community. I look at The Greens and see not one ethnic representative in the House. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Dr John Kaye: Point of order: I take that remark as a personal insult, given my ethnic and religious background. I ask the member to withdraw the comment.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I listened to the remarks of the Hon. Charlie Lynn carefully. At no stage did he refer to an individual. Under the standing orders, if I am to require a member to withdraw offensive words they must be directed towards an individual. The standing orders and past Presidents' rulings are quite clear in that regard. I cannot require the Hon. Charlie Lynn to withdraw. However, I ask the Hon. Charlie Lynn to uphold the dignity of the House. I ask him to respond as best he can to elucidate his previous answer. Has the Hon. Charlie Lynn concluded his answer?

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: Yes.

PARSONS REVIEW

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Was the Minister aware that during the preparation of the Parsons audit the report's author, Mr Peter Parsons, spent time residing with a member of The Nationals? Is this another indication that the report was far from independent?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: Now the Opposition is into the character assassination of former highly decorated police officers. I do not ask people where or with whom they stay. A senior police officer responsible for the North Coast, all the way to Queensland, who also worked in the Western Division of New South Wales will probably get to know some good local people. Shock, horror: that might include members of Parliament. I am sure some senior public servants have stayed with Labor Party members from time to time. The Government does not make assertions that staying with somebody is a criminal offence. We do not suggest that maybe something sinister was going on. Give it a break.

NEWCASTLE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for the Hunter. Will the Minister update the House on progress of the revitalisation of the Newcastle central business district?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: That is an excellent question. The Hunter region boasts a \$10 billion a year coal industry, with the world's largest export port, world-class medical and research institutes, and thriving beef, wine and tourism industries. While these industries continue to forge ahead in the region, sadly its main commercial and civic centre in the Newcastle central business district has not kept pace with this growth.

Sadly, the neglect of the former Labor Government fuelled this. Business and local community interests in Newcastle and the lower Hunter have clearly expressed to the Government—including both myself and the member for Newcastle—the need for Government action to help revitalise the State's second city. At the recent New South Wales 2021 forum on the Hunter Regional Action Plan the lower Hunter community gave us its priorities for the region. Amongst its highest priorities were: revitalising the Newcastle central business district to resolve its transport issues, remove red tape that works against development, and for all levels of government to work together. Achieving this task requires government action on numerous fronts. Therefore, the Government is focussing efforts to ensure a coordinated and integrated approach to this task.

The NSW 2021 Hunter Regional Action Plan will provide the overarching framework for infrastructure provision and service delivery of a revitalised city centre in Newcastle. The city's revitalisation will incorporate a range of land use, infrastructure, transportation and public space improvement initiatives. The Department of Planning and Infrastructure is progressing a draft urban renewal State environmental planning policy toward public exhibition. This instrument will set new land use regulations for the city that help facilitate its redevelopment, including for nominated renewal sites pivotal to city revitalisation efforts. The department is also working with the Hunter Development Corporation and Newcastle City Council to examine the use of public buildings, improvements to community spaces and public transport services to contribute further to city revitalisation using public assets. The draft Urban Renewal State Environmental Planning Policy and associated improvements plans will be put to community consultation by June 2012, with implementation to commence this year.

In parallel to these initiatives, opportunities for community input into transportation priorities for the Newcastle central business district and the Hunter region will be provided through a regional forum on the New South Wales Long Term Transport Master Plan on 13 April. At the heart of each of these initiatives is addressing the future of the Newcastle railway line between Wickham and the city centre. The Government is in final stages of analysis of the issue of rail services into the Newcastle central business district. Following a final opportunity to consult the community on the issue on 13 April, a decision on its future will be made shortly.

A key historical impediment to revitalisation in Newcastle is the mine subsidence that directly impacts the city centre. In response, the New South Wales Mine Subsidence Board has now finalised detailed investigations into the extent of this problem in the various precincts of the Newcastle central business district. Mapping detailing up-to-date information on the mine workings within the high priority revitalisation areas of the city are now available online for use by developers, alongside new construction standards to help overcome these land constraints. Each of the initiatives I have outlined will form a key part of the NSW 2021 Hunter Regional Action Plan. They aim to put in place up-to-date information and the policy guidance required by developers in the Newcastle central business district to carry out their redevelopment plans effectively and efficiently. These initiatives will progress significantly over the course of the year.

COSMETIC SURGERY REGULATION

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, representing the Minister for Health. Recently *Choice* magazine reported on the dangers of untrained and unqualified people using laser hair removal devices. As six people have been hospitalised in the past 18 months for serious burns, blistering and severe permanent scarring, what regulations are currently in place to prevent unqualified technicians from using these devices on clients?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I thank the member for this interesting question. I look forward to an expedited answer from the Minister for Health.

SPEED CAMERA AUDIT

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. In his answer to a question on notice from the shadow Minister for Roads and Ports, the Minister advised that a program of works for alternative safety measures at the 38 sites where he switched cameras off would be completed by the end of March 2012. However, on 15 March, during question time in this place the Minister indicated that every site had already had alternative safety measures implemented. Can the Minister explain to the House the contradiction in those two answers?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: There is no contradiction in my answers. As was indicated, the program of works were to be completed by the end of March. I indicated that we had a clear commitment to the community that if elected we would ensure speed cameras are in places where they improve road safety. I indicated that we would put in place road safety upgrade reviews by the end of this month. If we have actually finished those works earlier, that is under-promising and over-delivering. What is the Opposition searching for? Is it complaining that we are actually finishing something early? What is the real problem with Opposition members? They just do not like good news. This is a good Government that is doing the right thing; it is listening to the people and putting in place proper measures.

HUNTER WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Can the Minister update the House on upgrades to wastewater works in the Hunter?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Last Friday I went to Farley, where I announced that construction is underway on the \$29.5 million upgrade to the Farley wastewater treatment works. This announcement follows hot on the heels of my recent announcement of the upgrade to the Morpeth wastewater system. The major upgrade will increase the plant's capacity to cater for a projected population growth in the Hunter region. It will also cater for future recycling opportunities in the area, improve asset condition and ensure compliance with its environmental protection licence.

The New South Wales Liberals and The Nationals continue to deliver major infrastructure upgrades for the Hunter region that provides quality services to the community. The previous Labor Government failed to provide quality services and infrastructure upgrades to the Hunter region. The Hunter has always been a region that Labor took for granted—always regarding it as so-called natural Labor territory that would never stray from the Labor fold. Well, I am here to tell you, we are not going to take the Hunter for granted at all; we will continue to deliver better services for the Hunter into the future to ensure that there is adequate infrastructure for the future population. I am proud to be working in association with the Minister for the Hunter in delivering these important services. The upgrade also will enable an increased supply of quality treated wastewater to Hunter Water's commercial customers, reducing the demand on the drinking water supply.

A further benefit for the local community will be an improved odour-control biofiltration system. On the day I was there, I have to say, it was very fortunate that the wind was blowing the right way. Throughout the development of the plan, extensive consultation with the community took place to determine the best approach that balanced the social, environmental, technical and economic factors associated with the upgrade. This infrastructure project will provide future recycling opportunities with state-of-the-art ultraviolet disinfection that will be incorporated into the upgrade to enable the plant to produce high-quality recycled water for use in the plant's operations and supply to commercial customers.

The works will include: replacement of inlet works and odour-control systems, improved control of the aeration system, decommissioning of maturation ponds, a new amenities block, associated electrical,

instrumentation and communications systems, site works, and a new switch room to house switchboards for new equipment. The works will be undertaken by the Hunter Treatment Alliance, a joint venture between Hunter Water, Abigroup and CH2M Hill. This alliance has recently completed significant upgrades of wastewater treatment works at Branxton, Paxton, Boulder Bay and Burwood Beach.

I can report to the House that it is anticipated works will be completed by the end of 2013. The announcement has been welcomed by the member for Maitland—that excellent Minister, the Hon. Robyn Parker—who said growing populations in the suburbs serviced by the treatment works, including Maitland, Morpeth, Gillieston Heights and Lochinvar, will enjoy improved and more reliable wastewater services. Hunter Water and the Hunter Treatment Alliance will endeavour to minimise construction-related impacts during the life of the upgrade and will work with local residents and other stakeholders to keep them informed during the project. If there are any works expected that will result in an increase in noise from the site, neighbours will be informed prior to the work commencing. This is another example of this Government delivering for the people of New South Wales, and in this case for the people of the Hunter.

BOWRAVILLE OFF-RIVER WATER STORAGE PROJECT

Dr JOHN KAYE: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Primary Industries. My question refers to the Bowraville off-river water storage project, which is under development by Nambucca Shire Council as part of its Nambucca district water supply. Is it true that the New South Wales Government is committed to providing 30 per cent of the project costs and, if so, what steps has the Government taken to ensure that all of the lower cost, lower environmental impact and lower economic risk alternatives—which include demand management and recycling—were fully exploited before committing taxpayers' dollars to this quite expensive project?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the member for his question. It is an important question for the Bowraville community. The responsibility for water supply and sewerage services in non-metropolitan New South Wales rests with local water authorities—in this case Nambucca Shire Council. I can advise that the New South Wales Office of Water within the Department of Primary Industries has worked in partnership with Nambucca Shire Council in the preparation of an Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy study for council. This study, completed in 2009, considered a range of options that were assessed in terms of their social, economic and environmental outcomes.

The Bowraville off-river water storage project is just one component of the preferred option. Other water-related components in the preferred option include a residential water efficiency refit program, a non-residential water efficiency program targeting high-end water users, an enhanced leakage reduction program, rainwater tank rebates and a grey water rebate program. In answer to the member's question: yes, a range of water efficiency and reuse options have been considered and, along with the Bowraville off-river water storage project, they form an integral component of Nambucca Shire Council's overall water supply strategy.

The Government has committed to a significant financial contribution towards the Bowraville off-river water storage project under its Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program. I know that the Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson, has been in communication with the Nambucca mayor, Rhonda Hoban, regarding arrangements to enable this project to proceed. I confirm that this Government is committed to ensuring that the level of services and infrastructure found in regional and rural New South Wales is as good as that found anywhere in the world and certainly anywhere in the city.

M4 EAST MOTORWAY

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Given the range of recent media reports indicating that the Government will not proceed with the M4 East extension, will the Minister now come clean with the residents of western Sydney and confirm that the M4 East will not be built in the next 10 years?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the honourable member for her question, but I commend a little more diligence to her. We had a clear election policy that there was a series of missing links, of which the M4 East is one.

The Hon. Steve Whan: There are several on your side of the House.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: No wonder the people of Monaro rejected you. We indicated in our election manifesto that we would carefully examine those missing links through Infrastructure NSW and that Infrastructure NSW would make a recommendation later this year. I do not know whether the Opposition has got a media monitoring service. The Opposition certainly has not got a question time committee because that is a very silly question. The Opposition should know that there is a roads Minister and this is March, nearly April—it is not August or September when the report will be done. I ask the member to stop spreading scuttlebutt and to listen and wait.

NSW POLICE GAMES

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister inform the House about the 2012 New South Wales Police Games?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: The annual New South Wales Police Games is currently being held in Blacktown City, having started on 24 March and concluding on 8 April 2012. This year marks Blacktown city's tenth anniversary of hosting the games and the 150th anniversary of policing in New South Wales. The official launch of the games took place at the Justice and Police Museum last Friday. The New South Wales Police Games are open to all NSW Police Force employees, including volunteers in policing, as well as employees attached to Fire and Rescue NSW, the Ambulance Service of NSW, Customs, Corrective Services NSW, the State Emergency Service, the New South Wales Sheriff's Office, the Rural Fire Service, the Australian Federal Police, Blacktown City Council and the Police Credit Union. Retired staff and family members from those agencies can also take part.

This year 32 sports are offered, including AFL, angling, aquathon—which is a swim and run event—archery, basketball, a pistol and run biathlon, clay target shooting, cycling, a fun run, netball, open water swimming, sailing, surfing, swimming, track and field, triathlon and tug of war. All police and emergency service employees over the age of 18 are encouraged to take part, and I understand that age groupings apply for some events. This year's games coincide with the 150th anniversary of policing in New South Wales and commemorative medals are being presented to the first, second and third placegetters.

We all know that participation in sport, or indeed in any kind of fitness activity, is an important part of leading a healthy lifestyle. We also know that working in police and emergency services can be particularly stressful. Scientific evidence clearly links regular physical activity to a wide range of physical and mental health benefits, including the ability to be more effective at work. Social and sporting events such as the New South Wales Police Games help foster camaraderie and solid working relationships, which are very important in their line of work.

The games bring together police and emergency service employees from all around the State. The games encourage these officers to stay physically active and they instil a sense of friendly and light-hearted competition, which police who work in the demanding professions deserve. The 2012 New South Wales Police Games also provide a significant boost to the economy of Blacktown City Council, which boasts an impressive range of sporting facilities. It has successfully hosted the games in the past. I commend Blacktown City Council for its commitment to the event and I wish the best for all those currently competing in the 2012 New South Wales Police Games.

In May, Blacktown will receive four additional police. Adjacent to Blacktown is Mount Druitt and that local area command will receive 10 additional police. We were asked about Hurstville. Hurstville police will be getting an additional five police officers. Those local area commands will not have as big an intake of additional police as the electorates of former Premier Kristina Keneally and Michael Daley, the would-be Opposition leader in the other House: the eastern beaches are getting 12 extra police.

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: Under Standing Order 56, I move without notice:

That the document referred to by the Minister in his answer be tabled.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I remind the member that under Standing Order 56 he must move such a motion at the conclusion of the Minister's answer.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: Earlier in question time the Hon. Sophie Cotsis interjected and said, "What about Rockdale?" Labor sold it. Labor sold the police station building and closed it down. The Hon. Sophie Cotsis has no idea what she is talking about. She should stay asleep and not interject. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: Under Standing Order 56 (2), I move without notice:

That the document referred to by the Minister in his answer be tabled.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I will read Standing Order 56 (2) for the benefit of the House:

A document relating to public affairs quoted by a Minister may be ordered to be laid on the table, unless the Minister states that the document is of a confidential nature or should more properly be obtained by order.

Minister, is the document either confidential or more properly obtained by order?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I am happy to table the document entitled, "New Police Recruits". I think most members opposite will have trouble reading it.

Document tabled.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: The time for questions has expired. I have enjoyed it today. I was getting a bit rusty. I thank Opposition members for their questions, which allowed us to provide fulsome answers. If members have any further questions I suggest they place them on notice and we will get to those questions as quickly as we can.

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

The House continued to sit.

BRAVEHEARTS EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: On 23 February 2012 the Hon. Paul Green asked me a question regarding Bravehearts Education Program. I provide the following response:

Decisions about educational presentations such as the one by Bravehearts are made at the local level by individual school communities and principals.

Officers from the Department of Education and Communities are in contact with representatives of Bravehearts about the possibility of piloting Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure in schools in New South Wales to complement the delivery of child protection education by teachers in government schools.

CRONULLA FISHERIES RESEARCH CENTRE

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: On 23 February 2012 the Hon. Cate Faehrmann asked me, representing the Minister for Primary Industries, a question regarding the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre. The Minister for Primary Industries has provided the following response:

Consistent with our commitment to ensure the current level of services enjoyed by fishers and industry are maintained in the future, the decentralisation project is being conducted in a measured way to suit the needs and demands of all our fishing stakeholders.

The New South Wales Department of Primary Industries is continuing to work with staff on the decentralisation of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre. The process is on track and proceeding well according to the original 12 to 18 months decentralisation timeframe.

The New South Wales Government is committed to providing opportunities to regional communities under its Decade of Decentralisation policy and will ensure NSW Fisheries positions are situated in the regions and can provide services where the majority of stakeholders are located.

OCCUPY SYDNEY PROTEST

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: On 23 February 2012 the Hon. Robert Borsak asked me a question about the Occupy Sydney protest. I provide the following response:

The NSW Police Force has advised me that police officers have taken appropriate action, and continue to do so, where offences are detected. A number of arrests have been made and appropriate charges laid.

The cost of policing this protest to date is approximately \$78,123 in addition to normal police salaries. However, I am advised the policing of Occupy Sydney has had no impact on the capacity of the Central Metropolitan Region to respond to other incidents such as drive by shootings.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE SAILS

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: On 23 February 2012 the Hon. Luke Foley asked me, representing the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, a question about the Sydney Opera House sails. The Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing has provided the following response:

The Sydney Opera House lit the sails to mark St Patrick's Day in 2012.

Questions without notice concluded.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Report

The President tabled, pursuant to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, a report entitled "Report of an Audit into the Exercise by the Independent Commission Against Corruption of its Powers Under Sections 21, 22, 23 and 35 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988", dated March 2012 and authorised to be made public this day.

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

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

The PRESIDENT: Order! During question time yesterday, the Hon Amanda Fazio took a point of order that the Minister for Roads and Ports had referred to the Legislative Council as the "losers' lounge" and that this was unparliamentary language. A search of *Hansard* shows that the term "losers' lounge" was first raised in this House in 2004 when the Hon. Ian Cohen referred to the use of the term in *www.crikey.com.au* at that time as a label for the House.

There is a line of authority in this House to indicate that for a term to be offensive it must be made with respect to an individual and not to a group. The term "losers' lounge" cannot be said to be directed to an individual member and therefore cannot, according to established practice in this House, be held to be offensive. However, under Standing Order 91, "A member must not use offensive words against either House of the Legislature ... and all personal reflections on either House ... will be considered disorderly." So, for example, in 1989 President Johnson ruled that it is offensive to refer to debate in this House as a farce, and further that to suggest that the manner in which debate is being conducted is illegitimate is a reflection on the House.

It is at least arguable that the use of the term "losers' lounge" to describe this House is unparliamentary and a reflection on the House; however, I do not believe that was the sense in which the Hon. Duncan Gay used the term. There is a tradition of robust debate in this Chamber and indeed by definition in electoral competition there is a winner and there is a loser. There are designated benches in this House for the Government and the Opposition. By definition, those members representing the party who have won the election sit on one side of the House and those who have not won sit on the other side of the House. However, as President Willis said:

I point out to honourable members that members of both Houses of the Parliament occupy very special and privileged positions in our society, and nowhere more so than within the precincts of the Parliament. The classic example of that is that members cannot be served with legal process within these precincts, whereas they can be outside. Parliament is not a school: there are no prefects; there are no schoolmasters; and the good and orderly conduct of the Parliament depends on the common sense, courtesy and observation of propriety by members. If that were not the case it would be open to any member to do things which may be found to be excessive by his or her colleagues. This line of propriety is very fine and completely ill defined. It relies entirely upon the good sense and courtesy of members.

There is no point of order.

ADJOURNMENT

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY (Minister for Roads and Ports) [3.37 p.m.]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

GLOBAL WARMING

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK [3.37 p.m.]: I will speak about what Dr Bob Brown will be told when life out there in the cosmos eventually contacts him for a chat. For those who missed it, the good doctor delivered the Third Annual Green Oration in Hobart last week. True to form, he opened the proceedings with the greeting, "Fellow earthians". He went on to question why no-one out there has yet contacted him to see how they should operate their worlds, which are inhabited by Captain Kirk, Mr Spock and all those others with pointy ears and three fingers.

Mr David Shoebridge: It is Dr Spock.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: It is Mr Spock out there. I do not think Dr Brown should hold his breath for extraterrestrial contact for advice from him on how to run their planets. I expect that perhaps they will see the way he seeks to run this planet and they will decide that they might like to live someplace where there is power for light, wealth for toil, houses to live in and food and clothing for those who need it. I could give an insight into what Dr Brown might learn from those coming in from the cosmos to talk to him. It might shock Dr Brown because they are likely to tell him that the whole earth actually heated up in medieval times, without the presence of human carbon dioxide emissions. I bet that when he hears that little truth he will deny it and tell them they are mistaken because he knows it did not happen that way. His whole mantra, and that of The Greens and their fellow travellers, is that humans are killing the earth.

Contrary to this, a new study has thrown current theories about the causes and impact of global warming into question because it shows that during medieval times the whole of the planet heated up and then it cooled down naturally and there was even a mini ice age. A team from Syracuse University in New York State found contrary to the consensus being peddled around today. The Medieval Warm Period, approximately 500 to 1,000 years ago, was not just confined to Europe. In fact, it extended all the way down to Antarctica, and that means that the earth has already experienced global warming without the aid of human carbon dioxide emissions. What we are being told at the moment by the renowned body known as the intergovernmental panel on climate change, whose original work alerting the world to this problem was later found to be dodgy, is that the Medieval Warm Period was confined to Europe and, therefore, the warming we are experiencing now is a man-made phenomenon. This is what they are using to scare the daylight out of everyone on this planet.

This new study looked at crystals found in layers deposited during the Little Ice Age about 300 to 500 years ago and during the Medieval Warm Period before that. Both climactic events have been documented in northern Europe, but the studies have been inconclusive as to whether the conditions in northern Europe extended to Antarctica. Guess what? The study of the crystals found that in fact they did. The university team says that the study shows that the northern European climactic events did influence climate conditions in Antarctica. So there it is: humans apparently are not responsible for global warming. While it will come as a surprise to Dr Bob Brown, I hope he is not too disappointed when our alien friends, who might turn out to be green, give him the news. No doubt, if he did accept their advice, next week it will be something else that is causing him, and us, trouble.

BIAGGIO SIGNORELLI FOUNDATION

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA (Parliamentary Secretary) [3.41 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak of the outstanding contributions to our community that the late Biaggio Signorelli made over the course of his 54 years from his arrival to his beloved adopted home of Sydney, Australia. Biaggio became a most successful businessman and philanthropist whose legacy continues to assist those in need through the Biaggio Signorelli Foundation, which was established in his honour by his loving family. The youngest of five sons to Paolo and Antonina in 1937, Biaggio Signorelli arrived in Darling Harbour in 1954 at the young age of 17, with little more than a suitcase and the clothes on his back. Following the World War II devastations in Europe, Biaggio made the difficult decision to leave his homeland in Sicily with ambitions of a better life for his future family through hard work and fortitude. Biaggio joined his older brothers as a greengrocer in Willoughby and worked with determination to one day start his own business.

In 1967 Biaggio married his beautiful wife and future mother of his children, Filippa. They would soon welcome two girls and one boy: Nina in 1968, Paul in 1969 and, finally, Anna in 1973. Biaggio and Filippa worked tirelessly to provide the very best life for their family while operating their own business and at the same time embracing the Australian culture of community volunteerism. Biaggio dedicated himself to a range of charitable works, in particular, in his role as the international ambassador for muscular dystrophy. As their

business flourished in Sydney, the Signorelli family established the Doltone House catering business and a collection of dining venues, which by 1995 were run by Nina, Paul and Anna. The Doltone House group is a collection of special event venues across Sydney, beginning with Sylvania Waters which opened in 1995, Jones Bay Wharf in 2004 and the recent addition of Darling Island Wharf in 2010.

In the years that followed, the Doltone House portfolio has been the recipient of many awards and accolades for achievements in providing the best in catering and event management. The awards include: the 2011 New South Wales Meetings and Events Australia, Speciality Meeting Venue, as well as the Cause Related Event of the Year; the 2011 Function Centre of the Year, Restaurant and Catering Australia; the 2011 Host Employer of the Year; and the 2011 Mice.Net Best Unique Venue in Australia.

After years of building a successful business franchise, instilling the importance of ethical business practices, education and hard work into his children, and giving back to the community through his significant charitable works, sadly, Biaggio was diagnosed with mesothelioma, a terminal cancer. He underwent surgery and chemotherapy over the course of the next eight months in an effort to prolong his life expectancy, as there is no cure or treatment for this terrible disease. Biaggio was surrounded and comforted by his family members, with his son Paul taking a leave of absence from work to look after his father. The outstanding care given by the doctors, nurses and staff at Calvary Health in Kogarah and the Sydney Cancer Care Centre made an immense impact on Biaggio's physical and emotional wellbeing.

Prior to his passing on 30 May 2008, he displayed his courage and unselfishness through a desire to help others affected by mesothelioma. His fortitude has been carried on by his family through the establishment of the Biaggio Signorelli Foundation, which is devoted to the early detection, treatment and care of and ultimately a cure for mesothelioma. To date, over \$500,000 has been raised by the foundation towards a commitment of \$1 million in just under four years. It has always been a delight for me and many other members to attend the many elegant and heartfelt fundraising dinners and events organised by the foundation.

Sydney has been blessed with a bronze sculpture by Terrance Plowright, commissioned by the Signorelli family and unveiled by Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales. The sculpture, *Life from a Suitcase*, which is situated in front of Doltone House, Darling Island wharf, depicts Biaggio and Filippa Signorelli with their seven grandchildren. I feel privileged and honoured to recognise today Biaggio Signorelli and the work of the foundation named in his honour. I acknowledge and thank the Signorelli family for their selfless work in continuing to serve others in so many extraordinary ways.

SYDNEY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE [3.46 p.m.]: Question time in this House and the other place this week has been full of backslapping Dorothy Dixers and congratulations on the achievements of the first 12 months of the O'Farrell Government. However, most commentators have said, "Ho-hum". Tonight I draw the attention of the House to transport for Sydney commuters. For those who catch public transport to and from work this will be a familiar story. The price of a weekly rail ticket has risen above inflation, but it is more likely the trains will be running late, especially if travelling on the East Hills, South Coast or western lines. Those travelling from Blacktown to the city on the western line in the morning peak probably will not get a seat for the 50-minute journey, even if they leave home at 7.00 a.m. Those who commute by ferry are waiting to learn whether they too will face fare increases and whether services will suffer when the Government franchises Sydney Ferries later this year.

Given that three or four routes to be run by private operators have fallen over before they began, it is a matter of concern what this will mean for the full franchising later this year. Of course, there is no guarantee that the ferry to Parramatta will continue. It is an all-too-familiar story for commuters in Sydney and flies in the face of the Government's promises before it came to office. The O'Farrell Government promised better services. The O'Farrell Government promised to put the customer at the centre of everything it did. It also promised new express train services and upgrades to train stations and commuter car parks. But rather than start work on any of these projects, it has put them all under review, and has spent \$18 million on consultants to do so.

It is important to give credit where credit is due. As I have said previously, Opposition members support the North West Rail Link. We also welcome the extra carriages for Newcastle and Central Coast commuters. That is good news. The new NightRide bus routes are also good. But while it is important to give credit where credit is due, it is also important for the Government to stop taking sole credit for the South West

Rail Link, which was planned and funded under Labor. It also should acknowledge the significant amount of Federal funding going to the Northern Sydney Freight Line and most of the large road projects and the fact it is not paying its fair share for the Pacific Highway upgrade.

The O'Farrell Government cannot hide from the congestion and capacity issues that keep increasing across the entire CityRail network. Unless addressed, they will have a huge impact on the viability of the North West Rail Link. It could end up being a shuttle service twice an hour from Chatswood. This Government scrapped the City Relief Line, one of the few projects that would have increased capacity on the line. Unless the Government does something to address congestion, the CityRail network will not have the capacity to operate the new promised express services, let alone the North West Rail Link.

What is happening with bus services? Yesterday the Minister for Transport said that she had no plans to expand the very successful Metrobus program. She has said no to potential new services that have been rolled out in western Sydney while the North West Rail Link is being built. Although there are some new Growth scheme buses, they were paid for by the previous Labor Government. That fact is never mentioned. What of light rail? This Government came to power promising a light rail revolution, but we are still waiting on the Inner West Light Rail extension and the GreenWay has been scrapped on the way through. Light rail is a clean and efficient form of transport and has great potential in Sydney. Given the delays to the Inner West Light Rail extension, I for one will not be holding my breath.

It is not only commuters who have felt the brunt of the first year of the O'Farrell Government; transport workers also have been under attack. Their wages have been capped, 100 Sydney Ferries employees are gone, and 92 stations throughout the State risk losing staff under the O'Farrell Government's cost-cutting review of RailCorp. Under this \$6 million, four-month review, the Government is looking at cutting everywhere it can, and frontline staff are not immune from these cuts. The rail network's transit officers will be replaced by police. Although the police have a role to play in securing the rail network, currently there are 600 transit officers and 300 commuter police. Following this so-called reform there will be 610 police and 150 transit officers—who will no longer do security, just fare compliance. Security on our transport services requires more and not fewer staff. The Minister for Transport came to office promising no cuts to front-line jobs, but that is exactly what we are seeing. Under this Government we have seen a growth in the money spent on consultants, but not much in return for commuters. The Premier has given the Minister for Transport a top-of-the-class rating for her performance for the year. I am not sure that commuters feel the same way.

ABATTOIR ANIMAL CRUELTY

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN [3.51 p.m.]: If how we treat our animals is a measure of our development—a notion made famous by Mahatma Gandhi—our society still has a long way to go. The law treats animals as property. Industry treats them as commodities; consumers treat them as another product in their shopping trolleys. Insufficient regard is given to animal welfare in meat production, and cruelty is entrenched in the codes of practice. We have become desensitised to our fellow animal—until we get a glimpse of what goes on in the meat production line and then our sympathies are provoked. Some recent glimpses have been ugly.

When *Four Corners* telecast footage revealing the treatment of Australian cattle in Indonesian abattoirs on 30 May last year, there was a massive public outcry. The Federal Government acted swiftly the next day to suspend exports to the abattoirs exposed in the *Four Corners* investigation. As the outcry amplified, it resulted in the Prime Minister announcing a full suspension of the trade to Indonesia by the end of the following week. The Federal Government has now resumed approval for Australian cattle exports to Indonesia in accordance with a new export supply chain assurance system, but it seems that animal welfare is not at all assured.

Footage of animal cruelty at the Timur Petir and Cakung abattoirs in Jakarta, which was obtained by an Indonesia investigator engaged by Animals Australia and telecast on the ABC *Lateline* program on 28 February 2012, shows that serious and systemic breaches of the Export Supply Chain Assurance System are still taking place. On behalf of the Australian Greens, my colleague Ms Lee Rhiannon has reintroduced a bill in the Senate to ban live animal exports, the Live Animal Export (Slaughter) Prohibition Bill 2012. Anna Krien has an interesting take on the Government's fix, in an opinion based on her dissertation in the *Quarterly Essay*, "Us and Them: On the Importance of Animals." Krien suggests the point of the new Export Supply Chain Assurance system is "... for killing standards to be raised to Western-approved levels so that cattle can safely become objects once more".

Is she right that our conscience was briefly raised, but we are too willing to be reassured and slip back into the comfort of our complacency? I hope this is not the case and that The Greens bill will pass. But we are

naive if we think this happens only in Indonesia and in countries less developed than ours. In February we were appalled when footage was released from a Sydney abattoir exposing horrendous cruelty to sheep, cows, goats and pigs. The footage was obtained covertly by Animal Liberation and with thanks to the bravery of whistleblowers. The abattoir, Hawkesbury Valley Meat Processors, was promptly suspended by the New South Wales Government. Statements were made suggesting it was a rogue operation. I am not convinced. I have joined calls from Animal Liberation, Animals Australia and the RSPCA Australia for mandatory closed-circuit television in all abattoirs.

Paul McCartney once said that if abattoirs had glass walls we would all become vegetarians. Committed meat eaters might resist, but video surveillance would at least allow increased scrutiny and ensure that cruelty cannot thrive behind closed doors. Hawkesbury Valley Meat Processors has been allowed to resume operations and has decided to install closed-circuit television cameras. The recordings will be inspected by the Food Authority, for which I commend the authority. It is not a mandatory requirement to have closed-circuit television cameras, but some in the industry are moving forward on it. In February Teys Australia, which is an internationally owned meat processing business, announced it would install closed-circuit television cameras in its premises. With industry moving in this direction, it would be appropriate for this Parliament to act and make it a mandatory safeguard to at least ensure the treatment of animals in abattoirs is lawful. However, I recognise that mandatory video surveillance is not an answer on its own.

The abattoir workers who handle, stun and kill animals must be trained and competent and that training must be ongoing. The Australian Meat Industry Council has animal welfare standards for abattoirs that are more rigorous. However, those standards apply only to abattoirs processing meat for export and not to New South Wales abattoirs that process the meat for the domestic market. They should. The RSPCA is writing to Ministers ahead of the Standing Council of Primary Industries to ask for the standards to apply nationally. I also will write to the Minister on this point. The question of what is lawful is the next matter we must address, if we are to evolve as a more humane society. As a result of codes of practice, piglets can have their tails sliced off and teeth cut without any form of pain relief. Laying hens suffer for their entire lives in battery cages where they cannot even stretch their wings, and millions of meat chickens die every year because they are bred to grow so fast that their legs are unable to support them.

What might ordinarily be considered an act of cruelty is not an offence under the New South Wales Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act if it is done in compliance with the codes of practice. If the codes of practice act as a defence against animal cruelty, then they need to ensure they are genuinely avoiding animal cruelty rather than sanctioning it. So, as a society, we have a long way to go before we are humane and respectful to our fellow animal. I want to see ambitious animal welfare law reform in this Parliament to bring about such a society. As one small yet important step towards this goal, I will soon table a private member's bill for mandatory closed-circuit television cameras in New South Wales abattoirs.

RURAL VOLUNTEERS

The Hon. MICK VEITCH [3.55 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the significant contribution that volunteers make to country communities and what we as members of Parliament could and should be doing to ensure there is public acknowledgement of those contributions. On Australia Day, I was delighted to attend the Gundagai Australia Day celebrations. I attended in my capacity as a Gundagai ambassador. The city has a wonderful system whereby former residents of Gundagai and those who are native to Gundagai, having been born there as I was in 1962, are invited to return—along the track winding back—as ambassadors. Gundagai's Australia Day program is quite outstanding, as are most programs in country villages and country towns in New South Wales. Their Australia Day program highlights the contributions of their volunteers to their community in the arts, sport and other community activities. Gundagai is a wonderful community. Like most country communities, on Australia Day Gundagai celebrates the contributions of a number of people and organisations that in some way have made their respective communities great.

The Gundagai community is much the same as most of our communities: The volunteers in that community create a wonderful sense of community. It is this sense of community that so impresses me when I visit every country community in New South Wales. The fabric of those communities is crafted over time. It should not be dismissed and it should not be taken for granted. The fabric of country communities should be respected. That respect can come only if people understand how the fabric is held together, who the contributors were, or are, and why the contribution has been made. The community fabric of country areas is something that is influenced by every resident in some way. Every strand of the fabric represents an element of the community,

such as sporting groups, theatre groups, art galleries, museums, the business community and, of course, the very important community-based not-for-profit organisations, such as disability organisations like the Riding for Disabled Association or other organisations that support our seniors.

I am a strong advocate for involvement in our community. I do not think people should live in their local community and enjoy the community fabric without giving back in some small way. Essentially, in the old language, I am an advocate for citizenship. People should try to give back to their community in any way that is possible. This contribution can take a number of forms. People can assist with their local museum or with local community groups in a volunteering capacity. In country communities, people will dedicate themselves to volunteering for long periods. I know of people who volunteer for Red Cross in a lot of country villages and who have given 50 years or even up to 60 years of continuous service to their organisations. That is not unusual in country New South Wales. People should not be scared of contributing to their local community. Just volunteering time is fine. Volunteering need not be public. In fact, most of the people who volunteer in country communities do not want to be acknowledged. They like to work behind the scenes, just doing the work that needs to be done, without any public acknowledgement. That is what makes the Australia Day ceremonies in most country communities so outstanding.

Most members of this House from rural communities would have attended Australia Day celebrations and would have acknowledged, along with everyone else, some wonderful volunteers. When people are acknowledged, most of the other people in the community do not know what they do and how much they contribute to the community until the citation is read out as they receive their award. More often than not people say, "Wow, just how do they do all that work?" As we heard earlier today, country communities are great places in which to raise families. It is important that every community acknowledges the contributions made by their volunteers. In most rural communities, Australia Day is how that is done. But most members of Parliament at some stage will be asked to nominate an individual, or provide supporting statements for an individual, for recognition of that individual's contribution to society. It is essential that, particularly in rural communities, those contributions are acknowledged.

Acknowledgement can be achieved by the Australian honours system. There are countless individuals in our communities who do not have their contributions acknowledged through the Australian honours system, but in my view they should. This afternoon I encourage all members of the House to give consideration to at some stage nominating individuals in our communities for an Australian honours award to acknowledge the significant contributions they have made to their community, often over many, many decades.

SYRIAC ORTHODOX CHURCH

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE (Parliamentary Secretary) [3.59 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to one of Christendom's most ancient of churches and inform the House of its continued growth, even in the face of sustained persecution, and about its expansion in Australia, especially in the State of New South Wales. That this church, the Syriac Orthodox Church, has survived for more than 2,000 years in the face of incredible adversity and intense litigation and is alive and well and expanding, particularly in Australia, is to my mind a testimony to faith and conviction and to dedication and perseverance. In many ways, the story of the Syriac Orthodox Church is a miracle of the ages. My recent attendance at the opening of a new church of the community, the parish church of St Melke in Greenacre—which was attended by a thriving and growing congregation, dignitaries from other Christian dominations and numerous community and civic leaders—certainly reinforced my view.

The religious service was conducted in Syriac, the main branch of Aramaic spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ. The *Bible* and prayer book used were in Syriac, the language spoken was Syriac and the community can all speak in Syriac. Only a small handful of Christian denominations can still claim to conduct their liturgy in the language of Christ. The history of the Syriac Orthodox Church is a fascinating one and demonstrates the victory of faith over adversity. In the New Testament at Acts 11:26 it is recorded, "The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch," and it was the Apostle St Peter who established the church there, becoming the first patriarch of the Patriarchate of Antioch in A.D. 37 before proceeding to Rome. He was succeeded by his chosen successors Evodios and Ignatius and it is from this foundation that the Syriac church can trace its chronology and unbroken line up until the present day.

Currently, the head of the church is His Holiness Mor Ignatius Zakka Iwas, Patriarch of Antioch and All East, who presides over a church that has spread to India, the Americas, Africa, Europe and Oceania—a remarkable growth. Throughout its history the church has sustained much persecution, firstly under the

Romans and then, after the first 100 years of Islam, from Islam itself, and this has more or less continued up to the present time, including in present day Iraq from Islamic extremists. Persecution became particularly savage under the Ottoman Empire, especially in 1915 when more than two-thirds of all Syriac Orthodox Christians in that empire were killed in a campaign of genocide. Similar genocidal persecution was unleashed against the Armenians, the Pontian Greeks and Assyrian Christians. Discrimination of varying degrees has continued in post-World War I Turkey, although there have been some small improvements in the past 10 years or so.

In Australia the church has achieved great growth under its Metropolitan Archbishop for Australia and New Zealand, His Eminence Mor Malatius Malki Malki. Appointed to the position at the age of only 33 he has overseen growth that has given the church a presence right throughout Australia. He is a religious leader known within the wider Christian community for his biblical and theological expertise and understanding and his visionary views on the mission of the church in the present-day world. Archbishop Malki Malki holds three degrees in respect to divinity and theology and is now completing his doctorate. While he is regarded as a very learned theologian, nonetheless he is deeply involved one-on-one with his community.

Having observed His Eminence at many church and community events, it is clear to me that he is not only revered as a spiritual leader but as one who makes himself available to each and every member of his church. His courteous, friendly and understanding manner has unquestionably endeared him to his community. Today I express my admiration for and pay tribute to the Australian Syriac Orthodox community and its Metropolitan Archbishop Malki Malki. In its almost 2,000 years of existence it has always overcome all obstacles in its way. With its unshakeable faith—a faith I have closely observed—I believe it will overcome all obstacles that may be faced in the future. Australia and New South Wales can be proud of their Syriac Orthodox community.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL PETERSON

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ [4.03 p.m.]: Today I acknowledge the death of Michael Peterson at the age of 59 from a heart attack. Michael Peterson has been described as one of our greatest surfers but I believe he was probably our greatest surfer. He was fearless, brave and absolutely scary in the surf. Michael Peterson was a three-time winner of the Bells Beach Easter Surfing Classic and in 1977, in front of 20,000 people, he beat future four times world champion Mark Richards to win the first ever event of the surfing world tour before he disappeared completely from the surfing scene. An undiagnosed schizophrenic, he was arrested in 1983 in a 15-car police chase from Coolangatta to Brisbane and spent years in Boggo Road jail before he was eventually released and diagnosed with schizophrenia.

Michael finally found stability living with his mother, Joan Watt. Although he had not surfed for over 20 years Michael Peterson still dreamed about surfing. His mother said that when he was in the water everything else was forgotten. Surfing was obviously the way in which Michael Peterson dealt with his illness before being diagnosed. As I said, Michael was brave and terrifying in the surf. We often talk about wild bushrangers but Michael Peterson was the wild bushranger of the surf. If members do not know about the life of Michael Peterson I urge them to go to the *Sydney Morning Herald* website and to watch the documentary *Looking for Michael Peterson*. Our thoughts go today to Michael's mother, Joan Watt, and to all the mothers in our community who do the hardest job of all—affording their children who like Michael Peterson suffer from schizophrenia some peace in this chaotic world.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS [4.05 p.m.]: Once again Ben Cubby has returned to climate change when writing in today's *Sydney Morning Herald*. He wrote an article entitled, "Only a few years left before climate change danger, warns panel." He went on to say:

... scientists told a global conference in London there are probably just a few years left to avoid some of the "tipping points" for dangerous climate change.

He goes on to quote Will Steffen, director of the Climate Change Institute at the Australian National University, as follows:

This is the critical decade. If we don't get the curves turned around this decade we will cross those lines.

If we were to believe Will Steffen and Ben Cubby this is the last chance to save the world. Wait a moment—last year it was the Durban conference that was reported as being the last chance to save the world. Who could

forget the last chance to save the world, as outlined by Kevin Rudd, was in Copenhagen in 2008? Again, there was the last chance to save the world, according to the World Wildlife Fund, at Poznan in 2008, but that was after the Bali climate conference that was posited as being the last chance to save the world in 2007, as was Johannesburg in 2002. Going all the way back to 1992 the Rio Earth Summit was promoted by *New Scientist* as the last chance to save the planet. Once more we face this last chance of last chances. How many last chances will there be? The strangest thing about all this is the persistent belief that it is now too late. Mr Cubby continues to quote Professor Steffen as follows:

The tipping point for stopping the eventual break-up of the massive West Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets may already have been passed.

The strangest thing about this is that it is too late. What does he do before the end of the world? Surely he would be at home drowning himself in quality alcohol, moving to Nimbin to smoke a lot of Mullumbimby madness or at least making passionate love to strangers in lifts. Steffen is just another anthropogenic global warming parasite offering people advice about cutting down the use of fossil fuels, none of which seems to involve academics avoiding air travel to international anthropogenic global warming conferences. Indeed, in this ever-changing world in which we live there is only one certainty: More conferences and more chances to save the world. The anthropogenic global warming scam continues. It is one more chance, one more chance. As long as there is government funding there will be one more chance next year.

[Time for debate expired.]

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

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 4.07 p.m. until Monday 2 April 2012 at 2.30 p.m.
