

# LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday 10 May 2012

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

**The President** read the Prayers.

## TABLING OF PAPERS

**The Hon. Duncan Gay** tabled the following paper:

Annual Reports (Statutory Bodies) Act 1984—Report of the Parramatta Stadium Trust, for the year ended 31 December 2011.

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

## SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

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

That this House at its rising today do adjourn until Tuesday 22 May 2012 at 2.30 p.m.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN** [9.35 a.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that Private Members' Business item No. 692 outside the Order of Precedence, relating to Mother's Day, be called on forthwith.

**The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ** [9.35 a.m.]: The Opposition will oppose this motion. Not one member in the Chamber would not support a motion relating to Mother's Day. The Hon. Paul Green's motion could have been dealt with as Formal Business. There are several items of business inside the Order of Precedence that members have been waiting for some time to deal with. The House has already commenced debate on the Hon. Mick Veitch's important motion about regional job cuts. The Leader of the Opposition has a motion to introduce a bill to amend the National Parks and Wildlife Act. The Hon. Cate Faehrmann has a motion relating to marriage equality. There are many items of business on the *Notice Paper* that are more urgent than a motion relating to Mother's Day. The Opposition will not be supporting urgency.

**The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN** [9.36 a.m.]: I echo the comments of the Hon. Lynda Voltz. The Hon. Paul Green's motion could easily have been dealt with as Formal Business today. Not one member of this Chamber would not support a motion relating to Mother's Day. As members are aware, on Tuesday, in good faith I sent an email to all members giving them notice that I hoped to debate a controversial motion today. I know that my motion is controversial but I gave members sufficient notice to enable them to prepare to debate it. The Hon. Paul Green's motion is a stalling tactic by the Christian Democratic Party to ensure that my motion is not debated. I fear that this will happen time and time again, although a debate on my motion is inevitable as it is within the Order of Precedence.

If members start supporting motions like this so that the House cannot debate potentially controversial motions within the Order of Precedence, where does that leave us? Every single week the Christian Democrats could move to suspend the standing orders simply to delay debate on an issue that they do not want to debate. I do not support the Hon. Paul Green's motion. It sets a bad precedent. On the face of it, this motion is a delaying tactic so that my motion, of which I gave sufficient notice, is not debated, although it must be debated at some stage. It is a pity that this motion has been moved as I emailed members about my motion, in good faith, a couple of days ago.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN** [9.38 a.m.]: I inform the House that the Shooters and Fishers Party will be supporting the motion moved by the Hon. Paul Green. The Hon. Cate Faehrmann making an argument about the disruption of business by spurious urgency motions is an example of The Greens saying, "Do what we say, not what we do."

**Dr JOHN KAYE** [9.39 a.m.]: Surprising, is it not, that the Christian Democrats would seek to politicise motherhood and Mother's Day. I note the laughter from Government members and I note their sense of frivolity about this, but anybody outside this Chamber would recognise that what is going on here is simply an attempt to stop the Hon. Cate Faehrmann's motion coming on. It is a straightforward delaying tactic. Nobody in this House would oppose a motion to acknowledge motherhood and nobody in this House would oppose the motion of the Hon. Paul Green being taken as formal business.

The motion clearly does not need debating because it is not an issue of controversy in this House; it is something we would all agree to. For that very reason this House has the mechanism of Formal Business, which would be entirely appropriate. I note that the Hon. Paul Green did not attempt in any way whatsoever to put this motion on as Formal Business. It is extremely clear what is going on: this is a delaying tactic to avoid a vote on the Hon. Cate Faehrmann's motion on same-sex marriage. It is disgraceful that the Christian Democratic Party would stoop so low as to try to politicise Mother's Day and motherhood.

**The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER** (Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Hunter, and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [9.40 a.m.]: I note the sense of mock outrage by The Greens in relation to a motion of which notice has been given by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann. I note that the item is quite a way down the list for Private Members' Business. It is not top of the pops, so to speak; it is item No. 6. Other items ahead of that in the Order of Precedence relate to the 110th anniversary of the right of women to vote, the National Park Estate (South-Western Cypress Reservations) Amendment Bill and regional development and small business. It seems that this is all about The Greens once again. Well, sadly for The Greens, it is not all about them; it is about democracy and the Hon. Paul Green's right to bring forward a motion that he believes is important.

The Hon. Paul Green has not abused the privileges of this House, unlike The Greens over the many years they have been in this House. The Hon. Paul Green has brought forward a motion that he believes is important to him and, going by the sentiments expressed by other members, to many others as well. If The Greens do not want to speak on the motion, they need not, but they should not deny other members the opportunity to stand up and say what they believe is important.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE** [9.41 a.m.]: We all know how Private Members' Business works in this Chamber: members who are ready to move a motion that is in the list on a specific day will, ordinarily, be called upon to have that business transacted that day. We know that item No. 2 in the Order of Precedence is not ready to go. I believe the Hon. Mick Veitch is ready to go with his motion, item No. 3, which relates to regional development and small business. I understand that the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones is ready to go with item No. 4.

**The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones:** I am more than happy to have that debated later.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** She is not ready to go; I accept the honourable member's statement. The Hon. Luke Foley is ready to proceed with his motion, and the Hon. Cate Faehrmann is ready to go. These items are all in the Order of Precedence and are all of substantially greater moment to the operation of this State than a motion relating to motherhood and Mother's Day. We all support Mother's Day, so why do we not just move the motion now, accept it and then get on with other items of the business of the House for which there has been notice for a substantial period of time?

**The Hon. Michael Gallacher:** We might want to talk about it.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** I note the interjection from the Hon. Michael Gallacher. He wants to spend hours in this Chamber talking about Mother's Day. This is the epitome of the O'Farrell Government's approach to this Chamber: Let us not worry about the real issues; let us not worry about matters of actual moment. The O'Farrell Government wants to spend hours of this Parliament debating Mother's Day. That just sums up the Government. But there will not even be a debate on Mother's Day—we all support Mother's Day and we all support motherhood. Let us just move the motion.

**The Hon. DAVID CLARKE** (Parliamentary Secretary) [9.44 a.m.]: In response to the comments of Dr John Kaye that we are politicising Mother's Day, I remind him of the recent debate in this House on Anzac Day. On his argument, that motion could have been agreed to without debate because it had the support of every member in this place. But we unanimously chose to debate it because it is a very important matter. The arguments raised by The Greens are drivel. Every second day they have the nerve, the cheek and the gall to try

to bring on an item of business that is not really urgent. Mother's Day falls on this coming Sunday and the members of this Chamber are entitled to speak to this motion, just as they had the right to speak to the motion relating to Anzac Day, which, as I said earlier, was agreed to by all members of the House. Once again The Greens are just being cute.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE** [9.45 a.m.]: First, The Greens have argued that the motion could have been dealt with as Formal Business. That would have prevented all members of the House participating and expressing their views in debate on the motion. We believe it is not right to gag members of the House who wish to speak on a motion. Second, Mr David Shoebridge seems to think that the motion relates only to Mother's Day. I remind him that the motion has a second leg—and I assume even The Greens have mothers—a punchline, if you like, which states:

That this House acknowledges the remarkable sacrifices mothers make for the wellbeing of their loved ones.

That will give all members an opportunity to express their personal views and those of their electorates on this important matter.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES** [9.46 a.m.]: I respond to comments made by Mr David Shoebridge. Yes, it is true that there is an item of business on the *Notice Paper* standing in my name, but I am more than happy for that to be debated at a later stage because I believe that motherhood is a very important issue and we should all have an opportunity to speak on its importance.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 21**

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

**Noes, 19**

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

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**MOTHER'S DAY**

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN** [9.54 a.m.]: I move:

1. That this House notes that:
  - (a) in Australia, Mother's Day is celebrated on the second Sunday in May,
  - (b) Mother's Day is a celebration honouring mothers and celebrating motherhood, maternal bonds and the influence of mothers in society,

- (c) Mother's Day is also a time to celebrate the important mother figures who may have played an important role in our lives, and
- (d) grandmothers, step-mothers, mothers-in-law, foster mothers are an important part of many families and make an invaluable contribution to children's lives.

2. That this House acknowledges the remarkable sacrifices mothers make for the wellbeing of their loved ones.

Today I pay tribute to all mothers, but I particularly think of my own mum. As Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile said, this debate presents an opportunity for all members to pay public honour to their mothers. Mother's Day is one day that has been set aside to honour every mother across our nation and the globe. Author Lisa Bevere said:

Mothers are different from mentors ... mothers really want more for their children than they ever had for themselves. Mothers will lay down their life to bring forth life.

J. Hampton Keathley III stated:

On Mother's Day families pay special tribute to their mums in various ways—through cards, flowers, breakfast in bed—

although that should not be given to mum too early—

—lunch at a fine restaurant, long distance calls, and special gifts. These are just some of the ways families will say thanks to mum, and that is as it should be. But too often Mother's Day is simply a time when families attempt to atone for an entire year of neglect, indifference, misuse, disrespect, and a lack of thoughtfulness and genuine appreciation.

When I look at my wife I can see that being a wife and mother is an immensely challenging task. Family is the foundation of society and while fathers, generally speaking, are responsible for the way a family develops, mothers are the glue that holds the family together. When I think of mothers I think of the *Hymn to a Good Wife* from the *Bible*. I read from Proverbs 31: 10-31 in the Message version:

A good woman is hard to find,  
and worth far more than diamonds.  
Her husband trusts her without reserve,  
and never has reason to regret it.  
Never spiteful, she treats him generously  
all her life long.  
She shops around for the best yarns and cottons,  
and enjoys knitting and sewing.  
She's like a trading ship that sails to faraway places  
and brings back exotic surprises.  
She's up before dawn, preparing breakfast  
for her family and organizing her day.  
She looks over a field and buys it,  
then, with money she's put aside, plants a garden.  
First thing in the morning, she dresses for work,  
rolls up her sleeves, eager to get started.  
She senses the worth of her work,  
is in no hurry to call it quits for the day.  
She's skilled in the crafts of home and hearth,  
diligent in homemaking.  
She's quick to assist anyone in need,  
reaches out to help the poor.  
She doesn't worry about her family when it snows;  
their winter clothes are all mended and ready to wear.  
She makes her own clothing,  
and dresses in colourful linens and silks.  
Her husband is greatly respected  
when he deliberates with the city fathers.  
She designs gowns and sells them,  
brings the sweaters she knits to the dress shops.  
Her clothes are well-made and elegant,  
and she always faces tomorrow with a smile.  
When she speaks she has something worthwhile to say,  
and she always says it kindly.  
She keeps an eye on everyone in her household,  
and keeps them all busy and productive.  
Her children respect and bless her;  
her husband joins in with words of praise:  
"Many women have done wonderful things,  
but you've outclassed them all!"

Charm can mislead and beauty soon fades.  
The woman to be admired and praised  
is the woman who lives in the Fear-of-God.  
Give her everything she deserves!  
Festoon her life with praises!

Proverbs 31 provides a very down-to-earth depiction of modern challenges for mothers. Mothers are involved in meal planning and preparation, food and clothes shopping for the family and for herself—just so that kids can complain about their mother's fashion sense. They mend, wash, iron and clean the house. They care for the many other needs of the family. They provide comfort should their child break his or her arm, and when their children wake in the middle of the night with a cold or flu. A wife and mother must deal with her husband's "man flu" and with her kids fighting. She oversees homework and, in some cases, is the teacher in home schooling programs.

Mothers run a taxi service to sports training, swimming lessons, dancing lessons, the doctor, music practice and friends' birthday parties. The scripture also makes us very aware that she is an incredible businesswoman as well as having all those other attributes. It is an amazing piece of scripture in which the writer of Proverbs outlines the incredible capacity of mothers. That most mothers can handle all those different aspects and remain sane and strong is a testament to the resilience of motherhood.

There is no doubt that in my life, as I said in my inaugural speech, my mum had a rough trot. She not only watched over two boys who were incapacitated, one of them intellectually disabled and the other with a brain injury and complications arising from that, but also looked after me when I was suffering from burns. I remember that time fondly: only a mother's love could have comforted me in such deep distress as a 12-year-old child. When my other brother had a motor vehicle accident and was nearly at death's door she looked after him. She displayed her love and resilience in that situation and still was able to look after the household and get us through the days while being at the bedside of my dying brother. The resilience of mothers is incredible.

I want to say happy Mother's Day to my lovely wife, Michelle. There is no doubt that she, as Proverbs says, has put her own needs on hold for the sake of all our children and my situation. Michelle always seems to put everyone else's needs before hers in helping young mothers at church and around the area. It seems that her choices and wishes always go on the backburner. I think this is reflective of motherhood. This society runs at 100 miles per hour and we do all sorts of things but we hardly ever stop to say thank you. Bringing this motion to the House is my way of saying thank you. I appreciate that it could have been done through formal business but there is no doubt there are other members who want to contribute and honour their mother and take this rare opportunity to express their appreciation in a public place.

I also note the sacrifice of grandmothers. I recently went to speak with grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren because for various reasons—sadly, some of them to do with drugs—the children's parents cannot do so. We should express our appreciation for what grandmothers do as well. My grandmother has passed away but I think of the special times that she was involved in my life. Although distance prevented those special times from being more frequent, there is no doubt that she was instrumental in establishing some of my core values and who I am. My grandmother did not have much but every Christmas she made her annual visit to the farm. She had very little to give; it might have been a secondhand tape recorder or a radio that she listened to on the long train trip, but she generously gave them to us because she really loved her grandchildren. There was probably nothing my grandmother would not have done for me if she had had the capacity to do so.

On Mother's Day I will be at Worrigee cemetery with a whole bunch of family, friends and other members of the community to acknowledge those mothers who have passed on. It is very important for us as human beings to not forget the legacy our mothers and grandmothers have left us. That is how our memories of loved ones live on. We can take time out now and on Sunday—when I will join the community to offer a prayer—to think about how we can honour our mothers. One of the ways to do that in such a consumerist and fast-paced world is to take time out now to honour them formally as we are doing today.

It may sound clichéd but one day per year is barely enough to pay tribute to the contribution that mothers make to society. Every day should be Mother's Day in my view. I think of all my friends and all my kids' friends who come to my house and talk about the contribution their mothers make. Mothers are very special and their contribution to society is immeasurable. It is important today to acknowledge them in this way. It is my privilege to move this motion relating to Mother's Day and I do so unapologetically. It is very important that this House not only acknowledges Mother's Day but also says thank you to the many mums across New South Wales.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN** [10.05 a.m.]: I applaud the honourable member for moving this motion, but this could develop into a very twee debate and a wasted opportunity. We all have mothers and we all have fond memories of our mothers and grandmothers and people like that. We can all pay tribute to the roles that those women in our lives played in our upbringing. Today, though, we live in a very troubled society. We should think about the number of mothers in our society, whether they are Indigenous or non-Indigenous, who do not have the support of a father and who in some cases live on the streets with children. We should think about their sacrifices and the roles those mothers play. It is nice to have thoughts about Mother's Day and visits and cups of tea and looking after one's mother but there are many Australian women, and women around the world, who have to fight every day in their motherhood role to protect their children. We probably turn a blind eye to it even on the eve of a day that celebrates mothers.

I was born rather late in my parents' union. My mother was about 46 when I was born. The eldest of my three sisters is 15 years older than I am. I do not have memories of my mother in the early years and even my memories of my grandmother are not very clear. I will admit I was more of a daddy's boy. But when I talk to my surviving sisters and they tell me what sort of job my mother had in 1950—a 46-year-old woman in a fairly rigid society giving birth to a child and the child being a bad-tempered, precocious, nasty little boy—

**The Hon. Lynda Voltz**: It's on the record now, Robert.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN**: I was, but I do not recall it. I thought I was a wonderful kid. Every now and then my sisters remind me what it was like for my mother. In fact, she suffered some social opprobrium for having a child at 46, in 1950. How bloody stupid is that! I will not take up too much of the time of the House but rather than turn this debate into a mockery—the motion to suspend standing orders was passed and we are debating this motion—I urge all members to think about what motherhood means, particularly as it relates to trying to protect children and to give children that we bring into the world half a chance of a decent life. We should not think just about our own mothers, grandmothers and our family circle and what we will be doing on Sunday. We should think about those mothers who are in refuges or who perhaps have nothing and are trying to protect their children. We all should think about that.

**The Hon. DAVID CLARKE** (Parliamentary Secretary) [10.09 a.m.]: I support this motion. When people talk about families they speak of the father as the head and the mother as the heart of the family. I do not know that that is true about the father being the head. In our household it is a joint arrangement. However, there is no doubt in my mind that the mother is always the heart of the family. There is another saying that the father is the head and the mother is the neck that swivels the head. I am glad that there is a lot of truth in that because I believe that mothers bring a perspective to married life and to the raising of children that is not captured in the father. They complement each other. When I think of Mother's Day I think of the two grandmothers of my children—both of them are still alive—who sacrificed for those grandchildren. They gave them love and affection and our children give back that love and affection to those grandmothers who truly sacrificed for them.

I think of my own mother in her capacity as a mother and her sacrifice and her raising of me and my sister in a loving home. I am fortunate and glad to be able to say that I have no bad memories of my home life—I wish that every home was that way—and a lot of that is because of my mother. I think of my wife, who has brought up our children as she is most certainly the heart and soul of our family. I see my wife as a mother of heroic virtue. On Mother's Day I also think of my daughter who has a two-year-old child. Together with her husband, she works and raises their daughter. I think also of my youngest daughter, who is about to become a mother.

Also on Mother's Day an image comes to my mind of something I saw in war footage: a grieving Russian mother kneeling down over the dead body of her son who was killed on a frozen field on the Russian Front. She is grieving in an uncontrollable way. She is showing grief that only a mother could show. I think of that image when I think of Mother's Day. I also think of a photograph I saw from Arlington National Cemetery in Washington DC of a grieving mother sitting quietly, slumped in contemplation, beside the grave of her son who was lost in Vietnam. Those things come to my mind on this commemoration of Mother's Day 2012.

**The Hon. MARIE FICARRA** (Parliamentary Secretary) [10.13 a.m.]: I have great pleasure to honour mothers. Quite simply, I would not be here today if it were not for my mother—naturally in a genetic sense, and my father biologically speaking. However, with reference to motivation and encouragement, certainly I am my mother's child, something that I have been told many times in relation to strengths and weaknesses. My mother was named Rosaria Giampino before she married my father, Antonio Ficarra. She was a very strong woman, the

eldest in a family of four girls. From the moment my mother was born on the island of Lipari in the Aeolian Islands in the Mediterranean, part of the province of Sicily, Italy, it is true to say that she was a determined feminist in her day, which was rare.

My mother passed away a few years ago at the age of 92, and she was strong right to the end. She was very much for women's rights and education. My mother and father emigrated to this country solely based on educational opportunities. My mother resented that she did not have a good education because she was virtually plucked out of school at a very early age to work in the pumice factory on the island. The islands were of volcanic origin. These days they are an absolute tourist mecca. I would recommend that anyone who is having a holiday in Italy visit the Aeolian Islands. If they do not they are crazy because they are seven of the most beautiful and idyllic islands in the Mediterranean that lie between the foot of Italy, Calabria, and the island of Sicily.

But during and after World War II things were pretty tough on the islands. My mother worked in the volcanic pumice industry, which has now been declared environmentally hazardous and, thankfully, closed down. A lot of its workers subsequently developed respiratory problems. Thankfully, my mother did not. However, my father enlisted in the Italian Navy and worked in the submarines and consequently got exposed to asbestos and later died of mesothelioma. My mother instantly fell in love with my father, Antonio Ficarra, who also worked in the same factory: there was very little employment other than working in agriculture or fishing. At the time the pumice factory employed hundreds of people. Quite remarkably for her age, my mother became a foreman of the plant. Hence many people say there are similarities between my mother and myself in wanting to be in control all the time. She had strong leadership capacities.

My mother and father married and had four children—three boys and me. All the boys were conceived before and during World War II, when my father had occasional leave from the Italian Navy. Mum remained on the island to take care of the farmlands while my father was in the Navy. Upon his return they realised that there was very little opportunity to forge a future for their children in Italy. As it was in those days, the people of the islands got together. If we go to the Haberfield, Drummoyne, Five Dock area we will find that the great majority of Italians who live there come from the Aeolian Islands. The father of John Sidoti, the member for Drummoyne, comes from the beach of Canneto on the island of Lipari. Diego or Richard Sidoti lived five doors from my mother's family. I have known the Sidoti family since I was very young. Many members of Parliament have the same origins.

The women on those islands had to be very strong to survive and make a life. I was fortunate in that my father migrated to Australia with his youngest son, Frank or Francesco. They got employment in fruit shops, as many Italian migrants did at that time. Thankfully, Uncle Charlie Paino sponsored many Italian migrants, particularly from the Aeolian Islands. He was born on the island of Salina. The family pay great homage to the memories of my late uncle, Charlie Paino. Having migrated here with my eldest brother, Frank, my father worked very solidly to learn about running fruit shops and milk bars under the guidance of Uncle Charlie. After two years my father called for my mother to join him with his other two sons, Aldo and Joe. I was born approximately 10 months later—so they did not waste any time.

I remember as a young child, the only girl in the family, being very spoilt by my father. He accepted anything that my mother said was good for parenting, and education certainly was on the top of the list. I could not spend my time relaxing and watching television: she regularly asked me why I was not reading a book, being active or playing outside. In hindsight, she was probably ahead of her time in her parenting style. I have much for which to thank her.

I became involved in local government because we had pigeon breeders living next door in Penshurst. We did not think pigeons would be a problem. However, we realised that they posed a health hazard when we watched the numbers grow from 10 to 50 to 200 to 500 and to 1,000. I did some research and found that other people around Sydney were experiencing the same problems with pigeon breeders. The hobby was obviously getting out of hand in suburban areas. My mother said, "Okay, you've done the research and your father needs to go to the council meeting." At that time every member of my family who was able to vote always voted Labor. They did not know why, but it was what all the other migrants did. They expected the Labor councillors to support their views at the Hurstville City Council meeting at which the issue was to be discussed.

The mayor at the time was Gary Punch, who is familiar to many members. That meeting galvanised my interest in local government. I was busy tutoring in histology and physiology at Sydney University after completing my science degree and I had no interest in local politics. However, I did read newspapers and

decided that I would vote differently from my family. We went to the council meeting and my father was horrified. We did not know that there was a very large pigeon fanciers union and its members were also at the council meeting. Undertakings had been given to my father about regulating pigeon numbers. We were not being unreasonable; we wanted them contained, not eliminated. However, that was not to be. The meeting was a real eye-opener.

I took my very unhappy father home and returned to observe the rest of the meeting. I decided that I would attend the next and some subsequent council meetings. After having done so and having written a number of letters to the editor of the *St George & Sutherland Shire Leader* I caught the attention of the editor and was interviewed. I was challenged one night in the council gallery by the mayor—the youngest mayor in the council's history. He spoke to me in front of a number of witnesses and asked me what I was doing in the gallery and whether I was interested in standing for local government. I asked what would happen if I did. He responded that I would have no chance of being elected because I was young, female and ethnic. What a challenge!

As a result, I decided to stand for election as an Independent at a by-election. Everyone told me I had no chance of winning, including my mentor, Independent Councillor Noel Bergin, a great man. He told me that I was being silly standing for election in the Penshurst ward, which was a strong Labor ward covering Penshurst, Mortdale and Peakhurst. He said that the Labor Party candidate would be elected and I told him that I knew that but that I was using it as a trial run for the general election the following year. How does this relate to my mother? She offered her total support. She gathered our family and friends around the dinner table and told them that they would be working on my campaign, which they did. Despite the fact that we marshalled a large number of volunteers, I did not win. However, the following year I attracted enough votes to get two candidates elected at the general election.

**The Hon. Cate Faehrmann:** Happy Mother's Day.

**The Hon. MARIE FICARRA:** Yes, because I owe it all to my mother. Of course, my father was also very loving and supportive of my mother. I definitely owe it all to my mother and I pay homage to her. I now have a 96-year-old mother-in-law, Alice Carless, whom I love dearly. She is an inspiration and a phenomenal woman. Alice lives at Waterbrook Lifestyle Resort at Yowie Bay—we are not allowed to call it a retirement village. She had a pacemaker put in about 18 months ago and is very strong. She still does Sudoku, cryptic crosswords and anagrams in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in a race to see who will be first to solve them.

**The Hon. Cate Faehrmann:** Is it very important to put this in *Hansard*?

**The Hon. MARIE FICARRA:** Yes, it is. Alice Carless is an inspiration to me and my husband. Another strong woman in our life is Aunty Jean Monro from Warrigal, who is 94 years old and a phenomenal lady. I booked the flight she took to Hobart on Tuesday and she gets herself about from Warrigal and visits her best friend Hilda. These are examples of extremely strong and inspirational women in our lives and the lives of many others and it is important that we pay tribute to them.

The history of Mother's Day is interesting. I used Wikipedia to research Mother's Day because I did not know much about it. The celebration began in America and it has since been adopted by many other countries and cultures. It has different meanings and has been associated with different events across the world. Members who are interested in speaking on this motion should consult the Wikipedia reference. It details the religious history of Mother's Day and how it is observed across the world. It is fascinating to see how it is observed in the Middle East. Mother's Day gained momentum in Australia in 1924 because of the efforts of Janet Hayden, a Leichhardt resident. I encourage members to look at that website because it contains some incredible stories about Mother's Day celebrations in China, France and Germany. I have printed the information and I am enjoying reading how we honour motherhood around the world. I again pay tribute to the Mothers Union Parenting Program, an international program that provides extensive guidance to young mothers.

**The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN** [10.28 a.m.]: I made clear my views about this motion in my contribution to the debate to suspend standing and sessional orders. I find motions of this type a little self-indulgent. We are elected by the people of New South Wales to get on with the business of the State and it is inappropriate for us to spend so much time talking about our mothers and grandmothers; we can talk within our circle of friends and families about those issues. We are here to represent the people of New South Wales and it is self-indulgent of members to use this time to put on the record their feelings for their mothers and how fantastic they are.

I also find some of the language used about mothers problematic. The glorification of mothers and motherhood and the role that a perfect mother should play is a problem. Mothers are not saints. People have different relationships with their mothers. Some people do not get on with their mothers. Some people have relationships with their mothers that are very problematic and destructive. There are some mothers in this world who are not very nice people. I think the sainthood notion of what the perfect mother should be can be quite stressful for women—the notion that mothers have to be everything, they have to wake up at 5.00 a.m. to get everything done for their kids, bake the perfect cookie, be the perfect wife, ideally stay at home, ideally be there when their husband comes home, ideally cook a fantastic meal for their husband and clean up after the kids. I feel that some members still think this is what mothers are.

Consider the stress caused to women in the 1950s and 1960s as a result of the notion of the perfect mother. A huge number of women were diagnosed with mental illness, given a lot of prescription drugs and told to calm down because they were struggling with that perfect idea of motherhood. I feel that motions such as this in some way support that notion of motherhood. Mothers are not saints; I think most mothers will tell us that they have their failings. Having said that, I do support Mother's Day, I do support mothers and I do support my mother.

**Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile:** Bravo.

**The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN:** Bravo from the Christian Democrats. Thank you. I will move an amendment to the Hon. Paul Green's motion to try to encapsulate the fact that we should support all mothers in their efforts. I note the Hon. Robert Brown's very good contribution to the debate. He spoke about mothers who do not have it all and who find it very difficult to be good mothers because of their circumstances. While he was talking, I was thinking about mothers in various countries around the world, for example Mali. Some women would probably like to be anything but mothers. They would probably like to escape from appalling poverty and other situations where they have six, seven or eight children, and where they have no access to contraception or family planning and are not able to make the choice, which about 25 per cent of couples in Australia are making, not to have kids.

There are many women around the world who do not have that choice and who are living in appalling poverty. It is a very extreme situation to be in, and we see it on our television screens nightly. Eleven per cent of families in New South Wales are single parents. In 2008 the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated that there were 210,000 one-parent families in New South Wales. Around 80 per cent to 90 per cent of those families are headed by single mothers. I move:

That the question be amended by omitting paragraph (d) and inserting instead:

- (d) all mothers, including grandmothers, step-mothers, mothers-in-law, foster mothers, single mothers and mothers in same-sex relationships are an important part of many families and make an invaluable contribution to children's lives.

We have, as a Parliament, voted and supported same sex adoption laws. We know from many contributions to this House in previous parliaments that mothers come in all shapes and sizes and forms, and same sex mothers and single mothers should be supported by this Parliament. We know, and it has been quoted time and again in debates in this House, that children in families with lesbian parents are incredibly well adapted and want recognition for their families. I know, and have spoken with, children who are part of families with two mums and they want recognition for their families. I hope we will have a bigger discussion on that issue in the next few weeks when my motion for marriage equality comes before the House.

I note the blow to single parents that came with the Federal budget, which will force 100,000 single parents with kids over the age of eight off the Parenting Payment (single) and on to Newstart, which means that those families will be \$60 a week poorer. They will go from \$320 per week to \$265 per week when their youngest child turns eight. That is a blow to single parents—largely single mothers—in the budget, so it would be a nice balancing act if we could amend the motion to include single mothers or mothers in same sex relationships. I commend the amendment to the House.

**The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ** [10.36 a.m.]: Many members have spoken of the extraordinary sacrifices that women make. Somehow getting up in this Chamber eases their conscience by thanking women for the struggles they endure. I would be more impressed if members made similarly eloquent speeches addressing the inequalities for women in society. Perhaps members could have turned their minds to the huge gap in working women's superannuation, much of which relates to the time that women spend out of the workforce caring for children. Perhaps we could have dealt with the retail trading legislation that is sitting on the table and that will

require working mothers to give up their few public holidays when no-one could ask them to leave their children and go to work. Perhaps we could have turned our minds to the funding of the National Disability Insurance Scheme to ensure that we are helping those mothers and fathers who take on a particular burden.

I do not celebrate Mother's Day. I send my mother a bottle of Baileys on International Women's Day. She knows I love her and she loves me, and I do not feel the need to place some long speech about her in *Hansard* to quantify it. I thank all parents who go the extra mile to look after their children and who have the satisfaction of a job well done. I do not think we could identify many parents who do not want to do that. I also acknowledge, as the Hon. Cate Faehrmann did, those women who have made the choice not to have children and who live with the inevitable question of why. We are a whole society and there are still huge inequalities out there. I think there are a number of more important issues this Chamber should spend time debating than the lot of women with children.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL** [10.38 a.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to the debate. I note that the Hon. Cate Faehrmann talked about us being self-indulgent. I apologise, but I am going to be—it is a big deal in Gunnedah if you are in *Hansard* and I have to support my family. The Hon. Cate Faehrmann talked about women dealing with the feeling of being overwhelmed after having children. I am not a mother but I know many people, including members of my family, who have had issues with post-natal depression and the pressure that comes with being a first-time mum, and I think we should acknowledge them.

We should also acknowledge those women whom I have mentioned previously in this place who have lost children through miscarriage or stillbirth. Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day will be in October this year. Some of those women will probably find Mother's Day pretty tough and I think we should pay tribute to them in this debate. The Hon. Marie Ficarra mentioned the biological fact that we are all products of our mothers. I am a lot like my mum, Marg.

**The Hon. Lynda Voltz**: Getting to the science of the issue.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL**: Yes. My mum has had a big influence in my life. She has always been a big supporter of all her siblings. One of the things I love most about my mum is that while she is my biggest supporter, she is also the first person to keep me grounded—there is no room for ego or big heads in my family, no matter what. The motion refers also to other mother figures in our lives. My family is a close one. I am lucky to have a close extended family also. Aunty Pam and Aunty Jan—my mother's sisters—are like my second and third mothers, and we are incredibly close. I know that I can always get any support I need from them. It was the norm for me that we did things as an extended family when I was growing up—on weekends and on holidays. As I have gotten older I have realised just how special and unique that extended family relationship is, and now I am an aunty to my niece and nephews I will try to replicate that bond. It is important to be there for our families and to show the love that we have for one another.

The motion refers to grandmothers and mothers-in-law. My grandmothers, Meg and Judy, have also played an important role in my life. They helped a lot with us kids as we were growing up. My mum worked—and still does—and thanks to their help and support we were able to function as a family unit. My mother-in-law breaks the stereotype of every mother-in-law in existence: she is a wonderful woman. Roie has become the stalwart of the Mitchell family. My father-in-law passed away almost two years ago, following the sudden onset of a vicious cancer. He died quite quickly. Roie has taken over running the family farm and keeping her three boys and daughter on track. She is also a wonderful mother-in-law to Liv and Caroline.

I am pleased to be able to record in *Hansard* how much we love her and how grateful we are that she shares our lives—I know she will appreciate it. Finally, I thank the other three young mums in my life: my sister, Amber, mum to Oscar and Scarlet; Megan Braby, who is part of our family and mum to Charlie; and my sister-in-law Liv, mother to Tom. They do an amazing job coping with the pressures of being new mums and all that goes with that. I only hope that if I ever become a mother I will prove to be as good as the mother figures in my life. I wish a happy Mother's Day to you all.

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR** [10.42 a.m.]: In speaking to this motion I acknowledge the debate that occurred to allow this motion to be considered, with the support of the House, ahead of other items listed on the *Notice Paper*. The Hon. Cate Faehrmann spoke of there not being the "perfect" mother and the pressure that that perception places on many women in society. Whilst I acknowledge her comments, I view Mother's Day as a time to pay homage and respect to those mothers who do their best in all circumstances. In a motion such as this I can relate only to a handful of people with whom I have had contact in my family, but I will take this opportunity to be self-indulgent and pay respect to those women who have made a contribution.

Within two years of moving from Northern Ireland to a new country, with no family network or support, my parents started a family. I am the oldest child in that family. I pay absolute homage and respect to my mother. In the 1970s, living in a new country on the opposite side of the world to her mother, my mother had to work things out; she had no networks and no support to turn to in difficult times. My next brother followed 20 months after me—and I am sure it was a hectic time in the Blair household at Goulburn. My dad worked as a teacher, and I am sure that mum faced some challenges as she looked after my brother and me.

Mum returned to work when my brother and I started school. My youngest brother was born eight years after me. After a short period on maternity leave, mum juggled the roles of full-time mum and full-time teacher. Despite the many challenges, we all turned out all right and we are all very thankful for everything mum has contributed to our lives. My dad helped mum and the family unit was, and still is, a very respectful one. Everyone takes their turn looking after the needs of the household. I do not for one moment think my mum was ever placed in a situation where she felt she had to cook the perfect cookie or be a flawless role model.

I turn now to the role that my wife has played, in particular, in the life of our son. The Hon. Cate Faehrmann spoke about some couples not having the opportunity to have children. It was not an easy decision for Melinda and me to start a family. Like most parents, we entered into parenting with a lot of uncertainty along the way. I will refrain from going through the complications involved in having our son arrive in a healthy state, but I do know that from the moment he was born my wife's maternal instincts kicked in. I will never know how she was able to understand things about our new baby's needs, and my wife continues to meet all his needs—particularly for the first eight years of his life. Three months after the birth of our son my wife returned to work. Some people considered that decision was wrong. Melinda and I made that decision but, more importantly, it was Melinda's decision. It was important for Melinda to continue with her career and to do what she felt was best for our family. It was not because she chose not to be the "perfect" mother—and this is where I disagree with the Hon. Cate Faehrmann's comments about the struggles that some mothers face.

In this broad-ranging motion all mothers, despite their differences and the struggles they may have encountered, can be acknowledged without casting aspersions or passing judgement on the different types of mothers in our society. I am sure that all members will interpret this motion as paying nothing but respect to all mothers in our society. I am sure also that if my young bloke could speak to this motion he would have some wonderful things to say about the contribution that my wife has made to his life. She plays a pivotal role because, as members will understand, we work in a profession that removes us from our families. I have the utmost respect for all mothers in this place because I cannot imagine the strain that the demands of this role puts on their families while at the same time they are fulfilling the wants and needs of their children.

My wife is able to provide my son with the stability, support and all the things he requires while I am not available and at home. She is heavily involved in his sporting activities, particularly horseriding. She picks up the slack when it comes to homework. Yes, she must pick up the slack when it comes to the more traditional duties such as housekeeping or cooking when I am not there. I try my best when I get home but she would admit that I am quite useless at many of those things. But my son can count on her 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Obviously she does that out of love, because of her maternal instincts and because she is a mother. To her and to all mothers who contribute to the lives of so many children and family units, I simply say thank you on this Mother's Day. I support the motion.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN** [10.51 a.m.]: I will speak briefly on this motion. First, I suspect that no member will say a bad thing about their mother. The nature of members' contributions to this debate is almost inevitable. I have always adopted a somewhat equivocal position with regard to Mother's Day. Indeed, it is the same equivocal position as that of a lady in the United States who campaigned in 1914 to celebrate Mother's Day. Within a few years her fight resulted in the establishment of Mother's Day as a national day in the United States. However, by 1922 she was concerned that Mother's Day had become truly commercialised and the spirit of the day had been lost. That is the sad fact of days such as Mother's Day: They become an opportunity for commercial gain rather than an expression of love and commitment towards, in this case, one's mother. That was the position she reached, and that has always been my concern.

I will not see my mother on Sunday this year but I will see her tomorrow. I will see her in the place where I have seen her for the past 3½ years: sitting by the bed of my disabled father. Apart from four days when she was not allowed in the nursing home, she has gone there every day for seven or eight hours to care for his every need. It is difficult to see, and I grieve for my mother because she has been confronted with that situation. I do not need Mother's Day to know that or to tell her that I love her and that I am concerned that that is what

her life has become. I am concerned about the motion. On only two other occasions in the past 31 years has a motion relating to Mother's Day been brought before the House. Such a motion has been brought before the House only twice since 1983.

**The Hon. Marie Ficarra:** It was overdue.

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** The Hon. Marie Ficarra said that it is overdue. That may be one explanation. Every year we legitimately discuss Anzac Day. Strangely, we are discussing a motion about Mother's Day ahead of other items of business in the Order of Precedence. I will be supporting the amendment. I understand that the Hon. David Clarke has a view and I understand why he holds that view. But just as Mother's Day should not be commercialised, nor should it be politicised. We should not use a motion of this nature as a weapon. I am concerned that this motion is, in a sense, being used as a club to achieve a certain result. Indeed, the motion is also being used as a club in response. Regrettably, a motion honouring our mothers is being used as a weapon by competing forces in this Chamber. That concerns me.

I can do nothing but support this motion because in 2010 in this Chamber I made my position clear during a debate on same-sex adoption. There are valuable relationships beyond what is considered the norm in our society. In terms of foster care, children are frequently in the care of two mothers, for example, and those children are cared for well. We know that because extensive assessments are made of prospective foster parents before children are placed in their care, and there is continual supervision and assessment of the foster care given to those children during that period. Foster parents deserve recognition—and they deserved that recognition in 2010. Foster parents deserved the opportunity to adopt those children in appropriate circumstances, following appropriate assessment. Now they deserve recognition through the amendment moved by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann. As I said, some aspects of this motion are regrettable. Nevertheless we all love our mothers and we recognise the good they do in our society. On a personal level, we all recognise their importance to our growth and development. Therefore, I will be supporting the motion and the amendment.

**The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS** [10.57 a.m.]: I agree with the Hon. Trevor Khan when he said that Mother's Day allows for an expression of love and commitment to one's mother. The nature of motherhood is unconditional love, irrespective of circumstances, irrespective of facts and irrespective of what foibles and faults our mothers have. I am pleased that the Hon. Cate Faehrmann has expanded the motion because I would like to talk about a different form of motherhood.

**The Hon. Luke Foley:** Talk about Lee Rhiannon and Mother Russia.

**The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS:** There is no better example of this than Lee Rhiannon and her love of Mother Russia. Lee Rhiannon and the Brown family's love of Mother Russia is a wonderful example of an unconditional, irrational love that transcends all boundaries. The Brown family have loved Mother Russia for many, many years, despite all that they know. They loved Mother Russia when Mother Russia executed 20,000 people per month in the two years immediately following the Bolshevik revolution. They loved Mother Russia when the bayonets were driven into the Romanov family, including the children.

**The Hon. Cate Faehrmann:** Point of order: My point of order refers to relevance. The motion is about Mother's Day. It has nothing to do with the country of Russia, which is clearly the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps' line of argument.

**The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS:** To the point of order: The motion has been expanded by way of an amendment moved by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann. I may well have my own motion at the end of this debate that may seek to amend the amendment. I am speaking to both the amendment and the substance of the original motion.

**The Hon. Lynda Voltz:** Point of order: Members have not gone outside the purview of talking about women in this country and the relevance of Mother's Day. The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps is well outside the leave of this motion; he is well outside the purview of any debate within this Chamber. He is specifically talking about international relations and Russia. It has nothing to do with this debate.

**The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS:** To the point of order: The Hon. Lynda Voltz is incorrect. The Hon. Trevor Khan spoke about the origins of Mother's Day in the United States. So we are talking about Mother's Day around the world.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell):** Order! I uphold the point of order. I remind the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps that his comments must be generally relevant to the motion. If he intends to move an amendment I suggest he do so quickly. His comments would be relevant if they related to his amendment.

**The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS:** I am speaking about the love of Lee Rhiannon for her family, who were staunch members of the Communist Party for many years. I can only presume that it could not have been her own intellectual rationalisation of communism which caused her to do that. It must have been a blind and unswerving adherence to her own mother, Freda Brown, a staunch member of the Communist Party, which prompted her to do it. After all, no sane and rational human being, knowing of the murder of Trotsky or the disgraceful behaviour of the Communist Party after the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact was announced, could possibly have done this. It must have been her mother and her love for her mother.

**The Hon. Lynda Voltz:** Point of order: In your last ruling on relevance, you advised the member to move his amendment if he wished to be generally relevant to the debate. I have not heard the member move his amendment.

**The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS:** To the point of order: I am speaking specifically about a relationship between a mother and her daughter, and the close relationship occasioned by that relationship.

**The Hon. Lynda Voltz:** To the point of order: Earlier you ruled that the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps needed to move an amendment to be relevant. He is flouting your ruling; he has not moved the amendment.

**The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS:** Further to the point of order: I am no longer speaking of international relations; I am speaking about a relationship between a mother and her daughter. If I am not allowed to use practical examples of the relationship between a mother and a daughter in an examination of Mother's Day and the nature of motherhood, then I am not sure how I can further progress the argument in relation to the original motion.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell):** Order! I do not uphold the point of order. While members are participating in a lively debate, I encourage them to be generally relevant to the motion.

**The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS:** We can envisage the quaint and delightful evening scene—an idyll of bliss—around the dinner table where Bill and Freda Brown would be discussing with Lee, their young daughter, the wonders of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and how the glories of the Five-year Plan had led the Soviet Union into a new, peaceful and wonderful era.

**The Hon. Lynda Voltz:** Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance again. The member is now talking about the Five-year Plan in Russia. At no point in his last statement has he drawn the attention of the House to either Mother's Day and its relevance to our community or to the women of Australia.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell):** Order! I uphold the point of order. I remind the member that his comments must be generally relevant to the motion.

**The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS:** Earlier members—including the Hon. Cate Faehrmann—raised the issue of domesticity and the enforced domesticity of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, with some critical aspect to it. During those 1940s, 1950s and 1960s there was a level of enforced domesticity where women were supposed to stay at home, cook, sit around the dinner table and chat, and look after their children. The Brown family is an example of this. I can imagine them sitting around the table, justifying the Rosenbergs' treason against the United States with their nuclear espionage.

**Dr John Kaye:** Point of order: While the Government Whip may take great sport in defaming a woman who has been dead for three years, I do not see the relevance of this individual to the debate. The member is out of order by making references to somebody who is not relevant to this debate. What happened in the Brown household is not part of a Mother's Day debate.

**The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS:** To the point of order: The Hon. Cate Faehrmann has previously raised issues of enforced domesticity and I am going through examples of the sort of situation you would find in a 1950s family.

**The Hon. Lynda Voltz:** Point of order: The member is flouting your ruling on relevance. On numerous occasions he goes directly back to talking about Russian foreign policy. That is of no relevance to this debate on Mother's Day. At no time has this member spoken in regard to Mother's Day and its relevance to women in this country.

**The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS:** To the point of order: It was clearly recognised at the time—and indeed by some left-wing academics today—that domesticity and the role of females is an integral part in understanding class theory. If one does not address this, one is basically saying that this Feminist-Marxist interpretation has no validity. I am quite happy for the Hon. Lynda Voltz to say that Feminist-Marxist interpretations have no validity whatsoever but I do not believe she is going to say that.

**The Hon. Lynda Voltz:** Further to the point of order: The member has not spoken about domesticity in the 1950s. He has constantly referred to one family and referenced that to Russia and Russian foreign policy. I appreciate that the member has now found the feminist view of history useful to him. However, I ask you to bring him back to the debate.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell):** Order! I uphold the point of order. The member's comments need to be generally relevant at all times.

**The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS:** As people become older, they move away from their mothers—the traditional phrase is "moving out from behind one's mother's skirt". But it appears that, for many people—especially in the 1960s—they did not merely move out from behind their mother's skirt but they took up the causes which had so enlivened their mothers. There is no better example of this than Lee Brown, as she then was, and her maintenance of strong links with Communism. She supported the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

**The Hon. Lynda Voltz:** Point of order: I feel obliged to do this and will perhaps end up doing this all day. The member is constantly flouting your ruling. He is constantly referring back to Russian foreign policy, which has nothing to do with the debate.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell):** Order! I uphold the point of order. I remind the member that his comments must be generally relevant at all times.

**The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS:** Teenagers move into adulthood, and adulthood brings with it a greater understanding—especially when one becomes a mother—of one's mother's position. Certainly, that was the case of Lee Brown. As she moved into adulthood she came to appreciate her mother's position on a range of issues far greater than she had in the past. In relation to the State of Israel, the invasion of Czechoslovakia—

**Dr John Kaye:** Point of order: If the member thinks that the particular political position of one particular mother in New South Wales is relevant to this debate, then I am mystified. This is a debate about motherhood. How could offensive remarks about one particular individual be relevant to this debate?

**The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS:** To the point of order. If we are not permitted to illustrate the development of an individual, from her first contact with her mother through to becoming a mother herself and understanding the nuances and complexities of one's life as we move along that journey, how can we give true appreciation to the heartfelt sentiments behind this motion?

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell):** Order! Once again, I uphold the point of order. I again remind the member to be generally relevant at all times.

**The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS:** Finally, I would like to say: Happy Mother's Day.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE [11.09 a.m.]:** I am pleased to support the motion moved by my colleague the Hon. Paul Green, which states:

1. That this House notes that:
  - (a) in Australia, Mother's Day is celebrated on the second Sunday in May,
  - (b) Mother's Day is a celebration honouring mothers and celebrating motherhood, maternal bonds and the influence of mothers in society,
  - (c) Mother's Day is also a time to celebrate the important mother figures who may have played an important role in our lives, and
  - (d) grandmothers, step-mothers, mothers-in-law, foster mothers are an important part of many families and make an invaluable contribution to children's lives.
2. That this House acknowledges the remarkable sacrifices mothers make for the wellbeing of their loved ones.

I point out, in view of the amendment that has been moved by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann, that the motion includes foster mothers. The motion does not seek to become involved in controversy; it can be any foster mother. The motion does not define "foster mothers"; in fact, there are no definitions in the motion at all. It is a pity that The Greens have decided to make the motion divisive by bringing forward concepts that are really part of another debate that this House will have in due course. Mother's Day is celebrated in Australia on the second Sunday in May. It is not a public holiday as it is in the United States, where it is also celebrated on the second Sunday in May. Julia Ward Howe first issued her Mother's Day proclamation in 1870 as a call for women to join in support of disarmament.

In the 1880s and 1890s there were several further attempts to establish Mother's Day in the United States but these did not succeed beyond the local level. The current holiday in the United States was created by Anna Jarvis in Grafton, West Virginia, in 1908 as a day to honour one's mother. She wanted to accomplish her mother's dream of making a celebration for all mothers, although the idea did not take off until she enlisted the services of wealthy Philadelphia merchant John Wanamaker. She kept promoting the holiday until President Woodrow Wilson made it an official national holiday in 1914. As I said, it is not a national holiday in Australia but there is no need to make it a national holiday as Sunday is a perfect opportunity for people to celebrate Mother's Day and visit their mothers, and acknowledge all the benefits and happy times they have had with their mothers, mothers-in-law and grandmothers over the preceding years.

Like other members I give thanks to Almighty God for my mother, Marjorie Lillian Nile, whose maiden name was Clark. The Clarks came originally from an area around Millport in Scotland. Her grandparents' wedding was held in the Presbyterian Church in Kilmarnock, Scotland. They moved to Wellington, New Zealand, in recent times but originally the grandparents arrived from Portadown as pioneers at the southern tip of New Zealand. They were my mother's grandparents. My mother had a very difficult time prior to her marriage. People have often criticised me and claimed that I do not know much about broken families and situations that occur in marriages when there is a divorce or a broken marriage. I strongly promote marriage, the traditional family and the traditional roles of a mother and father, and I always will as I believe they are part of God's plan for His creation—not Fred Nile's plan but Almighty God's plan.

My mother suffered great hardship in her childhood. We had a major scandal in our family's history that shocked the conservative Clark family, which at that point was a Scottish Presbyterian family living in Wellington. My grandmother through her actions destroyed the unity of the family and caused great embarrassment in a very conservative society. My grandmother, my mother's mother, fell in love with her next-door neighbour and decided to run off with him to Sydney and desert her five children in Wellington, one of whom was my mother. My mother and her four brothers were left destitute because my grandfather was very ill with asthma and not in good health and could not care for the children. They were taken in by the State and became wards of the State. As usually happens they were sent to different homes and were brought up in various foster families. It was not until quite late in my mother's relationship with me that I learnt that during some of those foster arrangements she experienced sexual abuse, and was moved to another home. There was a lot of sadness in my mother's background.

Eventually my grandmother had a change of heart and sent a message to New Zealand for the five children to be sent to join her in Sydney. They had grown up and were teenagers. I think her motive was probably to use them as employees. Those five children were then given ship tags and put on a ship on their own and sent from Wellington to Sydney. My grandmother collected them and moved them to the guesthouse that she was operating near Glebe. As I said, I think her motive was to use my mother as a housemaid in the guesthouse, which she did. That was not a very easy life according to my mother's comments to me. She eventually left home and worked as a waitress in a cafe in Kings Cross where she met my father, who was a taxicab driver. He used to go to the cafe and have his meals. They fell in love and were married in St Michael's Anglican Church in Taylor Square in 1933. I was very fortunate to be born in September 1934 as the first of four children—my brother, Jim, and two sisters, Marjorie and Mary.

My mother was a wonderful example of motherhood. I think sometimes the suffering she experienced in those years as a foster child put in her heart a desire to really be a mother and also to have a good family, with love and care, to make up for what she had lost as a child. I greatly appreciated that. She had a difficult time when my father sold the taxicab and bought a general business at Mascot, near the airport, which meant my mother had to help by serving in that retail business. That put a bit of pressure on her as she had four children. My mother always gave me great encouragement during my life, as well as to my brother and sisters, and I thank God for her.

I left school when I was 15 and worked as a junior storeman at Mascot Airport. I eventually left home to study for the ministry but when I came home she would have a hot dinner on the table in front of me. She had that knack of always wanting to care for people and feed people and make the family contented and happy. I thank God for my mother and her love and care. Even though my grandmother had been in a very unfortunate situation the family became united again. I spent some time with my grandmother at her home in Parramatta when my mother was ill and got to know my grandmother. All was forgiven and the family became united even though it had had that very unhappy beginning.

I still remember my mother's comment when I told her I was going to become an ordained minister after training with the Methodist Presbyterian Congregational colleges. She said she was pleased, but she wished I would become a "proper" minister. She believed a proper minister was an Anglican minister, but she was happy and proud of me, and the life I had chosen. She did not become aware of my political achievements because she died of a heart attack before I was elected to Parliament. I know she always took a deep interest in politics and carefully studied the political issues in the newspapers. I am sure she would have been proud that I was elected to the New South Wales Parliament. As my father was an orphan and did not know his parents we could not contact grandparents. I thank God for my wife and I acknowledge her role as a mother and her care for our four children and eight grandchildren.

I am disappointed that The Greens have moved an amendment to the motion, which is deliberately general. The motion does not mention that we support heterosexual mothers; it simply refers to all grandmothers, stepmothers, mothers-in-law and foster mothers. It does not indicate their sexuality. It is a pity that instead of The Greens making this debate congenial and united they have made it divisive. I know that is how The Greens operate, so I am not surprised. The Christian Democratic Party will oppose the amendment. I hope the House will support the motion as it is.

**The Hon. DAVID CLARKE** (Parliamentary Secretary) [11.22 a.m.]: Madam Deputy-President—

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! Does the Hon. David Clarke wish to speak to the amendment moved by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann?

**The Hon. DAVID CLARKE:** Yes. I contributed to debate on the motion. I seek leave to speak purely to the amendment.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! I advise members that the Hon. David Clarke does not need to seek leave to contribute to debate on the amendment. The member may contribute to the debate for a second time provided he confines his remarks to matters raised in the amendment.

**The Hon. DAVID CLARKE:** The amendment moved by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann is shameful. It is disgraceful. It is a sly amendment because it seeks to divide a motion that seeks to bring people together. This motion is about the nobility of motherhood: all motherhood. It does not define whether mothers are living in same-sex relationships or not in same-sex relations. This is the hijacking of a worthy motion; a motion that talks about all mothers. It does not distinguish. There are no hidden messages in this motion. There are no hidden buttons waiting to be pushed for political purposes.

I feel strongly about abortion, but I have not used this debate to move an amendment that drags in the issue of mothers and abortion. I did not raise that issue and I would not seek to do so. A motion was moved only days ago in relation to Anzac Day, but not a single member—not even from The Greens—sought to amend it to include political messages. The Hon. Cate Faehrmann feels strongly about this issue and she will have her time to talk about it. However, it is truly sorrowful that she seeks to hijack this motion that does not distinguish between mothers in same-sex relationships. I appeal to the Hon. Cate Faehrmann to do the decent thing and make her point about her definition of "mothers"—nobody disagrees with her on that—and leave it at that. She should not proceed with a squalid, shameful, disgraceful and sly amendment.

**Dr JOHN KAYE** [11.25 a.m.]: I support the amendment moved by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann. In many senses I want to echo the words of the Hon. Trevor Khan, as I too was going to talk about the commercialisation of Mother's Day. The original founder of Mother's Day, Anna Jarvis, started a campaign and spent her family's fortune on making it an officially recognised day in the United States of America. She was successful in 1913 when the American equivalent of its gazettal was made by President Wilson. Mother's Day was officially recognised. She spent the rest of her life—she died in 1948—campaigning against it. She was arrested when she protested against Mother's Day and regretted deeply that she had ever campaigned for it. She protested what she saw as gross commercialisation, particularly by the card and floral industries.

That does not take away from the fact that Mother's Day is a substantial day for many people and families. The Greens acknowledge that Mother's Day is important to many people. I am going to Melbourne to see my mother on Mother's Day. I support the amendment moved by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann, which seeks to include the specific recognition of single mothers and mothers in same-sex relationships. I want to calmly address the comments of the Hon. David Clarke.

**The Hon. David Clarke:** Comments which I made calmly as well.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Yes, you did make them calmly. While I am not sure that they were necessarily temperate, I will attempt to address them. Why do we talk about single mothers? Most members would be aware of the forced adoption debate that has been a significant part of the public debate since Senator Rachel Siewert's committee reported on the practice of forced adoption. Since the mid 1970s the practice has been ceased and there has been an increasing number of single supporting mothers. I do not think anybody in this House would question the challenges that a single parent, mother or father, faces in raising a child.

A single parent faces challenges not only financially—although the advent of the single supporting mother's benefit from the Whitlam Government changed the financial position substantially for a number of women—but also culturally and emotionally when raising a child on his or her own. We need to pay respect to the large number of single mothers who are exceptionally capable and who have delivered wonderful nurture and love to their children, often through difficult circumstances. I believe that is an entirely appropriate addition to the motion.

**The Hon. David Clarke:** You do not need a separate motion to do it.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** The Hon. David Clarke said we do not need a separate mention of those single parents.

**The Hon. David Clarke:** All mothers.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** Single mothers. In response to the interjection of the Hon. David Clarke, I understand it but I do not accept his argument. I think there is something specific about the challenges faced by single mothers and the courage and determination so many of them show in the face of adversity. They do not have a partner to share the challenges financially and emotionally. There is a worthy cause on Mother's Day to remember that not all mothers exist within a partnered relationship and not all mothers have the support of a partner. Those mothers who do not have a partner are deserving of our support.

I also refer to mothers in same-sex relationships. To some extent, same-sex marriage would make that clause in the amendment less relevant. But as long as we have systematic discrimination against the rights of women who are in same-sex relationships to marry and to have the full state-sanctioned approval that people in opposite sex relationships have then there is a specific case for identifying that they face a challenge.

It is a challenge created in large measure by a legislative failure to create equality in marriage for women in same-sex relationships. I have a number of friends who are in same-sex relationships and who are raising children and doing a wonderful job creating very nurturing and loving environments. They are raising boys and girls who will be fine citizens and who have great self-confidence and confidence in their family, their mothers and their community. However, there is not one of those mothers who has not at some stage expressed concern that they and their children are being discriminated against because of the inequality created by the absence of access to marriage. Not all of them would get married if they could—many probably would not—nonetheless, they are discriminated against and legally they are seen as inferior as parents compared with parents in heterosexual relationships.

It is therefore appropriate that this Parliament identify, recognise and celebrate the invaluable contribution that they take to their children's lives. Given the legal discrimination against them it is totally appropriate to recognise the role that they play. This amendment does not in any way suggest that we should have legal recognition of same-sex marriage—although I think we should and that is a debate we should have. However, it does recognise that mothers in same-sex relationships are in a specific and singular situation that should be recognised. To that extent, I support the amendment and commend it to the House.

**The Hon. MARIE FICARRA** (Parliamentary Secretary) [11.32 a.m.]: This is a very divisive amendment orchestrated by The Greens to divide us on an issue that is fundamental to society—the value of all

mothers. The motion moved by the Hon. Paul Green is respectful of all women and it has nothing to do with a mother's sexual preference. We are saying we value women for their mothering regardless of their relationship status. The amendment is disingenuous, destructive and dishonourable.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS** [11.33 a.m.]: I also support the Hon. Paul Green's motion. Like other members, I will put on the record a few of my fond memories of my mother. My relationship with my mother when I was very young was probably different from the relationship that most people have with their mother. My mother was also my governess or schoolteacher. My first six years of formal education in the early 1960s were done by correspondence because we lived a long way out of town and there were about 12 gates on the dirt road to our house. Things were tough on the land and mum and dad did not have the money to send me to boarding school. I was a student of the Blackfriars Correspondence School and my mother supervised me, my sister and my brothers.

That arrangement presented a number of issues because I was devoted to life on the land and I loved everything going on around me. Mum tried to get me to sit in the kitchen to do my school work, but every time a tractor started or a sheepdog barked I would be out the door to head off somewhere with dad. Dad would ask whether I had finished my school work and, of course, I would say that I had and we would be off until the sun went down. When we got home dad would not be mum's favourite man and I was not her favourite son because, of course, I had not finished my school work. Mum often had to find me to get me to do my school work. I would hide under the car to avoid her.

I boarded at Presbyterian Boys Hostel when I went to Tamworth High School. I was a student there at the same time as my good friend the Hon. Jennifer Gardiner. I remember mum saying that when she put me on the train to school she often wondered whether I still loved her because of the way she treated me when I was a little renegade kid. Those early years were a very special time in our lives. Mum has been the stalwart of our family. We can all always rely on her to discuss things frankly and openly. She and my dad are still in good health in their mid-eighties. There are plenty of mothers like her who have been the stalwart of their family. Mum is now the matriarch of the family as a mother, a grandmother and a great grandmother. Mum, thank you very much for what you have done for us and our families over the years. We all love you very much.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN** [11.37 a.m.], in reply: I thank the Hon. Robert Brown, the Hon. David Clarke, the Hon. Marie Ficarra, Ms Cate Faehrmann, the Hon. Rick Colless, Dr John Kaye, the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps, the Hon. Lynda Voltz, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell and the Hon. Niall Blair for their contributions to this debate. Despite the fact that members did not think that this motion was worth debating, a large number of them decided to make a contribution. I was not expecting such a wide-ranging debate and was surprised by the reference to Mother Russia. It appears that a number of mothers and grandmothers are now in the gallery and it is ironic that the House is acknowledging the great job that they do.

The Hon. Robert Brown mentioned the sacrifices that his mother made and mothers in refuges. The Hon. David Clarke talked about mothers being the heart of the family and the Hon. Marie Ficarra talked about her Sicilian mother, the great example she set and the support she offered to her daughter in her political career. Ms Cate Faehrmann offered some interesting thoughts about the perfect mother. My wife is the mother of six children and she handles that role with ease. However, the danger is that many young women think that that is the standard. That is by no means true. The *Bible* refers to having one's quiver full—containing the number of arrows that one can carry and fire. There is no doubt that a woman's mothering capacity is what she chooses or what she can cope with.

No doubt the notion of the perfect mother causes stress. I also acknowledge the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, who talked about post-natal depression and the loss experienced by women who do not get to deliver their babies, which I am very mindful of, but unborn children are also family and those women are mothers in their own right. A plethora of different conversations came up in the debate. Dr Kaye talked about the commercialisation of Mother's Day, which I thought was a good point. One only needs to look at the television to see advertisements for how to spend the next dollar—not that mothers are not worth it, they are worth every dollar and more, but commercialisation is a valid point to raise.

The Hon. Rick Colless talked about his mother being a schoolteacher and the way that the relationship between his mother and father worked. How he, as their son, saw that relationship was very insightful. There was a lot of good discussion. At the end of the day this was simply a moment to stop and say thank you to mothers, full-stop. The Christian Democratic Party does not support the amendment, because the motion does not define what relationship the mother is in. We just wanted the House to note our congratulations to mothers across New South Wales.

**Question—That the amendment of the Hon. Cate Faehrmann be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Amendment of the Hon. Cate Faehrmann agreed to.**

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

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

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE** [11.41 a.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that Private Members' Business item No. 687 outside the Order of Precedence, relating to VE Day, be called on forthwith.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH** [11.42 a.m.]: I am not against the motion on VE Day but I have been sitting here waiting for debate on my motion regarding the closure of regional development offices, which is quite significant. There have been some developments in relation to that and there are whispers in Goulburn that the office is not going to close on 30 June but on 1 June. That is an urgent matter of State significance and needs to be debated in this Chamber right now. No offence to Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile—VE Day is very important—but regional development in country New South Wales is an extremely important matter that has been raised to a new level with the alleged closure of the offices earlier than was timetabled. It is an absolute disgrace that we are not going to finish debating my motion about the closure of regional development offices in New South Wales. We should be doing it now. It is on the *Notice Paper*. I have waited for my time to come. To try to block it is an absolute disgrace. As important as the motion of Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile is, the closure of regional development offices in New South Wales is important and it is happening right now.

**The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO** [11.43 a.m.]: I oppose contingency being given to Private Members' Business item No. 687 standing in the name of Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile. This is yet another example of a motion that could have been passed by way of formal business, because nobody in this House would object to the content of this motion, but this is the second time today that the Christian Democrats have used contingency to take over Private Members' Business. We all know that many motions go on to the Private Members' Business paper and members wait a very long time to get their motions inside the order of precedence. It takes quite a long time.

As the Hon. Mick Veitch has stated, the regional development and small business motion that is on the *Notice Paper* is a matter of considerable importance to people in rural and regional New South Wales. He has waited patiently. He had an opportunity in the draw for Private Members' Business to put this motion. He started the debate on it and I think we should finish that debate today rather than giving precedence to another matter that is not contentious. That is the point of having the capacity to have motions put up by way of formal business: to discharge them from the *Notice Paper* on the basis that they receive the unanimous support of members of the House.

I do not believe that debating a motion on VE Day is so urgent that it should take precedence over other matters on the *Notice Paper* today. It is Private Members' Business day; it is not Christian Democratic Party private members' business day. I think it is time we got to some of the business that is scheduled to be dealt with today. This and the previous motion could have been discharged by way of formal business. That would have been more appropriate than trying to block important motions on the *Notice Paper* that are scheduled for debate today.

**The Hon. STEVE WHAN** [11.46 a.m.]: I also oppose the contingency motion, not out of any disrespect for the principal motion. As others on this side of the House have said, it could have been dealt with by way of formal business because it would not have been opposed. The Hon. Mick Veitch has raised a critical issue in this place, which needs to be—and should be—dealt with today. I also have received advice, in my case from the union, that the Goulburn office of Regional Development and Small Business will close on 1 June. That makes it a very urgent issue. Four people who work in that office, as we understand it, are expected to make a decision in the next few days on whether they take a redundancy package. Those people have worked to help the development of our regions.

It is fair to say that the Bombala softwood mill development would not have happened but for the fact that the person in the Goulburn office who dealt with the project for 15 years put a huge amount of effort into it.

That person's job is one of the jobs that will go in the next few weeks, and that person has to make a decision about whether to accept a redundancy package. That means that the motion should be considered by this Chamber now. We started considering it on the last Thursday of Private Members' Business but, unfortunately, ran out of time to complete it. The Hon. Mick Veitch reasonably expected that it would come up again today. I did as well, and I have my notes here ready to go. Those notes include the reaction of the Goulburn Mayor, Geoff Kettle. He said that the decision I hope we will discuss today—if Government members have the sense not to support the contingency motion—would leave a huge hole in the centre of the State. The local chamber of commerce wrote to the Minister responsible, Ms Katrina Hodgkinson. The response it got was gobbledegook. Those things make it more important to discuss the motion of the Hon. Mick Veitch than the motion of Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile.

**The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox:** Point of order: We are dealing with a motion to suspend standing and sessional orders. Urgency is the issue, not the substance of a motion that is not before the House.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell):** Order! I uphold the point of order. The Hon. Steve Whan should remain generally relevant to the motion to suspend standing and sessional orders.

**The Hon. STEVE WHAN:** I have just overheard a conversation in the background. We may shortly see a change of plan so I will bring my comments to a close.

**The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN** [11.50 a.m.]: This is the second motion to suspend standing and sessional orders by the Christian Democratic Party today. It makes a mockery of Private Member's Business. As the Hon. Mick Veitch said, there are matters ready to be debated in the order of precedence that will make a difference to people's lives today if they are passed by this House. Having another motion debated that is not asking the House to do anything but note and remember a particular day is but another delaying tactic by the Christian Democratic Party. If Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile allows the Hon. Mick Veitch to debate his motion and then raises his urgency motion it will clearly demonstrate that the two Christian Democratic Party motions today are all about delaying debate on my motion on marriage equality.

**The Hon. Rick Colless:** It is not about you, Cate. The world does not revolve around you.

**The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN:** Then why is Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile about to allow the motion of the Hon. Mick Veitch to be debated and proposing then to bring his contingency motion on? I suspect Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile thought that the Hon. Mick Veitch, the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones and the Hon. Luke Foley were not ready to debate their motions. What is going on here is blatant. Everyone knows what is going on. The Christian Democratic Party does not want to debate marriage equality today and it is doing everything it can to stop that debate.

The Christian Democratic Party is now going to allow the Hon. Mick Veitch to talk about jobs in regional and rural New South Wales—and I am pleased that the Hon. Mick Veitch will have the opportunity to debate his motion. The Christian Democratic Party will then jump up and move its contingency motion to stop this House from dealing with a motion in the order of precedence that it is the right of a private member to debate. The Christian Democratic Party is indulging in disgraceful tactics. I urge members to reject contingency on this motion. If Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile moves the contingency motion again after the debate of the motion of the Hon. Mick Veitch it should be rejected then also.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE** [11.52 a.m.], in reply: I was strongly influenced by the speech of the Hon. Mick Veitch. I understood from inquiries that none of the motions prior to that of the Hon. Cate Faehrmann were ready to proceed. I do not wish to stop the Hon. Mick Veitch from speaking on a genuine issue of concern—the Christian Democratic Party shares that concern. I withdraw my contingency motion. I will proceed with it at a later time.

**Motion, by leave, withdrawn.**

## **NATIONAL PARK ESTATE (SOUTH WESTERN CYPRESS RESERVATIONS) AMENDMENT BILL 2012**

### **Second Reading**

**Debate called on, and adjourned on motion by the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps.**

**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS OFFICE CLOSURES**

**Debate resumed from 3 May 2012.**

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH** [11.53 a.m.]: From the outset I acknowledge and thank Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile for withdrawing his contingency motion. It was very nice of him to do so. I have been prepared to debate my motion for quite some time. Regional development in New South Wales is very close to my heart and to the hearts of everyone in country New South Wales. Today whispers are circulating along the streets of Goulburn that the Goulburn Regional Development office will not close on 30 June; it has been pulled forward and it will now close on 1 June. It would be helpful if a Government member could confirm in his or her contribution to this debate that that office will close on 1 June, not 30 June—that is another reason why it was so important to have this motion completed today.

As I said in my earlier contribution to this debate, I have been approached by local government representatives. They have raised with me concern about the closure of offices in Tweed, Coffs Harbour, Broken Hill and Goulburn in particular. I repeat that I am a little bemused as to how, due to the closure of the office at Broken Hill, the people of Broken Hill will now be serviced from Dubbo. In the previous debate the Hon. Steve Whan mentioned that Councillor Geoff Kettle had raised concern about the closure of the Goulburn office. It will leave a hole in regional development in that part of the State. I am not sure whether the councils affected by these closures have been advised on what the new structures will be and how they are to access the new processes for regional development.

I certainly hope that the Minister and the Government have passed on that important information: not to do so would be remiss and irresponsible. If the Government is going to remove a Regional Development office then it should ensure that transitional provisions are in place and that everyone in that part of the State understands what the new arrangements are. There must be significant reasons for moving the closure from 30 June to 1 June. I have never had the opportunity of being a Minister but I am certain that others in the Chamber—

**The Hon. Niall Blair:** I wonder why?

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** That is enough from the Hon. Niall Blair. Fair is fair. He will get his turn to come to the microphone.

**The Hon. Niall Blair:** And I will take it.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** The Hon. Niall Blair can come to the microphone and explain to the people of Goulburn why The Nationals are supporting the closure of Regional Development offices in New South Wales. I would have thought that The Nationals would stand up for country New South Wales and say that this office needs to stay and—

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** To preserve jobs for themselves.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Well, there is also a rumour circulating that the Hon. Niall Blair is contesting preselection for the Federal seat of Hume. I categorically ruled out running for Hume. Why does the Hon. Niall Blair not do the same thing? Why does he not put on the record that he is not going to run for the Federal seat of Hume? My intelligence is that the Liberal Party is holding its preselection on Saturday. Is that correct?

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! I remind the Hon. Mick Veitch that he must direct his comments through the Chair. He should not respond to interjections.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** My apologies, Madam Deputy-President. I do not often respond to interjections because they are disorderly, and so are the members who are making them. In the lead up to the last election Coalition members, who are now members of the Government, made a significant number of commitments to country New South Wales—a decade of decentralisation and a range of other things. Yet 12 months later the Government is closing down Regional Development offices in Tweed, Coffs Harbour, Broken Hill and Goulburn. It beggars belief that that could be part of a process that will encourage decentralisation and economic growth in the regions. I know that a number of members of the Government will

support the Minister on this. The Minister needs to face the people of Goulburn and tell them why. Councils are asking why the Minister will not explain why the decision was made, what the transition arrangements will be, and how in the future they will access Regional Development. I commend the motion to the House.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN** [11.58 a.m.]: On behalf of the Christian Democratic Party I speak to the motion of the Hon. Mick Veitch. Regional development is often dependent on government policy. Different regions have different regional development concerns; however, it is important to ensure that policy is effectively addressed. I come from the beautiful Shoalhaven on the New South Wales South Coast. It is one of the best places to live for quality of life—

**Mr David Shoebridge**: Does that mean you do not care about Tweed, Coffs Harbour, Broken Hill and Goulburn?

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones)**: Order! Mr David Shoebridge will come to order.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN**: I assure Mr David Shoebridge that I have a mother's heart for regional Australia. Some areas in regional New South Wales have a higher than average unemployment rate. We are constantly trying to create jobs. For instance, in the Shoalhaven we must create more than 700 jobs a year. That means virtually continual growth.

**Mr David Shoebridge**: That's just to tread water.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN**: That is to break even. It ensures that our young and brightest—the cream of the crop in our schools—do not leave the region and travel to Sydney for work. Those young people stay in our region. Those key individuals, along with all others, have the innovation and entrepreneurial mindset. We need to keep those young brains in our region to ensure growth in the sector. For example, the unemployment rate in the Shoalhaven can rise to double the national average. Sometimes our unemployment rate goes down to about 5 per cent—it has been 5.6 per cent on a good day—which is fantastic. On the other hand, the unemployment rate can increase to 10 per cent to 12 per cent, particularly a bit further south in Ulladulla.

**The Hon. Mick Veitch**: Youth unemployment.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN**: Youth unemployment in Ulladulla is well over 10 per cent. These are real issues for our region. The local council works with the State Government and Regional Development Australia on innovative opportunities for growth. For instance, in Ulladulla there was a proposal to use Shoalhaven City Council's sewerage treatment plant, which had been exhausted. The tanks on the site have been renewed and we will do some fish marketing. Basically, the idea is to create a new aquaculture sector. It was a dream to partner with the State and Federal governments on that project. We have done that—we simply cannot afford not to do it—because regional Australia needs the jobs.

Ulladulla has high unemployment. Kids are struggling. Where do they go and what do they do? People need a job. Kids need a job. Parents want their children to have a job. Parents get a buzz when they drive their kids to work; the kids do not have a drivers licence but they have a desire to earn a few bucks. That is echoed throughout regional Australia because of isolation, petrol prices and so on. It is imperative for our kids to have a job in regional areas because they cannot afford the petrol to drive the distances to Sydney or to Wollongong for a job. They need a job in their own town. They need jobs that are accessible and close so that their parents can drop them off and pick them up until they get their drivers licence. Those issues are important in regional areas.

We need to ensure that the Government's regional initiatives and policies are effective. I understand that the Government may want to refine its policies in this area. That is the Government's job. We do not expect the Government to rubberstamp everything; we expect it to scrutinise its resources, access to those resources and whether resources are being wasted, particularly in regional New South Wales. We do not have a problem with that. But it is dangerous territory, and I simply ask the Government to consider whether the facts, theory or information provided by the Hon. Mick Veitch are correct. I ask the Government to consider carefully the ramifications of its decision to close regional development offices. It is easy for those in Sydney to simply put a line through a line item in the budget but they should consider the ramifications. Who will pick up a service if it is not delivered in regional areas?

I know the Government is keen to move its services to regional areas, and that is a great initiative. I simply ask the Government not to look only at the bottom line; it should look at the potential effects of its

decision on resources in three months, six months or 12 months. The decision may result in two things. If the decision is wrong it could come back to bite the Government and could cost the Government a lot more. I ask the Government to be mindful of those things. We all have a commitment to ensure the long-term sustainability of the regions in New South Wales. Regional development is not simply about individual regions; it is about combined regional communities getting together to maximise resources and incomes.

**The Hon. Walt Secord:** Are you for or against it?

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** That is the point: It does not have to be a question of us or them. By bringing members' great minds together we can deliver a great outcome and build a great regional development strategy. That is what this is about. Regional business growth plans, strategies, social inclusion, support for economic development, the creation of new jobs, skills development and business investment are important to regional development. Shoalhaven City Council has \$10.6 million sitting in a bank account to build a strategic road.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! The Hon. Steve Whan will come to order.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** The northbound link is a strategic road that will provide access to the industrial area and ensure job creation and efficiencies. But do members think we can build the road? That money has been ring fenced for investment in a road structure strategically to feed our industrial areas. The project cannot go ahead for numerous reasons, many of which relate to environmental sensitivities. Those problems can be solved. But while \$10.6 million sits in the council's account it is not creating jobs or a sustainable opportunity, and it is certainly not providing an opportunity for young people in our area. The Government must be mindful of those matters when it decides to pull the plug on something. It must consider the ramifications not only for our youth but for all people who are seeking employment in regional New South Wales. The Hon. Simon Crean made an important point when he said:

A real regional development framework—guided by the principles of localism, transparency and leadership, together with new resources—has a key role to play in micro-economic reform, in understanding that diversity and challenging it to play its part in lifting the nation's productivity, growth and resilience.

In his parliamentary briefing paper, "Regional NSW—Economic Survey and Development Initiatives", John Wilkinson said:

Unemployment rates vary between the regions of NSW, as they do between the regions collectively and Sydney ...

Employment in the regions does not necessarily correspond to higher or lower rates of employment. While the Richmond-Tweed/Mid-North Coast had the highest unemployment rate (between January-August 2009) of any of the regions ... there were over 22,000 more people employed in the two regions in 2006 than in 2001.

The Murrumbidgee-Murray combined regions recorded the lowest January-August 2009 unemployment rate, and yet only around 4,000 more people were employed in 2006 than in 2001.

Regional NSW, collectively, does have a higher unemployment rate than the other regional areas of the Australian states. South Australia has the lowest regional unemployment rate, while Western Australia has the second lowest.

Given those statistics, it is important not to do a simple equation and burn a bridge based on a line item in the budget. The Government needs to be aware that unemployment is a real issue for regional areas. If we want to make productivity count, what the Hon. Simon Crean said about the role of micro-economic reform, productivity and a necessary resilience will take three levels of government. Therefore, it is imperative that the Government is aware of the concerns raised by the Hon. Mick Veitch. If the Government's motive is to save something on the bottom line—

**The Hon. Duncan Gay:** We didn't hear anything for the last 16 years about concerns.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** The Government, with its commitment to the decade of decentralisation, must ensure that if it is removing a service it has a strategy to replace it that is twice as good, twice as productive and twice as able to create productivity; otherwise regional Australia will die a slow death in terms of jobs growth and the productivity it brings to New South Wales overall. I note the motion of the Hon. Mick Veitch. I encourage the Government to listen to his concerns and—if they are doing what he claims—to make sure that the ramifications of those actions are not far reaching. The Government should ensure that its actions do not cost jobs for the people of this State, particularly young people.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS** [12.10 p.m.]: I lead for the Government on the motion moved by the Hon. Mick Veitch. The first thing I must do is set some facts straight. For 16 years Labor failed small business and neglected regional communities. In the March 2011 election the voters of New South Wales made Labor pay for that neglect.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** It's just your spin.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** I ask the Hon. Steve Whan to accept that my next statement is a fact. At the March 2011 election the voters of New South Wales made Labor pay for its neglect and comprehensively booted it out of government.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** It's just rhetoric.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** That is a fact, and the member opposite cannot deny it. It is not hard to understand why the voters did that. Under Labor, business confidence in government policy was the worst in the nation. Under Labor, New South Wales suffered the worst job growth of any Australian State. Under Labor, the Government failed to pay small business on time. Just think about that: butchers, hospital suppliers and so on all around New South Wales did not get paid for months. Under Labor, New South Wales under-performed in assisting core businesses compared with other States.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! Members will cease interjecting.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** Under Labor, many businesses in important economic regions of New South Wales had no access, or limited access, to local business support services. When we came to government—

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** You're reducing them. How can you say that with a straight face?

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** If the Hon. Steve Whan would listen, he would find out. When we came to government we talked to small business owners in New South Wales in regional areas. It was clear that things had to change when it came to how the Government dealt with small businesses in our regions. If members opposite actually bothered to get out and speak with small business owners, they would understand this. But as this debate has shown, those opposite have not learnt the lessons of their past mistakes. The fact is that when the people of New South Wales voted for the Government in record numbers in March last year, they did so on the basis that we would make the tough decisions and take the tough actions necessary to turn this State around. The changes at NSW Trade and Investment are a case in point. That department has been established to lead efforts to improve the performance of the New South Wales economy. Economic growth in regional New South Wales will be encouraged, which will make this State a more competitive and attractive place to do business.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** By cutting jobs in regional New South Wales. You should be embarrassed to say this.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** I acknowledge the interjection by the Hon. Steve Whan. I will get to him in a minute.

**The Hon. Duncan Gay:** Do him slowly.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** Yes. Informed by the outcomes of the Small Business Commissioner's recent statewide consultation with small business stakeholders, NSW Trade and Investment is refocusing delivery of small business advisory services. This will ensure greater alignment with local needs and with the overall strategic goals outlined in NSW 2021. Is the Hon. Mick Veitch listening? From 1 July 2012, a new \$5 million program called Smallbiz Connect will provide expanded small business advisory services, including events at a grassroots level in each region of New South Wales.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** You don't believe this; you have just been given the words—write something yourself, Rick. You used to have some sort of credibility in the country.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** If the Hon. Steve Whan would stop chattering—like the tired old chatterbox he is—he might learn something.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! I remind the member to direct his comments through the Chair. Members who wish to engage in conversation should do so outside the Chamber.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** Under the \$5 million Smallbiz Connect program, each region in New South Wales will see an expansion of small business advisory services at the grassroots level.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** That's simply not true.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** Those opposite should not talk to us about reducing advisory services in regional areas. The Hon. Mick Veitch in his contribution talked about the need to have face-to-face contact with people. The Government could not agree more. One does need face-to-face contact, but let us remember what the previous Government did to the Department of Primary Industries—or the New South Wales Department of Agriculture, as it was in those days. It closed 45 departmental offices.

**The Hon. Niall Blair:** How many?

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** Forty-five offices.

**The Hon. Duncan Gay:** Who was the Minister?

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** This member opposite was the Minister at the time. He, together with a number of other primary industries Ministers, closed 45 departmental offices.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** No offices closed while I was Minister.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** The Hon. Steve Whan says that no departmental offices closed while he was Minister. He cannot deny that 45 offices closed during the term of the Labor Government.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** Last time you spoke you said 30. Make up your mind.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** No, I did not. You check *Hansard*; it was 45.

**The Hon. Duncan Gay:** He was part of the Cabinet when it happened.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** He was a member of the Cabinet when it happened. Some 45 Department of Primary Industries offices, research stations and research facilities were closed. That represented more than 30 per cent of the Department of Primary Industries. That is what the 30 figure was—30 per cent of the Department of Primary Industries. The former Labor Government did not have a plan. It had no vision and no strategy to improve or revitalise the department. The previous Government carelessly axed 600-plus jobs from the Department of Primary Industries. Members opposite talk about providing face-to-face services but all those people were face-to-face workers—agronomists, beef cattle officers, sheep officers—and they are gone.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** Do you know about the review of extension services that the Government is doing?

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** I know a lot more about extension than the Hon. Steve Whan ever will.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** Do you know that the Government is reviewing them at the moment?

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** There is not going to be a reduction in the small business advisory services, as members opposite would have us believe. Under the new program, small businesses will have access to a statewide network of skilled small business advisers funded by the New South Wales Government. So instead of being focused in a dozen or so major towns, our small business advisers will be able to travel across the breadth of New South Wales to visit small businesses.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** You have said that they will be internet based.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** That will broaden the accessibility of these programs. I have just said that advisers will travel across the breadth of the State to visit small businesses on a face-to-face basis. This will

broaden the accessibility of these programs across the State. It will allow more small businesses to benefit from these programs through better-connected services. And what do you know? Our reforms are being welcomed by small business operators and stakeholders across the State and industry, including the Executive Director of the Council of Small Business Australia and the National Chairman of the Business Enterprise Centre Australia. In fact, contrary to the claims of those opposite, the New South Wales Government is always willing to engage with stakeholders on issues such as these.

Both the Deputy Premier and the Minister have been in touch with small business operators and stakeholders, local councils and local business development organisations. Innovative programs such as Smallbiz Connect represent a significant change in the delivery of small business services throughout the State. NSW Trade and Investment was formed to drive the economic performance of this State and it requires a refocus of resources. As part of this refocus the decision has been taken to close the department's Enterprise, Small Business and Regional Development operations in Tweed Heads, Coffs Harbour, Broken Hill, Goulburn and Parramatta. Let me tell members opposite about Broken Hill.

**The Hon. Amanda Fazio:** What about Broken Hill? You know nothing about it.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** The Hon. Amanda Fazio says that I know nothing about Broken Hill. Let me remind the House that there was a significant event in Broken Hill last weekend—Agfair. Those opposite probably do not know about it. Do you know how many Country Labor members were at Agfair last week?

**The Hon. Niall Blair:** How many?

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** How many do you think were there in the once mighty Broken Hill, the heartland of New South Wales Country Labor? How many Country Labor members were present? Not one—zero. There were four members of The Nationals and one Liberal Party member at Broken Hill. I do not know what has happened to Country Labor; it does not exist anymore in regional New South Wales. There was no interest by Labor at all. I have to say that we did a tremendous amount of business at our stand, but members opposite did not even bother to turn up to Broken Hill, once the heartland of Country Labor.

As mentioned previously in this debate, these smaller regional offices have been closed in order to retain the critical mass at larger regional centres. As a result of these closures there will be a reduction of just 12 staff across New South Wales, not 47. Members opposite should get their facts right instead of claiming hysterically that the number is 47. It is not; it is only 12. While we would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the important issues of regional investment and small business support, it is important to cut through the lies coming from those opposite and get the facts straight. Labor had 16 years of failure and was justifiably booted from office. In contrast, we heard the message that things in New South Wales needed to change and we have heeded it. These reforms to the Government's delivery of regional development and small business support are a case in point. The Government opposes the motion.

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM** [12.21 p.m.]: I support the excellent motion moved by the Hon. Mick Veitch. The Greens, as members opposite are becoming only too aware, are the friends of regional New South Wales. In the past 12 months I have been to the Tweed, Coffs Harbour, Goulburn and Broken Hill, and nearly everywhere in between. I have been surprised at how much concern there is in regional New South Wales about the performance of this Government in relation to supporting the regions. I am particularly concerned about the disregard that is being shown to the regions by the Coalition Government and am disappointed that The Nationals have not done more to stand up to their Liberal Party masters and support those whom they claim to represent. It is becoming standard for this Government, including The Nationals, to go back on their word when it comes to promises to regional New South Wales. We saw a rally of close to 10,000 people, mostly from regional New South Wales, who were very angry about what they see as a clear breach of trust when it comes to protecting agricultural land and water from the impacts of mining.

Of course, the Northern Rivers, mid North Coast and Far West are not even included in the Government's strategic regional land use plans. Many people in those regions are wondering why they have been left out by this Government given they are all subject to significant mining and gas exploration activities. We saw a fundamental breach of another election promise when The Nationals went quietly into the night by supporting their Liberal colleagues in voting against a more robust weed management framework for New South Wales. This was despite a clear election promise to even up responsibilities between private and public landholders when it comes to managing weeds. I think this breach of promise will cause particular concern in

the regions. I give some credit to The Nationals for their performance in the coal seam gas inquiry when the Hon. Rick Colless broke ranks with his Liberal Party colleagues to vote for the royalties for regions recommendation. This is another election promise that is yet to come to fruition.

As the motion says, the Government has broken another election promise by going back on its word about decentralisation and public sector employment opportunities in the regions. As members would know, I am from Orange. In Orange we have a good example of the value to regional communities of decentralised public sector jobs. The Department of Primary Industries delivers a number of services from its offices in Orange and provides hundreds of jobs in the district. It is one of the biggest employers in our region. Orange has undergone significant change in recent years, with the explosion of mining in the first decade of this century and now the dramatic winding back of Cadia Gold's operation and the closure of the open pit next month, which will see 500 jobs go from the region. Maintaining a stable public sector workforce is important for the long-term future of the town. Inherent instability in future employment opportunities is being built into the New South Wales economy by this Government's narrow-minded obsession with expanding mining at all costs.

In particular, through the Hunter Valley, Gloucester Valley, Gunnedah and north-west areas the expansion of coal and gas exploration and mining is starting to undermine existing sustainable industries such as agriculture, tourism and manufacturing. We know that coal and gas mining have a finite life in these regions but the industries they are forcing out have been operating for decades and could operate for centuries into the future if they are not literally undermined. Having Regional Development and Small Business offices there is critical to maintaining and growing the existing service, manufacturing and small business enterprises that employ so many people in the regions.

The Greens have a strategy for regional development that is not built on mining. It is about supporting existing sustainable industries in agriculture, manufacturing and tourism, supporting the decentralisation of public sector jobs and finding new opportunities in renewable energy and other carbon reduction fields such as the carbon farming initiative. Many of these things go together with the need for some bureaucratic support to most effectively develop regional communities and large-scale renewable energy projects, and the education, training and development, monitoring and compliance of carbon farming initiative activities. An example of how the Coalition Government is abandoning regional economies and regional communities is Rugby. It is an area the Hon. Duncan Gay will be familiar with. It is based primarily on sheep farming and agriculture but you would have to say that it has been in decline for some decades.

**The Hon. Duncan Gay:** Rugby in decline?

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM:** Yes. It has lost population and is losing services—

**The Hon. Rick Colless:** What planet are you on?

**The Hon. Duncan Gay:** Where have you been? What parallel universe?

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM:** If you think Rugby is going from strength to strength you obviously have not been there.

**The Hon. Duncan Gay:** You are not talking about the farming industries in Rugby.

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM:** They are certainly employing fewer people and the population is declining and there are fewer services. Yet when faced with a chance to renew that community through renewable energy the Government brought in guidelines that will destroy an opportunity to introduce wind power. The company that is proposing to establish itself in Rugby, Windlab Systems, has wound back its proposal by 40 per cent. That type of proposal is about sustaining regional development and regional communities. It would certainly be a boon to that locality and that community, but this Government is not interested in supporting those industries either through the public service or by having policies that sustain regional development, enterprises and jobs.

The opportunities in renewable energy alone are substantial. Research by the Centre for Full Employment and Equity at the University of Newcastle has identified a gain of between 10,000 and 15,000 new jobs if the Hunter's six coal-fired power stations are phased out over time and local energy needs are met by renewable energy. There are also tremendous job opportunities in the carbon farming initiative. We need the people in Regional Development and Small Business to support small enterprises to make sure they have the

ability to capitalise fully on the opportunities that arise. That is especially so in the carbon farming area and in other areas such as weed and pest management and tree planting, and with soil and water scientists, agronomists, ecologists and land managers. This is the future of sustainable regional communities and we need those government officers there to help them.

Farmers would be paid to improve the carbon-carrying capacity of their land. Enormous industries could develop and billions of dollars flow into regional communities but they need people to assist them and inform them and build the networks. It will not be done by gutting the public sector or by destroying face-to-face communication and putting things on the web. Regional communities need people on the ground talking to them on a daily basis about how they can grow their industries, grow employment opportunities and grow regional economies. There are enormous opportunities for increased revenue streams to hedge against climate disruptions and poor seasons.

At the same time regional economies will see a boom in diverse jobs as the sons and daughters of regional families stop worrying that the only opportunity that they have in the future is to mine. They are the regional industries of the future, not mining. This Government is going the opposite way: rolling out mining across the landscape and pulling back public sector jobs in regional areas. Far from a decade of decentralisation in New South Wales, it looks like we will see a decade or two of irresponsible mining. It is killing jobs. The Australian Institute modelling shows that for every job created, potentially through gas and mining in the Namoi, three jobs in the manufacturing sector are killed. It is driving up the dollar and driving jobs out of manufacturing and services.

We need people in regional development. We need people to support small business that employ 70 to 80 per cent of people in the regions. We want to sustain industries that have been established long term and will continue to emerge. We do not want to have a one-speed, singular vision for the economies of regional New South Wales. This House should condemn the Government not only for its disregard for regional communities but also for its arrogance to think it can get away with continually breaching its election commitments. If the Government is not prepared to stand up for regional community and economies, The Greens and I will.

**The Hon. STEVE WHAN** [12.31 p.m.]: I have no great pleasure in supporting the motion moved by my colleague the Hon. Mick Veitch. It is sad to have a Government that is so comprehensively going back on its commitments made to regional New South Wales when in opposition. I refer to the closure of regional development offices in Tweed Heads, Coffs Harbour, Broken Hill and Goulburn on the basis of a report by the Small Business Commissioner. The Hon. Rick Colless said that the Coalition had been talking to regional small businesses. Coalition Ministers have acknowledged in various media press releases that the Small Business Commissioner's report is secret, no-one was consulted on it and no-one has seen the report. An article in the *Goulburn Post* reported:

Ms King's review was scathing of the existing arrangement and argued the five offices recommended for closure were ineffective.

I have had personal experience of working with the Goulburn office over a number of years and I strongly dispute that comment. Within the Goulburn office people gave face-to-face support for businesses that wanted to establish or expand in regional New South Wales. The Hon. Rick Colless should be embarrassed because he read a speech that contains words provided to him by the Ministers' staff. He talked about a commitment to face-to-face services in this area. As revealed by Pru Goward in an article in the *Goulburn Post*, the new Small Biz Connect program being rolled out by Ms Hodgkinson has "more emphasis on online service". It does not have more emphasis on face-to-face service by people travelling around, but more emphasis on online service.

As a result, we lose the experience of people working in the Goulburn office, one of whom had 15 years corporate knowledge that led to the development of the new pine softwood mill in Bombala. She has worked on a range of other projects, to which I will refer shortly. Expressions of disappointment have been heard but members of The Nationals should hang their heads in shame. The member for Goulburn, Pru Goward, who said she could not change the decision—we know she did not try too hard—said in the *Goulburn Post*:

It's disappointing the city's regional development office is shutting, but is standing by the [review].

The Mayor of Goulburn said in no uncertain terms that the closure of that office was bad for the region. He also said that it would leave a major hole in services in the area. The head of the Chamber of Commerce was still waiting for explanations about this decision. She told a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce that she had

written to the Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson, the Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business but the answer she received was "all gobbledygook". Do we expect anything more from that Minister? No, we do not because the Minister has consistently not talked to people annoyed about government decisions. She will not see interest groups or hear legitimate concerns.

A classic example is the recent decision about the Gunning water supply. Instead of the Minister telling the people who were lobbying in the community about it, she informed her friend who runs the local cafe. That is the level of consultation of a Minister who is too scared to talk to the people who are upset about decisions. I refer to the closure of the office of Cronulla Fisheries. The union sent the Minister dozens of emails requesting meetings, but she did not have one. The union notified the Minister that it would protest outside her office, but she was not there.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! Members will cease interjecting. Hansard is having difficulty hearing the Hon. Steve Whan.

**The Hon. STEVE WHAN:** The Minister was notified that a delegation of hardworking union members from Cronulla, many of whom told me that they voted for Coalition members at the last election, would be at her office. I accompanied them, but the Minister was not there. The Goulburn office has worked on many projects including expanding Southern Meats, the Goulburn Harness Training Track, a new Visitor Information Centre, attracting Corporate Air at Goulburn Airport, relocating the Police Credit Union to Goulburn, the Goulburn Mulwaree Economic Development Plan, obtaining infrastructure for the new Bombala Timber Mill, and assisting Monbeef Meatworks in Cooma. It is a vital employer in the Cooma area. It will be helped out with capital infrastructure funding in the Federal budget to upgrade the Mildura Park, something which will make that route able to take larger trucks all the way through to the port because the remainder of it was upgraded by the former New South Wales Labor Government. Four employees at Coffs Harbour and two at Tweed Heads will be left unemployed when those two offices close.

The Small Business Commissioner's report has not been released, but it was cited as the basis for closing down those services. Instead, we have heard chaff put out by Government Ministers who have tried to distract attention. One Minister claimed that we were not talking about the same thing and mentioned small business advisory services. For those who do not know, those officers do not deliver small business advisory services; they are delivered on contract by other officers. Incidentally, when I was Minister for Small Business I increased the number of advisory services in regional New South Wales and took some away from the city. Face-to-face services are important in regional New South Wales.

The Nationals used to talk a lot about that in Opposition, but has now completely forgotten it in Government. The supposed new services that will be extended are just a rebadging of existing programs with no gain for anybody in New South Wales, something that we see consistently from this Government. The office in Broken Hill will be closed despite having done so much good work. The Nationals talk about how they stood around in a tent for a while, but can they explain to the people of Broken Hill why their services are being cut? The local member and I were in the other place together for four years and I remember him well. He pointed out that services could not be provided to Broken Hill from Dubbo so often that we would roll our eyes every time he said it.

Despite that, what was the first thing he did when the Coalition came to power? He rolled over and said not one word about the Government's closing the office in Broken Hill. Where will those services be based? In Dubbo! That is an outrageous backflip by The Nationals and they should be embarrassed. The office in Broken Hill worked on the establishment and operation of the Outback Development Forum, which in turn developed the Far West Region Growth and Investment Strategy. The Hon. Rick Colless did not mention that during his contribution, despite the fact that when the committee visited the area we heard a lot about it. He has probably seen it in operation.

**The Hon. Mick Veitch:** He did chair a good meeting.

**The Hon. STEVE WHAN:** Yes, there is no doubt about that. He probably read the strategy document while drafting the committee's recommendations.

**The Hon. Rick Colless:** Be careful.

**The Hon. STEVE WHAN:** I was complimenting the honourable member.

**The Hon. Rick Colless:** I can understand that.

**The Hon. STEVE WHAN:** That forum developed the strategy. That office, which this Liberal-Nationals Government is closing, was critical in that process. It was also involved in Film Broken Hill and the establishment of a major studio with facilities to promote the Broken Hill image and attract new businesses and skills to the region. The forum was also involved in the establishment of the Broken Hill Community Foundation, a \$10 million fund for the Far West to provide small loans and funding assistance. Despite that, the Government has dismissed the forum. The forum was also involved in the establishment of an alliance of Broken Hill engineering firms that pooled resources to attract heavy steel profiling to the area. The Broken Hill office worked on the Remote Service Project and the Corner Country marketing project.

This Government has told staff with the corporate knowledge that facilitated those projects that it does not need them. It came to office promising a decade of decentralisation. That was simply more lies and spin from a Government that is not committed to regional New South Wales. The decision to close the Broken Hill office is bad enough, but amazingly members of The Nationals read prepared speeches defending it. Today the Hon. Rick Colless told the House that the new programs will commence on 1 July. However, the Hon. Mick Veitch and I have established that the Goulburn office will close on 1 June. The staff have been told that they must accept the redundancy offer by 18 May or miss out. That indicates this Government's failure with regard to regional New South Wales. It is insulting to the people of Goulburn that their local member, the Hon. Pru Goward, seems to be powerless.

The Minister for Small Business, who supposedly represents the Burrinjuck electorate but who lives in the Goulburn electorate, has completely ignored her constituents. Of course, they are getting used to that. I will remember the editorial in the *Yass Tribune* after the O'Farrell Government's first budget was handed down. It stated:

After waiting for the first O'Farrell budget to be delivered last Tuesday, I was another of those in the shire who was disappointed to discover that Yass missed out again.

Ms Hodgkinson was, in due course, contacted by the Tribune to seek an explanation for why we missed out ... It has since transpired that even the community transport funds we seemed to have been delivered turned out to be just more old money re-packaged.

That is an indictment from a newspaper that members on this side of the Chamber would never have regarded as a pro-Labor rag. In fact, it has generally given the Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson a fairly good run.

**The Hon. Niall Blair:** She is a very good local member.

**The Hon. STEVE WHAN:** I acknowledge that interjection from her strenuously loyal Nationals colleague. He still has not told us whether he intends to stand for preselection in the seat of Hume. We will wait to see what happens at the end of the week. I admire that loyalty, but her constituents and the local press tell us that she is not a good local member.

**The Hon. Niall Blair:** Why did they vote for her at the last election?

**The Hon. STEVE WHAN:** Perhaps they were silly enough to believe the rhetoric from The Nationals, who told us that there would be a decade of decentralisation. Rather than move jobs to regional areas, this Government has cut them. That is in stark contrast to the Labor Government's record of moving 1,500 State Government jobs to regional New South Wales since 2000. Members do not need to rely on me for that information because it was provided to me in a Government Cabinet submission that was helpfully leaked to the Opposition. What do the people of Broken Hill have to say about their local member? After the last budget they said that the member for Murray-Darling proudly claimed that the Coalition Government had created 44 jobs in Broken Hill. An article in the *Barrier Daily Truth*, the local newspaper, stated:

Mr Williams' office was unable to specify the nature of the 44 jobs created in Broken Hill as the information was considered confidential.

That says it all. [*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR** [12.46 p.m.]: I oppose the motion moved by the Hon. Mick Veitch. I will address a few points raised by members of the Opposition, and particularly those raised by the Country Labor members. It is great to see two-thirds of the caucus present for this debate. I am glad that both of them are here

while I put the truth on the record. I will not be part of this political stunt perpetrated by Country Labor members, who are trying to scare the good people of New South Wales. They are playing with the lives of people in regional New South Wales for political gain.

First, I will correct an error made by members opposite. The Department of Trade and Investment Goulburn office will close at the end of this month, which is earlier than previously announced. However, following consultation with local management it has been decided to bring forward the closure to facilitate the transfer of responsibility from the Goulburn office to the Wollongong office. This is not a cloak-and-dagger process; it is not being done in the dead of night. Appropriate processes have been followed in cooperation with local management to facilitate that transfer of responsibility.

I also wish to allay some of the concerns that members opposite have raised. The Hon. Steve Whan referred to the Gunning water supply. The good people of Gunning have seen nothing of Country Labor members for well over a decade. They have not even had the courtesy to visit them on any issues, but as soon as a serious issue pops up—the failure of the local pump to supply good drinking water to the people of Gunning—we all of a sudden have the two stooges popping up to try to create fear and—

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! There is too much noise in the Chamber. Members will refrain from yelling across the Chamber. The Hon. Steve Whan will come to order.

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR:** —to try to politicise the drinking water issue in Gunning. The local member, Ms Katrina Hodgkinson—

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell:** Great local member.

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR:** She is a fantastic local member and a fantastic Minister. She did not decide to make a big political issue out of this. She did what a good local member does and went through the appropriate channels. She worked with the Deputy Premier's office to secure the required funding—

**The Hon. Mick Veitch:** State funding.

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR:** State funding, and what we have now is a good outcome for the people of Gunning. Their drinking water will be addressed, thanks to the Deputy Premier and thanks to the local member, Minister Katrina Hodgkinson.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** Alby Schultz says he phoned the Treasurer.

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell:** Point of order: I ask that Opposition members be reminded that interjections are disorderly at all times. I am trying to listen intently to the honourable member's contribution. I am having trouble hearing him. I would ask that they be directed to be quiet.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! The Hon. Sophie Cotsis will come to order. Members will refrain from yelling across the Chamber. Members who continue to interject will be called to order.

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR:** The good people of Gunning did not deserve that issue to be politicised. They needed a good local member, and they got a fantastic response and representation by Katrina Hodgkinson through the Deputy Premier's office to deliver the result that they wanted.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! I call the Hon. Steve Whan to order for the first time.

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR:** The other issue I will address is the stunt that the Hon. Steve Whan pulled by taking a busload of New South Wales Fisheries employees down the Hume Highway to Yass. He talked about decentralisation and being a friend of regional New South Wales, and he tried to estimate the number of jobs that we want. Instead of working through the issues with the people, he decided to use them as pawns in a political stunt. He took them to Yass on a day when he knew that the Minister would not be in her office. He tweeted about it all the way there to try to raise points for a political stunt.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** She would not answer, so I did not know she would not be there. Tell her to answer her emails.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! I call the Hon. Steve Whan to order for the second time.

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR:** He is playing with the future and raising hysteria about what is a clear decentralisation policy that the Government took to the election. We were going to look at what government agencies could be moved into the regions, just like the successful decentralisation of the Department of Primary Industries, which this year celebrates its twentieth year. I am glad that the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham praised the previous Coalition Government for that move. Decentralising that department has been a fantastic thing for his local town. Instead of looking at the positives for regional New South Wales, the Hon. Steve Whan is raising hysteria, getting people on a bus and driving them down the Hume Highway. He raised expectations that they would see the Minister on a day that she clearly would not be in her electorate office. It is just another stunt in a line of stunts that we have seen from Country Labor members.

In the Southern Highlands I quite often turn on the radio in the morning and have the displeasure of hearing about the Hon. Mick Veitch's little stunts, raising fear and hysteria in these areas. Raising points on a radio program rather than going out and meeting people is in line with the sorts of stunts that we have seen—stunts such as the motion before the House. The notice of motion was given on 15 March this year. If the Hon. Mick Veitch was so concerned about the good people of Goulburn he had the opportunity on 24 and 25 March to come to the Goulburn Show, to set up a tent and to listen to the concerns of the people—

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! The Hon. Sophie Cotsis will come to order.

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR:** Rather than give notice of a motion and leave it on the *Notice Paper*, he should get out of the office, go to Goulburn, put up a tent at the Goulburn Show and listen to people's concerns. I was there. The Liberals were there, but Country Labor was not there. Maybe it was too close to the giving of the notice of motion to get organised for the Goulburn Show—although we managed to do it. The Hon. Rick Colless talked about the Broken Hill Agfair. If it is such a big issue—we regard Broken Hill as Country Labor heartland—members should turn up to Agfair and listen to the people. They were missing in both areas. This is in the long line of stunts that have been carried out by Country Labor, particularly in the Southern Highlands and Southern Tablelands. In his contribution last week the Hon. Mick Veitch could not believe the Government would be so inconsiderate of the needs of small businesses in regional New South Wales and he was at great pains to talk about the people of Goulburn.

**The Hon. Mick Veitch:** Absolutely, the region.

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR:** The region of Goulburn. I cannot illustrate how Country Labor treats the region of Goulburn better than referring to last year's election. Country Labor had the opportunity to listen to what people wanted to see in the Goulburn electorate. The Country Labor faction of the New South Wales Labor Party decided to elect its candidate only 17 days before the election. It elected a 21-year-old university student from Sydney who did not even come to the electorate, who did not attend any of the meet-the-candidate forums and who did not participate in any of the debates about what the people wanted. If those opposite are so concerned about the good people of Goulburn and the Goulburn electorate, if they are so concerned about their needs and if they are so concerned about the union members in the area, where were they? Where were they in the last election? It was so bad that the 2007 Labor candidate decided to run as an Independent.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! The Hon. Mick Veitch will come to order.

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR:** Country Labor had so upset its local people that its 2007 candidate decided it was better to run on John Hatton's Independent ticket than be seen running under the Country Labor banner in the Southern Tablelands. So much lip-service, and then they stand here and bring on debate on a motion about the good people of Goulburn. They have treated the Goulburn people with nothing but contempt. This is lip-service. The people of Goulburn and the region deserve better. They deserve people who are willing to listen, who turn up at the Goulburn Show and who listen to what they have to say, not just put a number or name on the ballot paper and say, "Here you go."

And how did it go? In 2007 when Bob Parker was running for the Country Labor Party he managed to get over 9,500 votes. In 2011 he became the Independent candidate for the John Hatton group. He then walked

out on Country Labor because he could not believe how they had given up on the people of Goulburn. Those opposite are just paying lip-service. What we are seeing is a long line of stunts designed to serve the minor interests of Country Labor and to put fear into the good people of Goulburn.

How did it work out? In the 2011 election the candidate for Country Labor got 6,500 votes—almost overtaken by Bob Parker running as an Independent in the John Hatton group. The Government is aware of the stunts of those opposite. In the O'Farrell-Stoner Government we have fantastic local members—Katrina Hodgkinson is one—and fantastic Ministers from regional New South Wales. We get amongst the people to gain a better understanding of the issues. We do not do it from sound grabs on radio programs, nor do we do it from notices of motions in the House. We get out there and listen to what the people have to say. The Government is delivering fantastic results such as the Gunning water supply, where Katrina Hodgkinson worked with the Deputy Premier to get what the people needed. It was not a political football.

*[The Deputy-President (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones) left the chair at 1.02 p.m. The House resumed at 2.30 p.m.]*

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

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

### **MEMBERS CONDUCT DURING QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I remind members that under Standing Order 192 a member may be called to order three times in any one sitting day for breach of the standing orders. Therefore, I caution members who were called to order prior to question time.

### **QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

#### **JOBS GROWTH**

**The Hon. LUKE FOLEY:** My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Given that the Australian Bureau of Statistics data released today shows that New South Wales lost 23,786 jobs in April and that there are fewer jobs in New South Wales than there were in March last year, can you please advise the House how the Government will deliver the 100,000 new jobs promised in its election policy, the Jobs Action Plan?

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The New South Wales unemployment rate rose 0.1 per cent in April 2012 to 4.9 per cent, which is now in line with the national rate, at 4.9 per cent. The national rate in April 2012 fell 0.3 per cent, from 5.2 per cent. Therefore, under the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government—in the difficult economic circumstances that we have suffered—the fall was 0.1 per cent. However, in the rest of the country—under the Gillard-Swan Labor Government—the fall was 0.3 per cent.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I call the Hon. Trevor Khan to order for the first time.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** The New South Wales Government is always disappointed with any job losses. Unlike the previous Labor Government, we acknowledge that there is more to do and we are prepared to take the hard decisions required to save jobs in New South Wales. For example, the Government has made hard decisions such as reforming the workers compensation scheme. That scheme was making New South Wales employers uncompetitive with the other States with which they must compete. The Government has had to take those hard decisions to ensure that jobs are saved in New South Wales. In April 2012 the New South Wales unemployment rate rose by 0.1 per cent and is now in line with the national average of 4.9 per cent. But in Labor's last five years in power the New South Wales unemployment rate was, on average, 0.4 per cent higher than the national rate. It is true that in New South Wales we have had a fall in employment levels and are now at the national level, but under Labor for five years—

**The Hon. Eric Roozendaal:** Talk in a GFC, genius.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** The Hon. Eric Roozendaal is here today. I have an apology for him because in March he had his fiftieth birthday and we all missed it. We neglected to wish the Hon. Eric Roozendaal a happy fiftieth birthday. So here is the opportunity to rectify that omission. So let us all say "Happy fiftieth birthday, Eric."

[Interruption]

**The Hon. Luke Foley:** Point of order: My point of order goes to relevance. My question was a serious one, about jobs.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I have asked Ministers to ignore interjections that distract them from their answers. A Minister who responds to interjections does not provide full information to members, which detracts from the purpose of question time. Interjections are disorderly at all times, as is responding to them.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** I did want to rectify that omission. If New South Wales had only performed—

**The Hon. Eric Roozendaal:** Where's my present?

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** The Hon. Eric Roozendaal wants his present. He has five years to go until he gets that New South Wales taxpayer-funded pension that he has been waiting for.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I call the Hon. Greg Pearce to order for the first time.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** Five long years to sit on the backbench. [*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. LUKE FOLEY:** I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer by providing some information on how the Government will meet its election policy of creating 100,000 new jobs in this State?

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** Under the last five years of Labor, New South Wales unemployment was, on average, 0.4 per cent—nearly half a per cent higher than the national rate. If New South Wales had only performed in line with the national average during Labor's last five years there would be 13,200 fewer jobless people in this State—and perhaps there would be a vacancy for Eric somewhere. Under the Liberal-Nationals Government, New South Wales has created an additional 11,000 jobs. That is 11,000 additional people and their families who have security of employment in this difficult economic environment. The Government's Jobs Action Plan is providing the incentive that New South Wales businesses need to grow, with payroll tax rebates for the first 100,000 new jobs created.

In western Sydney the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures from February 2011 to February 2012 show that the annual average unemployment rate in Canterbury-Bankstown is down, from 8.5 per cent to 8.1 per cent; in central western Sydney it is down, from 6.7 per cent to 6.4 per cent; and in north-western Sydney it is down, from 6.5 per cent to 5.6 per cent. Unfortunately, in Fairfield-Liverpool it has risen slightly, from 7.3 per cent to 7.6 per cent, but it is markedly better than the average of 9.3 per cent during Labor's 16 years. While these are positive signs for employment, the Government continues to remain cautious in the current global economic environment. I note that the Federal Labor Budget forecasts the unemployment rate to rise nationally to 5.5 per cent in 2012-13. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government will continue to take the action needed to rebuild the economy following a decade under Labor, when New South Wales recorded the lowest employment growth of any State. [*Time expired.*]

### PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will the Minister update the House on the Herons Creek to Stills Road upgrade of the Pacific Highway?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I thank the Parliamentary Secretary for that important question. I advise the House that late yesterday I received a preliminary report into the contaminated material on the Herons Creek to Stills Road upgrade of the Pacific Highway. The report was prepared by the former head of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Brian Gilligan. Today the preliminary report has been released and is available from the Roads and Maritime Services website. The report concludes that there is nothing to indicate that any radioactive material was ever buried at the site following the 1980 crash.

The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation [ANSTO] reported no indication of any abnormal radioactivity present in the soil on site and removed from the site. The report concludes that most of

the DDT carried on the truck was removed from the site immediately following the accident on 4 December 1980. The spilled DDT that was buried on site after the accident was excavated, tested and removed under contract by BMD in April 2011 so that it was considered to pose no further threat to human health or the environment. The potential for some trace of DDT or dioxins to have acted in combination with other materials to exacerbate exposure symptoms is currently being investigated.

The report concludes that the material that triggered the workplace health incident was almost certainly propionic acid trapped in clay three to four metres below the original burial pit and that it exhibits some of the characteristics similar to naturally occurring acid sulphate soil. The propionic acid accumulation formed as the sodium propionate buried in the pit progressively dissolved, possibly mixing with decaying food wastes buried with it, and seeped through the soil profile. Rather than having degraded or dispersed as expected by the State Pollution Control Commission in 1997, it seems to have become trapped in clay on the site. Expert advice suggests that the symptoms experienced by the construction workers spreading the clay on the site on 27 March 2012 are consistent with those attributable to short-term exposure to sodium propionate or propionic acid mixed with decayed food wastes. If this is the cause, it is reasonable to expect the workers will suffer no ongoing health effects from the brief exposure. I understand sodium propionate is used in the production of bread.

In relation to the treatment of the site the report finds that the burial pit was located, excavated and remediated under contract by BMD in April 2011. When other disturbed ground was encountered in the vicinity in January 2012, further excavation and testing resulted in material, apparently from a second pit, being removed and disposed to landfill as general waste. There is no suggestion the work required under the approval process was not carried out. The report did make an important finding in relation to communication. Mr Gilligan found that, while communications to staff and the wider community have intensified after the incident on 27 March 2012, the potential for confusion and misunderstanding could have been significantly reduced—*[Time expired.]*

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I thank the honourable member and I note that at least one of The Greens members moaned. Mr Gilligan found that, while communications to staff and the wider community have intensified since the incident on 27 March 2012, the potential for confusion and misunderstanding could have been significantly reduced if there had been more proactive communication and explanation of the issue at various stages from the time construction work commenced. I have heeded this advice and asked Roads and Maritime Services to be more proactive in communicating with the community.

Subject to confirmation from the Environment Protection Authority and WorkCover, indications are that the site can be treated to neutralise the remaining contaminants. As I mentioned earlier, this is a preliminary report and it will be finalised once WorkCover and the Environment Protection Authority have finalised their reports. I do, however, encourage interested parties to read the report and if they have feedback or additional information it can be supplied to the investigation team. Frankly, the safety of workers and the broader community is, and always will be, first priority for the New South Wales Government on projects such as this.

### PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. If the Government had no intention of matching Federal Government funding for the Pacific Highway upgrade why did the Minister call for it while he was in opposition?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** Mr President, you gotta love 'em. They bowl it up every day. They now have a question time committee, but I have a question: Who is running that committee, because if I were them—

**The Hon. Adam Searle:** Point of order: The Minister is debating the question and you have ruled repeatedly that Ministers should not do that. I ask you to call the Minister to order.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The member's point of order was premature. I remind the Minister that he should not debate the question.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** It is not my responsibility to highlight Opposition members' deficiencies if they cannot see them. The fact is that the agreement, and the honourable way, was 80:20. That was the agreement they had with the former Government. New South Wales has been duded by \$2.31 billion, and this

lot opposite are supporting it. The member sitting on the losers lounge, the former member for Monaro, is not going to fess up. Yet he tells us to man up and find the money somewhere. Which one of the roads in Monaro does he want us not to do? Which bit of the Kings Highway or main road 32 or the Monaro Highway does Steve Whan want us not to improve and maintain?

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I call the Hon. Amanda Fazio to order for the first time.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** He is too slippery to say that that money has to come at the expense of other roads in New South Wales. Unlike those opposite, we are sticking up for New South Wales. I suspect they are getting their starting orders from Canberra, as good lackeys do. We have inaugurated in my office the wonderful creature called "Albo Watch". It is a very important creature. It is like Bankwatch, Credit Watch and FuelWatch except it is trickier because Albo gets up very early when he applies the spin. Yesterday during question time in Federal Parliament he said, "I haven't had an agreement with them but in fact I took \$50 million from the previous Labor Government." He quoted from a document that I had supplied to this Parliament a week ago. There it was in the second paragraph: \$48 million had been removed from the previous Government for not honouring a commitment.

But we read on. In not the next paragraph but the following one there it was: the \$48 million had been put back. So what Albo takes away with one hand Albo gives back with the other hand. He also said that he had no ability to move money around, yet in that one document he moved money around. He took \$48 million away and he gave \$48 million back. That is why we need Albo Watch. He said earlier this week that the Federal Government had given us \$30 million for the M4 and we had not used it but we discovered, first, it was not new money but old money; and, secondly, within the budget we could not access that money until 2014. [*Time expired.*]

### LOCAL SCHOOLS, LOCAL DECISIONS PROGRAM

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Education. Will the Minister describe the scope of work being performed by the consulting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers Australia for the Department of Education in respect of Local Schools, Local Decisions? Does this work involve the development of a resource allocation model and will the Minister release the terms of the contract describing the scope of work being undertaken?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** Earlier I met the hardworking Minister for Education who suggested that Dr John Kaye might ask this question and he has done a lot of work on it. The answer is that the Government is committed to improving teaching and learning by giving schools more decision-making authority because they are best placed to improve student outcomes. The Minister for Education announced in August 2011 that this Government would make changes so that schools can directly manage and increase the percentage of the total education budget, including the budget for school-based staff; funding allocations will be made to schools to reflect the complexity of the school and its students; and schools have the flexibility to respond to student needs by managing a budget rather than many small-program budgets. The Minister also announced that there would be public consultation and that in February 2012 the department would present him with the next steps to achieve those reform outcomes.

In March 2012 the Government announced the Local Schools, Local Decisions reforms including the commitment that it will develop a new resource allocation model by mid 2012 for staged implementation from 2013. In October 2011 the Department of Education and Communities engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers Australia through a formal tender process for a two-stage project. The first stage was to understand and document the way that resources are currently allocated across the department. The scope of this work included modelling and assessing the current state and recommending improvements. This stage was finalised in February 2012. A second stage of work commenced in February 2012, which included secondary research and analysis, the development, testing and refinement of a new resource allocation model, and the development of an implementation and transition plan consistent with the Local Schools, Local Decisions reforms.

Stakeholders are a key part of the design of the resource allocation model—as they should be. The Government has established a stakeholder committee that is being consulted as the model is being developed. Membership of the committee comprises two representatives from the New South Wales Secondary Principals Council, New South Wales Primary Principals Association, NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Public Schools Principals Forum, New South Wales Teachers Federation, Public Service Association of NSW, Department of Education and Communities, Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW, and the Institute of Senior Educational Administrators of NSW.

The resource allocation model will mean that schools will manage more than 70 per cent of the total public school education budget; schools will manage one budget that separates staffing and non-staffing funding; and schools will be funded directly and will reflect complexity as well as student numbers. Further information relating to the new resource allocation model being developed is publicly available on the managing resources fact sheet released in March and available on the Local Schools, Local Decisions website. These reforms will make it easier for schools to respond directly to the needs of students. They place students at the centre of all decisions and recognise that— [*Time expired.*]

### HEAVY VEHICLE ROAD SAFETY

**The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister update the House on the prosecutions that have resulted from the joint Roads and Maritime Services and NSW Police Force operations into heavy vehicle drivers and operators? Will the Minister update the House regarding current police activities pertaining to heavy vehicles?

**The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER:** This issue is important not only to me but also to my colleague the Hon. Duncan Gay. Our agencies, Roads and Maritime Services and the NSW Police Force, have been working hard to take ratbags out of our trucking industry. The trucking industry in New South Wales is a strong and important industry Australia-wide, and most people are doing the right thing. Sadly, however, there are a few rogue operators and cowboy drivers who are bringing the whole industry into disrepute and endangering the entire community. The Government has zero tolerance for those who tamper with speed limiters, falsify logbooks and create an operating environment in which truck drivers are placed under unreasonable pressure to make their deliveries. That kind of behaviour puts the lives of people on our roads and footpaths at risk, and it must stop.

As members will be aware from media reports during the past 24 hours, Roads and Maritime Services has launched more than 1,000 prosecutions against the directors and owners of four trucking companies, alleging they are responsible for speeding and other offences committed by their drivers. Following the dreadful crash at Menangle on 25 January 2012, which claimed the lives of three members of the Logan family, police have been providing enforcement assistance to Roads and Maritime Services in an effort to crack down on companies as well as drivers that tamper with, or give the nod to drivers who tamper with, speed-limiting devices, and that create an environment that tolerates their drivers speeding, taking drugs, not taking rest breaks and fudging their logbooks. As a result of those operations and investigations, 246 court attendance notices have been issued to Lennons Transport and its owner. Other charges have been brought against three other companies: Scotts, Damorange and Fred's Interstate Transport.

But just because those cases are now moving into the prosecution stage, truck drivers and operators should not become complacent or think that police have moved on. The month of May sees police across the country involved in Operation Austrans. Operation Austrans is an annual, multi-jurisdictional enforcement operation targeting road safety issues relating to the heavy vehicle industry. Every year in May police across Australia and New Zealand work together to ensure that heavy vehicle drivers are not breaching speeding, seatbelt, fatigue, alcohol and drug driving laws, and other road safety legislation. This operation has run successfully for more than 20 years targeting all vehicles over 4.5 tonnes, including buses and coaches. It commenced on 1 May and will conclude on 31 May. Overall, 73,895 vehicles were intercepted Australia-wide last year during Operation Austrans. Police are only 10 days into this year's operation but I look forward to their continued scrutiny of the heavy vehicle sector.

A law-abiding trucking and transport industry is vital to the productivity of our State, and honest drivers have nothing to fear. In fact, it is in the interests of the industry as a whole to have the rogues weeded out. Those who are doing the right thing do not deserve to be tarnished by the actions of a few. I conclude by thanking all officers from the NSW Police Force and officers from Roads and Maritime Services who have been working hard in relation to all these investigations. Earlier this year the Minister for Roads and Ports and I stood side by side and said that we would ensure that our two departments worked together to resolve these issues. Any trucking company that is involved in these illegal activities should not be surprised; we said that we were going to do it. The two agencies are working together and the results over the past 24 hours, in particular, with 1,000 breaches, show it is working well. [*Time expired.*]

### NEWCASTLE PORT

**The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN:** My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Yesterday the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that the chief executive officer of Infrastructure NSW, Paul

Broad, said that Newcastle will not be developed as a container port. However, in January 2012 the Premier said that Mayfield "is more suited to handling multi-product, container, general cargo and dry bulk terminal freight". Does the Minister agree with Infrastructure NSW or the Premier's comments?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** That is a very good but tough question. If the Opposition was worthwhile it would have asked this question. On Monday and Tuesday mornings my office anticipated possible hostile questions, and that question remained each day. The member has asked an important question.

**The Hon. Greg Donnelly:** Then answer it.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I will answer if members opposite stop interjecting. Colonel Blimp sitting on the losers lounge keeps interjecting while I am trying to answer. The Government has established some new sections in Transport for NSW, including the Freight and Regional Development Section, which is headed by Rachel Johnson. She is a terrific deputy director general who has a private enterprise background. Her job is to review the sector and the roles of the various ports. That review is underway and people will be able to express their views, either publicly or not. I know that there was a newspaper report, but I do not know whether Mr Broad said what was attributed to him. A review is underway and members will have to wait until it is completed. It is a statewide review involving not only the Port of Newcastle but also Port Botany and Port Kembla, and it will examine freight movements from roads to the ports.

### FORESTS NSW

**The Hon. STEVE WHAN:** I direct my question to the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Primary Industries. I refer to comments made by the Minister yesterday announcing the corporatisation of Forests NSW. What guarantee can the Minister give to communities with significant softwood timber mills such as Bombala, Tumut, Tumbarumba and Oberon that future wood supply contracts will continue to require local processing? What plans will the Minister put in place to stop the new board of Forests NSW deciding to sell softwood logs from Forests NSW plantations whole for export if the price is higher than for local processing?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** If I had been writing Opposition questions I would not have written that one. Had the honourable member been sitting on the losers lounge a few years ago he would have remembered that there was a person across—

*[Interruption]*

They do not want to hear about Labor's treatment of the timber industry in the New South Wales. The Labor Party, with its mates in arms, The Greens—

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** Point of order: I refer to relevance. I asked a specific question about the Government's plans, which it announced yesterday. Mr President, I ask you to bring the Minister back to the question.

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

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** The honourable member knows that his shoddy lot set up the industry to fail in a disgraceful deal done with The Greens. They ensured that the industry would not have enough resource to fulfil the contracts that had been entered into. They then turned their dogs onto the timber industry when it tried to get extra resource to fulfil the contracts. The Hon. Steve Whan's hypocrisy is palpable—it is also "pulpable"! The industry finally has a Minister who is acting properly by corporatising Forests NSW and getting the industry on a sound footing. That is in contrast to what happened when he was the Minister and implemented staff cuts across the State. His name is mud in that industry. How dare he imply—

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** Point of order: The Minister has been speaking for several minutes. My point of order relates to relevance. I asked a specific question about the softwood industry in New South Wales. The Minister has talked about hardwood, but not the softwood industry.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The question was broader than that. The Minister was being generally relevant.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** The honourable member asks questions and leads with his jaw. Once again he has demonstrated that it is made of glass. He cannot accept that his Government, in which he was a Minister—albeit in its dying days—was responsible for the destruction of much of the timber industry. Finally, after 16 years, the industry has a good Minister who will do the right thing.

### FEDERAL BUDGET AND THE ILLAWARRA

**The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX:** My question is directed to the Minister for the Illawarra. Can the Minister update the House on the Federal budget implications for the Illawarra?

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** As I noted yesterday, the Federal Government ignored the Illawarra in Tuesday night's budget. A region that the Labor Party has always taken for granted has been left out in the cold in favour of the so-called Independents who let the Federal Labor Government survive on borrowed time. The Federal Government has again delayed completing an engineering study on the Maldon-Dombarton rail line. Its continued foot dragging on this issue led the South Coast Labour Council secretary, Arthur Rorris, to say that he was profoundly disappointed in Labor's Federal budget. He is reported as having met Prime Minister Gillard seven months ago and he claims she said that the money would be available immediately. However, of course, as is the way with Labor, she reneged on her pledge to a fellow unionist. Mr Rorris is so disappointed with Federal Labor that he has slammed it and is quoted in today's *Illawarra Mercury* as saying that it is not a good sign for the region and that it does not do much to restore faith in the Government's intentions with regard to this matter.

It is not only the unions that are upset about the Federal budget. An *Illawarra Mercury* article under the headline "Budget slammed by Illawarra small business" states that it is "hairy times for Illawarra small businesses trying to make sense of the Gillard Government's budget" and that business owners feel short-changed by "a budget that provides few incentives". The voice of the Illawarra Business Chamber can be added to the cacophony of disappointment being heard in the region about Federal Labor's budget. The chief executive officer of the chamber said that the business community did not get anything and that the budget has "penalised profitable businesses because they did not get a tax cut that was promised". That is yet another promise broken by Julia Gillard.

The feeling of neglect in the region is captured in a letter to the editor entitled "Forgotten region". WTF Nothing writes, "Thanks for nothing, Julia. Clearly it does not pay to be a safe Labor seat. Bring on the next election and let's boot Labor out." With the unions, business and the people of the Illawarra off side, including WTF Nothing, the Gillard Labor Government has nowhere to run. The Federal budget does not look after the people of the Illawarra. Federal Labor as betrayed the hardworking former Labor voters of the region to shore up its numbers in the Parliament with its grubby favours for the so-called Independents.

### OFFSET ALPINE PRINTING FIRE

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** I direct my question to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, representing the Premier and the Attorney General. Will the new Coalition Government establish an inquiry to be undertaken by the NSW Police Force Fraud Squad and an independent judicial officer into the Offset Alpine Printing Limited factory fire, which occurred on Christmas Eve 1993 and which resulted in a \$53 million payout to shareholders for a factory valued at only \$3 million? Will the Government authorise the inquiry to investigate who purchased shares in the company before the fire, including Gordon Wood, to ascertain whether anyone had knowledge of the arson attack and the potential huge payout and whether there is any connection between that fire and the murder of Caroline Byrne on 8 June 1995?

**The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER:** I thank the honourable member for his important question. I assure the member that I will refer the question to the Attorney General. I will then get a response from the Attorney General and report back to the member as soon as I can.

### INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. I refer to statements in Tuesday's *Australian Financial Review* from the Director General of the Department of Finance and Services in relation to the New South Wales Government information technology strategy where he stated, "We will employ fewer people." Given that the Minister has previously suggested that outsourcing would be considered, and in light of the comments of the Director General, will he tell the 5,600 public servants who work in information technology whether their jobs will be safe?

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** I thank the honourable member for taking note of the Government's excellent initiative in developing its information and communications technology [ICT] strategy. One of the key elements in that strategy is to properly equip our public servants to do their jobs, to deliver services to the people of New South Wales, to grow business in New South Wales, and it is a great opportunity for us all to work together to ensure that New South Wales leads in information and communications technology development, in using information and communications technology in the current and future options that we have and in better service delivery. Most importantly, it is a great opportunity for us to upskill public servants to make their jobs more interesting and more satisfying, and to give them more opportunities. I love it when Labor talks about me and outsourcing—

**The Hon. Luke Foley:** You love it when anyone talks about you, Greg.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** I acknowledge the interjection of the Leader of the Opposition. I recall that for a while the Hon. Eric Roozendaal was the Minister for Commerce. I do not think he realised that he was Minister for Commerce, but we went back and what did we find? There were several outsourcing projects being undertaken when he was Minister. Most importantly, I was able to make a contribution to our election victory in March of last year. It was nowhere near the contribution that the Hon. Eric Roozendaal made, but I could not believe that the Labor Party spent money advertising that I was in favour of outsourcing. I could not quite work it out—

**The Hon. Luke Foley:** It was wasted money because no-one had ever heard of you.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** Exactly. The Leader of the Opposition has it right again—it was. There was I, able to drag the money out of them, and it did no good at all. Why would Labor bother advertising? Anybody who knows me knows that I support outsourcing where it is appropriate. We know that, so there is no problem.

**The Hon. Luke Foley:** Imagine running an ad about Greg Pearce—

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** Precisely, but Labor did. They ran advertisements night after night after night; they ran them in newspapers and handed out leaflets. That was Labor's strategy to lose the election. Look where it got Labor. I think it contributed to us winning an extra 10 or 20 seats—no, I take that back. The Hon. Eric Roozendaal did that all by himself. I was happy to be able to contribute in a small way to the final waste of the Labor Party campaign in the last election. We have seen a couple of remarkable things from Labor since.

Labor asked me whether I was unhappy with the occupational health and safety laws. I am on the record many times about the unfairness of Labor's occupational health and safety laws. I introduced the legislation to change the laws and yet Labor still keeps asking whether I have concerns about the occupational health and safety laws. Labor members had a tactic a few months ago where they came here and asked me some questions, and then they put out a press release saying that they asked me questions in question time. Those sorts of tactics by the Labor Party help to explain why its members are over there on the loser's side. [*Time expired.*]

## POLICE NUMBERS

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister update the House on the operational strength of the NSW Police Force?

**The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER:** I thank the member for her question. This Government has made a commitment to working with the NSW Police Force to ensure police officers are allocated to where they are most needed. Despite yesterday's bleating from the Leader of the Opposition in the other place, we have made a commitment to end the previous Government's practice of fudging the numbers. This new era of transparency starts from tomorrow, with the publishing on the NSW Police Force website of the first of what will become regular reporting on police officer operational strength.

One of the key findings of the ministerial audit of police resources was the need to bring commands up to 90 per cent operational strength and not count officers on long-term sick leave, leave without pay or maternity or paternity leave, or indeed officers who had been suspended from duty, as those opposite sadly did. Ninety per cent was chosen in recognition of the fact that it is not expected that every officer will be available for duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Numbers are set with the expectation that at any given time officers will be on sick leave or maternity leave or, for whatever reason, not available for duty. Coupled with

graduations only occurring three times a year, 90 per cent is a reasonable target. We may not always be able to reach it, but police and the Government will be working hard to meet it. The Government adopted this recommendation almost immediately and we have been working since to achieve this outcome.

In December 2011, as I have previously told the House, some 300 probationary constables, or around 60 per cent of that attesting class, were allocated to local area commands outside the Sydney metropolitan area—places that were ignored by Labor for 16 years. Last Friday a little over 75 per cent of the attesting probationary constables were allocated to serve in Sydney metropolitan commands with a particular emphasis on western and south-western Sydney. I am advised that the data to be published tomorrow will include operational full-time equivalent numbers—something that those opposite would never have wanted the public to see in their time. It will also include this figure expressed as a percentage of authorised strength.

I can advise that the data will show that, overall, the operational strength of the NSW Police Force is around 94 per cent as at 4 May 2012. This is a significant achievement, given where we were less than 12 months ago. The data will show that four out of five local area commands are at 90 per cent or more—metropolitan commands such as Mount Druitt, where operational strength sits at 98 per cent; Blacktown, Liverpool and Green Valley, with commands at 90 per cent; Macquarie Fields and Kings Cross, which are at 97 and 94 per cent respectively; and regional commands such as Lake Macquarie, which is at 102 per cent operational strength; New England, which is at 99 per cent; and Deniliquin, right down in the south-west, which is at 95 per cent.

I am advised that some local area commands are under the 90 per cent target and this may be for a number of reasons. For example, at Hurstville local area command, where operational strength is at 88 per cent, a number of officers are on maternity leave or on pregnancy-related restrictions. But this does not mean that places such as Hurstville are not being properly policed. To give a true reflection of staff available, the data will include the number of officers serving at a regional level, many of whom are on front-line duties. This includes officers serving within region enforcement squads, metropolitan robbery units, emergency management units, region strike forces and unsolved homicide teams. As I have previously advised the House, the Government will continue to publish operational strength data three times a year. We will continue to work with police to meet our aim of 90 per cent of operational strength in local area commands and continue to meet our commitment to returning police to communities following the neglect by the previous Government, which turned its back on far too many.

## WORKCOVER

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE:** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. What has been the cost to the WorkCover scheme of journey claims in each of the 2010, 2011 and 2012 financial years? Is it true that approximately 50 per cent of all those costs are recovered from third party actions?

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** I will take the question on notice as I do not have the figures with me.

## AERIAL CANNABIS SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. In light of statements made on 13 April by Acting Inspector Brad Stewart of Tweed-Bryon police that the annual aerial cannabis surveillance program of the New South Wales Police Drug Squad had to be cancelled as resources were required for flood relief in western New South Wales, when will the Government restore that helicopter surveillance program on the North Coast?

**The Hon. Jan Barham:** Why?

**The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER:** The Greens ask: Why? I would have thought it was pretty clear. The Greens say, "Let them stay out west. Police are doing a great job looking after the people of Bourke and Walgett. We will take care of the identification ourselves. We have a unique eradication program in place on the far North Coast." The Greens are absolutely smoking when it comes to eradication on the far North Coast, and it is great to know that The Greens are supporting police in this eradication program. The Greens know what is happening. If there are drugs in the community one can guarantee that The Greens will spot them before anyone else. I am so grateful that the far North Coast voice of The Greens is showing continuing support for police eradication of drugs in that area.

The great news for the Hon. Jan Barham is that the work The Greens are doing on the far North Coast will not go unsupported for much longer. I am sure police will be able to get the helicopters back there. The other great news for the Hon. Jan Barham is that drug dogs will also be deployed to the North Coast. The Greens will not be working on this North Coast eradication strategy alone; they will have the support of police. I am sure The Greens will support me in not placing the details of the operational deployment dates on to the record. Who knows, they may well be in place right now. Members can rest assured that The Greens will welcome Polair 1, Polair 2, Polair 3, Polair 4 and Polair 5 when they land on the North Coast. No doubt they will hold a welcoming ceremony and they will work hand-in-hand with police. I will leave it there. I cannot go much further in congratulating the Hon. Walt Secord for his question.

### RURAL AND REGIONAL ROADS

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I address my question to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will the Minister update the House on rural and regional roads in New South Wales?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I thank the member for her question. The announcement by Federal Labor in Tuesday's budget to slash its contribution to the Pacific Highway upgrade by \$2.31 billion is a cruel blow to future funding options for roads in rural and regional New South Wales. As I said yesterday, ripping such a huge sum of money out of the overall funding pool not only puts at risk the 2016 completion date of the Pacific Highway upgrade, it also puts at risk the State Government's ability to fund other road projects across New South Wales. Under the heading "Budget Shock: New South Wales Roads Shunned", the NRMA rightly criticised Federal Labor for slashing spending on New South Wales roads by almost half. NRMA President Wendy Machin said:

This is a tough budget for motorists ... there are no new funding announcements this year for any New South Wales roads.

When one considers that New South Wales is Australia's most populous State—a State that delivers more than 30 per cent of Australia's gross domestic product and carries the weight of 75 per cent of the national heavy vehicle freight task—this lack of Federal funding for road infrastructure is appalling. Astonishingly, if one looks deep into the Federal budget under the line item titled "Regional Infrastructure Fund", one will find that for the Scone level crossing—an important crossing that needs to be fixed—New South Wales received a measly \$1.4 million. Compare that \$1.4 million allocation to New South Wales with the allocation to Western Australia and Queensland, under this fund, of up to \$480 million and \$462 million respectively—we get \$1.4 million and they get \$480 million and \$462 million.

Infrastructure Australia, the infrastructure body established by Federal Labor, continues to call for the Pacific Highway to be tolled; a situation that would merely redirect thousands of cars and trucks onto the New England Highway and cause significant road wear and tear. Ironically, under the Federal budget the New England Highway—a major transport and freight link in country New South Wales, not to mention a vital part of the Sydney to Brisbane national highway network—will receive only \$6 million over the next four financial years. Roads funding in rural and regional New South Wales should not be squeezed because Federal Labor has squandered billions on harebrained environmental and social engineering schemes such as the \$2.5 billion pink batts fiasco or the bottomless pit of the \$36 billion National Broadband Network.

Back to the Pacific Highway funding issue: as Federal Labor stated, this highway is a key component of the national land transport network—"national" being the operative word. As any fair-minded person would conclude, being a national highway, the majority of funding should come from the national government. [*Time expired.*]

### HOMELESS PERSONS PROTOCOL

**The Hon. JAN BARHAM:** I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for Family and Community Services. Will the Minister advise the House on the progress of the revised Protocol for Homeless Persons? Specifically, will the Minister advise the House of who has so far been consulted on the revised protocol and when the final version will be available to the public?

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** I thank the member for her question and for her ongoing interest in homelessness; I am also interested in this area. Homelessness falls within the portfolio of the Minister for Family and Community Services. I will forward the question to the responsible Minister for a response.

### NEWCASTLE PORT SAFETY

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Roads and Ports. What steps are being taken by the Newcastle Port Corporation to ensure public safety when the MPC *Kopenhagen* returns to the port?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** The disappointing thing is that one expects scaremongering from the Leader of the Opposition, but not from such a sensible soul as the Hon. Peter Primrose. Obviously those opposite have a question time committee and a mysterious person has posed that question. The question asked what sort of safety precautions will be put in place by the Government. The answer is that the Government will put the usual safety precautions in place. The Government takes safety seriously at Newcastle and they are implying that it was not taken seriously in the past. The usual safety precautions will be taken—comprehensive and appropriate—and they will be the correct precautions.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE:** I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer as to "the usual safety precautions"?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** The usual safety standards are standards of the absolute highest. We are nearing the end of question time—as much as those on the other side would wish to stay and hear me talk chapter and verse about this—but we could order the member a book or he could look it up on the internet. I have answered the question.

**The Hon. Michael Gallacher:** The standards are set by experts.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** They are experts in setting standards. One should not rely on the Leader of the Opposition because, like Chicken Little, he has been talking about the sky falling. Chicken Little said the sky is falling all the time. Members opposite have not said anything as they do not want to scare the Newcastle community.

**The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER:** The time for questions has expired. If members have further questions they should place them on notice.

**Questions without notice concluded.**

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

**The House continued to sit.**

**Pursuant to sessional orders Government business proceeded with.**

### INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AMENDMENT (INDUSTRIAL ORGANISATIONS) BILL 2012

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

### ADJOURNMENT

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY** (Minister for Roads and Ports) [3.30 p.m.]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

### FERAL ANIMALS

**The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK** [3.30 p.m.]: I again speak about feral animals and the fact that they live in national parks but prey on livestock on neighbouring farming properties. This fact has been highlighted in the recommendations of the Ryan review into the Livestock Health and Pest Authority in relation to pest animal control on farms. Amongst a number of recommendations—I am watching keenly to see what the Government does about the report—Mr Ryan has recommended that pest animal control on farms be made contestable, that is, to introduce competition. At the moment the Livestock Health and Pest Authority has a monopoly on pest animal control on farms. The Australian Environmental Pest Managers Association has

already called on the Government to implement the recommendation. On the surface, I imagine there could well be a role for the NSW Game Council in any such efforts at contestability without impacting on professional pest managers who are already out there doing the best they can to remove pest animals.

As Mr Ryan pointed out, there are, and always have been, landholders who for various reasons do not control pest animals on their land, which turns those properties into incubators for pests such as rabbits and wild dogs. That is causing particular problems across the State at the moment. I note that Mr Ryan pointed out in his report that some areas have already set up other arrangements for pest animal control. He highlighted the fact that Byron Shire Council has engaged a private professional wild dog, fox and feral cat trapper to assist landholders to meet their responsibilities. The council pays a financial retainer to the trapper and landholders pay \$100 per scalp for wild dogs, which are caught in soft-jaw traps. Mr Ryan specifically pointed to wild dogs and said:

The problem is primarily related to landholders bordering public lands, such as National Parks and State Forests.

He further said:

Farmers can adapt to wild dogs by measures such as changing enterprises from sheep to cattle where the impact of wild dogs is much less.

I do not think this is a satisfactory answer to the problem. I do not think it is fair that a sheep farmer is forced to change to cattle simply because no-one is controlling the wild dogs that live in the national park next door and prey on his flock. We need to get rid of the wild dogs. Interestingly, for city people who may not be aware of the fact, Mr Ryan points out that, of the declared pests, rabbits are the most localised and affect individual farmers specifically but can cause problems for neighbours, while pigs are territorial but have a bigger range and wild dogs can cover significant distances of up to 20 kilometres a night.

For a long time the Shooters and Fishers Party has maintained that there is a better and cheaper way to manage feral animals on public land. This has been proven in the State forests of New South Wales. The Chairman of the Australian Environmental Pest Managers Association's Vertebrate Pest Management Panel, Mr Alex Krstic, said that professional pest managers would be able to supply integrated services that provide a range of solutions, not just poison, which seems to be the favoured method of the Livestock Health and Pest Authority. Most interestingly, he said that allowing contestability would:

... result in pest control being delivered more effectively and at a lower cost.

That is the point: getting rid of feral animals humanely and at the lowest possible cost. Our national parks are currently being overrun by feral animals. It is time the Government accepted the need to have properly licensed conservation hunters allowed in national parks throughout the State to remove the feral animals.

## GLOBAL WARMING

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS** [3.35 p.m.]: Today I will speak about the changing view in the community on the greatest scam of the century, that is, the claim that the carbon tax will stop global warming. It is obvious that those promulgating global warming have been caught out again. For example, a recent survey of polar bear numbers in Hudson Bay in the Northern Hemisphere shows that the population has increased since 2004.

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** Increased? We were told it was going to go down.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** That is right: we were told it would go down but it has increased since 2004. This is the work of a gentleman by the name of Mr Drikus Gissing, the Director of Wildlife Management with the Government of Nunavut. He clearly said that polar bears are not endangered and that their number is increasing. The second furphy is that sea ice is decreasing. We all remember back in 2006 when that well-known global warming promulgator Mr Tim Flannery—

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** Alarmist.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** In 2006 the alarmist Mr Flannery said that the Arctic could be free of ice by 2011, which was last year. Mr Flannery said:

New evidence reveals the ice caps are melting faster than previously thought. Only urgent action can save our coastal cities—the Arctic Ice Cap may have entered a death spiral that will see it melt entirely in summer within the next 5 to 15 years.

It did not happen. The National Snow and Ice Data Centre issued a report on the latest Arctic sea ice. It stated that during April this year the ice cover remained unusually extensive in the Bering Sea, continuing a pattern that had persisted over winter. Ice cover was also higher in Baffin Bay and part of the Sea of Okhotsk, where average temperatures were 6 degrees to 8 degrees lower than average.

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** Global warming.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** Global warming is alive and well. The *Anchorage Daily News* reported that "sea ice is encroaching unusually early on the Bering Sea, threatening to grind Alaska's economically important snow crab fishery to a halt at the peak of its season, leaving crabbers facing major losses". That is what is happening in the Northern Hemisphere. Perhaps we should look at what is happening in the Southern Hemisphere. What is happening in the Antarctic? The Australian Antarctic Division reported that sea ice in the Weddell Sea and Ross Sea is increasing.

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** No.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** It does, and the division is not known to be a denier of global warming by any stretch of the imagination. The division reported that the ice in the Weddell Sea and Ross Sea is increasing. We must remember that the terrorists attempting to instil fear in communities across the world believe that increasing carbon dioxide levels will cause the earth's ice sheets to melt, causing sea levels to rise alarmingly and coastal cities to be flooded.

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** Like Sydney.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** Just like Sydney. Let us look at what else is happening. In Antarctica it has been reported that a number of huge volcanoes are under the Antarctic ice. This has been discovered only in the last few years. Scientists from the British Antarctic Survey have discovered previously unknown volcanoes in the waters around the remote South Sandwich Islands. Twelve volcanoes—some up to three kilometres high—have been found there. Craters five kilometres in diameter have been left there by collapsing volcanoes and there are still seven active volcanoes visible above the sea as a chain of islands. There have been reports that sea ice in that area has been decreasing and the alarmists are saying—

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** I wonder why.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** The alarmists say it is global warming but it is because there is a huge fire under the ocean that is warming the water and melting the ice. On the other side of Antarctica—in the Weddell Sea and Ross Sea—guess what? As the report by the Australian Antarctic Division states, sea ice in that area is also decreasing.

### "WE'RE FAMILY TOO" REPORT

**The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD** [3.40 p.m.]: Recently here at Parliament House, together with the Hon. John Ajaka, I had the pleasure of hosting the launch of the We're Family Too report. For the first time the effects of homophobia on same-sex attracted Australians from an Arabic-speaking background have been documented in the report. The report also draws attention to racism and stereotyping within the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community.

Homophobia exists in all communities. It exists within the Arabic-speaking community amongst people of Christian and Muslim backgrounds. Attitudes that exist in the Arabic-speaking community are similar to the sorts of attitudes that exist in the broader community. These attitudes are: homosexuality is contrary to cultural and religious values, it is disgusting, a sickness, a choice, unnatural, a risk to children and it may lead to AIDS. Within the Arabic-speaking community was the extra belief that homosexuality was a Western import and did not exist in Arab communities or that it did not exist to the same extent as in the West. This report will start a conversation to address some of those misconceptions. It is community attitudes to homosexuality—rather than homosexuality—which are causing harm and pain for gay and lesbian members of the Arabic community and those people who love them.

During the We're Family Too launch there were a number of prominent guests who spoke passionately about the report. Some of their stories were quite moving. Mr Ghassan Kassiseh authored this groundbreaking

report. He is of Palestinian heritage, having migrated from Jordan with his family in 1990. Ghassan has completed an honours thesis on the experiences of same-sex attracted Australians from Arabic-speaking backgrounds.

The We're Family Too report is based on consultation with same-sex attracted men and women from within Arabic communities. The families of those men and women were also consulted together with community workers, welfare workers and nine religious and community leaders from Arabic communities. The respondents were from both Christian and Moslem backgrounds. The We're Family Too report was produced with the support of the AIDS Council of NSW—the leading gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender health organisation in New South Wales—together with the Arab Council of Australia. Mr Nicolas Parkhill, Chief Executive Officer of the AIDS Council of NSW spoke about the impact of homophobia and racism on the health of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender [GLBT] individuals. Ms Randa Kattan, Executive Director of Arab Council Australia has been an active community leader for over two decades. She said:

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people from Arabic backgrounds are a valid and vibrant part of the Arab community and to exclude them or to be violent towards them is destructive at all levels. The discrimination and marginalisation that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people experience in both the Arab community and broader society is a human rights issue.

While none of the religious or community leaders in the report advocated violence against homosexuals, the majority considered exclusion or corrective interventions an appropriate response in order to discourage homosexual behaviour. Same-sex attracted respondents reported that in order to overcome the negative experiences they have created their own networks and spaces where they can freely acknowledge and celebrate their sexuality and cultural identity. According to Ghassan this report opens an important conversation for the first time. The report is aptly titled "We're Family Too" because that is the key message. Same-sex attracted Arabs are saying to their families and communities: We exist and we must talk about the pain that homophobia is inflicting on us and the people who love us. Ghassan says:

Yet despite the homophobia experienced, the participants keep coming back to the great value they place on their family and culture, and the desire for a more inclusive and supportive relationship with the people who love them.

Participants reflected very positively on the Arab cultural emphasis on hospitality and family. However, with a cultural emphasis on the collective and the need to show respect to elders, claiming a same-sex attracted identity and/or challenging homophobia was difficult. It was felt that it could have a negative impact on personal and familial reputation—the notion of honour or bringing shame onto the family. Participants want to be able to simultaneously express their sexual and cultural identities in a way that does not require a choice to be made between the two. Many gay and lesbian participants talked about the pain of partial or complete familial rejection. Same-sex attracted participants—and the family members who are supportive of them—talk about the isolation and difficulty of having to carefully negotiate the disclosure of sexuality within the family and to extended networks. They are fearful of bringing shame onto the family or of putting their gay and lesbian relatives in harm's way.

The report recommends a wide range of initiatives, including education campaigns featuring role models and ambassadors from both gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender and Arab communities. By linking together these activities resources can be used more efficiently and support can be better organised. I commend the Arab Council of Australia, the AIDS Council of NSW and Mr Ghassan Kassisieh for this much-needed groundbreaking report.

### **HOLIDAY RENTAL CODE OF CONDUCT**

**The Hon. JAN BARHAM** [3.45 p.m.]: Tourism has a significant role to play in the economy of the State, bringing in an income estimated at \$28.7 billion. The Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, Brad Hazzard, last month wrote to the General Manager of Byron Shire Council to advise that the Government had developed a Holiday Rental Code of Conduct. The code was developed with the support of an industry stakeholder group and will allow self-regulation. The use of residential dwellings for the purpose of tourism causes concern within local communities about amenity, safety, noise and the effect on property values. For a decade these issues have been defined by local and State Government. The loss of housing for permanent residents and the resultant pressures on affordable housing are also causes for community concern.

Another cause for concern is that the consultation process under which the code was developed was undertaken with those with a direct pecuniary interest. The approved tourism sector is also concerned about the unlevel playing field that is created by this activity. Local government was not involved in the development of a

resolution to this planning issue. For a number of years bureaucrats in the Department of Planning—including Tom Gellibrand—had written to Byron Council and local residents advising that a solution was being sought in consultation with the Local Government and Shires Associations. However, this consultation did not take place.

What is disturbing about the development of this code within the planning portfolio is that this use is prohibited under the Planning Act. This is a well-documented legal position. The code contributes nothing in terms of developer contributions and puts at risk the safety of those who stay in the accommodation. It does not operate fairly in an industry that is doing it tough with the high Australian dollar, which encourages people to take holidays overseas instead of supporting the domestic tourism industry.

The letter from the Ministry fails to inform how it allows, in planning terms, for prohibited use to be available for a code of conduct. A number of court cases have dealt with this issue. In 1990 the Supreme Court heard the case of *North Sydney Municipal Council v Sydney Serviced Apartments Pty Ltd*. That matter was regarding the use of 37 of 144 residential units in Blues Point Tower for short-term use as serviced apartments. The council contended that the use was contrary to the town planning Act. Despite the Land and Environment Court's decision, the Court of Appeal overruled the decision. The judgement was clear in its understanding that, in planning law, the description of a dwelling or domicile carries with it the notion of a degree of permanency. In 2003 the Sutherland Shire was successful in a similar case in which, again, the use of a building approved for residential purposes was being used for short-term and tourism purposes. In that case the courts were clear that the zoning of land and the approval of applications that seek approval for a dwelling carry with them an understanding that the dwelling will have a degree of permanency.

The Building Code of Australia defines classes of buildings and clearly differentiates between single dwellings and shared accommodation. The type of accommodation becomes a determinant for the application of fire safety provisions—as does the Rural Fires Act—in defining special fire protection purposes. These include dwellings to be used for tourism and group accommodation. Schools and hospitals are also included. The issue of fire safety is paramount. We cannot forget the terrible incident at Childers. People staying in temporary premises may not be aware of safe egress in case of fire and high standards of emergency signage and fire alarm installations are required. In the last two years there have been two fires in houses used by travellers in Byron Shire.

It has been fortunate that neither of these involved a fatal accident but they were close calls. I also raise the issue of insurance, as the Minister's code includes the option for insurance but it is the opinion of some that insurance cannot be made available for an unapproved use. This puts the tenants at risk. Overall there is great concern about the State Government defining a use to be permissible by a code that is defined by self-regulation when the matter should clearly be regulated under the Planning Act or not at all. I call on the Minister to review his decision and to ensure that the Planning Act must take note of case law, zoning and the prescription of local planning rules.

### **BURMESE NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR DEMOCRACY**

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE** [3.49 p.m.]: In the day-to-day work of this Parliament I wonder if we do not sometimes take for granted the robust, stable and functioning democracy that we are privileged to be part of. I was reminded of this last Friday when I was fortunate to meet Zeya Thaw, Sandar Min, Htein Lin and Phyo Min Thien. These four people are members of the National League for Democracy who have been recently elected to the Burmese Parliament. As an elected member I can say that when running for political office I did not have to risk arrest, torture or indeed my own life. This is not the case for these four diverse and courageous individuals.

Zeya Thaw is one of Burma's most well-known hip-hop musicians. He introduced hip-hop to the Burmese people. He is the founder of the Generation Wave, an underground movement that seeks to raise awareness amongst young people through the production of music. However, instead of being revered as a pioneer, celebrated for his creativity and applauded for his youth work, Zeya Thaw was reprimanded and arrested for producing music which was critical of the Burmese regime. In 2008 he was sentenced to six years in prison.

Sandar Min took action, first as a university chemistry student and later as an adult, when she saw how the Burmese economy was being negatively affected by the decisions of the Burmese regime—in 1988, when Burmese citizens were losing their life savings due to the voidance of various currency notes, and again in 2007, when the decision to remove fuel subsidies resulted in such a rise in diesel and petrol prices that citizens were

unable to get to work. Sandar Min decided that it was no longer time to be quiet. She formed the Tri-Colour Student Group and was arrested both for starting an organisation and distributing information about the economic injustices. In 1988 thousands of activists in Burma were killed. Sandar Min went on to act as security for the National League for Democracy leader, Daw Aung San Suu Ky. She was arrested, sent to prison and sentenced to a term of 65 years in jail for her participation in the 2007 demonstrations. Her crimes were forming an organisation without permission and offences under the electronic transmission Act.

Sandar Min was only released from jail in January as a part of a national amnesty. Instead of getting mad she decided to get elected. In an election that was not free or fair, Sandar Min campaigned to improve roads, electricity, land ownership and education in her township. Even as she attempted to campaign to make these improvements she faced opposition. Her campaign billboards were struck down, she struggled to garner outward public support from local people fearful of retribution from the regime, and she found it difficult to get permission to hold rallies. But that did not stop her. Sandar Min proved her tenacity and through the support of her community has taken her place in the Burmese Parliament.

The other two newly elected representatives, Htein Lin and Phyo Min Thien, also spoke out against the injustices in Burma. Htein Lin did so through his performance art and Phyo Min Thien did so through demonstrations he organised as the leader of the 1988 Generation Student Group. But just as Zeya Thaw and Sandar Min had been, Lin and Thien were both punished for voicing their opinions and arrested. In an interview Zeya Thaw said:

Once you get involved in politics in our country, you have a 90 percent probability of ending up behind bars. I took this into consideration before I decided to take part in politics, so I don't feel sorry for myself. In fact I feel honoured.

Meeting with these four members of parliament reminded me of the honour and privilege of being an elected member of Parliament. They also reminded me of how much easier it is to get elected in New South Wales. In this State we do not have to face the persecution that these Burmese activists did. We are free to criticise the Government: indeed, the role I have as part of the Labor Opposition is recognised within the Westminster system. Our voices can be heard without our being reprimanded, except by Don Harwin, punished or threatened with arrest. It was also a reminder of the precious steps being undertaken in Burma to return that country to democratic rule. There is of course a long way to go. I congratulate all the newly elected members of parliament from the National League for Democracy and honour their commitment to and personal sacrifice in advancing democracy in Burma.

## POLAND

**The Hon. DAVID CLARKE** (Parliamentary Secretary) [3.54 p.m.]: Only a few days ago I was deeply honoured to represent the Premier and to speak at a celebration to mark the National Day of Poland. Today I take the opportunity to pay my respects to members of the Polish-Australian community and to acknowledge their many admirable achievements in this country. I also wish to highlight some landmark events in Poland's recent history which have played such a pivotal and positive part in shaping the history of Europe and indeed the world in the direction of freedom and democracy. I also pay tribute to the heroic virtue of Poland and her people and their triumph over what others might see as insurmountable odds, with the result that the Republic of Poland is today a nation of freedom and democracy and an upholder of human rights.

The National Day of Poland, which falls on 3 May, commemorates the adoption of Poland's first constitution in 1791. That was the first constitution of any nation in Europe and indeed the second constitution in the world after that of the United States. But to me the National Day of Poland represents infinitely more than a constitution; it represents a people at the very centre of Europe going back to the earliest days of European civilisation. It represents a people firmly anchored to the values of Western civilisation and it represents a people who have overcome great obstacles and adversities in their history.

Only a few days ago we celebrated Anzac Day, and among the thousands of war veterans who marched past Sydney's Cenotaph was a contingent of Polish World War II veterans. They march without fail every year and they will continue to march each year until they can physically march no longer. The most catastrophic of all wars was World War II, which started with the invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany. And, as many leftist commentators are too shy, or too sly, to want to acknowledge, a few weeks later the Soviet Union invaded from the east as part of a secret carve-up of Poland pact between Hitler and Stalin. For two years in eastern Poland under communism and for two years in western Poland under Nazism, and then for another four years when all of Poland was under Nazism, the lot of the Polish people was one of forced deportations, starvation and mass destruction. Poland was a slave state of cruelty and barbarity in which millions were murdered.

But these years of occupation were also years of great heroism for the Polish people—the heroism of the Warsaw ghetto uprising; the heroism of the later Warsaw general uprising; and the heroism of the Polish underground. Then there was the heroism of the Polish military units that, having been overwhelmed by the forces of Hitler and Stalin, escaped to Britain and fought as pilots in the Battle of Britain. There also were those Polish units who took part in the landings at Normandy. These are the things history records when it speaks of the Polish people. Following these war years the Polish people lived under 45 years of brutal oppression—communist oppression and Soviet oppression. But they were years of Polish defiance when, despite Soviet domination, their spirit was never broken, because it never could be broken.

The collapse of communism in Europe and elsewhere started in Poland. It started with the Polish people, in the shipyards of Gdansk, with an organisation called Solidarity and with men such as Lech Walesa. They were energised and inspired by another hero, a Polish Pope, John Paul II. The collapse of communism, which had worldwide positive repercussions for freedom, democracy and human rights, started with the Polish people. To my mind the Polish people, sanctified through their suffering and heroism, were destined by providence to be the spark that lit the fire that caused the collapse of communism. It happened with relatively little loss of life, which must surely be a miracle of modern times.

I remember well the members of the Polish community in Australia who during some of those later dark years lived through many of those terrible years in Nazi- and communist-occupied Poland. Today I give testimony here in the Parliament of New South Wales that the spirit of our Polish community in Australia never wavered or wilted or faltered. Never were there better sons and daughters of a free Poland than our Polish community. Since their arrival here they have been good and great sons and daughters of Australia as well. In talking today about the Polish presence in Australia I could have referred to the first Pole to visit our shores in the 1600s or the first Polish settler in 1803 or the many distinguished Australian achievers of Polish background, and all of these things would be true. But it is the heroism and the refusal of the Polish people to wilt under the severest of pressure that comes to my mind when I commend our Polish-Australian community and congratulate for its national day the free and noble nation of Poland.

#### GLOBAL WARMING

**The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ** [3.58 p.m.]: I would like to take up the report about polar bears in the Arctic that was quoted by the Hon. Rick Colless. The matter he referred to came from an article in the *Globe and Mail*. We should note in that report about polar bear numbers something else that Mr Gissing said. Overall about 450 polar bears are killed annually across Nunavut. Mr Gissing said that a new quota is expected to be announced in June. If members would like to go on a polar bear hunt in Nunavut with Mr Gissing it apparently costs \$5,000. I know members of the Shooters and Fishers Party may be interested. It is interesting that Mr Gissing has come up with an increased number of polar bears when he is looking at a new quota for his polar bear hunt.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**The House adjourned at 3.59 p.m. until Tuesday 22 May 2012 at 2.30 p.m.**

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