

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday 6 September 2012

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

The President read the Prayers.

Pursuant to sessional orders Formal Business Notices of Motions proceeded with.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Formal Business Notices of Motions

Private Members' Business item No. 869 outside the Order of Precedence objected to as being taken as formal business.

LEGACY

Motion by the Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) Legacy Week is 2 to 8 September 2012,
 - (b) Legacy is dedicated to caring for the families of veterans who have died or become incapacitated either on service or subsequently, including veterans who have served in war and on peacekeeping and humanitarian missions, and
 - (c) Legacy's compassionate service assists over 100,000 widows and 1,900 children and dependants with a disability through innovative and practical programs aimed at:
 - (i) protecting the basic needs of individuals and families,
 - (ii) advocating for the entitlements, rights and benefits of individuals and families,
 - (iii) assisting families to cope with bereavement,
 - (iv) helping people thrive, despite their adversity and loss.
2. That this House acknowledges and thanks Legacy Legatees who volunteer their time to advocate on behalf of and support the dependents of veterans who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in defending and protecting Australia.

WEAR IT PURPLE DAY

Motion by the Hon. PENNY SHARPE agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) Friday 7 September 2012 marks the third annual Wear It Purple day,
 - (b) Wear It Purple Day is a grassroots campaign organised by young people for young people,
 - (c) Wear It Purple is a student run not for profit organisation that exists to support young people who identify as sexuality and gender diverse, queer or rainbow,
 - (d) Wear It Purple has a simple message to young people in our communities that they have the right to be proud of who they are, and
 - (e) Wear it Purple seeks to raise awareness about the issues faced by these young people and the need to eradicate bullying based on sexuality and gender diversity.
2. That this House further notes that since its establishment in 2010 Wear It Purple:
 - (a) has grown to involve schools across New South Wales and Australia,
 - (b) is now being held in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and New Zealand,

- (c) has strong support and involvement from community organisations like ACON, the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby, and
 - (d) has strong support from the NSW Police Force and significant involvement from the Police Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers across New South Wales.
3. That this House commits to unconditionally respect, support and celebrate all young people for who they are and congratulates the Wear It Purple organising committee and all the young people, teachers and police officers who will help turn NSW purple on Friday 7 September.

RIDE FOR LIFE AND POLY'S PLATE LUNCHEON

Motion by the Hon. MARIE FICARRA agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
- (a) the Ride for Life race held on Sunday 19 August 2012 and the Poly's Plate luncheon, named in honour of Andrew Polivis, held on Friday 24 August 2012 in the Parliament of New South Wales Strangers Dining Room, raised upwards of \$60,000, and
 - (b) for over nine years Ride for Life has raised more than \$400,000 in support of the NSW Cancer Survivors Centre.
2. That this House congratulates those that helped organise the event, including:
- (a) Nicole Bowman, the wife of the late Andrew Polivis in whose honour the luncheon was held in,
 - (b) Mayor Scott Nash and Randwick City Council for providing a two kilometre track at Heffron Park, and logistical support for the race,
 - (c) major supporters and sponsors including Medina Apartment Hotels and the Vlandis Group, represented on the day by Michael Samios, and friends of Nicole Bowman, especially Rick Stein,
 - (d) TAFE NSW, represented on the day by the Director Pam Christie and Assistant Director Carmel Ellis Gulli, for staging the TAFE Relay,
 - (e) the founders of Ride for Life, Rick Christie and his wife Vicki, both cancer survivors, the Ride for Life committee headed by Phil Bates, AM, and his staff Warren Scott, Andrew Baxter and Lenneke Lucas,
 - (f) the Professors involved with the NSW Cancer Survivors Centre, Michael Friedlander, David Goldstein, Andrew Lloyd and Richard Cohn,
 - (g) Chris Tzarimas, Director of the University of NSW Faculty of Medicine's Lifestyle Clinic which supports the NSW Cancer Survivors Centre,
 - (h) Roshana Sultan, the Executive Officer at the NSW Cancer Survivors Centre,
 - (i) special guest speakers Michael Milton, OAM, and Bianca Berganin, both cancer survivors, and
 - (j) Paul Martell for MC'ing the event.

FATHER OF THE YEAR AWARD RECIPIENT JOHN SYMOND, AM

Motion by the Hon. MARIE FICARRA agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
- (a) on 28 August 2012, the Australian Father of the Year Award Ceremony was held at the Parliament of New South Wales,
 - (b) the recipient of the 2012 Father of the Year Award was Aussie Home Loans founder and Executive Chairman, John Symond,
 - (c) in 2002, Mr Symond was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia,
 - (d) in recognition of his services to the industry, John Symond was inducted into the Australian Banking and Finance Magazine's Hall of Fame in May 2004, and
 - (e) in August 2011, Symond was listed eighth in the *Australian Financial Review's* poll of the most influential business, economic and political leaders of the past 60 years.

2. That this House acknowledges that:
 - (a) Mr Symond is the father of two children: Stephen and Deborah, and
 - (b) Mr Symond has actively supported charity organisations over many years, such as: the Shepherd Centre, the Sydney Children's Hospital, Jeans for Genes, Children's Medical Research Institute, and Friends of St Vincent's Private.
3. That this House congratulates the outstanding generosity that John Symond has displayed in his charitable work, and recognises John as a positive role model for fathers across Australia.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion by the Hon. Duncan Gay agreed to:

That this House at its rising today do adjourn until Tuesday 11 September 2012 at 2.30 p.m.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES [9.41 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. 840 outside the Order of Precedence relating to Grandparents Day be called on forthwith.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ [9.42 a.m.]: The Opposition does not support the motion for the suspension of standing and sessional orders. Grandparents are important but debating this motion is not more important than debating other business on the *Notice Paper*. Item No. 4 in the order of precedence, which deals with the Small Business Commissioner and Small Business Protection Bill 2012, is much more important and should be discussed in this Chamber on a day that has been set aside for private members' business. Last Tuesday members were given only 1½ hours in which to discuss private members' business. Today we should be discussing motions that have been listed by members as urgent motions. Government members are moving motherhood motions that are taking up the time of other members and inhibiting their ability to move urgent motions.

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

Motion agreed to.

Order of Business

Motion by the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones agreed to:

That Private Members' Business item No. 840 outside the Order of Precedence be called on forthwith.

NSW GRANDPARENTS DAY

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES [9.44 a.m.]: I move:

That this House notes:

- (a) that NSW Grandparents Day will be held on Sunday 28 October 2012 to promote the valuable contribution grandparents make to family life and the broader community,
- (b) commends the O'Farrell Government for introducing NSW Grandparents Day to recognise the importance of grandparents and seniors within our society, and
- (c) that on NSW Grandparents Day the winners of the NSW Grandparents of the Year awards will be announced and these awards recognise exceptional grandparents as carers, volunteers and mentors.

I thank members for allowing me to move this important motion which will give members an opportunity to recognise the role of grandparents and their contribution to society, and to talk about upcoming events relating to Grandparents Day. I look forward to hearing the contributions of other members promoting and encouraging participation in Grandparents Day across the State. Grandparents are an essential part of the fabric of our life and society. Each and every grandparent makes a huge contribution to their families and communities, to our

economy and to society as a whole. Grandparents Day provides the people of New South Wales with a unique opportunity to acknowledge the vital role played by grandparents. For many families the support or the lack of support of grandparents in the family unit can lead to families coping or not coping. It is unfortunate that it has taken us so long to learn about the important role played by grandparents.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I ask members to reduce the volume of their conversations or to conduct their business outside the Chamber.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Grandparents play an extremely important role in our communities. Over the past 50 years the role of grandparents has changed dramatically. People in their forties and fifties who are grandparents will live 30 or 40 years longer than they did in the past because of health and lifestyle improvements, which means they will play an even greater role in their grandchildren's lives and in some cases spend more time with their grandchildren than they did with their own children. Traditionally grandparents helped to collect children from school, babysat and assisted when needed while mums and dads were at work. Over time that role has changed and many grandparents are now caring for their grandchildren full time. They are carers also for their loved ones, spouses, brothers and sisters, and aunts and uncles.

Grandparents perform a variety of roles—as grandparents, friends, role models and teachers. They provide a safety net during hard times and also protect their grandchildren. On 6 March at Parliament House a forum entitled "Grandchildren with a Second Chance" was held. The forum was attended by a number of members of the Legislative Assembly who supported that important group of individuals. I have been told that Annaleigh, Tarsha and Koday, three articulate and vibrant young teenagers, spoke at that forum about the extraordinary impact their grandparents had had on their lives. They spoke also about how they had embraced life and were finding their way in the world. I am told that their speeches were so moving there was not a dry eye in the room. Annaleigh, Tarsha and Koday thanked their grandparents for creating a home life that made their successes possible. They spoke about the sacrifices that their grandparents had made and they thanked them for everything they had done. I commend the work of their grandparents and the work of many other unique grandparents in this State and country and internationally who give children in their communities a second chance.

Grandparents who raise their grandchildren play an important role in our communities. I thank them for what they do. Grandparents across the country contribute to the upbringing of their grandchildren—from providing love and affection to child care, as I mentioned before. They also take on the full-time care of their grandchildren. I am sure all members would agree that grandparents who raise their own grandchildren should be commended and admired. Many do this through their own private arrangements; they do not seek support or assistance. Sometimes they do this to their own detriment but they do so because they believe in ensuring that every child has the best opportunities in life. Often they are formally or informally involved in the care of their grandchildren without any support from the Commonwealth or State government.

Grandparents often take on a broader parenting or caring role. Many are still engaged in part-time or full-time work and contribute to our economy. Everyone benefits from their vast experience. Australia has an ageing population—many members would be aware of figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. I wish to highlight some of those important and interesting statistics. Currently 13.7 per cent of the population is over the age of 65—an increase of 97,600 people over the past 10 years. It is predicted that over the next 20 to 30 years those over the age of 65 will comprise about 25 per cent of our population, which is a large percentage, and many of them will remain in the workforce. In the past 12 months the number of people over the age of 85 has increased by 21,000. Over the past 20 years the number of people in that age group increased by 169 per cent.

The Hon. Walt Secord: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones is talking about ageing demographics and the economy; she is not talking about Grandparents Day.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! I have been listening carefully to the member's contribution. Had the Hon. Walt Secord been listening earlier, he would know that she was talking about the role grandparents play in babysitting or caring for their loved ones, which contributes to the economy. There is no point of order.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Members would be aware that the Hon. Walt Secord was chief of staff to the former Minister for Ageing. I look forward to hearing his comments about the valuable

contribution that seniors play in this country and in this State. Grandparents make a valuable contribution to our communities and our economy and many of them are still in the workforce. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, over the past 12 months there has been an 18.2 per cent increase in the number of people over the age of 100. Over the past 20 years that figure increased by 237 per cent compared with a total population growth of 31 per cent. People are now living longer and they have healthier and active lives. Statistics show that 75 per cent of those over the age of 65 have engaged in volunteer work for the past 10 years or more.

Many members of the Liberal Women's Council have been active for a long time. Grandparents in their seventies and eighties perform voluntary work and support some of the younger women. As I have said before, grandparents play an important role in our community, as volunteers and as local councillors. I acknowledge all those grandparents who are running for election this Saturday who want to contribute to our community. Grandparents also are involved in public service and in church and faith groups. Through the Department of Family and Community Services the New South Wales Government has put in place a number of strategies to support grandparents and carers, both formally and informally. Last year the Minister for Family and Community Services, the Hon. Pru Goward, and the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. Andrew Constance, were involved in the establishment of Grandparents Day.

The Department of Family and Community Services and the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care provide a number of services for grandparents and families. They also provide funding to non-government agencies to support and assist them directly through their local communities. In 2011 the O'Farrell Government honoured grandparents in New South Wales with their own special day, which is held on the last Sunday of October. Last year it was held on 30 October. Grandparents Day is an opportunity to celebrate the important role that grandparents play, particularly as primary caregivers. Grandparents Day 2011 was a great success and was attended by hundreds of community members.

The Hon. Walt Secord: Name them.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I will name a few in a minute. That event was supported by Clubs NSW as well as the Council on the Ageing. A number of private organisations at a local level and schools and libraries across New South Wales were also involved. Grandparents Day provides us with an invaluable opportunity for sharing information and experience across generations. It also enables grandparents to talk about their experiences and to provide support to one another. It is an opportunity for grandparents to network and to share similar experiences and ideas for the future. It also gives some senior Australians an opportunity to share their culture and their knowledge of a vast range of life events. Quite often they find that they have a lot more in common with their grandchildren than they realised.

I acknowledge the local volunteers who made Grandparents Day last year a success and who will do so again at the upcoming event on 28 October. I also acknowledge the ambassadors and community leaders who raise awareness of the day and who encourage community members to plan and to host events. This year three ambassadors were involved. Christine and Paul Ng, who have three grandchildren aged one, six and eight, described their relationship with their grandchildren as very close: they do everything together. After raising four children of their own they are now raising their grandchildren full time. About 10 years ago I met Dorothy, who has seven children of her own and who for the past seven years has been raising two of her son's children. Now that those grandchildren are at school she is looking after her daughter's child, mainly because both parents have to work full time. Even though Dorothy is in her late eighties she said that she was more than happy to do that: it is part of being a member of a family.

Jan Blackhouse, another ambassador, has 12 grandchildren ranging in age from three to 24, and four are stepchildren. Jan has always taken an active interest in her grandchildren and has taught them new skills such as cooking and sewing. Her grandchildren have taught her how to use Facebook and Skype, which has been a great way for her to keep in contact with the younger children. Lucy Porter, yet another ambassador, has been a grandparent for the past 45 years and has grandchildren ranging in age from eight to 45. When asked what she considered was important in raising children Lucy said her philosophy for raising and interacting with children was giving them lots of love, teaching them respect and responsibility, setting appropriate boundaries for their age group, being a good role model and retaining a sense of humour. She believes that grandparents mostly are invisible but vitally important within society.

I acknowledge also the Grandparents Day awards that give community members the opportunity to nominate exceptional grandparents in three different categories: carers—those nominated for outstanding grandparenting as primary carers of grandchildren; volunteers—those who provide an exceptional contribution

in volunteering their time to activities that support their grandchildren; and mentors—those senior community members or elders who have been involved in mentoring activities to young people in the community, which means that this award category is not limited to grandparents. The Government has committed \$1 million over the next four years to support Grandparents Day. As I have stated, the Council on the Ageing is leading the development of activities for Grandparents Day in the coming year.

Another initiative I share with the House is the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren project. I have spoken at length about the important role of grandparents in raising children. The aim of this project is to provide grandparents with more information, advice, links to services, and contacts and support networks for others in similar situations. The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren website provides a range of educational resources and information to help grandparents, and I urge everyone to take a look. Last year the Dungog cars for cancer event was held and, on the North Shore, Taronga zoo held special events on Grandparents Day. This year a couple of events being held around Sydney include the St Johns Park Bowling Club celebrating the day with a *Star Wars* theme. Being a big fan of *Star Wars*, I know the day will be great as children will be able to don the Jedi robe and with their grandparents engage in lightsaber training to re-enact *Star Wars*.

Leichhardt holds its Fiesta, which is one of Australia's largest street festivals, and which the Hon. Marie Ficarra has attended previously as one of over 100,000 past attendees as well as the member for Drummoyne. This year that Fiesta will be held on Grandparents Day and will be great with lots of activities, including cooking and other things. Grandparents Day is a great opportunity around the State to teach children lots of skills and to share with people. The competition "My Grandparents Taught Me" encourages children to write a poem or story about what their grandparents have done. I commend the motion to the House. Grandparents are invaluable to our community.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY (Parliamentary Secretary) [10.04 a.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I support this motion about Grandparents Day. Grandparents have an amazing and profound impact on society, families and local communities. I acknowledge the great contribution by the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones highlighting the role of grandparents. It is important to acknowledge Grandparents Day, especially the first one held in New South Wales last year, which had been some time in its planning. I acknowledge the role of the Council on the Ageing in developing Grandparents Day.

The Hon. Helen Westwood: It clashes with the Dragons Abreast Festival.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: I acknowledge the interjection of the Hon. Helen Westwood. A little problem was created for Helen and me trying to get the boat together for Paddling Pollies on Darling Harbour: Grandparents Day now clashes with the Dragons Abreast Darling Harbour Festival. Last year the clash impacted on some crew members, including the Premier, who had to attend the Grandparents Day festivities. The 2003 Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] information regarding grandparents is a little old but it highlights that in 22,500 Australian families grandparents were the guardians of their grandchildren. The bureau reported that, while many grandparents provide temporary child care for their grandchildren, some are guardians of their grandchildren. Children live with their grandparents for a variety of reasons, but often because of some family trauma, such as parents' drug or alcohol abuse, relationship breakdowns, mental or physical illness, or death.

As primary care providers, grandparents assume responsibility for their grandchildren's emotional, structural and financial support. All of us in this Chamber have been touched by stories of the profound role grandparents have taken in the lives of their grandchildren. Interestingly, the Australian Bureau of Statistics information highlighted that a larger proportion of grandparent-grandchildren families exist in regional areas. The information reports that grandparent families tend to live in regional areas more so than in other areas. In 2003 the Australian Bureau of Statistics highlighted that a similar proportion of grandparent families lived in the major cities of Australia as lived in regional areas: 48 per cent lived in regional areas and 45 per cent lived in cities. However, this is different from the normal pattern of family relationships.

A substantially greater proportion of other families live in major cities: 65 per cent, compared with 33 per cent in regional areas. I come from the North Coast, which has a strong retired population. Often in instances of family trauma or breakdown the grandchildren come to live with grandparents, particularly on the North Coast, South Coast or other regional areas. Grandparents do an incredible job for their grandchildren and the community generally. That role is very much a part of the establishment of Grandparents Day. I highlight again that the Council on the Ageing very much drove the initiative at the end of the previous Labor administration and coincided with the support of the Minister for Ageing for the first Grandparents Day last year on 28 October. On that day Grandparent of the Year, Grandparent Volunteer of the Year and Grandparent Mentor of the Year awards were presented. Similar nominations are being received this year.

The Chief Executive of the Council on the Ageing, Ian Day, has written to all of us to encourage us to think of those special people within our communities—those grandparents who contribute above and beyond the call of duty as carers, volunteers and mentors—so that they can be recognised within the community for their outstanding work. I touch briefly on the role my parents have played as grandparents and mentors to my children. I was sworn in as a member of the Coalition in this place 15 days after the birth of my second child, which is 10 years ago on Monday.

The Hon. Trevor Khan: You slipped that one in well, Mel.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Thanks very much, Trevor; I appreciate your support.

The Hon. Helen Westwood: He is congratulating you on your stellar achievement.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Yes, he is a great friend and very supportive. With the support of the Parliament at that time in allowing my mother to be recognised as a carer for my daughter, my mother travelled with me from Coffs Harbour to Parliament to support my role as a new member of this place so that I could continue to breastfeed my daughter for the first five or six months after her birth. That was an amazing sacrifice by my mother. It was a role that she enjoyed, and I enjoyed that experience with her. It formed a bond between the three of us and my mother now has an incredible bond with my daughter because of the role she played following her birth. There are so many people in the community that have relationships with their grandparents. My children continue to have a very profound relationship with their grandparents, as I did with my grandparents. We went on school holidays for two or three weeks to spend quality time with our grandparents. That is when we learnt things about our family, our country and how things were when they were children. It is a great learning experience to spend time with a grandparent.

At a personal level, I think that having Grandparents Day is a proper and worthy exercise. Society should acknowledge that grandparents have a profound impact within the community. Three out of four Australian children see their grandparents at least once a month or more. If a child is living in a one-parent family the chances are that they will see their grandparents every day. The role that grandparents play by supporting their children and grandchildren is important to our community as a whole. In the latest edition of *Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* it is noted that only a few children have no grandparents or no contact with at least one grandparent. The study found that grandparents are the number one choice for parents seeking care for their babies up until aged one.

The statistics from the study are shedding new light on the extent to which young children, infants and four to five year olds have face-to-face contact with their grandparents, and the factors associated with such contact. The importance of children maintaining contact with grandparents should not be underestimated. This study states that a relationship with a grandparent is the foundation for the child's development and contributes to the wellbeing of the grandparent too. Recent amendments to family law are based on the premise that spending time with grandparents provides children with a number of benefits. As well as having someone to talk to and confide in, grandparents provide the link that helps children understand who they are and where they come from.

One in five children is cared for by a grandparent on a regular basis. For children under three grandparents are often the only carers, whereas by ages four to five the children are experiencing a range of care options. Most grandparents typically put in one or two days a week of caring but very few of them, 5 per cent, are paid for the care they provide. Parents report that the main reason that they use a grandparent, or any sort of child care, is that they need to work or study. The parents of the four to five year olds opt to leave their children with grandparents so they can spend time with each other and foster their relationship. Over and above the need to work and study, the parents of the infants turn to care providers when they want to play sport, go shopping, and attend to social or community commitments, or just have some time on their own. Parents say they are satisfied with all their care options but grandparents get the top vote.

These findings are reassuring at a time when there is considerable concern in the community that family breakdown is having the effect of reducing contact between children and their grandparents. The study from *Growing Up in Australia* highlights statistics that indicate positive relationships between grandchildren and grandparents and they are interacting at least once a month. That is a statistic that provides important knowledge for a strong foundation in society and the community. Grandparents have a big impact on the lives of their grandchildren and on maintaining family units.

Sunday 28 October is NSW Grandparents Day—and the weekend of the Paddling Pollies Dragons Abreast Festival at Darling Harbour. It provides a platform to recognise the role and fundamental impact that grandparents have as a foundation stone of our society. I congratulate COTA New South Wales on supporting Grandparents Day. I offer all the nominees and future award winners my congratulations. The awards are an expression of the community's recognition of the role that grandparents play in society. There are three grandparent award categories: carer, volunteer and mentor. I wish all the communities that are organising activities well and I take this opportunity to thank my parents for the wonderful role that they have played as grandparents to my children.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD [10.15 a.m.]: I speak in support of the motion. I will begin by moving an amendment. I move:

That the question be amended by omitting in paragraph (b) the words "O'Farrell Government" and inserting instead "Council on the Ageing New South Wales".

Members on this side of the House acknowledge the important role that grandparents play in family life. Each and every one of us, as a member of our own family, will have parents and grandparents who have made a significant difference in our lives. Within our own communities we would be aware of the important role that grandparents play in supporting children, families and community life. As other speakers have noted, grandparents are often the overwhelming majority of volunteers in local communities. Whether we are talking about hospital auxiliaries, support at local schools and neighbour centres, bush fire brigades or the State Emergency Service, it is often grandparents who provide the bulk of volunteer hours to those much-needed community organisations—those organisations that are reliant on the good will of volunteers.

I question why this motion has been brought on as urgent and why we are debating it. All members of the House acknowledge it and no member objects to it, so why could it not proceed as an item of formal business? It is beyond me. At best one would think that the motion would be material for a Dorothy Dix. I am flabbergasted that the Government thinks that this is a legitimate—

The Hon. Trevor Khan: Point of order: The member is quibbling with a previous decision of this House. The issue of urgency was voted on by the House and it was determined. The member is now seeking to quibble, argue against, a previous decision of the House. The member should be brought back to the substantive motion.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! The member's comments are in order. The House has decided that the motion is urgent. I encourage the member to direct her remarks to praising grandparents—or she may wish to criticise them, but that is up to her.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Thank you for that decisive guidance, Mr Deputy-President.

The Hon. John Ajaka: You are not quibbling with his ruling, are you?

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: I thanked the Deputy-President for his decisive guidance.

The Hon. Trevor Khan: Point of order: Sarcasm is unbecoming for a parliamentarian.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: To the point of order: Sarcasm has been previously ruled to be not out of order in the House—otherwise I will lose a lot of my speech time.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: I am really concerned now when the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps is speaking on my behalf: I will not be including that in my curriculum vitae. As other members have acknowledged, grandparents play a significant role in supporting families and it is important to acknowledge the role they play particularly as kinship carers. It is interesting that in New South Wales we have a very high rate of children in kinship care. Research undertaken by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has shown that 56 per cent of children in care are in kinship care arrangements and that many of these children are Aboriginal. Research shows that there are better outcomes for children living with their grandparents or in kinship care, so it is imperative that grandparents are supported.

It should be acknowledged that often grandparents have not been prepared for the role of being carers. They had not planned to become full-time carers or chosen to be foster carers. Often they get a knock on the door in the middle of the night when there is a crisis. Their children are no longer able to care for their families

and those grandparents are called upon to be full-time carers at a time in their life when they had planned for retirement. Many are on pensions or on limited incomes, yet they are faced with being full-time carers. Many of us know how demanding it is to look after children. Indeed, as a grandparent I realise the difficulty of being a full-time carer at my age. When my grandchildren are with "grandma" during the school holidays I often remark, "Gee, I know why I had my children in my twenties and not in my fifties." It is really hard work looking after little children and teenagers. It is a lot to ask of people in their sixties and seventies, especially with the great demands involved in looking after teenagers.

It is very important that we provide support to these grandparents. I urge the Government to ensure that there are no cuts to any support services and allowances currently provided to carer grandparents. It is important that we as a society acknowledge the great work that they do on behalf of the community. These people did not plan to be full-time carers; often they planned on travelling around Australia or overseas, volunteering in the community or simply gardening, yet they are full-time carers. I am particularly proud that the Labor Government did much to improve support for kinship and grandparent carers, especially in the form of allowances. I urge this Government to continue and, wherever possible, expand that support.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! I acknowledge in the gallery this morning representatives from Lawrence Public School, which is in the Clarence River area. The topic we are discussing is Grandparents Day. Make sure that when you go home you ring your grandparents if possible. We welcome you to the public gallery and hope you enjoy your day at the New South Wales Parliament, especially your time in the Legislative Council.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: I am sure many of the young people in the gallery have a grandma, nana, pa or pop who makes a great difference in their lives. I think I have more grandchildren than any other member in this place: I have eight grandchildren. No other member is making a higher bid. Grandchildren bring a great deal of joy to one's life.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! The member will be heard in silence.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: It would be very good if we set a good example for the young people in the gallery.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: What about Trevor Khan?

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): No dobbling on other members!

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: Mr Deputy-President, if you had the capacity you might put some of these members on detention. Yesterday I had a phone call early in the morning because my 11-year-old grandchild was testing the boundaries at home. I had to be the wise counsellor. Later in the day I had a lovely conversation with three of my grandchildren: I was on the phone for half of hour, with the 11-year-old, the nine-year-old and then the three-year-old. It brings great joy to me as a grandparent to have that contact.

Equally, grandparents are there to support families in need. I know the difference that can make particularly for families where, for whatever reason, parents are no longer capable of parenting their children and the grandparents become full-time carers. In addition, many grandparents provide care for working families. Mum and dad both work and because childcare is often unaffordable, unavailable or inaccessible the grandparents then become child carers. It is important to acknowledge the contribution grandparents make to a family's wellbeing, because we know the significant cost of childcare. Therefore, grandparents save families that cost. Grandparents also provide care in times of crisis. When a child or parent is ill often the grandparents step in to provide support and care for the family. A parent may be in hospital or be with a child in hospital and the grandparent provides invaluable support to families in times of need.

On a lighter note, as other members have acknowledged, my only disappointment is that Grandparents Day now falls on the same day as the Dragons Abreast Festival. The Hon. Melinda Pavey and I have attempted to put together a team of politicians called Paddling Pollies. Because the event clashes with Grandparents Day we lost a few of our team members, including Minister Constance. We lost the Premier for a couple of hours. He did return but missed one race. I heard that perhaps the member for Drummoyne would not be available this year although he paddled with us last year. I jokingly said that perhaps he was not a loss because his style of paddling was not particularly helpful, one might say. It was referred to as more of a splash although I think windmill may be more appropriate. I am being unkind because I was very grateful to the members of Parliament

and staff who paddled. Indeed, many of the women who are survivors of breast cancer are also grandmothers. Anyone who attends the Dragons Abreast Festival at Darling Harbour on the Sunday will see many survivors of breast cancer who are also grandmothers, so perhaps it is an appropriate coincidence that the festival falls on Grandparents Day.

As I said, many of us on this side of the House are definitely supportive of Grandparents Day and of acknowledging the great contribution that grandparents make in supporting New South Wales families. But it is important that we acknowledge that Grandparents Day is not partisan; it was something the previous Government introduced and I think the motion should reflect that—hence, my proposed amendment. We should also acknowledge the important role the Council on the Ageing has played in proposing Grandparents Day and in continuing to resource, support and promote it throughout its relevant networks. I support the motion and I urge other members to support it also.

The Hon. WALT SECORD [10.30 a.m.]: I speak briefly on Grandparents Day. I support the motion as amended. Australia ranks alongside Iceland and Japan as having the longest life expectancies in the world. While this should be a source of pride it also places an onus on us. We must ensure that the final years of our older Australians are lived in dignity. Within 40 years the number of Australians over 65 will almost triple to about 7.2 million. This effect will be seen in every street, in every family and in every community. Currently, about one million people receive some form of aged and community care. By 2050 it will explode to more than 3.5 million.

The New South Wales North Coast is home to one of the largest senior citizens communities in New South Wales. I speak as Labor's member of the Legislative Council representing North Coast issues. An issue of major concern to grandparents in New South Wales is the O'Farrell Government's decision to replace an overnight emergency department doctor with a video camera at Mullumbimby Hospital. That will have a major impact on the community, especially grandparents on the North Coast. Grandparents in rural, regional and coastal communities are watching the developments at Mullumbimby Hospital nervously. This matter will affect grandparents across the State. The best thing the O'Farrell Government could do for grandparents is to restore the emergency department doctor and put away the video camera. The community and the hardworking medical staff deserve no less.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Looking after the grandparents.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I agree with the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps. I commend the motion to the House.

Dr JOHN KAYE [10.32 a.m.]: On behalf of The Greens I lend our support to the motion as amended by the Hon. Helen Westwood. The amendment takes the politics out of the motion and allows the motion to concentrate on grandparents. Every member who has spoken on this motion has mentioned the contribution grandparents make to the development of grandchildren and the important role grandparents play in their lives. Most of us have had a nana and a papa, or a gran and a grandpa, or a nonna and a papa, or a porpor and a gung-gung—

The Hon. John Ajaka: A jeedo and a teeta.

Dr JOHN KAYE: A jeedo and a teeta. Many of us have had that influence in our lives. But what many of us did not realise was that the presence, the geographic proximity of a grandmother in the giving of care to children has increased our chances of surviving to adulthood and has increased our health in childhood. Numerous studies show that where a maternal grandmother is within a five-kilometre radius of the grandchild and the mother, both maternal health and infant health improve dramatically. That is partly due to care giving—the ability of the mother to socially re-engage because of the childcare her child receives—but also because of the watchful eye of a grandmother and the experience a grandmother brings to the relationship between a child and the mother and to the development of the health of that parent. That evidence lends weight to the idea that we should acknowledge the importance of grandparents.

It is also true, and I observed this in the case of my own late father and my mother, the time grandparents have to spend with their grandchildren is greater than the time they had to spend with their children. It is simply an economic and social issue that as people get older they tend to have more time. Certainly my nephews and nieces greatly appreciated the role that my parents played in their upbringing both in relation to guidance and having fun. I saw my father having a lot of fun with his nephews and nieces and that

bonded a very special relationship. An issue that arises from this motion is the way in which we value older people and the way in which we see older people in our society. We have developed a strong commercial culture.

At this point I bid farewell to the students of Lawrence Public School and their excellent teachers, who are leaving the public gallery. The teachers deserve substantial pay increases and the respect of the Government; they do not deserve in any way whatsoever the Local Schools, Local Decisions catastrophe that is about to be visited upon public education. The teachers should receive the funding that the Gonski review recommended. Those children's grandparents would be concerned about what is happening in public schools; more than two-thirds of grandparents in New South Wales have grandchildren in public schools. They are deeply concerned about the future of public education. As I said, The Greens support the motion as amended by the Hon. Helen Westwood.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS [10.36 a.m.]: I offer my support for the motion and congratulate the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones on moving it. It is an extremely important motion. We all have grandparents, whether or not we knew them and regardless of how close we were to them. I shall tell the House a bit about my grandparents and how much I loved them when they were alive. I never knew my maternal grandfather; he died when my mother was just 12 years of age. Therefore, unfortunately, I never got to know him. My maternal grandmother was a grandmother in the true sense of the word. She loved all her grandchildren and her family and she was a very important part of our lives.

My great-great-great-great-great-grandfather came to Australia in leg irons in 1798. We are proud of our convict heritage because it makes us part of an exclusive family in Australia that has convict heritage. George Colless' first son, William, who is my great-great-great-great-grandfather, was born in 1805. When he was about 18 or 19 he and a couple of his brothers took off for the north-west, where they settled at a place called Come By Chance and established Come By Chance Station. The Come By Chance Picnic Races are now a well-known event in the bush in New South Wales.

The extraordinary thing about these three young men who went to Come By Chance was that they came home to Penrith every year for Christmas. It was about 20 years before they took their wives to Come By Chance—when the station was finally in a condition that they considered was good enough for their wives and families. They all had about 17 or 18 kids. The three men would come home at Christmas every year, welcome the newest family addition and make another one before they went back to the bush for the next nine months. It must have been an extraordinary time in Australia's history when people lived and worked under those conditions.

[Interruption]

I notice that the Hon. Walt Secord makes fun of this. He has no comprehension of the importance of Australia's history.

The Hon. Walt Secord: Point of order: I take exception to that comment. It is racist. I have lived in Australia for 25 years, which is longer than I lived in Canada. No-one should ever criticise anyone for being born elsewhere. I demand that the Hon. Rick Colless retract that comment and apologise.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! The member felt offended by that comment. I encourage the Hon. Rick Colless to withdraw it and apologise.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: I withdraw the comment, Mr Deputy-President, and I apologise to the Hon. Walt Secord. I was not being racist when I made that comment. I was simply saying that people who live in certain parts of Australia do not understand the hard work that went into establishing western New South Wales.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: Point of order: The member should withdraw the comment without elaborating on or qualifying the withdrawal.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! I am listening to the Hon. Rick Colless very carefully. He is not qualifying his withdrawal; he is helping members understand how people lived at that time. There is no point of order.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: I wish to talk about my grandfather. Unfortunately, he died at a young age when I was only three years old. I do not have a lot of memories of him but the memories that I do have are very important to me. In families all sorts of stories are told about grandparents and other family members.

I have a photograph of my grandfather that was taken in the early 1900s. The photograph shows my grandfather wearing a waistcoat and tie as he castrated calves in the cattle yards. It is interesting that 100 years ago people got dressed up to do that sort of work in the bush.

My father tells the story that my grandfather never used foul language of any sort. We can imagine how challenging that would be for a farmer trying to control his sheepdog when the dog is not doing the sort of thing that the farmer would like it to. My father says that the harshest words grandfather ever said to his dog were, "Darkie, if you don't come behind I'll warm your trousers." That is the sort of man my grandfather was. It is with sadness that I reflect on not knowing my grandparents as well as my children know theirs. Three of my children's four grandparents are still alive and they love them dearly. It is wonderful to see how my parents interact with my children now that there are great-grandchildren running around. The enjoyment that my parents get from their great-grandchildren and the support they give my children is really something to see.

As the Hon. Helen Westwood mentioned in her contribution, becoming a grandparent is one of the most satisfying things we do in this world. I have two grandchildren. One is three and the other is nine months old and they are the most gorgeous kids that God ever put breath into. I think every grandparent says that about his or her grandchildren, but of course the good thing about being a grandparent is that when the kids get a bit boisterous and hard to handle one can simply say, "Well, mum and dad, it's time you took over." As the Hon. Helen Westwood also mentioned, a lot of grandparents get lumped with looking after their grandchildren when the parents are unable to do so. Thankfully my family has not yet had to embark on that work and it is hoped that we never will. I also hope that it will not happen in other families and grandparents and grandchildren are allowed to enjoy each other's company in the way they should. I hope that all grandchildren are able to receive the advice and love that grandparents are only too happy to give. I support the motion.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS [10.44 a.m.]: I will speak about two quite prominent grandparents in Australian society, who I shall call Grandma Rhiannon and Grandma Brown. A lot has been written about Grandma Rhiannon, not the least of which is an 800-page Australian Security Intelligence Organisation [ASIO] report on her activities. Grandma Rhiannon has achieved wide and in some cases international notoriety—

Mr David Shoebridge: Point of order: The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps is being disrespectful and debasing the concept of this motion by attacking a woman who is not in the Chamber to defend herself. He is using the former member's status as a grandmother to launch an unprincipled, disgraceful and personal attack—as he has done previously. I ask you to call him to order.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: To the point of order: I have said nothing. I have only commended her for having an 800-page report and I was about to discuss the international recognition that she has received.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! There is no point of order at this time.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: As I was saying, the international recognition Grandma Rhiannon has received includes being awarded the Lenin Medal. As she is the only Australian grandmother—nay, the only Australian woman—ever to have gained such an achievement one has to ask what it was for. I presume that it was for her grandmotherly activities, rather than for being an agent of Stalinism in Australia over many years. I congratulate Grandma Rhiannon on gaining recognition of her grandmotherly activities from the Soviet government, but that is not all.

Dr John Kaye: What a coward you are, Peter. You are attacking dead people.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: I am speaking about Senator Rhiannon. If Senator Rhiannon has passed I believe a condolence motion is urgently in order. I look forward to an urgency motion in relation to the passing of Grandma Rhiannon. People have looked at the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation files on Grandma Brown, nee Gorman, also known as Grandma Rhiannon, and have been impressed with the thoroughness and skills involved in their compilation. While the organisation's intelligence was not perfect—as is to be expected—it was much better than Grandma Rhiannon made out.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! I call Dr John Kaye to order for the first time.

Mr David Shoebridge: Point of order: This motion is about Grandparents Day. It is not an opportunity for members to launch political attacks in a debased and personal way on one woman who is now deceased and another who was a former member of this Chamber. The contribution of the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps is not relevant to the motion on Grandparents Day. I would ask you to bring this disgraceful member to order.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: To the point of order: Without wishing to return to my early feminist roots, I will quote from them by expressing the notion that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Members opposite should have taken points of order to earlier speeches on the basis of relevance if, unlike previous speakers, I cannot adduce the important effect that grandmotherly and maternal care has had on offspring and grandchildren. It is relevant to talk about the important role that mothers and grandmothers play in bringing up their children and the values they inculcate upon them.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! I am listening to the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps carefully. I think every member has a contribution to make, whether we particularly appreciate those—

Mr David Shoebridge: No, the question is relevance.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! I am listening carefully to ensure that the member's contribution is relevant. It is not outside the leave of the motion.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: One of the great things that grandparents do is take their children out for day excursions. I am reminded that in the April 1955 edition of the Communist Party of Australia's *Tribune* newspaper an article headlined "Kiddies big part in May Day" showed a three-year-old "little Lee Brown" dabbling at a sign saying, "For me—Ban that H-bomb" in preparation for the upcoming May Day march. I am sure that little Lee was oblivious to the Soviet Union's possession of an H-bomb.

Mr David Shoebridge: Point of order: Mr Deputy-President, I ask you again to address the question of relevance and I do so in this vein: Are we seriously going to debase this Chamber by drawing out the political and personal histories of former members' parents and grandparents, and do that under the guise of what is meant to be a motion to discuss Grandparents Day? The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps is debasing the Chamber by his contribution, debasing political debate in this Chamber and debasing the very concept of representative democracy. To introduce that type of appallingly personal and political invective against a woman's mother and against people's grandparents under a motion about Grandparents Day, which I would have thought is meant to bring members of Parliament together to celebrate grandparents, begs the question: When will it end?

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! Points of order are not an opportunity for members to engage in debate.

Mr David Shoebridge: Do we introduce through this motion the personal history of grandparents and relatives of people such as Eric Abetz? When will it end?

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: To the point of order: It is ridiculous to suggest that a discussion of public figures in this Chamber is somehow ultra vires. The people I am speaking about are public figures and are publicly acknowledged as public figures. To exclude public figures and suggest they are not able to be spoken about in this Chamber is nonsense.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! Dr John Kaye will come to order. I reiterate that each member's contribution to the debate must be relevant. The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps is speaking about grandparents and Grandparents Day. While members are extended wide latitude, I encourage the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps to confine his comments to the leave of the motion. Members will refrain from shouting and interjecting across the Chamber. I am unable to hear what the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps is saying.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: Although little Lee obviously did not realise that the Soviet Union already possessed the hydrogen bomb, Grandma Rhiannon now claims that the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation inaccurately noted that she was a founding member of the Eureka Students Organisation. In one stroke she glossed over her involvement with this organisation, which was the youth wing of the Communist Party of Australia. It was described by her father, Grandpa Brown, as being like the Pioneers. Of course, as everyone knows, the Pioneers was an international organisation for children that was operated by the Communist Party. It promoted sports and outdoor skills while teaching communist principles. In actuality, Grandma Rhiannon's Australian Security Intelligence Organisation files record the application to attend the Junior Eureka League's 1964 summer camp at age 13; her election as treasurer of the Junior Eureka League's south Sydney branch in 1965; her graduation from the Junior Eureka League; and her role as a pioneer of the south's branch.

By age 14, Grandma Rhiannon was demonstrating against the Vietnam War. At 15, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation files show she took part in a rowdy Eureka Communist Party of Australia

[CPA] protest against Prime Minister Holt. She participated in other protests, marches and communist social functions, and attended a Communist Party of Australia Sydney district meeting. By age 16, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation files indicate that Grandma Rhiannon did clerical work at Communist Party of Australia headquarters during her school holidays.

Dr John Kaye: Point of order: This matter is irrelevant. It would be no more relevant if, for example, I had raised the issue of Schutzstaffel [SS] Brigadeführer Otto Abetz, who is Eric Abetz's uncle, during my contribution. It would have been just as relevant to point out that the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps worked for Eric Abetz and to point out that Eric Abetz's uncle was a Nazi collaborator, who collaborated in the deportation of Jews. I think that would have been irrelevant, just as the Government Whip's contribution is irrelevant.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! The standing orders of this House provide for a citizen's right of reply.

Mr David Shoebridge: That is not an answer to this disgraceful contribution.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! I am advising members of a citizen's right of reply.

Mr David Shoebridge: She is dead.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! Mr David Shoebridge will come to order. There is a procedure for a citizen's right of reply.

Mr David Shoebridge: Not if she is dead.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! If the person referred to by the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps wishes to address the issues raised in the debate, there is a procedure that person may follow. I encourage the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps to confine his remarks to the leave of the motion. His remarks may not be overly apposite to the spirit of the motion. For the sake of members who are a little offended and in the light of the charitable spirit of this House, I ask him to refrain from making personal comments.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: Thank you, Mr Deputy-President. I hope that a citizen who feels aggrieved exercises a right of reply. In particular, I hope Lee Rhiannon addresses the points made by Mark Aarons in relation to her Australian Security Intelligence Organisation file. Although she promised to do that, she has not done so at this stage.

Dr John Kaye: Point of order: Allegations that may or may not have been made by Mark Aarons are not relevant to Grandparents Day.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! There is no point of order. The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps will refrain from making remarks that are outside the leave of the motion.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: Specifically on the point of grandmothers, on 16 May this year I was delighted to receive an email from Kilty O'Gorman, who commenced her email with "I am the grand daughter of Freda Brown." I am speaking directly about an email I received from a constituent who is a person who commenced her email with the notation that she wrote to me as a granddaughter of Freda Brown. She wrote:

I am aware my grandmother was a public figure ...

And what an interesting public figure she was. She was deeply involved for many decades with Stalinist communism. That was what Ms O'Gorman's grandmother did, and she did a lot of work. Grandmothers do a lot of work. According to this email, she was a grandmother who was interested in "social change across the world", and we know what sort of social change she wanted. She wanted the imposition of a Stalinist regime. She concluded by saying that her grandmother "was a committed mother and loving Grandmother". We certainly know what she was committed to—international socialism—and she loved Joseph Stalin.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY (Minister for Roads and Ports) [10.57 a.m.]: I congratulate the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones on moving this motion. I have five grandchildren, but I know I look too young to have grandchildren.

The Hon. John Ajaka: Hear, hear!

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank my Parliamentary Secretary for being the lone voice of support on that subject. I am doubly blessed because I have five granddaughters. People who have been around this Parliament for a long time know what a crabby and nasty old fellow I can be, but they probably also have noticed that in recent times on most days that has become tempered. I certainly attribute those days to my role as a grandparent, which is a very special role. Grandparents are lucky to have that role. Contributing to our children's families as a grandparent is becoming an increasingly important role in society. The traditional role of a stay-at-home parent no longer is the norm; in fact, the norm is very much the opposite. The times when there was very little divorce or separation in the community have changed.

Mr David Shoebridge: There were a lot of ongoing unhappy marriages.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I am not married to Mr David Shoebridge, so I would not know.

Mr David Shoebridge: Let's change the law. That's what I say.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I apologise for that unkind comment. My family has not escaped any situations that are part of life in our community—very much so. I suspect that my eldest granddaughter, Autumn, was given that name because her mother is Canadian. She wanted her name to reflect the fact that the time of the year that is known in Canada as fall is referred to in Australia as autumn. My second eldest granddaughter, Xanthe, is very special to us. Xanthe is disabled and we love her dearly. We put a lot of time into looking after her. Xanthe's parents separated and are now divorced. Xanthe and her mother live in Mudgee and her mother does a fantastic job in bringing her up and looking after her.

Many people know my wife, Katie, who is outstanding. When I am in Parliament in Sydney she works as a volunteer in play therapy at the Children's Hospital and has done so for 15 years. She plays a fabulous role in helping Xanthe. Exceptional steps have been made in the special education area and the support that Xanthe has received in Sydney through the Children's Hospital, in the Blue Mountains where she lived for a time, and in Mudgee where she is living now. Xanthe is globally delayed and has autism but she is the friendliest and most loving girl who brings a lot of joy to our family.

I happen to have three other sparkling girls whose father was born in Scotland. Mhairi, which is Celtic for Mary, is a gorgeous girl—as they all are—and she is full of life. Emmy, who is a bubbly kid, looks like my grandmother did as a very young girl. A few weeks ago my daughter, Anna, and her husband, Angus, had another daughter, Eleanor. So we have Mhairi, Emmy and Ellie—which is what they are known as in Australia. All three granddaughters are redheads so the ranga gene is pretty rampant. Working parents have changed the role of grandparents. It is important to be able to help. I know from the contributions that I heard earlier in my office that grandparents are special.

A number of grandparents are relatively young but because many people are now getting married in their thirties and even later they will not become grandparents for some time. My wife and I are reasonably young grandparents when compared to the parents of my children's friends. In our family we have great-grandmothers on both sides of the family. My father, who lived until his late nineties, was a great-grandfather before he died. That is pretty exceptional when we take into account the fact that he did not marry until he was in his mid-forties, which is what many men did in those days. It was exceptional for someone who got married in his mid-forties to become a great-grandfather before he died. Grandparents Day is special, and I support it. I congratulate the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones on moving this motion. I thank all those members who supported the motion and I thank all those grandchildren who bring us so much joy.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE [11.04 a.m.]: I acknowledge my children's grandparents. Both my wife's parents are enormous sources of support for my family and provide a great deal of love and care to my two daughters. My father-in-law was born in mainland China and grew up predominantly in Hong Kong, and my mother-in-law was born in Hong Kong. Together with my mother they bring their culture and love into the care of my children. As a parent it is a great pleasure to see the love and care that is bestowed on my children by their grandparents. Grandparents do not require a motion of this House to acknowledge the work that they do; they do it for love.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL [11.05 a.m.]: I am happy to speak in debate on the motion moved by the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones relating to Grandparents Day. Some great contributions have been made so far but the contributions of the Hon. Duncan Gay and Mr David Shoebridge highlighted the fact that Grandparents

Day is all about family. I am sure all members agree that Grandparents Day is an opportunity to recognise the increasingly diverse role of grandparents in modern society and the invaluable support they provide to us all. That is true in my family. I am lucky to have my two grandmothers, Meg Smyth and Judy Johnston. I lost my two grandfathers some time ago but they had a big influence on my life and on the lives of my brother and sister.

The family on my mother's side is very close. My grandparents played a big part in our lives while we were growing up. Sunday was always family lunch day. We would go to our Nan's and Pop's place and my grandfather would cook a massive roast lunch for us all. He always used to cook baked rice, which was my favourite dessert when I was a kid but I have never been able to cook it in the same way. My grandmother has tried to teach me but I cannot quite perfect the recipe; I wish that was a talent that I had. It might sound a bit trite but what I take away from that tradition of family dinners is that sometimes doing a little for someone goes a long way. When we know what is important to a person—whether it be my grandfather cooking me baked rice or something else—it is not hard to be a nice person and to show that person love and support. That is probably something all of us could remember on a daily basis. It was important for us as a family to connect and to catch up on the week's events. We still do that to this day, though we have moved from a Sunday lunch to Monday night dinners when we all get together and talk about what we have been doing and communicate with family members.

The issue of grandparents raising or helping to raise their grandchildren has been brought up a few times in debate. I was particularly interested to hear the contribution of the Hon. Melinda Pavey who talked about how many grandparents in regional areas assist in raising their grandchildren. That number is growing. It is important to note that some help is available to grandparents who raise their grandchildren. Grandparents Raising Grandchildren NSW, an initiative of the Council on the Ageing, helps grandparents, relatives and kinship carers by providing them with information on services, networks, tips and what sort of support is available. As was mentioned earlier, for some grandparents, becoming a parent for the second time around can be very different. In my family my mother and father look after my niece quite a bit. My mother often says that it seemed so much easier when she was a parent but, as she pointed out, she was about 30 years younger and that might have had something to do with it.

It is evident that all grandparents and those who have spoken in the Chamber today talk first and foremost about the love that they feel for their grandchildren and the satisfaction that comes from being able to be a part of their lives. Of course, there are not just those grandparents who raise their grandchildren on a permanent basis; there also are those who are probably classed as being on permanent babysitting duties. Again that is something I have experienced within my family. My father's mother, Judy, was instrumental in helping us when we were growing up. Both my parents ran their own small businesses and every afternoon after school Nan would be the one we came home to. She would be there to help us with our homework, get the tea ready and that sort of thing so that both my parents could be successful in their business lives. We have many vivid memories about those times coming home after school with Nan being there, and a lot of amusing stories. One amusing incident involved a bag of lollies from the corner shop, which I will not go into but I know that my sister and brother will find that amusing when they see it in *Hansard*; that will be our little private joke.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Oh, go on!

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: No, trust me.

The Hon. Niall Blair: Just say sorry.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I will not go there other than to say I am sure that Amber and Luke will enjoy reading that one day. Lots of grandparents take on this role and they all need to be recognised. As I said earlier, my parents, Marg and Steve, look after my sister and her husband's kids, Oscar and Scarlett, almost weekly, and my mother-in-law helps my sister-in-law, Liv, with her little boy, Tom, on a daily basis. I know that if and when the time comes for my husband and I to have kids we will have that unconditional family support as well. That means a lot. Congratulations to the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones on moving this motion. It is important for us all to take this opportunity to thank our families and to acknowledge the contribution that all grandparents make across this State.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA (Parliamentary Secretary) [11.11 a.m.]: I support this clearly excellent motion and congratulate the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones on moving it. At the outset I indicate that I will move an amendment that, in effect, is an amendment to the amendment moved by the Hon. Helen Westwood. I move:

That the amendment of Ms Westwood be amended by inserting after "Council on the Ageing New South Wales" the words "in partnership with the O'Farrell Government".

I note that the Hon. Helen Westwood stated her intention was for the motion to be non-political and bipartisan. If all members agree with my amendment in reality the O'Farrell Government, in partnership with the Council on the Ageing, created, moved for, supported and gave assistance to NSW Grandparents Day, which this year will be held on Sunday 28 October. That cannot be taken away from the O'Farrell Government. To use a lovely colloquialism, this is occurring on the watch of the O'Farrell Government; it did not occur on the watch of the previous Government.

I will now address the substantive motion. I am the grandchild of my father's parents, Iskander and Affie, and my mother's parents, Jaber and Beraska. Much of my culture, understandings and the person I am today have been greatly influenced by my four grandparents. Sadly for me, I never met my father's parents as they both died prior to my birth. I had the fortune of meeting my mother's parents when I was eight when we had an opportunity to travel to Lebanon. I spent some time with both of them and from that opportunity I understood the history of my grandparents. My father's father, Iskander, had travelled as a young man to the United States of America and spent many years in that country. During that time he saved enough money to return to Lebanon, marry and have a family, and he had enough funds to assist my father to come to Australia in the early 1950s. In many ways I have a connection, through my grandfather, with the United States of America.

My mother's father, Jaber, also had an incredibly interesting history: he was a member of the British Army while it occupied Jerusalem. As I have said on previous occasions, my mother was born in Jerusalem during that time. The interesting fact about my grandfather, Jaber, is that he was, as I understand it, the only non-British citizen to achieve the rank of senior sergeant in the British Army. He achieved that after being able to prove to the then colonel that he would break the butt of the rifle if he were to effect the salute at a presenting of arms while holding the rifle in the appropriate fashion—in other words, to hit the rifle as hard as possible with the palm of his hand. The colonel challenged him and said that if he broke the butt of the rifle he would be promoted from sergeant to sergeant major, but if he did not he would be demoted to corporal. Fortunately for my grandfather, he broke the butt of the rifle and was promoted.

I come from a family of five children. My father no longer is alive and my wife's father no longer is alive, but our mothers are. Taking my mother as an example, who is now known to everyone as Tetta, meaning "grandmother", she has five children, 19 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren, and they are still coming, that is, the great-grandchildren. I do not think anymore children are coming—at least I hope not! I am the father of six daughters. My youngest daughter said to me the other day that she and her sisters have promised to have six daughters each. On that basis I look forward one day to being the grandfather of 36 granddaughters. Today, if not for grandparents—and particularly if not for my mother—journeys travelled would have been difficult. On 28 October 2012 we have organised already a barbecue at my mother's home for the immediate family—all 35 of us—her children, her grandchildren and her great-grandchildren.

The Hon. Walt Secord: A quiet dinner.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: A very quiet barbecue on Grandparents Day. Growing up in a close-knit family with grandparents always assisted in understanding one's heritage, culture and what transpired in the past. I am a great believer that one cannot look to the future if one does not understand and appreciate what transpired in the past. We live in a State where over 40 per cent of its residents were either born overseas or have at least one parent who was born overseas. One can only imagine when looking at the statistics what the percentage would be if one grandparent was born overseas. As a result of the many diverse cultures and influences, we have a diverse and extraordinary State of citizens.

Recently I started reading a book called *Keeping up 'appearances'* authored by my very good friend Peter J El Khouri. The book talks about the history of citizens in New South Wales and the various contributions made by those citizens. One can truly appreciate the role of grandparents and great grandparents and the effect they have had on society. One example of two amazing grandparents is our Governor, Marie Bashir, and her husband, Sir Nicholas Shehadie, AC, OBE, KStJ. One can only imagine the influence that they have had on their family and grandchildren.

I take this opportunity to correct a statement that I made during a committee hearing that has appeared in some publications on a number of occasions. At that committee hearing I recall saying I did not consider that a unit comprising a mother, father and children was the only type of family unit. I recall using the word "only". Any search of Google will reveal that I am quoted as saying that a father, mother and children were not a normal family, which I find extraordinary. I assure members that I consider a father, mother and children to be a normal family just as I consider families comprising other units to be normal families. We need only to look at statistics

to realise how many children currently are being raised by one or two grandparents. Imagine telling those families they were not normal families. Irrespective of the make-up of many families, for example, single parents, two parents, two fathers or two mothers, they are all normal families. What matters is the love that is shown by parents in those families and, importantly, the love shown by grandparents. I congratulate the mover of this motion and I hope that members support my amendment to the amendment moved by the Hon. Helen Westwood.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE [11.22 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones in the following terms:

That this House notes:

- (a) that NSW Grandparents Day will be held on Sunday 28 October 2012 to promote the valuable contribution grandparents make to family life and the broader community,
- (b) commends the O'Farrell Government for introducing NSW Grandparents Day to recognise the importance of grandparents and seniors within our society, and
- (c) that on NSW Grandparents Day the winners of the NSW Grandparents of the Year awards will be announced and these awards recognise exceptional grandparents as carers, volunteers and mentors.

I am pleased to support this motion. I have a limited knowledge of the grandparents on my mother's side. My mother's parents lived in Wellington, New Zealand. My grandfather was Hugh Clark and his father came from Scotland. Hugh Clark died at the age of 80 from asthma, an illness common in the Clark-Nile family. My grandmother on my mother's side was Anne Nixon. She came to Sydney, remarried and had a nice house at Wentworthville on the highway. I remember staying with her. She was an old-fashioned and strict lady. When I was a teenager my mother must have been ill at some stage and I was sent to stay with my grandmother. Every day she tried to teach me manners, including how to use a knife and fork correctly. I hope that I learned something from her. She was strict in her adherence to those matters.

My father sadly believed he was an orphan and that his parents had died when he was a small baby. His father, Joseph Nile, lived at 6 Moon Street in Plymouth, England. Joseph Nile was a house painter. It was common in those days for house painters to die in their thirties from lead poisoning as the paint contained lead. He died at a relatively young age. The family believed that his wife, Harriet Nile, had died at about the same time but a few years ago Harriet's nephew came and saw me and said that she had moved from Plymouth to Liverpool and remarried, so the family story that she had died at a young age was not correct. My father had a difficult time growing up as an orphan on what was believed to be a grandmother's property.

It is important to recognise our grandparents. I have a vested interest in this motion because I am a grandparent of eight grandchildren who all keep me busy. Last Sunday I had a great Father's Day with my grandchildren and I will have a great day on 15 September with my family—children and grandchildren—in celebration of my birthday. I salute this motion in support of grandparents. It is important to acknowledge the generations of our families—grandparents, parents and grandchildren—an important part of Australian society.

The Hon. NIAL BLAIR [11.27 a.m.]: I commend the motion moved by the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones and support it. I am a firm believer that it takes a community to raise a child adequately, which is why this motion is important. These days the role of grandparents is vital as we have lost some of that community structure. I did not know my grandparents well as they lived on the other side of the world. I can only reflect on what my cousins experienced in small villages in Ireland where my grandparents had a hands-on role in raising them. It is good for everyone to respect and to reflect on the important work that is done by grandparents. Other members have referred to the roles that grandparents play.

Earlier this year, when my son came home from school, I was happy to learn that part of his school project required him to interview his grandparents and to report on their life experiences. I pay tribute to Barbara Holborow, the first grandparent ambassador and chair of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Ageing who sadly passed away this year. We remember Barbara for her years of work in protecting children and for her service to the community. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN [11.29 a.m.]: On behalf of the Christian Democratic Party I speak on the motion and commend the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones for moving it. New South Wales held its inaugural Grandparents Day on Sunday 30 October 2011 and this year it will be celebrated on Sunday 28 October. This year's Grandparents Day is being led by the Council on the Ageing—COTA New South Wales. Grandparents

Day is a special event celebrated in eight other countries around the world. It aims to recognise and thank grandparents for their care, support, love and guidance. Many older people are involved in caring for their grandchildren because they choose to, as a way of supporting their adult children or as the sole or major providers of care. In a 2008 report, "Better support for Grandparents: Issues and Recommendations", Families Australia states:

Grandparents play a vital and usually hidden role in supporting families and individuals. Their work provides a major underpinning of Australia's prosperity, but they need greater acknowledgement and support ...

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2006-07, there were 14,000 grandparent families in which the grandparents were guardians or main carers of co-resident children aged 0 to 17 years.

Almost half (47%) of grandparent families were lone grandparent families (compared with 21% of other families with children aged 0-17 years being lone parent families).

Eighty-nine percent of grandparent families had one or two children in their care, and 11% had three or more children.

The report further states:

Grandparents are Australia's largest providers of informal child care, and one of the main reasons parents use this and other forms of informal care is to participate in the workforce ...

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2002, almost one in five children aged 0-11 years (19% or 592,000) had been looked after by grandparents in the survey week ...

Most children who had been in grandparent care (98%) had been looked after at no cost to parents.

I call attention to Grandparents Raising Grandchildren NSW, which represents an alliance of grandparents who have full-time care of and responsibility for their grandchildren across New South Wales. The Hon. Helen Westwood and other members referred to grandparents who, in their twilight years, were expecting to have perhaps 10 to 30 years of ticking off their bucket list but suddenly find themselves back in an era they thought was over, that is, looking after children full time. Grandparents in the Shoalhaven area that I have met have told me that raising their grandchildren is having a traumatic effect on them. They really struggle. Indeed, some have even cashed in their superannuation to provide for their grandchildren's education or give them some quality of life. In some cases this is because the parents have been caught up in drugs, alcoholism or some other factor has prevented them from producing functioning citizens. Those grandparents carry a great burden and it broke my heart to see how many of them—

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell): Order! Debate is now interrupted to allow the mover her right of reply.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Can I finish with a poem?

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell): Unfortunately not.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I seek leave to allow the member with the call and other members to speak, each for no more than three minutes.

Leave granted.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN, by leave: This is an important issue and, sadly, I will not have time to place the rest of that important information on the record. With family breakdown and divorce many grandparents do not have the opportunity to continue their relationships with the people their children married. It is a shame that those grandparents do not have access to the children of the relationship. I will conclude with a poem from *Gifts by the Side of the Road* by John Wayne Schlatter:

I am a Grandparent

I remember the day they entered my life. They brought gifts of love, joy, confusion, challenge and humor.

I committed myself to guiding them along the paths to success and happiness.

Now they have evolved to maturity and welcomed their own children to the adventure we call life.

As for me, my roles have changed to adviser, comforter, baby sitter, referee and playmate.

I offer wisdom as I have been where they are going.

I am a caretaker, a keeper of the flame of family traditions.

I am a historian sharing memories of ancestors who had paved the way.

I can turn a refrigerator door into an "art gallery" and family chores into "fun filled activities".

I offer a lap that is always available, ears that listen carefully with understanding, a voice that encourages, eyes that see accomplishments and humor that lightens tense situations—

rather like the Hon. Duncan Gay did earlier—

Where others just see small bodies, I see gigantic potential that will lead to greatness.
 Where there are tears I offer hugs.
 Where there are "homemade" jokes I offer laughter.
 I love being invited to tea parties with stuffed animals.
 I stimulate dreams with bed time stories.
 My Life Is GRAND ...
 I am a GRANDPARENT.

I acknowledge my grandparents, who were absolutely awesome. I remember trying to run away from home. They put me behind a door naked as part of my punishment. I remember that day clearly: it is so real. It probably was not the way to handle discipline but I love my grandparents and, even though they have passed away, memories of them will live forever in my heart and the hearts of my children and hopefully my children's children.

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD [11.37 a.m.], by leave: How could I miss speaking on a motion dealing with Grandparents Day? I congratulate the Premier on establishing Grandparents Day, which will be held on Sunday 28 October 2012. The awards will be Grandparent of the Year carer award, Grandparent of the Year volunteer award and Grandparent of the Year mentor award. I encourage all members to nominate worthwhile grandparents for the awards. On a personal note, I never met Grandfather MacDonald, a builder, who was a veteran of the First World War and suffered severe wounds. He died some time after the war and was an inspiration to the family. Grandfather Eyears on my mother's side was also a builder and a veteran of the Second World War. He was a lovely bloke but I knew him for only a very brief time. Unfortunately, I missed out on having a grandparent on my father's side. My grandparents on my mother's side were wonderful ladies, Nana Eyears and Grandmother MacDonald. They were a wonderful part of our family.

I echo comments made by other members. The Hon. Paul Green mentioned that there are 14,000 grandparent families. I was not aware of that. We should acknowledge the financial care and support those grandparents give. The values that are passed down from our grandparents are enormously important. Parents these days are very busy in a very busy world and in some families both parents can be working long hours. The grandparents are obviously a very important support mechanism in those families. I commend the motion moved by the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA (Parliamentary Secretary) [11.40 a.m.], by leave: I commend the mover of the motion. I also commend the bipartisan spirit of members and the wonderful way in which all members have spoken about their parents and grandparents. Our multicultural community is one of the great things about Australian life. Community events give us an opportunity to connect with, for example, the Italian, Indian, Chinese, Greek and Croatian communities. Many of us have gone to Club Marconi for Nonni Day. All of that makes this great country, this great State, such a wonderful place to live, because we value our families.

Grandparents are the cement of our society. I look at my own family—my two brothers Aldo and Frank and their wives Caroline and Ann and all the grandchildren. I have nieces, great-nieces and nephews and there is always a menagerie of children and animals. I do not have any children but I have a miniature schnauzer with very dependent needs who is injected twice daily by Grandma Ann Ficarra. She keeps the family together.

I congratulate the Council on the Ageing. Today we all received correspondence in our offices about the New South Wales Grandparent of the Year awards. I congratulate the council on that initiative and on coming up with all the different categories of awards. The Council on the Ageing has been in existence since 1956. It does a wonderful job in advocating for seniors and for seniors' rights. We need to assist people as they get older in dealing with large and complex government agencies. We need good policy development and good advocacy, and certainly the Council on the Ageing has worked with all Premiers of the day.

I am pleased to see the amendment moved by the Hon. John Ajaka, which I hope the Opposition will support. I understand that the Opposition has also acknowledged the work of the Council on the Ageing. The Council on the Ageing is not politicised; it works for the good of all Australian senior citizens. I also acknowledge that we have ambassadors for New South Wales Grandparents Day—John and Colleen Fahey, the former Premier and his wife; Joe Commisso, who is a good friend of mine; Lucy Porter; Christine and Paul Ng; and Jan Backhouse. All of them have wonderful stories on the Grandparents Day website.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE (Parliamentary Secretary) [11.43 a.m.], by leave: I speak very briefly in support of this worthy motion. It has been said this morning that grandparents do not need a motion of Parliament

because they do what they do because they want to. I understand what was meant by that, but it is good to applaud what grandparents do and to recognise them for it and it is good to do that formally by a motion in the Parliament of the people of New South Wales. I believe in family and in the extended family, and grandparents are the heart and soul of what families are all about: they are pivotal to the wellbeing of our children.

In this modern day and age a special burden falls on the shoulders of grandparents because so many parents are working. It falls often on grandparents to be there for the children and, on many occasions, to raise the children. That is a big burden on those who are not getting any younger, but it is a burden that they willingly undertake in their later years. They should be admired, exalted and honoured for what they do. They give a special love to our children. They create a special relationship with our children that only they can form. It gives me very great pleasure to give my wholehearted support to this motion.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO [11.44 a.m.], by leave: I support the concept of having a special day to celebrate grandparents. I note that it was a commitment of the Keneally Labor Government and that after the change of government in March 2011 it was carried on by the O'Farrell Government because it recognised that it was a good idea to recognise grandparents. I concur with the Hon. Paul Green's comments about the dreadful loss it is to grandparents when they do not have contact with their grandchildren due to a marriage breakdown, particularly when the custodial parent decides to move interstate. It means that the grandparents are completely separated from the children and the children do not get the opportunity to develop an understanding of their family history and culture. That should be a great regret for us all.

Like the Hon. Melinda Pavey, my time in this Parliament and as a working mother would have been very difficult were it not for the support of my parents, who fulfilled their role as grandparents by doing things such as picking up my children from before- and after-school care and, when the children were younger, picking them up from child care as well. Other speakers in this debate have acknowledged the important role that grandparents play in providing assistance to working parents, because even though we have a very good network of child care services available, given the change in work habits where people do not work nine to five anymore, parents need somebody on hand to pick up their children when they are held back late at work. It is a very valuable role that grandparents fulfil and it is an unpaid role. That should be acknowledged when we look at the mix of care services that parents use, because often that range of care services would not be viable if it were not for the contribution made by grandparents. That is why it is important to have a day to celebrate grandparents.

I was interested to note that the Hon. Marie Ficarra said that John and Colleen Fahey are ambassadors for Grandparents Day. We all know the unfortunate story of the Fahey family—their daughter died and they have had to take over the primary care of their granddaughter. That sort of situation is happening more frequently and we should recognise that grandparents who are the primary caregivers probably need a wider range of supports than are currently available. I refer to support such as respite care, because as people get older they do not necessarily have the time and resources needed or other family members who can step in to help them. We should recognise the role of grandparents in the primary care role and investigate ways in which we can provide greater support for them. We should all be interested in nominating good grandparents for the awards on Grandparents Day because we all know people who have gone that extra mile to make sure that their role as grandparents has been very productive and rewarding.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM [11.47 a.m.], by leave: I support the motion. I had four grandparents. I knew two of them quite well but two of them I did not know at all. The role of grandparents is very important. I probably would not be able to do this job without the support of my children's grandparents, Lee and Sheila Bradbury, whom I mentioned in my inaugural speech. Probably one of the most important people in my life was my grandmother Pip Worth, who taught me a love of words and politics. On reflecting on the motion and thinking about what my grandmother would have had me say here, she probably would have liked me to make the case that we should all respect grandparents and that we should all have the opportunity to become grandparents. We have spent three hours in this House today discussing this motion, yet we have not addressed what I believe, and I think my grandmother would have believed, to be more important matters.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Point of order: The member is clearly canvassing a previous ruling of the House. I ask you to bring him back to the substance of the motion.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell): Order! I uphold the point of order. The House has resolved to debate the motion. The member should confine his remarks to the motion.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: I am speaking to this motion. It concerns the importance of grandparents and how important it is that all of us have the opportunity to become grandparents. If we fail to address climate change—the greatest moral challenge of our time—we will deny our children and our children's children the opportunity to become grandparents. To illustrate the impact climate change will have on future generations I will read some global highlights from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. My grandmother would want these facts read onto the record, and the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps will be interested in the following global highlights from July:

The Northern Hemisphere land surface temperature for July 2012 was the all-time warmest July on record, at 1.19°C ... above average.

The globally-averaged land surface temperature for July 2012 was the third warmest July on record ...

My grandmother would want that to be a matter of debate in this House. She would want members to focus on the big issues rather— *[Time expired.]*

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX (Parliamentary Secretary) [11.50 a.m.], by leave: Grandparents Day will be held on Sunday October 28 and it is wonderful to have a day on which to celebrate parents. I note that awards will be presented to grandparents on the day. Frankly, I think every grandparent deserves an award so I will reward mine with a call and a visit. While all of my grandparents have long since passed away, for me Grandparents Day will primarily be a time to reflect on the role that my wife's parents and my father play in the day-to-day lives of our children. They do a magnificent job as grandparents. Every school holidays one of my sons disappears, Lachlan, off to Harden to spend a week or so with his grandparents, which is a delight for him and them. My other children, Clare, Samuel and Rachel, also delight in the company of their grandparents. My father has written a number of books that he has dedicated to my children. They even appear as characters in some of them. It is wonderful that their grandparents have the opportunity to be a part of their lives, and I hope it continues for long time yet. It is my great pleasure to support the motion. I trust that all members will have a wonderful Grandparents Day.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES [11.52 a.m.], in reply: First, I acknowledge the contributions of the members who are grandparents who have spoken during debate on the motion: the Hon. Helen Westwood, the Hon. Rick Colless, the Hon. Duncan Gay and Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile. The Hon. Helen Westwood and Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile have a number of grandchildren and we saw the joy on their faces as they told some of their stories. I also thank the Hon. Walt Secord, the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps, Mr David Shoebridge, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, the Hon. John Ajaka, the Hon. Niall Blair, the Hon. Paul Green, the Hon. Scot MacDonald, the Hon. Marie Ficarra, the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox, the Hon. David Clarke and the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham for their contributions.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: What about me?

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I also thank the Hon. Amanda Fazio for her contribution. I will briefly comment on the amendments that have been put forward. I acknowledge the contribution that the Council on the Ageing has made in partnership with the Government. The motion acknowledges that Grandparents Day was introduced by the O'Farrell Government and that it is in partnership with the Council on the Ageing. The announcement was part of the Coalition's election commitment prior to the 2000 election campaign. We followed through on that commitment by introducing Grandparents Day last year and we have committed \$1 million over the next four years to ensure that it continues. It is important to acknowledge and honour the work and contribution of grandparents in New South Wales, across Australia and around the globe by having a special day to allow everyone to thank their grandparents for what they do to keep the family unit going and to assist wherever needed. Again I thank all the members who contributed. I commend the motion to the House.

Question—That the amendment of the Hon. John Ajaka to the amendment of the Hon. Helen Westwood be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment of the Hon. John Ajaka to the amendment of the Hon. Helen Westwood agreed to.

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

Amendment of the Hon. Helen Westwood as amended agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business**

Dr JOHN KAYE [11.56 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. 831 outside the Order of Precedence relating to Mullumbimby hospital be called on forthwith.

This motion relates to the proposal by the Northern New South Wales Local Health District to withdraw from Mullumbimby hospital the on-call overnight emergency doctors and replace them with a teleconferencing arrangement at Tweed Hospital. That is to say, the only doctor available to a patient who presents to the emergency department at Mullumbimby hospital under this proposal will be consulted via a teleconference facility to Tweed Hospital. Under this proposal patients will not receive the appropriate level of health care. It will deny the residents of Mullumbimby and the surrounding areas their right to be seen by a doctor when they have a heart attack, accident or other medical emergency during the night. Their only contact with a doctor will be via a video conference over the internet to Tweed Hospital. Many doctors have reported that this will deny them their right to look after their patients.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Point of order: The motion before the House is urgency. The rules for urgency are quite stringent. The member should direct himself solely to the question of urgency rather than to the substance of the motion.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell): Order! I uphold the point of order.

Dr JOHN KAYE: This matter is far more urgent than Grandparents Day because people will die if the Northern New South Wales Local Health District goes ahead with its plan. This matter is urgent for the population of Mullumbimby, the surrounding areas, the North Coast and the State. If this proposal goes ahead in Mullumbimby it will become the benchmark for budget cutting in regional hospitals across New South Wales. This matter ought to be extremely urgent for the National Party given that the local member and Cabinet Minister, Mr Don Page, told a—

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Point of order: I repeat that this is a debate on urgency, not on the substance of the motion. The rules are clear. It has to be in relation to urgency and, on the basis of rulings of previous Presidents, specifically why this is more urgent than any other matter on the notice paper. That is the sum total of the debate.

Dr JOHN KAYE: To the point of order: I was addressing the relative urgency of this motion compared to the Grandparents Day motion.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: To the point of order: In that case, Dr John Kaye is cavilling with a previous ruling.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell): Order! I uphold the point of order. Dr John Kaye should confine his remarks as to why his motion is urgent. I am listening carefully. Dr John Kaye should continue to address the issue of urgency.

Dr JOHN KAYE: This matter is urgent. In relation to the point of urgency, I refer to comments made by the Ballina State member of Parliament and The Nationals Minister, Mr Don Page, who told a meeting of 350 community members in Mullumbimby:

I am satisfied there are serious outstanding concerns.

The Hon. Melinda Pavey: Point of order: Clearly, the member is flouting your ruling by addressing the substance of the motion, not why the motion deserves to be debated urgently. I ask you to direct him to confine his remarks to urgency.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell): Order! Dr John Kaye should address the issue of why his motion should be debated ahead of other motions listed on the *Notice Paper*. He should not address the substantive debate.

Dr JOHN KAYE: Thank you for your ruling, Madam Deputy-President. This motion is more urgent than DonateLife Week. As The Nationals member for Ballina, Mr Don Page, stated:

I am satisfied there are serious outstanding concerns. Therefore at this stage I can't support the proposed telehealth trial.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Point of order: My point of order is the same as those I have taken previously. At this stage, debate is confined purely to the urgency of the motion, not the substantive motion that will be debated if the House agrees to urgency.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell): Order! I uphold the point of order. Dr John Kaye should refrain from addressing his remarks to the substantive motion and should address the issue of urgency.

Dr JOHN KAYE: In relation to the issue of urgency, if the telehealth trial goes ahead, the nearest hospitals will be either Tweed Heads, which is 52 kilometres away, or Lismore, which is 50 kilometres away. This matter is urgent because people will die. That is not just my opinion but the opinion of nurses and doctors who are delivering emergency care on the North Coast. If the telehealth trial goes ahead, it will become the benchmark for all of New South Wales, and we will witness the continued retraction of doctors. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. WALT SECORD [12.01 p.m.]: Labor supports this issue and supports the substantive motion being debated urgently. I support the motion as Labor's duty member of the Legislative Council for Tweed and as a person with a longstanding interest in police, environment and health matters in that area. This motion is urgent because the families of Mullumbimby have lost faith in the O'Farrell Government's management of their local hospital. This matter is urgent because North Coast families vehemently oppose the Government's decision to replace an overnight emergency department doctor with a video camera that was installed in June. This matter is urgent because it comes on the very morning when New South Wales hospitals are reporting a spike in emergency department admissions. This morning the New South Wales Minister for Health, Mrs Jillian Skinner, admitted on ABC Radio that there has been a "huge increase in demand in the last quarter—the March to June quarter". Mrs Skinner also admitted that they are very sick patients arriving at emergency departments, such as those with heart attacks.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Point of order—

The Hon. WALT SECORD: This is important.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: The Hon. Walt Secord should be reminded that he should address his remarks to establishing why the motion should be debated urgently, not to the substantive motion.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: This is what the Minister said this morning, so it is urgent.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell): Order! I uphold the point of order. I remind all members that their remarks should be directed towards establishing why the motion should be debated urgently, not the substantive motion.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: That said, this matter is very urgent. What the Minister said is all the more reason to retain the practice of a doctor attending overnight at the Mullumbimby hospital's emergency department. This matter is urgent because in recent weeks there has been a wave of urgent community meetings organised by concerned parents, retirees and local residents. This matter is urgent because the community has come together as one to fight this egregious decision. Despite this outcry, despite the community's anguish and despite this self-evidently retrograde step in the care of North Coast communities, there is still one person who seems to think it is okay. That is the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, who refuses to listen. She will not listen to the communities of the North Coast. She will not listen to doctors and nurses on the North Coast. She is listening only to North Coast bureaucrats.

This matter is urgent because Mrs Skinner wants to expand telehealth to other rural, regional and coastal hospitals. There is already one in Wauchope. Mullumbimby is the second hospital. This is urgent because communities across the State could have doctors being replaced by video cameras. On 26 July I visited the hospital with the Federal member of the House of Representatives for Richmond, Mrs Justine Elliot. We were given a tour of the emergency department by the hardworking doctors and nurses. This matter is urgent.

The Hon. Scot MacDonald: Point of order: Are we debating the substantive motion or urgency?

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Sarah Mitchell): Order! I remind the Hon. Walt Secord to confine his remarks to establishing why the motion is urgent.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: For the record, this matter is urgent because our visit was against the wishes of senior bureaucrats at Lismore hospital's Crawford House. The local area health service did everything it could to prevent us from getting into that hospital, but eventually Justine Elliot and I prevailed. The medical staff are so worried that patient welfare is being placed in jeopardy that they are willing to put their own jobs at risk.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Point of order: The motion before the House relates to urgency, not to the substantive motion. Past Presidents have ruled that debate should deal solely with why this motion is more urgent than any other motion of which notice has been given.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I uphold the point of order. I remind the Hon. Walt Secord that his remarks should relate to establishing why the motion should be debated urgently, not the substantive motion.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: This matter is urgent because medical staff are so worried about patients welfare in Mullumbimby hospital that they are willing to jeopardise their own jobs. They are willing to stand up to the bureaucrats. That shows how urgent this matter is. For the benefit of the House I will detail a recent example of an urgent matter at the hospital. In recent weeks there have been disturbing cases.

The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox: Point of order: Madam Deputy-President, the Hon. Walt Secord is flouting your ruling. Use of the word "urgent" in his emotive remarks does not establish that the motion is more urgent than other motions listed on the *Notice Paper* of which notice has been given.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I uphold the point of order. I remind the Hon. Walt Secord to relate his remarks to establishing why the motion should be debated urgently, not to the substantive motion.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: This matter is urgent. Take the example of a 44-year-old man who needed specialist treatment. He visited the Mullumbimby hospital in the middle of the night.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Point of order: It is out of order during a debate on why a motion should be debated urgently ahead of other motions of which notice has been given to cite examples that would be more appropriately referred to during debate on the substantive motion, if there is one.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I uphold the point of order. I remind the Hon. Walt Secord to relate his remarks directly to establishing why the motion should be debated urgently, not to the substantive motion.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: This matter is urgent because the local area health service and its chief executive officer, Mr Chris Crawford, are playing with the data. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO [12.06 p.m.]: My remarks will address the issue of why the motion that is sought to be debated urgently is more important than other motions listed on the *Notice Paper*. As other members who preceded me in this debate have stated, the provision of telehealth in the Mullumbimby hospital will place lives at risk. The motion should be debated urgently because if the change is implemented, it will mean that the health and welfare of Mullumbimby residents, who rely on the hospital's after-hours medical service, will be left in the lurch. This matter should be debated urgently because that form of overnight medical care would be deemed unacceptable in Sydney, so why should it be acceptable in Mullumbimby?

Members should realise that the population of Mullumbimby includes a large number of elderly people who are prone to experience medical emergencies at any hour of the day. They cannot be expected to present to a video camera and explain to a doctor in Tweed Heads what is wrong with them. This is a ridiculous form of medical treatment. Debate on this motion is urgent because we must put a stop to this practice in Mullumbimby and in other places throughout New South Wales. Debate on this motion is urgent because penny-pinching in the health system unacceptably puts lives at risk. The people in Mullumbimby deserve to continue to have a medical service at the hospital.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Point of order: My point of order relates to urgency. The Hon. Amanda Fazio should relate her remarks to establishing why the motion is more urgent than any other motion listed on the *Notice Paper*, not to debate on the substantive motion, which may or may not eventuate after debate on urgency concludes.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I do not uphold the point of order. However, I remind the Hon. Amanda Fazio to confine her remarks to establishing why the substantive motion should be debated urgently.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: It is not just me who believes this matter is urgent. It is not just the residents of Mullumbimby who believe this matter is urgent. The local elected representatives and health professionals in the North Coast area believe this is a matter of urgency. If we decline to debate this matter today, the members who vote against urgency should be prepared to accept the responsibility when the inevitable deaths occur in Mullumbimby hospital because a doctor in Tweed Heads is trying to diagnose and handle an emergency situation by video link.

It is a completely unacceptable form of health care. It is something that the people of Mullumbimby do not deserve. It is something that we as a Chamber need to say is unacceptable. The only way we can do that is by supporting the urgency motion and having a full debate on the motion. We should support the urgency motion so we can discuss whether we believe it is an appropriate form of health care for emergency presentations at a hospital to be hooked up by video link to another hospital—in this case, Tweed Heads Hospital—to see whether it can, through some form of osmosis, work out what is wrong with a critically ill patient. We have had debates in this Chamber about the upgrade of the Pacific Highway.

The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox: Point of order: The member is straying into the substantive issue rather than dealing with why this motion is more urgent than other motions on the *Notice Paper*. The member knows that very well; she is an experienced member.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I have the gist of the member's point of order. I uphold the point of order. I remind the Hon. Amanda Fazio that she must speak to why this motion is more urgent than other motions on the *Notice Paper*.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: How is a doctor in Tweed Heads supposed to deal with an emergency situation when there is a severe car accident in the area? How would such a doctor assess and triage which patients should be dealt with? If there is some form of accident in Mullumbimby there will be a queue of people waiting to get on the video link to find out whether they can be saved. This is not acceptable. We cannot have this form of remote area medicine in an area with a high population density such as Mullumbimby.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Point of order: Opposition members have repeatedly and knowingly flouted the rulings of the Chair. They should be speaking to urgency, not to the substantive matter.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I have the gist of the member's point of order. The member's time for speaking has expired.

Dr John Kaye: To the point of order—

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! The member's time for speaking has expired.

Dr John Kaye: But we still need a ruling.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I have upheld the point of order.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM [12.11 p.m.]: I speak on this matter not only as a concerned member of the House but also—for the next couple of days—the mayor of Byron shire. Mullumbimby hospital is in the Byron shire. I advise the House that this matter is urgent, and not only for the community of Byron shire. I was informed by nurses who work at Tweed Heads Hospital that they are concerned. They are worried that the Government has not properly considered whether they have the capability to undertake this additional work—and they have not been consulted in this regard. That is of major concern for them because Tweed Heads

Hospital is very busy. They feel that there has not been proper consultation. This matter is urgent for my community. People are very stressed about what is going on. They are stressed about not only the idea that they will lose an important service but also the manner in which a service will be provided to them.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Point of order: Once again I raise the fact that this is a debate on urgency. The member should confine herself purely to why this is more urgent than any other matter on the *Notice Paper*.

Mr David Shoebridge: To the point of order: If members cannot demonstrate the urgency of the matter by talking about the facts on the ground, which relate to the trial that will be starting in Mullumbimby in a matter of weeks, it makes a mockery of the situation. One can only illustrate one's argument about urgency by talking about the facts on the ground in Mullumbimby if this trial goes ahead. That is exactly what the member is doing.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: To the point of order: The member was talking about opinions of people elsewhere, which may well be used in the substantive debate but which do not relate to the urgency motion.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I uphold the point of order. I remind the Hon. Jan Barham to address her remarks as to why the matter is urgent, rather than to the substantive motion.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: I will talk about urgency, the urgency being that the people in my community who are the practitioners and the experts in the hospital will be saddled with the responsibility of dealing not only with their own crisis situations but also with the crises that might occur to those who present to Mullumbimby hospital. That point of urgency is being made. Who cares about the community? We have a group of people who care about the future. It seems like the Government does not care. It was stated that the former Labor Government knew nothing about the regions and that the Coalition Government would understand the regions, what it meant to be disadvantaged with transport, lack of services and the distances people have to travel. This Coalition Government is taking away services from the regions.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Point of order: Once again I take the point of order that this is a debate in relation to urgency, not a debate in relation to the substance of the motion or a broader debate about services to regional New South Wales. The matter before us is the urgency of this motion over other motions on the *Notice Paper*.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I uphold the point of order. At this stage of the proceedings, the member cannot talk about specific government services.

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: I will make a point about a motion that was deemed urgent by this House: Grandparents Day. With the trial due to begin at the same time as Grandparents Day, we will be taking services away from people—a lot of them grandparents, as we have a distinctly ageing community in the Mullumbimby area and on the North Coast—and those people will be stressed by not knowing whether they can go to their hospital and whether services will be available.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Point of order: Once again my point of order relates to urgency. The matter under discussion is the urgency of this motion, not the substantive question.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I uphold the point of order.

The Hon. Steve Whan: To the point of order—

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I have ruled on the point of order. The member's time for speaking has expired.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE [12.16 p.m.]: I support this urgency motion. The duty member of the Legislative Council for Tweed is a hardworking member and he knows best about the local issues. This matter is urgent because the families of Mullumbimby have lost faith in the O'Farrell Government's management of the local hospital. This matter is urgent because North Coast families vehemently oppose the Government's decision to replace the overnight emergency department doctor with a video camera. This matter is urgent because it comes on the very morning that New South Wales hospitals are reporting a spike in emergency department admissions. This morning the Minister for Health, Ms Jillian Skinner, admitted on ABC

Radio that there has been a huge "increase in demand in the last quarter, the March to June quarter". The Minister admitted that very sick patients are arriving at emergency departments suffering from heart attacks and they need to be seen within 10 minutes. She said there was a 25 per cent increase in "serious complaints presenting to emergency departments".

The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox: Point of order: The member is not addressing the urgency of this motion. The member is quite clearly canvassing all sorts of issues that are not dealt with by this urgency motion. He is talking about what the Minister for Health said this morning. He should be talking about Mullumbimby hospital and why this motion is more important and more urgent than other motions on the *Notice Paper*.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I do not uphold the point of order. However, I remind the member to address why this motion is more urgent than other motions on the *Notice Paper*.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: This matter is more urgent than other matters on the *Notice Paper*. The Minister said that patients with serious complaints were presenting at emergency departments. That is why it is urgent and important for us to deal with this issue. Some 34,000 more people are presenting at emergency departments, which is all the more reason to keep the overnight doctors in Mullumbimby hospital's emergency department. This matter is urgent because in recent weeks a wave of urgent community meetings have been organised by concerned parents, retirees and local residents. The community has come together as one to fight this egregious decision. Despite this outcry, despite this community angst and despite the self-evident retrograde step in the care of North Coast communities, one person still seems to think it is all okay: Minister Jillian Skinner, who has refused to listen.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Point of order: Once again I raise the issue of urgency. The member is clearly speaking to the substantive debate rather than speaking to the need for urgency.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I uphold the point of order. The member should not refer to individuals; he should speak to the urgency of the motion.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: This matter is urgent because communities across our State could find their doctors being replaced by video cameras, should Minister Skinner get her wish. The medical staff—the doctors and nurses—were so worried about patient welfare in Mullumbimby that they were willing to put their own jobs at risk and put the interests of their patients first. That is why it is urgent that this House deal with this motion now. Hardworking nurses were worried that they would not be able to handle a complex medical matter without the expertise of a doctor by their side. That is another reason for the urgency of this issue and why this House must deal with it today. As every day passes, more urgent cases are turning up at the emergency department. We understand and recognise those concerns. The Mullumbimby community wants answers and needs them now. That is why this matter is urgent and must be dealt with today.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY (Parliamentary Secretary) [12.21 p.m.]: This matter is not urgent and the Government will not support the motion to suspend standing and sessional orders. This issue has been inflamed by luddites, hypocrites and the biggest spin doctor in the history of New South Wales.

Dr John Kaye: Point of order: I take objection to being called the biggest spin doctor in the history of New South Wales. I ask the member to retract that statement.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: To the point of order: The Hon. Melinda Pavey was not referring, as I understood it, to anyone in this Chamber in particular or in general. She did not identify any particular member and as such she may well be talking about members—

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I do not uphold the point of order. Mainly because of the noise coming from Opposition members, I could not hear the comments made by the member with the call.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: The local health district on the North Coast is working to improve services at Mullumbimby hospital, which is experiencing difficulty—

The Hon. Steve Whan: Point of order: On numerous occasions, Madam Deputy-President, you have asked Opposition members and The Greens members to refer only to the reason this issue is urgent. I suggest

that the Parliamentary Secretary is flouting your ruling. She is now delving into the issue, which members on this side of the House would like the opportunity to properly debate in this place so that the people of Mullumbimby can see that this Parliament cares about their future and not just about the spin this Government seems to want to put forward.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I do not uphold the point of order. A number of members were given leniency in relation to their comments. I again remind members that they must speak to the urgency motion, not the substantive motion.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: The fact is that this type of medicine was introduced by the previous administration in 2002, yet an urgent motion has not come before this House—

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: Point of order: My point of order is that the Parliamentary Secretary is not dealing with the matter of urgency; she is in fact dealing with the substantive matter—that is, the history of this provision. That is simply not debating urgency. The member should be saying why other matters on the *Notice Paper* are more urgent. The Parliamentary Secretary has not even broached that issue. I ask that the Parliamentary Secretary be brought back to the matter of urgency and to stop debating the substantive motion.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I uphold the point of order. I remind the Parliamentary Secretary to confine her remarks to the urgency of the motion.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Far more urgent is the donor registration and the Transplant Games announcements in this Parliament today. The people in the gallery are here to listen to the finalisation of my motion regarding DonateLife Week, an incredibly more important motion than the one being driven by luddites, hypocrites and spin doctors.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: Point of order: My point of order is that the member is making imputations against other members in this place. She is being abusive towards other members. I ask that she be reminded to not make imputations about members unless by way of substantive motion.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The member was not referring to an individual.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: The only urgency in this motion is between Labor and The Greens as to who gets out the first media release to the North Coast to frighten and scare the community. This issue was elevated by the Hon. Walt Secord and now Dr John Kaye has jumped on top of it and caused great concern.

The Hon. Walt Secord: Point of order: The member is misleading the House. The only person misleading the community is Chris Crawford.

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

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: That is an outrageous attack on a qualified and professional public servant. The Hon. Walt Secord should be ashamed of himself, considering it was his administration that brought this type of arrangement into place. [*Time expired.*]

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 18

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

Noes, 21

Mr Ajaka
Mr Blair
Mr Borsak
Mr Brown
Mr Clarke
Ms Cusack
Ms Ficarra
Mr Gallacher

Miss Gardiner
Mr Gay
Mr Green
Mr Khan
Mr MacDonald
Mrs Maclaren-Jones
Mr Mason-Cox
Mrs Mitchell

Reverend Nile
Mrs Pavey
Mr Pearce

Tellers,
Mr Colless
Dr Phelps

Pair

Mr Foley

Mr Lynn

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business**

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE [12.34 p.m.]: I move:

That Private Members' Business item No. 841 outside the Order of Precedence relating to the Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment (Costs) Bill 2012 be called on forthwith.

This matter is urgent because at the moment the cost regime relating to workers compensation is at a significant crossroad, engendering a huge amount of uncertainty and great concern for thousands of injured workers.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE (Minister for Finance and Services, and Minister for the Illawarra) [12.35 p.m.]: This matter is not urgent. The legislation in question has not been proclaimed and is not urgent. The Government has announced a transition process to implement the workers compensation reforms.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 18

Ms Barham
Mr Buckingham
Ms Cotsis
Mr Donnelly
Ms Faehrmann
Dr Kaye
Mr Moselmane

Mr Primrose
Mr Roozendaal
Mr Searle
Mr Secord
Ms Sharpe
Mr Shoebridge
Mr Veitch

Ms Westwood
Mr Whan

Tellers,
Ms Fazio
Ms Voltz

Noes, 21

Mr Ajaka
Mr Blair
Mr Borsak
Mr Brown
Mr Clarke
Ms Cusack
Ms Ficarra
Mr Gallacher

Miss Gardiner
Mr Gay
Mr Green
Mr Khan
Mr MacDonald
Mrs Maclaren-Jones
Mr Mason-Cox
Mrs Mitchell

Reverend Nile
Mrs Pavey
Mr Pearce

Tellers,
Mr Colless
Dr Phelps

Pair

Mr Foley

Mr Lynn

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business**

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE [12.44 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that Private Members' Business item No. 884 outside the Order of Precedence relating to local government pecuniary interest laws be called on forthwith.

This motion is urgent because this coming Saturday there will be an election in 150 councils across New South Wales where, for the first time ever, the candidates being elected will be able to enrich themselves by voting on their own planning proposals to up-zone their own land, to remove any parking restrictions on commercial properties they own in the centre of their town and fatten their personal finances by potentially millions of dollars because earlier this year the O'Farrell Government moved to remove the restrictions on councillors voting for pecuniary interest.

Local government has gone through decades of dealing with the inappropriate power of property developers and the ugly influence of money in local government, particularly local government planning decisions. Yet over the past decade, after the fiascos in Wollongong, after countless corruption scandals around New South Wales because of the corrupting influence of decisions at local government level being attached to interest and property deals, the local government sector tried to move on. The local government sector tried to make sure it had protections in place so that councillors would not vote when they had a direct pecuniary interest. The Local Government Act provided that councillors could not vote to enrich themselves and fatten their own wallets. What did the Government do? The Government decided to get rid of those restrictions and for the first time ever allow local councillors to sit in the chamber and vote when they had a direct pecuniary interest. A local councillor in a regional town who might own acres of property on the outskirts of town—

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! Members will either take their seats or leave the Chamber.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Previously any councillor who owned acres of property on the outskirts of town and wanted to up-zone from a rural zoning to a residential zoning would have had to corrupt a local councillor; would have had to hand over a brown paper bag to try to get the right decision. That is too complicated for the O'Farrell Government. This Government wants to enable councillors to do it themselves. The crop of councillors being elected on Saturday will be the first crop in decades that are able to vote on their own rezoning, both to rezone their own land and to increase the floor space ratio on commercial properties that they own in the centre of town. Some candidates for the upcoming local government election have substantial and extraordinarily extensive property holdings. I give the example of the lead mayoral candidate in Newcastle, who is a renowned property developer with a large number of extremely valuable properties, including on Hunter Street in the centre of Newcastle.

The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox: Point of order: Mr David Shoebridge is aware that this matter has been canvassed a number of times. He is now debating the substantive motion and is not informing the House why his motion is urgent. He should be brought back to the leave of the motion.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I uphold the point of order. Mr David Shoebridge will speak to why the matter is urgent.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: This matter is urgent because on Saturday, two days from now, we will see this candidate for the local council elections in Newcastle ask the people of Newcastle to support his candidacy. This Government knows full well that once he is elected he will be able to vote to up-zone his own properties. He will be able to vote to enrich himself because of the malign changes made by the O'Farrell Government to the Local Government Act. What State government in its right mind would be allowing local councillors to vote directly, contrary to the public interest, because they get a private profit out of the decisions that they make?

What government in its right mind would be encouraging the carpetbaggers, the property developers, the real estate agents to be running for election in this coming Saturday's election for local government? The

O'Farrell Government has allowed them for the first time ever to vote to enrich themselves once they are elected to council. All residents across New South Wales should be greatly concerned about the changes that this Government has made to the Local Government Act and all residents across New South Wales should be looking closely at those candidates who are putting up their hands for election to see whether they have a secret agenda. Look at their property holdings. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS [12.49 p.m.]: The Labor Party supports the motion moved by Mr David Shoebridge. This motion is urgent because in less than 48 hours millions of residents and ratepayers of New South Wales will vote on Saturday for their local community champions—the potential civic leaders of their local communities. We must ensure that the public are informed and are aware that what this Government did months ago by lifting the pecuniary interest declaration will allow endemic corruption in the local government sector when it has been undergoing reform over the past 10, 15 or 20 years to ensure that regulations and laws are put in place to safeguard councillors and the community.

The Labor Party put forward an amendment, which was supported by The Greens but not by the Government, to retain the status quo. That amendment meant that any councillor sitting in deliberations for a local environmental plan would have been safeguarded. If a councillor walked out the room and a quorum was not present he or she would need to seek special dispensation. The Minister, who seeks advice from the department, would be responsible for ensuring that he or she had the necessary information to grant a councillor dispensation. The O'Farrell Government has abrogated its responsibility and given it to councillors who will now have to fill out a bit of paperwork that will be recorded in the minutes. That is a dangerous precedent.

We must debate this urgent motion. I have visited shopping centres and doorknocked in my community to tell people about this issue. When this Government was elected it said that it was all about transparency, accountability and openness. What did it do—

The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox: Point of order: I know that the Hon. Sophie Cotsis is passionate about these issues but it is a question of whether this motion is more urgent than other motions that are on the *Notice Paper*. The member should not be debating substantive issues at this time.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones): Order! I uphold the point of order.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: This motion is urgent. I urge all members to support it so that it can be debated as soon as possible.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM [12.52 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by Mr David Shoebridge. It is crucial for us to debate this motion today and to send a strong message to communities in New South Wales that these laws are inappropriate and that they will be a corrupting influence on council. If these laws were to operate in the future my council has rezoning developments that would benefit councillors who would be able to participate in that vote to the tune of tens of millions of dollars, which is outrageous. This would be a massive rort on the people of New South Wales. This House must send a message to the people of New South Wales and to those candidates that the O'Farrell Government's changes to the Local Government Act are completely inappropriate. This motion should be debated urgently. It is essential for us to send this message before the local government elections on Saturday.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX (Parliamentary Secretary) [12.54 p.m.]: The Government does not support urgency. The changes referred to in the motion of Mr David Shoebridge were made by amendments to the Local Government Act 1993 which were passed by both Houses of this Parliament earlier this year after extensive debate. That legislation has now been enacted. This matter has already been dealt with by this House and does not require its urgent attention. This is simply a stunt that members opposite and members on the crossbenches brought up right before the local government elections. It is another stunt after all the other stunts to which we have been subjected this week and it is all about attracting attention for their own campaigns. This matter is not urgent. The Government does not support urgency.

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

Motion negatived.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business**

The Hon. MICK VEITCH [12.55 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that Private Members' Business item No. 868 outside the Order of Precedence relating to the appointment of a select committee on the closure of Corrective Services NSW facilities be called on forthwith.

I will not take up too much time of the House because there is general agreement that this will happen and that it is urgent.

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

Motion agreed to.

Order of Business

Motion by the Hon. Mick Veitch agreed to:

That Private Members' Business item No. 868 outside the Order of Precedence be called on forthwith.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE CLOSURE OR DOWNSIZING OF CORRECTIVE SERVICES NSW FACILITIES

The Hon. MICK VEITCH [12.58 p.m.]: I seek leave to amend Private Members' Business item No. 868 outside the Order of Precedence relating to the appointment of a select committee to inquire into and report on NSW Corrections closures by omitting paragraph 2 (c) and inserting instead:

- (c) two crossbench members, one of which will be Mr Paul Green.
3. That the Chair of the committee be Mr Paul Green.

Leave granted.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I move:

1. That a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report on the closure and/or downsizing of Corrective Services NSW facilities since 26 March 2011, in particular:
 - (a) the basis for the decision to close or downsize any facility including the documents and other records that were considered by the Minister, such as any economic or financial analysis,
 - (b) each Rural Impact Statement completed before the decision to close or downsize any rural or regional facility,
 - (c) all consultation that was undertaken prior to the decision with stakeholders, including local government, chambers of commerce, industrial bodies, prisoner welfare groups and staff,
 - (d) the costs associated with the closure or downsizing of each facility and the relocation of the prisoner population to other locations,
 - (e) the impact on staff and their families of any closure or downsizing,
 - (f) the long-term plans of each closed facility including maintenance and/or management arrangements,
 - (g) the management of any heritage values for each of the closed facilities,
 - (h) the process used to identify any public sector employment opportunities that could be relocated to rural and regional communities to replace job losses due to the closure or down-sizing of a Corrective Services NSW facility, and
 - (i) any other related matters.
2. That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the standing orders, the committee consist of seven members comprising:
 - (a) three Government members,
 - (b) two Opposition members, and
 - (c) two crossbench members, one of which will be Mr Paul Green.

3. That the chair of the committee be Mr Paul Green.
4. That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the standing orders, at any meeting of the committee, any four members of the committee will constitute a quorum.
5. That a committee member who is unable to attend a deliberative meeting in person may participate by electronic communication and may move any motion and be counted for the purpose of any quorum or division, provided that:
 - (a) the chair is present in the meeting room,
 - (b) all members are able to speak and hear each other at all times, and
 - (c) a member may not participate by electronic communication in a meeting to consider a draft report.

As I said earlier, I will not take up too much of the time of the House. There are three amendments to work through: an amendment relating to the chair of the committee, a government amendment relating to changing the date on which the inquiry commences and an amendment of The Greens.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE (Parliamentary Secretary) [12.58 p.m.]: The Government is happy to agree to a select committee to inquire into the downsizing and closure of Corrections facilities in New South Wales, but why is the inquiry restricted to events since 26 March 2011? What is so special about that date? That was the date on which an election was held. That was the date on which the people on this side of the House were put into government and that lot on the other side were thrown out of government. That was the date on which 16 years of Labor Government came to a thundering halt in this State. That was the day the people of New South Wales got their political liberation. We will agree to the motion but we will move an amendment because we want to look at events not only after 26 March 2011 but also before that date. We want to see what the former Labor Government was up to before 26 March. We reckon there is a lot to see. We want to hear the witnesses, see the documents and find out what it was up to. We want to have transparency, openness, honesty and integrity and members opposite should not object to that. Therefore, I move:

That the question be amended by omitting the words "since 26 March 2011", in paragraph 1.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE [1.00 p.m.]: The Greens support the motion of the Hon. Mick Veitch. We also support the Government's amendment. We too do not see any reason why the inquiry should be limited to after 26 March 2011. I would not compare 26 March 2011 to any great days of liberation. It was not like Charles de Gaulle entering Paris. However, The Greens seek to amend paragraph (e). Therefore, I move:

That the question be amended by inserting in paragraph 1 (e) after "families" the words "and on families of Indigenous inmates".

The Greens move that amendment because Grafton prison has a substantial number of Aboriginal inmates whose families face extraordinary difficulties in travelling to Cessnock as a result of the closure of the facility. The Greens otherwise support the motion.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH [1.01 p.m.], in reply: The Opposition supports the proposed amendments. I commend the motion to the House.

Question—That the amendment of the Hon. David Clarke to the motion of the Hon. Mick Veitch be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment of the Hon. David Clarke to the motion of the Hon. Mick Veitch agreed to.

Question—That the amendment of Mr David Shoebridge to the motion of the Hon. Mick Veitch be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment of Mr David Shoebridge to the motion of the Hon. Mick Veitch agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

[Deputy-President (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones) left the chair at 1.04 p.m. The House resumed at 2.30 p.m.]

QUESTION TIME MEMBERS CONDUCT

The PRESIDENT: I draw to the attention of the House two rulings made by President Primrose in 2008 and 2009 that are particularly apposite to the state of question time as it has occurred in a number of parliaments but is becoming a particular problem at present in this Parliament. In one of the rulings made by President Primrose he stated:

Members should allow the free flow of debate in this Chamber. The prime privilege of members in this place is the ability to be heard. Members should not interject solely for the purpose of preventing another member from expressing a point of view.

I would add to that, in terms of answering of questions when question time is particularly for the purpose of seeking information, "or to prevent a Minister from responding to a question that has been asked by a member", another ruling made by President Primrose, which I think also is particularly apposite, which states:

Although strictly disorderly, interjections are tolerated if they facilitate debate and meaningful discussion across the Chamber. Interjections will not be tolerated if disruptive, such that members are unable to hear the responses of Ministers to questions asked of them.

I ask all honourable members to bear that in mind during question time today and on other occasions.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

BULLYING

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. In the light of recent claims of bullying made by staff members of the Minister for Fair Trading, what action is the Government taking to ensure that appropriate training is provided to Ministers and their staff to ensure there is no bullying within ministerial offices?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What an interesting question from one of the few survivors who did not make it into the ministry under Labor in the last 16 years. I suppose that the Mark Latham of New South Wales politics, the angry frustrated young man—

The Hon. Steve Whan: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The Minister was asked a very specific question. He made remarks at the commencement of his answer that were directed at other members and in no way were relevant to the question. I ask you to direct the Minister to confine his remarks to relevance.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister was reflecting on another member. I ask him to stop making such reflections.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Thank you, Mr President. Let us cut to the prime case related to this issue—Milton Orkopoulos. His staff member was bullied, vilified, taken to court, attacked and treated unmercifully badly by this mob, former Labor Party Ministers.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister is not assisting his cause. He is not being relevant. He should either give a relevant answer or resume his seat.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Thank you, Mr President. The issue is bullying and I am talking about the worst case of bullying that occurred during 16 years of Labor. It is no wonder all Opposition members are silent and no wonder they are ashamed of their behaviour. That was one of the most shameful episodes in Labor's 16 years in government.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Melinda Pavey to order for the first time. I call the Hon. Penny Sharpe to order for the first time.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Well may Labor members hang their heads in shame.

PARALYMPIAN SARAH ROSE

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will he update the House on the progress of Sarah Rose, who is a Roads and Maritime Services employee and who is competing at the Paralympics?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the Hon. Niall Blair for his question. On behalf of all members of the House I take this opportunity to recognise a Roads and Maritime Services staff member, the very happy Sarah Rose—I say "very happy" because quite often we see her at functions—who has been competing at the London 2012 Paralympics in swimming. The London Paralympics are Sarah's third Games and follow successful campaigns in Athens, where she won a bronze medal in the 50 metres butterfly event, and in Beijing, where she competed in four events. I am told that the London Paralympics holds special significance for Sarah.

Sarah returned to swimming after recovering from back surgery. I commend Sarah Rose for her determination to return to swimming despite injury and to again represent Australia. Sarah's events include the 50 metres butterfly, the 50 metres freestyle and the 200 metres individual medley. On Tuesday night, Sarah swam in the heats of the 50 metres freestyle, which was her second event after competing in the heats of the 200 metres individual medley on the previous night. And what a great effort—coming fifth in both of her heats. Sarah is having a rest day today.

The Hon. Charlie Lynn: A well-earned rest day.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Yes. She will be back in the pool tomorrow night when she will compete in the heats of the 50 metres butterfly. Sarah first competed in swimming in 2001 after being inspired by the Sydney Paralympic Games. She made her Australian debut two years later at the Canadian National Championships. At the 2008 Beijing Games she narrowly missed claiming her second Paralympic medal with a fourth-place finish in the 50 metres butterfly. Sarah's qualifying for the Australian Paralympic team caps off a remarkable comeback. She was out of action for almost a year in the lead-up to the trials. I am told that last November she made the decision to attempt to qualify for her third Paralympics. Remarkably, she clocked her second-fastest time at the 2012 Australian swimming qualifying tournament in Adelaide, which was enough to secure her spot in London.

All of our Paralympic athletes are to be commended for dedicating so much of their time to excel in their chosen sports. I personally, and on behalf of my colleagues in the House, congratulate Sarah Rose on a fantastic effort and contribution to her sport. The Paralympics shine a light on what can be achieved by people with disabilities—athletes such as Sarah are role models for all of us. The 2012 London Paralympic Games is the largest Games ever held, with more than 4,200 athletes from 165 countries competing in London. The Games will run until 9 September. I, along with members of the House and employees of Roads and Maritime Services, wish Sarah the best of luck, congratulate her on her achievements already at the London Paralympic Games and wish her well when she hits the water again very soon.

NSW LONG TERM TRANSPORT MASTER PLAN

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: My question is to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Given that a government spokesperson said of this week's transport plan that "the document clearly outlines the funding plan", how much of the \$100 billion that the plan requires will be raised from increasing car registration fees? How much more will drivers have to pay?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Within the funding plan contained in the document there is not one issue to do with increasing registration.

WORKERS COMPENSATION SCHEME

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Given that the changes this Government made to the legal costs in the New South Wales workers compensation system, where no legal costs are payable even for successful claims by injured workers, have been said by the WorkCover Review Task Force to be an aberration, likely to increase the administration costs of the scheme and to make the New South Wales workers compensation scheme one which will be observed for its potentially inequitable and chaotic management of disputes, what is this Government doing to fix the problem that he created?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I will be making a statement on that matter next week.

POLICE NUMBERS

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. What is the latest information about the operational strength of the NSW Police Force?

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Greg Donnelly to order for the first time. I call the Hon. Penny Sharpe to order for the second time.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I am so disappointed that we have come to the end of the sitting week after the operational strength figures were released and I have still not received a question from those opposite in relation to this incredibly important issue. Be that as it may, I am pleased to inform the House that as of 24 August 2012 police numbers in New South Wales are at record strength. The authorised strength of the Police Force now stands at 16,016 officers—following the addition of 60 new positions from Wagga Wagga and Albury in the south, to Barwon and Oxley in the north-west, and to Mount Druitt, Campbelltown and Rosehill in the metropolitan area. The addition of these extra positions coincides with the release of operational strength figures showing the Government and the NSW Police Force have made terrific progress in meeting the target of having all local area commands across the State at or above 90 per cent.

As at 24 August 2012 there are nearly 15,000 full-time equivalent sworn officers in the Police Force, taking total operational strength to 91 per cent. In fact, 76 of the 80 local area commands were at 90 per cent or more operational strength. I notice the Hon. Penny Sharpe nodding in agreement. This disappoints those opposite who thought I was foreshadowing massive numbers of commands being under 90 per cent when last sitting week I indicated some local area commands would not reach 90 per cent. Out they trotted—all atwitter—telling all and sundry that somehow it was a sneaky way to suggest we were not reaching the 90 per cent target. But, much to their disappointment, and much to the satisfaction of the police, the latest figures speak for themselves—Kings Cross Local Area Command is at 92 per cent operational strength; St Marys and Campsie at 99 per cent; and Monaro and Darling River at 97 per cent. Most pleasing are the numbers for Bankstown, Blacktown and Oxley local area commands, where operational strength is at 100 per cent, and Lake Macquarie is at 102 per cent.

As members would be aware, the NSW Police Force loses about 70 officers every month due to resignations, retirements and other separations. These officers can only be replaced, and new officers recruited, three times a year when probationary constables are deployed. In between times, numbers inevitably run down in some locations and sometimes we will not meet the 90 per cent target. Anticipating where new officers are needed is a complex task, factoring in anticipated retirements, promotion and other operational changes to provide resources to commands. More important than raw numbers is how the full range of police operational resources are brought together and deployed to fight crime. The 90 per cent operational strength is a target and we are working hard to achieve it.

While 95 per cent of commands across the State are at or over 90 per cent operational strength, four of the 80 are below. There can be a number of reasons why commands are under the 90 per cent target. Take Wagga Wagga, where the Government has just recently announced an additional eight authorised positions. It will take a short period for the command to organise recruitment and transfers to these new positions. We will not be like the last Government, throwing probationary constables at a command to artificially boost numbers. We want to make sure there is an appropriate mix of new and of experienced officers. Importantly, the commands below our target have been identified and police are now working on measures to improve these results.

ADOPTION PRACTICES

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: My question without notice is directed to be Minister for Police Emergency Services, as Leader of the Government in this House, and representing the Premier. Will the Government immediately release the submissions made to the 1999 Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues inquiry "Healing the Past—Adoption Practices 1950-1998" that were clearly identified as being for publication and/or were also clarified in the hearings as being available for publication?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I represent the Premier on this issue and, as the honourable member has requested, I will refer her question to the Premier seeking an answer.

M5 MOTORWAY TOLL

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. In light of calls from the member for Castle Hill for the scrapping of the M5 cash back arrangements, will he guarantee residents of south-western Sydney that he will not remove the M5 cash back as part of his Government's consideration of a distance-based tolling regime?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I compliment the member on the fact that she has not been watching what has been happening in the real world. Recently we put in place the changes for the widening of the M5. In doing that we had to renegotiate the contract on tolls. What did we do within that contract? We re-entrenched the cash back. Why did we do that? Because the Premier made a commitment before the election. Unlike those opposite, who have core promises and non-core promises—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: What, like the North West Rail Link?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: We will talk about the North West Rail Link in a moment if you like. I am very happy to go there but let us stay on the M5 for a moment.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Steve Whan to order for the first time.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I will tell members the reason cash back is there. Members on this side of the House remember that it is because Bob Carr—yes, as one of my colleagues said, it is because of a broken promise—promised to remove tolls from the M5. It was a reckless promise. When he came to office, instead of sticking to his promise, he broke it. As a sop to the community he put in place a cumbersome process called cash back. Members opposite should stay right away from the issue. I acknowledge that members opposite have taken my advice and they have a question time committee but, frankly, they should sack it and put a new one in. I received a letter from the member for the north-western area of Sydney, Dom Perrottet, who was rightly standing up for his community.

They are good local members who have a go and reflect the concerns of their community. No wonder he is representing that community and doing a damn good job. Let me make it quite clear: an election promise made by the Premier or anyone in the Coalition is one to which we adhere. Those opposite interjected about the North West Rail Link. This morning I heard the Leader of the Opposition describe it as the greatest dud deal. I remember the Rozelle metro—nothing but silence from those opposite. They remember the Rozelle metro. Somehow this great piece of infrastructure—

The Hon. Steve Whan: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The Minister has strayed a long way from tolls on the M5. I ask that he be brought back to the relevance of the question in the interests of the people of western Sydney.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister was being relevant.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The people of the north-west whose concerns were expressed by their good local member will be looking forward to the North West Rail Link, yet this morning the Leader of the Opposition called it a dud deal. The Opposition forgets that the North West Rail Link was part of its manifesto at the last election. Labor first announced it in 1998. In 2004 it was delayed. In 2008 it was axed and then later in 2008 it was brought back. Opposition members are hypocrites. [*Time expired.*]

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: My question is addressed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will the Minister update the House on possible options for new motorway projects?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the member for her question. Frankly, if we had a good Opposition they are the types of questions it should be asking in representing the people of the State. The draft NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan includes a recommendation to investigate distance-based tolling, such as that on the M7, as a way of raising revenue to build new transport infrastructure. For those not familiar with the M7, which includes the Leader of the Opposition, it has a distance-based toll charged at 35.84¢ per kilometre capped at \$7.17 or 20 kilometres. This has been well received by the community and endorsed by a plethora of transport infrastructure organisations. By moving to a distance-based toll we would be able to more closely align the price

of using the motorway to the travel time benefit achieved by commuters. It would remove differential rates across the network and deliver a fairer and more equitable system. Importantly, it would help us raise the funds needed to pay for new transport infrastructure. In case it escaped the attention of those opposite, we inherited a \$5.2 billion budget black hole from the former Government and a massive infrastructure backlog.

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

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: This is why we need to have a sensible conversation with the community about how we pay for enhancements to the road network now and into the future.

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

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: We are a Government committed to delivering quality roads and transport infrastructure. We think that moving towards a distance-based tolling regime for the Sydney motorway network is a good way of raising the funds. Indeed, this would take a lot of hard work as developing and implementing such a model would require extensive discussions with the private sector tollway operators currently managing significant parts of the network. On our side we are not afraid of hard work and have a good track record of being able to negotiate outcomes with the private motorway operators. We successfully negotiated a deal to widen the M5 west motorway with Interlink Roads—something those opposite were not able to do when they were in government. Unfortunately, the Labor Party has a terrible record when it comes to working with the private sector and delivering transport infrastructure.

When Labor has nothing positive to contribute it resorts to the old tactics of scaremongering. However, in John Robertson's effort to scaremonger he has missed the point that the draft NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan clearly states, "The general per kilometre rate would also be capped at a rate that does not lead to excessive charging for longer journeys." In doing its back-of-the-envelope calculations, Labor missed the point badly that any distance-based tolls, such as that on the M7, would be capped.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members who wish to engage in conversation will do so more quietly.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Labor's outrageous calculations missed this aspect. The scaremongering of the shadow Minister for Roads and the Leader of the Opposition shows, frankly, that they are either too lazy to read the document or they are purposely misleading the community. Currently, for 20 kilometres the charge is \$7.71. The figures of \$14, \$15, \$21 and \$27 used by those opposite are based on nothing; they just want to scaremonger and do not want anything to happen in the community because they were not able to achieve anything. *[Time expired.]*

SOLAR FEED-IN TARIFFS

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Resources and Energy. Is the Minister aware of claims that AGL, as an electricity distributor in New South Wales, is telling relevant customers in a letter that, despite contracts that will run until 2016, from the first meter reading after 1 September their solar feed-in tariff will be reduced from 60¢ per kilowatt hour to 20¢ per kilowatt hour? Has the Government moved to reduce the feed-in tariffs despite customers having set contracts for several more years?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The question contains a large amount of detail, which I do not have on hand. I will take the question to the Minister and obtain a response as soon as I can.

PENSIONER REBATE SCHEME

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. In light of the Government's support for the Schott report's recommendation for periodic review of all concessional arrangements across government, will the Minister guarantee that the pensioner rebate scheme will not be abolished or reduced?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: The Government will be acting on that recommendation.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY INQUIRY

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Will the Minister update the House on the reaction to his recent announcement of an inquiry into construction industry insolvency?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I thank the member for that question. Members would be aware that I recently announced an inquiry into insolvency in the construction industry, to be led by Mr Bruce Collins, QC. The construction industry accounts for 15 per cent of businesses in New South Wales but up to 30 per cent of the companies going into administration. The Government is concerned about this high rate of insolvency and its impact on small business subcontractors, the New South Wales economy and the Government's construction program. The inquiry will help safeguard the interests of subcontractors. The inquiry already has been hard at work looking at whether insurance schemes, trust arrangements, compulsory contract provisions or other mechanisms could help.

The inquiry will assess the extent and cause of insolvency in the construction industry. It will look at payment practices and whether existing protections are adequate. The inquiry will make recommendations as to how the incidence and impact of insolvency may be addressed and minimised, including possible changes to legislation or government policy. I am especially pleased about the fact that the inquiry already has strong support from all parties in the construction industry, including employers, unions, major associations and industry leaders. I can report to the House that the inquiry already is off to a good start, with an industry reference group holding its first meeting. The group is made up of representatives from the legal and insurance professions and the building industry.

I am informed that the members wholeheartedly support the action taken by the Government to address the problem and are committed to providing advice on options to minimise the incidence of insolvencies. Employer associations have been quick to praise the Government for launching the inquiry. Mr Brian Seidler, Executive Director of the Master Builders Association, said he was concerned about the high rate of insolvencies in the industry. He stated:

It is heartening to see the Government taking on this challenge by establishing an inquiry and giving all stakeholders the opportunity to contribute to a solution.

In addition, Mr David Carseldine, Chief Executive Officer of the Civil Contractors Federation of New South Wales, said the number of companies failing in recent times is of great concern to his organisation. He stated:

These insolvencies have had significant impacts on all sectors of the industry so this inquiry is timely and most welcome.

The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union [CFMEU] and Unions New South Wales have welcomed the inquiry. In addition to the industry reference group, the chair of the inquiry has met with a significant number of industry participants from across the construction sector. I understand that this consultative approach will continue with further opportunities for people to have their say over coming weeks. The inquiry has called for submissions from the public. I encourage anyone with an interest in the industry to make a submission. It is my understanding that the chair of the inquiry will release a discussion paper on specific matters of interest for comment by stakeholders. Anyone can make a submission to the inquiry by going to the Government's Have Your Say website or by emailing info@iici.nsw.gov.au.

Yesterday I mentioned Leisl Tesch, who is competing at the Paralympics. I inform members that she has won a gold medal. Leisl has dedicated that win to her recently deceased mother. It is Leisl's first gold medal. She has previously won silver and bronze medals. I am sure the House is proud of her and her efforts.

COUNCIL AMALGAMATIONS

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for Local Government. In March this year did the Minister claim that the structure of local councils in New South Wales had to change and that almost half of the 152 councils in the State were struggling financially? Will the Minister provide an updated estimate of how many rural and regional councils will be put in the position of having to amalgamate to survive because of financial imperatives? Will he state what impact this will have on local government employment in those areas?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: That is an important question. I will take it on notice and obtain a detailed answer from the Minister for Local Government.

SYDNEY CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT PARKING SPACE LEVY

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. I refer to comments from the NRMA's Wendy Machin, who stated:

The parking space levy is considered as a defacto congestion tax.

Given that the Minister promised not to introduce a congestion tax, will he clarify that his parking space levy is simply a congestion tax by another name?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I clear the air and indicate that it is not a congestion tax. The parking space levy is the same one those opposite had in place. The Government is doing it for the same reasons as the former Government. The former Government actually did something good.

[*Interruption*]

Do not be shy; I am giving you some praise. The former Government's central business district parking levy money was taken to provide parking at railway stations and bus stops. It was not a congestion levy; it was about reallocating this money and using it positively in the community. Whatever one wants to call it—I call it a parking charge—it is what the former Government had in place, and increased. The Government thinks it is a good idea. The former Government did not have many good ideas, but this was one of them.

Whatever the Government tries to do, it knows that the Opposition will be against it. Earlier I was asked a question about whether the Government will increase the cost of registration. Once again, that is an attempt at distortion. Within the Government's transport master plan it indicated that it would look at a restructuring of the registration to make it better for more environmentally friendly vehicles. Nowhere in the plan did the Government say it would increase registration. The Opposition is out there with a scare campaign. When the Government talked about tolling, the Opposition was against tolling. There is no money to build the extra infrastructure without new sources of funding, and one of the new sources is distance tolling. The only distance tolling that presently exists is the M7 motorway. Most people believe the M7 motorway is good—except the Labor Party.

The Hon. Luke Foley: We built it.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: You did not build it—private enterprise built it. If someone waited for the Labor Party to build anything it would be like waiting for the Rozelle metro.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 85 (1), which directs members to address their comments through the Chair and not to members on the other side of the Chamber where they may elicit responses.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I remind members that interjections are disorderly at all times.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: As to the issue of charges, Opposition members continued the scare campaign because they know the only distance-based tolling is the M7 motorway at 38¢ per kilometre and capped at \$7.17. Somehow a cap at \$7.17 for up to 20 kilometres became 14, 15, 21 and 27 kilometres. It is outrageous. The Hon. Luke Foley is innumerate.

LEWISHAM OVERPASS BRIDGE

The Hon. WALT SECORD: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. This week Transport for New South Wales confirmed that construction will begin shortly on an overpass bridge at Lewisham as part of the Rozelle to Dulwich Hill light rail. Transport for New South Wales has admitted to the *Inner West Courier* that:

... the potential impact on Parramatta Rd had not yet been determined.

What measures will the Government put in place to ensure that Parramatta Road is not gridlocked?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The first procedure that the State put in place was to change the Government. That was the first way to remove gridlock from Parramatta Road. The Hon. Walt Secord has asked me to take on good faith statements that he has made to the House. As much as I love Walt, I will do a check and come back with a detailed answer.

WESTERN SYDNEY TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will the Minister update the House on what the Government is doing to plan for growth in western Sydney?

The Hon. Robert Brown: It is going to build Tillegra Dam.

The Hon. Luke Foley: No, it is shipping radioactive waste out there.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I wouldn't talk if I were you; there are people in here who have shares in that—uranium shares. As the greater western Sydney area grows to encompass more houses, more jobs and more people so too should the transport options. Unfortunately, Labor forgot the hardworking people of western Sydney in its quest to preserve its own skins and those of its Sussex Street mates. Labor members took the people of western Sydney for granted and the people of western Sydney rejected them. That is why this Government faces the hard task of delivering vital infrastructure to support the growth in this important region. Western Sydney is home to 46 per cent of Sydney's residents and a quarter of those people commute to city centres such as Parramatta, Penrith and Liverpool. The greater Parramatta region is currently home to more than 100,000 jobs, which is expected to grow. The number of people working in Penrith and Liverpool is expected to increase to 62,000 by 2031. Importantly, the Coalition Government is not only planning to build the transport capacity of this region, it has already started.

Work has begun on widening the M5 West Motorway to support the planned residential and employment growth in south-west Sydney. I recently announced that a managed motorway system is being planned for the M4 Motorway to better manage high traffic and freight volumes and to reduce congestion and crashes. The western Sydney employment area is at the centre of the forecast growth, which is why the Government is working to complete the arterial road network. The construction of the Erskine Park Link Road is 50 per cent complete. When completed, it will provide a vital link between the western Sydney employment area and the M7 and M4 motorways.

We have fast-tracked the upgrades to busy roads such as the Camden Valley Way and Richmond Road to support housing and employment growth. In addition to these vital road projects that our Government is already delivering, it was our Government that laid the first bit of track on the South West Rail Link and that is going full steam ahead on the North West Rail Link. We are already delivering vital transport infrastructure for western Sydney and the draft NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan sets out the way forward. The master plan makes it clear that we will work towards upgrading Old Wallgrove Road, completing the Werrington Arterial Link Road and constructing the Southern Link Road, to provide north-south and east-west access to Horsley Park, Eastern Creek and Kemps Creek. These are essential projects to support the western Sydney employment area.

We will continue to target improvements at key pinch points along the corridor such as Blacktown Road, Campbelltown Road, the Cumberland Highway, the Hume Highway, Old Windsor Road and Fairford Road. Not only will we deliver works along these corridors, we will also investigate future works that may be needed along stretches of congested roads such as Pennant Hills Road, Canterbury Road and James Ruse Drive. There is extensive planning for bus infrastructure projects in north-west Sydney that we are delivering to encourage people to get out of their cars and onto public transport. Importantly the bus lanes will link key urban centres in greater Sydney and optimise access to the North West Rail Link. The all spin and no substance approach that characterised the former Labor Government is not one that the New South Wales Government intends to take. That is why we have our draft NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan.

SUPER TRAWLER FV *MARGIRIS*

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. The super trawler FV *Margiris* now has the authority to fish in the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery zone in Commonwealth waters off the New South Wales coast. Given this, has the Minister or his department received any requests for the FV *Margiris* to use any New South Wales ports?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the member for her question and I certainly understand her concerns. Many members have general concerns on this issue, not the least being amongst our recreational and commercial fisheries in New South Wales. I do not have that information with me, but I am more than happy to obtain an answer for the member.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The Hon. JENNIFER GARDINER: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister inform the House about emergency management training methods employed by Fire and Rescue NSW?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I thank the honourable member for her question and genuine interest in the ongoing improvements to training in the effective management of emergencies in New South Wales. The threat of emergencies such as incidents and disasters that can develop rapidly in size, severity and complexity are an ever present threat to the community and our emergency services stand ready to protect life, property and the environment. On 14 August 2012 firefighters from Grafton and Yamba fire stations participated in a joint emergency response exercise attending a luxury yacht fire and oil spill.

This exercise was conceived to test in real time the emergency port of Yamba marine oil and chemical spill contingency plan. More than 50 staff from government agencies including Ports, Roads and Maritime Services, Fire and Rescue NSW, the NSW Police Force, the State Emergency Service, the Rural Fire Service and the Clarence Valley Council participated in the joint exercise. Volunteer groups including marine rescue, surf life saving and wildlife care and rescue agencies also participated. The real time exercise at Yamba is just one of many local exercises being conducted across the State aimed, at least in part, to test and refine emergency control systems which coordinate multiple agencies and resolve the threat of large and rapidly developing emergencies and disasters.

In Australia the common emergency management framework adopted by all firefighting agencies is the Australasian inter-service emergency management system [AIIMS]. The Australasian inter-service emergency management system is designed specifically to deal with an emergency of any size or complexity involving the integration of activities and resources from the various public safety agencies and non-emergency services. Having the best possible fire and emergency training methods available is essential to the continuous improvement of emergency control systems. Training is essential to further reducing the risks to officers at the front line with the heavy responsibility of fighting fires, responding to rescues chemical spills and other complex emergencies.

That is why this Government is committed to ensure front-line officers receive the best possible structured training courses and resources. Underpinning exercises such as those at Yamba across Fire and Rescue NSW is the blue card emergency management training system. Blue card is a United States-based training and certification system chosen because of its compatibility in design and methodology with the Australasian inter-service emergency management system and the Fire and Rescue NSW Emergency Control System Standard Operational Guidelines developed by Commissioner Greg Mullins in 1995 following an overseas study tour.

Extensive evaluation trials in 2011 clearly demonstrated the blue card system's ability to improve the safe management of emergency incidents involving multi-agency jurisdictions while also ensuring local emergency operations are standardised across the agency. Under blue card senior fire officers are expected to complete a comprehensive 50-hour online course, following a four-day simulation course and evaluation. More than 130 Fire and Rescue NSW officers have already completed the certification process and six senior officers have trained as instructors.

Course participants who have subsequently attended real emergencies have said the blue card training substantially improved the effective management of highly dynamic and rapidly expanding incidents. Examples of real incidents managed by graduates of blue card include the tragic Quakers Hill Nursing Home last year and the huge Harvey Norman fire at Jamisontown earlier this year. I am advised that certified blue card instructors from Fire and Rescue NSW have also assisted the New Zealand Fire Service to implement the system. Blue card is being evaluated by Australian Capital Territory Fire and Rescue and the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service. *[Time expired.]*

MOTOR VEHICLE CRIME

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services a question without notice. Is the Minister aware of the car wreck rort, which is raking in millions and driving up insurance premiums? Is he aware that a number of smash repairers with criminal links are part of the rort, as confirmed by

a number of insurance investigators? Is the Minister aware that this criminality and intimidation begins at the auctions? What measures is the Minister putting in place to reinforce a safeguard for these types of criminal rorts?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I thank the honourable member for his question. Highly organised criminal outfits are involved in this enterprise; they are not backyard operators. These people are highly involved, knowing the specific car they are after and where they can find it. On 28 August the *Daily Telegraph*—that record of truth—reported on staged car crashes and false insurance claims being made. This has been going on for many years. Criminals see an opportunity and they take advantage of it. The sad news for criminals involved in this highly organised criminal racket is that a newly restructured and invigorated New South Wales Crime Commission will be focusing very much on these highly organised criminal activities.

Those involved and members of The Greens had hoped at some stage we would have seen the end of the New South Wales Crime Commission, but the commission will be coming back stronger, more focused, better resourced and backed by a Government that recognises that these highly organised criminal enterprises do not simply limit themselves to importation of guns or drugs into this country; they are involved in car racketing, which can quite often see the export of high-end luxury motor vehicles out of Australia to overseas buyers, who place orders through these highly organised criminal enterprises.

I thank the honourable member for his question. It will come as no surprise to him that the police view this as a very important task and I am sure he would agree that he would not like to see on the public record the lengths to which police are pursuing these offenders and the operations and the methodology that they use. I think what the honourable member is seeking is an assurance that the police are dealing with this matter in a serious way. I can give him that assurance. At the end of the day, it affects all owners of motor vehicles in this State when it comes to insurance. I can also assure the honourable member that the newly invigorated Crime Commission will be coming out of the box very shortly to deal with organised crime in this State.

BLAYNEY TO DEMONDRILLE RAIL LINE

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. On 21 February the Minister promised that a decision on the future of the Blayney to Demondrille rail line would be made by the end of June. As the deadline has passed and the Government has now finished its transport master plan, what is the future of this rail line?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Had the Hon. Amanda Fazio spoken to the community around the Cowra to Demondrille railway line she would have found out that we are in dialogue with them and that they are very happy with where we are going at the moment. Had she spoken to the Hon. Mick Veitch, who is a member of that community, she would understand that we have been in consultation with the council. We had several meetings with the council, we made the decision and then we went back and said that it had to give us an undertaking that it would fix the last mile within its community. We said that if the council did that the Government would give it an undertaking that we will support this project going out to expressions of interest.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Amanda Fazio to order for the second time. I call the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps to order for the first time.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: It is still with the community. As far as I understand it, we are waiting for the council to come back to us. When we left the last meeting we had about this issue the community was extremely happy. In fact, people indicated that that was the best message they had had from a government for a long time on this issue.

NORTH-WEST SYDNEY WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Will the Minister update the House on improvements to water infrastructure in north-west Sydney?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I inform the House that the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government has approved a \$100 million project to provide vital water and wastewater infrastructure to enable the development of 13,000 new homes in Sydney's north-west. The 14 kilometres of water pipelines, two reservoirs, two pumping stations and 10 kilometres of wastewater pipelines will service residential and land release areas in Box Hill and Schofields. The project was approved by the New South Wales Department of

Planning and Infrastructure after a comprehensive assessment and public consultation process. The approval includes a number of measures to minimise any potential impacts, including limiting construction hours, design considerations for crossings over watercourses and the provision of biodiversity offsets. Sydney Water is required to develop relevant management plans, including an operation environmental management plan to address issues such as noise and air quality impacts.

This exciting new project will cater for the development of the two precincts in the North West Growth Centre over 30 years and will help address the need for more housing in Sydney. I am advised that there is capacity for 9,450 new homes at Box Hill and 3,000 homes at Schofields. The Box Hill precinct will also contain 120 hectares of employment land. Around 100 people will be employed each year during construction of these vital services, which will support residential and industrial development. An impressive outcome of the project is the potential jobs growth. There is the potential to create around 17,500 jobs across the precincts in the business park, light industrial and retail and commercial areas.

Schofields has been zoned for urban development and revised plans for the Box Hill industrial precincts were recently put out for public feedback. This is on top of \$481 million committed in the State budget for a Housing Acceleration Fund for infrastructure needed to support housing across the State. Sydney Water is on the front foot, with a tender process worth more than \$90 million underway to expand water and wastewater services in this region. It is anticipated that construction of the first stage will begin next year with the remaining stages progressively rolled out by 2025. The 20-megalitre surface reservoir, four-megalitre elevated drinking water reservoir and one pumping station will be located at a single site in Box Hill, with the second reservoir to be located at the junction of Nelson Road and Box Road, Box Hill.

Wastewater from the project will be transferred to the Riverstone treatment plant and the Rouse Hill water recycling plant. The planning approval means that Sydney Water can extend its network to cater for this growth area using existing water sources and wastewater systems. This is great news for the people of New South Wales because capital costs can be kept to a minimum, as well as the project's footprint, while increasing the supply of residential land in Sydney for our growing population. Once again the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals are delivering. We are creating jobs and we are delivering real improvements in infrastructure for the people of New South Wales.

RENEWABLE ENERGY ACTION PLAN

Dr JOHN KAYE: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Resources and Energy, and it concerns the current status of the New South Wales Government's Renewable Energy Action Plan. Given that the Minister for Resources and Energy told the member for Balmain on 23 May this year that the Government was "developing a renewable action plan that has gone through a number of formulations and discussions" and that the Government committed to releasing a Renewable Energy Action Plan on 11 July 2011—more than 13 months ago—can the Minister advise the House what is the reason for the delay in the release of the Renewable Energy Action Plan? Who has the Government been consulting during its formulation discussions? When can the community expect to see the plan's final release?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I was hoping the member would ask me that question. I always look forward to The Greens questions on Thursdays. The Government is committed to renewable energy. The Renewable Energy Action Plan will boost renewable energy in this State to reach a goal of 20 per cent renewable energy generation by 2020. Development of the plan is being led by a joint industry and government task force chaired by the Chief Scientist, Professor Mary O'Kane. A draft plan will be released imminently, for which submissions will be sought.

The Government is working to achieve a secure, affordable and clean energy future. Investment in renewable energy will play a key part in this vision, encouraging regional development and creating jobs in New South Wales. The plan identifies opportunities and actions for each of the renewable energy technologies in New South Wales. The plan also details proposals to most efficiently grow renewable energy generation in New South Wales, with new actions that aim to attract renewable energy investment and projects, build community support for renewable energy, attract and grow expertise in renewable energy technology, and contain costs for energy customers through increased energy efficiency.

But there is so much happening in renewable energy in New South Wales in the meantime. We have committed \$64 million for the construction of a large-scale solar generator to be built at Broken Hill and

Nyngan as part of the Solar Flagships program. This is a clear example of our willingness to support renewable energy projects. Also, \$19 million will flow to the University of New South Wales to conduct research on solar energy. The plan will, among other things, develop better processes for deploying commercial-scale generators—solar and I hope a much better than what happened in the previous Government wind farm strategy, which destroyed communities like mine—and practical measures for reducing red tape. It is interesting that members of the Labor Party still think they did the right thing on wind farms when it is obvious that they did not.

I am also aware of organisations that operate in this sphere associated with The Greens. Members of the Manning Alliance wander in and out of The Greens offices on a weekly basis, conduct meetings with them and get their prompts. It is a bit like a substation coming out of a major power station. The Manning Alliance wants to remove from us the ability to fix the infrastructure in New South Wales. That is typical of all The Greens associated organisations. They say they want electric powered vehicles and other things to happen but they are against putting the infrastructure in place or fixing the existing infrastructure.

We remember when a group fought against reinforcing the power line coming on to the North Coast. The reason that Greens-orientated group gave for its opposition was the fact that there was coal seam gas and there would be a gas power station at the site. The Greens are now against coal seam gas. So there we have it. Organisations such as the Manning Alliance and The Greens are in lock step across this State and are stopping sensible things from happening.

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

The House continued to sit.

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

SUPER TRAWLER FV *MARGIRIS*

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Earlier in question time the Hon. Cate Faehrmann asked me a question about the arrival of the FV *Margiris* in Australian waters. As the Hon. Cate Faehrmann indicated and as others know, the Dutch-owned vessel is reported to be the second-largest super trawler of its type in the world. Frankly, there are proper concerns over its large fishing capacity. I am advised that the FV *Margiris* does not have approval to operate in New South Wales waters. All approvals are in Commonwealth waters, outside New South Wales jurisdiction, and New South Wales does not have any jurisdiction over the trawler's operation in Commonwealth waters. Currently we are seeking assurances from the Commonwealth Government that our concerns and any potential impacts on New South Wales fisheries are fully considered.

Questions without notice concluded.

Pursuant to sessional orders Government business given precedence.

FINES AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Message received from the Legislative Assembly returning the bill without amendment.

LEWISHAM OVERPASS BRIDGE

The Hon. WALT SECORD: For the benefit of the Minister for Roads and Ports I seek leave to table an article from the *Inner West Courier*, entitled "Parramatta Rd closure looms", dated 4 September 2012, which was the basis of my question without notice.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: That document is publicly available. As a rule we do not normally table such documents.

Leave not granted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES**Government Response to Report**

The Hon. Michael Gallacher tabled the Government's response to report No. 45 entitled, "Transition support for students with additional or complex needs and their families", dated March 2012.

Ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Michael Gallacher.

ADJOURNMENT

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER (Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Hunter, and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [3.35 p.m.]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

KOALA PROTECTION

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY (Leader of the Opposition) [3.35 p.m.]: Tomorrow, 7 September, marks National Threatened Species Day. In recent times no threatened species has captured the public's attention more than our national icon the koala. I will talk about the conservation of the koala in New South Wales State forests. Last year during a budget estimates committee hearing the environment Minister, Robyn Parker, infamously declared that logging protects koalas. She was referring to the logging of koala habitat in the Boambee State Forest near Coffs Harbour. I visited that forest and witnessed the destruction of koala habitat.

I note that koala habitat has also been logged at the Wedding Bells and Pine Creek State forests in the north of the State. Also on the Dorrigo Plateau numerous compartments in the Clouds Creek State Forest, all of which contain koala records, have been heavily logged. Logging of the Ellis State Forest where another high-use koala area has been identified is soon to begin. Logging also has occurred recently in the Royal Camp State Forest approximately 16 kilometres south-west of Casino. In late July I visited that area along with representatives of the North East Forest Alliance and we observed numerous breaches of forestry prescriptions. Following further inspections and complaints by the North East Forest Alliance, the illegal logging of koala habitat was temporarily halted.

Forests NSW is prohibited from logging in high-use koala areas but it was obvious that in the Royal Camp State Forest it was failing in its obligations to protect a minimum number of koala feed trees and to undertake pre-logging surveys to identify and protect high-use koala areas. I observed koala scratch marks on tree trunks in an area recently logged by Forests NSW and koala scat next to trees and stumps. While I welcome the fact that logging was temporarily halted, this would not have occurred without the inspections and follow-up complaints by representatives of the North East Forest Alliance.

The North East Forest Alliance has written to the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Primary Industries, and asked them to intervene to stop logging in areas that contain high-use koala feed trees in another part of the Royal Camp State Forest until independent surveys are conducted to identify and protect koala high-use areas. Forests NSW has failed to undertake the required thorough searches for koala scat to identify high-use trees and, thus, koala high-use areas. Mr Dailan Pugh from the North East Forest Alliance reports that he and his colleagues thoroughly searched more than 100 potential koala feed trees and stumps for koala scat and saw no evidence that anyone else had previously searched in the long grass, leaves and bark around the bases of the trees.

Mr Pugh and his colleagues found 17 trees and three stumps that had koala scats under them. Six trees had more than 20 scats beneath them and qualified as high-use koala feed trees. Forests NSW is required to identify and undertake detailed surveys around high-use feed trees, which is the only way to identify koala high-use areas before the areas are logged. The North East Forest Alliance found a koala high-use area that had been logged recently and considers there were likely to have been more. Forests NSW is breaching environmental laws that are designed to protect koala high-use areas. No action has been taken by the Minister for the Environment or the Minister for Primary Industries to fulfil their obligations to protect the koala, this threatened species, on the eve of National Threatened Species Day. It is time for the New South Wales Government to stop the logging of koala habitat in our State forests.

MULLUMBIMBY HOSPITAL TELEHEALTH TRIAL

Dr JOHN KAYE [3.40 p.m.]: This afternoon this House was denied the right to debate the issue of telemedicine replacement for the overnight emergency doctors at the Mullumbimby hospital. The Government declined the opportunity we offered to state on the record why it thinks it is okay to withdraw the overnight emergency doctors and replace them with a teleconferencing service linked to the Tweed hospital, with only nurses conducting the in-place diagnosis at the hospital. If nothing else, the O'Farrell Government has treated the community with utter contempt. Clear concern has been expressed on the North Coast not just at public meetings but also in letters to the editor, letters to politicians, blogs and on Facebook. Concern also has been expressed by a number of doctors and nurses about the inevitability of the standard of care declining, thus endangering the health and lives of people who live in the Mullumbimby area.

The evidence is clear from expert advice provided to the community that withdrawal of a doctor's service and its replacement by teleconferencing will compromise the quality of diagnosis. Symptoms and subtle signs of an imminent health crisis, which would easily and rapidly be detected by a doctor being present, will not be detected or will be missed, either by the nurse or by the video system. Opportunities for early intervention that could save lives and speed up recovery to good health will be lost as a result of this cost-cutting measure. Another issue of concern, particularly to nurses on the North Coast, is the legal and moral position of nurses under this teleconferencing arrangement. Nurses will be asked to participate in what is clearly a substandard level of care. When nurses miss a symptom or fail to identify a symptom or an emerging crisis in a patient because the patient's condition is beyond the level of their training, they will feel as though they have failed their patients. Their professional pride and their standards will be placed under unacceptable pressure and there will be unacceptable pressure placed on their capacity to perform as nurses.

A number of community members and doctors have identified that the golden hour will be compromised. In other words, the delay in clinical intervention will compromise the opportunity for rapid recovery. For example, should someone suffer a cardiac arrest at Ocean Shores, it takes approximately 20 minutes to reach the Mullumbimby hospital, it takes another 10 minutes for the telehealth consultation, waiting for the ambulance would take another 10 minutes, and travelling to the Tweed hospital would take another 35 minutes. That will put the patient outside the golden hour within which treatment would have been most effective. Heart attack patients in Mullumbimby will be able to look forward to a poorer chance of full recovery to good health. The North Coast, which is an area of population increases, will be denied the standard of medical service that is taken for granted in inner-urban areas. Currently 16,000 people are serviced by the Mullumbimby hospital—an area that experiences massive population increases particularly during the peak tourist season. With Mullumbimby's growing aged population, there is an increased risk of acute conditions developing, yet people will be denied service.

All three levels of political representatives have expressed grave concerns in relation to the telehealth plan. My colleague the Hon. Jan Barham and councillors of the Byron Shire Council have joined with the community to vociferously express to the Government that this is not the right way to go. The local member of the New South Wales Parliament is Don Page, the member for Ballina and a Nationals Minister. He addressed 350 residents at a public meeting on 2 August 2012 and stated:

I am satisfied that there are serious outstanding concerns ... therefore I can't support the proposed (telehealth) trial.

If Minister Page was doing anything more than purely casting narrowly to that population, by now he would have met with the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner so either the Minister for Health totally ignored her colleague or he did not prosecute his case adequately. I congratulate the Hon. Walt Secord on overcoming the fact that the idea of telemedicine originally came from a previous Labor Government by recognising that the community does not care who is responsible for this silly idea and dangerous plan. All people want is for this idea to go away. Justine Elliot, who is the Federal member for Richmond on the North Coast, also has taken up this issue. If nothing intervenes, at the end of September 2012 a telehealth trial will commence. However, doctors will be present during that trial, which will compromise the outcome of the results. Of course a doctor will intervene when a life is at risk. The Greens call on the Government to abandon the trial and the telehealth scheme. We urge the Government instead to listen to the people and find the required funding to ensure that there is an overnight doctor at the Mullumbimby hospital.

GIRL GUIDES NSW & ACT

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES [3.45 p.m.]: On 31 August 2012 I hosted a lunch at Parliament House for Girl Guides NSW & ACT on behalf of the Minister for Family and Community Services,

and Minister for Women, the Hon. Pru Goward. The Girl Guides are a tremendously important organisation in this State for the development of young women. The mission of Girl Guides NSW & ACT is to enable girls and young women to grow into confident, self-respecting, responsible community members. Adherence to that mission has led to an extensive program of events and activities that forge lifetime friendships and promote the development of leadership skills and experiences for all young women.

The Girl Guides first appeared in Australia in 1909 when some girls gathered in informal guiding groups. By 1920 Girl Guide associations had been formed in all six States. From those beginnings, the organisation grew to more than 8,500 members in New South Wales and 30,000 nationally, with the majority of participants being aged between eight and 12 years. More than a million Australian women either have been involved or are still involved in Girls Guides. Girl Guides NSW & ACT is a member of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts [WAGGS] and therefore forms part of the largest voluntary organisation in the world that is dedicated to girls and young women. The international association has 10 million members in 145 countries.

Currently Girl Guides NSW & ACT has 1,600 adult members who perform a leadership role by inspiring and educating young women. The adult members work with more than 1,000 young leaders who carry out the core guiding business of supporting girls to develop confidence and a sense of responsibility within their communities. In addition, a vital contribution is made by more than 2,500 volunteers, such as fathers and other family members who assist with barbecues and help to maintain guide halls, and support group members who contribute to administration and fundraising. The adult members and volunteers play an active role in determining the direction taken by this organisation and they are responsible for the success of the Guides.

The New South Wales Government is committed to supporting the Girl Guides. In June 2001 the Government allocated \$96,500 for an e-learning program for Girl Guides leaders. Girl Guides NSW & ACT collaborated with Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) to ensure that best practice information on autism spectrum disorder and Asperger's syndrome was included in the design of the program. The aim of the program is to train leaders to be proactive in encouraging girls with a disability to join the Girl Guides, to facilitate that participation and to build the social confidence of participants. The new e-learning program will have three major components. The first is core basics of support, which provides generation information for leaders, regardless of the type of disability concerned. The second is learning activities, which includes more specialised information on major disabilities and special needs areas. The third is a stories section, which features videos and photographic slides of girls and women with a disability who have been involved with Girl Guides.

During the lunch the leaders shared a number of positive stories about the program, particularly leaders from remote and isolated regional areas. Overall the e-learning program has been extremely beneficial, particularly for volunteers who are without actual experience or training in working with children who have complex needs. The e-learning program has proved to be an invaluable tool. The official launch of the website will be at the end of October this year. The resource also will be freely available to similar organisations. Currently, Girl Guides NSW & ACT is working closely with Scouts Australia NSW to develop a similar program. These are some of the brightest young girls and our future leaders. Their involvement through the Girl Guides will develop the skills that are necessary to take them through their lives and friendships.

Furthermore it will give them a chance to meet and to work with other young Australians across the State who share similar interests and thoughts. We are fortunate to live in a nation that respects and recognises the dignity and worth of every human being regardless of his or her race or gender. Most young people aspire to a balanced life and value their families, friendships and independence. They also have concerns about the economy and employment and they want to make a difference. Most importantly, Girl Guides is a means to encourage them to volunteer in society.

MEMBER FOR SOUTH COAST ELECTION COMMITMENTS

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE [3.50 p.m.]: This afternoon I draw the attention of the House to the broken promises of the member for South Coast, Shelley Hancock. The member for South Coast was elected on a promise to deliver a police station for her community in Sanctuary Point. On 3 March 2011 the member for South Coast told the *South Coast Register*:

If I'm elected the establishment of a police station at Sanctuary Point will be high on my list of priorities.

More than 18 months later the community is still waiting; there is still no police station. Earlier this year, when the member for South Coast was asked about the police station, she told her community:

It is my commitment, the government didn't commit to build this.

Those are just clever political weasel words to get out of not keeping promises. Shelly Hancock is a member of the Government. Shelly Hancock is the representative of the people of the South Coast who elected her on the basis of the commitments that she had made to them. I remind the member that she is in government now. Empty promises do not cut it anymore. Earlier this year, when I asked the Government through questions on notices about this issue I was told:

There is no allocation for a new police station in Sanctuary Point included in the 2011-2012 State Budget. Any announcements with respect to any new police stations to be funded in the 2012-2013 State Budget will be made in conjunction with the release of that Budget.

I had a look in this year's budget at the electorate allocation for the South Coast. There is still nothing and there is nothing in the media release for that area either. As recently as 14 August the member for South Coast said:

The Bay and Basin area is still in need of a new police station.

People who live on the South Coast want to know when a new police station will be built. People on the South Coast want to know the real position of the member. They were particularly confused when on 3 February this year the member for South Coast was reported in the *South Coast Register* as saying:

... trying to get a reduction in the overall cost so it's more palatable for the government.

Is the cost more palatable for the Government? Community members have been calling on their local member to honour her election promises to provide a police station at Sanctuary Point, a mobile police van for the Bay and Basin area and 20 additional police officers for the local area command. Meanwhile the community is left to deal with repeated incidents of antisocial behaviour, graffiti and vandalism which are costing local residents and council money. According to the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research chart of drive-by shootings by suburb, last year there was an incident of unlawfully discharging a firearm in the Sanctuary Point area. There was another event recently in Huskisson. In lieu of a better police presence, the community is proposing rewards for information on people responsible for repeated attacks and is requesting the installation of closed-circuit television cameras, improved lighting, and hotspot surveillance. Instead of increasing the police presence the Government is cutting entitlements for police. The community wants to know why their local member, who was elected on her word, will not stand up to her colleagues and deliver for her community.

Since the election of the Liberal-Nationals Government the member for South Coast has not stood up to her colleague the education Minister when he slashed funding to five schools that cater for students with additional learning needs. The member for South Coast will not stand up to her colleagues to stop cuts to the Rural Fire Service. This year is tipped to be one of the worst fire seasons on record, yet this Government is cutting staff. A fire is burning out of control already in Jamberoo and the local Rural Fire Service has not even received a budget for 2012. The member for South Coast has not stood up to her colleague the Minister for Family and Community Services who implemented a freeze on the filling of caseworker vacancies and cut nearly 200 jobs from the department. The member for South Coast has not stood up to her colleague the Minister for Health following cuts to the Ambulance Service of NSW. On 2 February this year the *South Coast Register* is reported as stating that when it comes to advocating for her community "there is a real feeling that the Speaker has lost her voice".

CHILD PROTECTION WEEK

The Hon. JAN BARHAM [3.54 p.m.]: This week communities across the country are acknowledging Child Protection Week in raising awareness about issues of child protection and the prevention of child abuse. According to the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect [NAPCAN] more than 30,000 Australian children were proven to have been abused or neglected last year. The association defines the term "child abuse" in a number of ways and includes the following: physical abuse, non-accidental aggressive act towards a child, including slapping, shaking, punching and kicking; psychological abuse, including rejecting, ignoring, terrorising and/or not providing emotional support and care; sexual abuse, any sexual activity between a child and an adult or older person including exposing or involving a child in pornography; neglect, failure to provide the free trial space it needs, including not enough food, shelter, clothing, supervision and medical

attention; witnessing family violence, a child being present and either hearing or seeing while a parent or sibling is subjected to physical, sexual or psychological abuse or is exposed to damage caused by the abuser. Child abuse in all its forms is really a one-off incident and is always harmful. The National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect website details child abuse as follows:

Child abuse is known to increase the risks of:

- substance addiction
- crime
- homelessness
- poor physical health
- educational failure
- poor employability prospects
- depression and suicide.

As a result, past victims of abuse and neglect are grossly overrepresented in the populations of our prisons, as perpetrators of crime and violence, and amongst the economically and socially disadvantaged members of our society.

National Child Protection Week provides an opportunity to consider the role that governments at all levels play in regard to child protection issues. Currently, out-of-home care is garnering a great deal of attention as the State Government moves to engage external agencies in the provision of that service. Bruce Barbour, the New South Wales Ombudsman, stated:

A shared approach to child wellbeing ... aims to make child protection and shared responsibility across government and between government and non-government agencies.

The protection of children who are deemed to be at risk is possibly one of the most important roles of government. The Department of Community Services must be adequately resourced to perform this vital task. Over recent days concerns have been raised about staffing levels in Community Services offices across the State and whether staff vacancies are being addressed. I look forward to the Minister confirming the current position. The protection of young people—and in special cases those in foster care—is to provide them with skills and support to enable them to take their place in an adult world. In February this year I moved a motion that made reference to the preparation of leaving care plans. This is a legislative requirement of government but there is a poor record of delivery of only 18 per cent of those plans. This lack of preparation for adult life, which will have a direct impact on society, is demonstrated by the fact that 35 per cent of young people who leave care are homeless in their first year out of care.

As a member of the Committee for Children and Young People, I acknowledge the work of the commission and Commissioner Megan Mitchell and their efforts in working towards greater child protection measures across the State. I note that important contemporary issues such as cyber bullying are being addressed by the committee after having been raised by committee members. Recently I attended a youth forum on employment in my local area. I was shocked to hear stories about the sexual harassment of young people in the workplace. My membership of the committee has made it possible for me to raise these matters with the commissioner. I look forward to young people receiving important information about their rights. Employers are also reminded of their obligations to protect young people.

As we mark National Child Protection Week I take this opportunity to thank the thousands of men and women across the State who dedicate themselves to the protection of children, and the prevention of abuse and neglect. The creation of a society in which the safety and wellbeing of all children is ensured must be a priority not only of this Government but also of this Parliament. The future belongs to today's youth. We are responsible as their guardians.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE (Parliamentary Secretary) [3.58 p.m.]: The growing campaign spearheaded by a politically correct elitist coalition of militant secular humanists, atheists and the hard Left—especially the hard Left majority faction of The Greens—to marginalise from public life those whose values are influenced from a religious faith perspective is a process that has been going on for some time now. That process is actively pursued not only in Australia but also in many nations where freedom of religious thought and practice traditionally has been taken for granted. Those who are prominent in this campaign can be found, without too much difficulty, in certain academic and media circles. In Australia they are especially active in the Fairfax press and in the taxpayer-funded ABC.

Wherever taxpayer funds are readily available for them to latch onto in order to advance their agenda one can find them hovering around in disproportionately high numbers. Of course, this is because taxpayer

funds are like mother's milk to them, which they need to propagate their cause. Without taxpayer handouts most of them would not last five minutes in a free marketplace of ideas. Currently we are witnessing the decline and fall of the Fairfax media, which is experiencing a collapse in its circulation and financial viability. Will the Fairfax press accept the lifeline offered to it by Gina Rinehart? No, it will not, because her politics are not their left-wing politics and because she will not be cowed into signing their charter giving Fairfax journalists continued carte blanche to propagate their left-wing agenda, which, if collapsing circulation figures are any indication, has resulted in the Australian public giving them a big thumbs down.

Presumably, Fairfax would rather close up shop than allow any serious alternative political viewpoint that would challenge its newspapers' prevailing left-wing slant. The campaign by the secular left to isolate the majority who hold practising religious values is not imaginary. Their campaign to ghettoise and quarterise the influence of those holding religious views from public life is very much alive and well. Many eminent public figures are speaking out against this trend. Britain's respected Orthodox Jewish leader, Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, has said that, under the guise of anti-discrimination, secularist policies have fuelled the erosion of religious liberty in Great Britain. He said that this was leading to a new *Mayflower*, a reference to the Pilgrim Fathers who fled to America on the *Mayflower* seeking religious freedom. He said:

I share a real concern that the attempt to impose the current prevailing template of equality and discrimination on religious organisations is an erosion of religious liberty.

We are beginning to move back to where we came in the 17th century—a whole lot of people on the *Mayflower* leaving to find religious freedom elsewhere.

In Britain the Catholic Church closed its child adoption program after many decades of service rather than be forced to breach its religious convictions and comply with new draconian laws requiring it to allow equal access to same-sex couples as potential adopting couples. Thankfully that is not the law in New South Wales, but give The Greens half a chance and they would take away that present religious exemption. Also in Britain there was a much-publicised case of a woman sacked from her employment for wearing a fully visible cross around her neck. Britain is not alone in having bigoted secularist thought police operating with apparent immunity. For example, in the American State of Alabama in a school where six-year-old children were asked to bring their favourite book as part of show and tell one child was told to take her book home because it was titled *Jesus Loves Me*. In Louisiana a girl was denied the right to give her high school graduation address because she refused to remove from its text the offending words, "Jesus has been meaningful in my life"—all in the name of alleged separation of church and State.

A similar atmosphere has been evolving in Australia. In 2008 Senator Lyn Allison, then leader of the Australian Democrats, in a well-publicised debate argued in favour of the topic, "The world is better off without religion". She said that the *Bible* was a cruel text and that the church repressed women and fuelled AIDS. In this very Parliament during a debate on a motion by a Greens member supporting same-sex marriage she agreed to accept an amendment that ministers of religion not be forced to officiate at marriage ceremonies if it violated their religious conviction. Whilst she accepted the amendment, she made clear that she did so reluctantly and only in order to help get her motion carried.

The question that could be asked may well be: What would happen to religious freedom if The Greens were unleashed to legislate into law their full wish list? The list goes on: ongoing campaigns by secular humanists to remove opening prayers from parliaments and local councils and the removal of bibles from public hospitals in Queensland for fear of giving offence to some. There was the notorious attempt by a former Greens member of this Parliament to drag Cardinal Pell before the Privileges Committee for allegedly exerting, through his general public comments, some sort of pressure on some parliamentary members to vote on an issue in a way consistent with their professed Catholic values. As we can see, the secular Left lobby is alive and active, but the great majority of people in this nation are awake to their tricks.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO [4.03 p.m.]: Monday 10 September 2012 is International Suicide Prevention Day. We all should bear in mind the scourge of suicide in our society. Far too many people, particularly men and those in rural areas, do not feel they can raise concerns weighing heavily on their minds with family, friends or health professionals. It is the responsibility of us all to recognise that we need to extend a helping hand to people we know who may be suffering mental health issues, whether temporary or long term. Suicide is the leading cause of death for adult males aged under 44 years and is one of the notable causes of

death for all men. We should support Lifeline Australia, which provides a telephone counselling service, and Suicide Prevention Australia for their wonderful work in highlighting problems in Australia caused by suicide and the need to provide adequate services for those who have suicidal thoughts and behaviours.

The work those organisations do with people at risk of suicide and the advocacy they provide for better services for those individuals is worthy of recognition from Federal and State governments. We should support and commend the work of these two agencies because suicide is a scourge and often can be avoided with appropriate timely intervention. If we were to scratch the surface, everybody knows someone who has committed suicide. It is always a terrible loss of life.

[Time for debate expired.]

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

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 4.05 p.m. until Tuesday 11 September 2012 at 2.30 p.m.
