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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday 28 February 2013

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

The President read the Prayers.

CRIMES (SERIOUS SEX OFFENDERS) AMENDMENT BILL 2013

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

Motion by the Hon. Duncan Gay agreed to:

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

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

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

MUSLIM WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Motion by the Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) the Muslim Women's Association was established in 1983 to provide Australian Muslim women with opportunities to enable them to actively participate in and contribute to Australia's culturally and religiously diverse society,
 - (b) since the Muslim Women's Association was established it has provided valued and quality services throughout Sydney and beyond, including emergency relief, settlement services, support for women who are victims of domestic violence, public awareness campaigns and community building,
 - (c) the theme of the Muslim Women's Association's thirtieth anniversary is "aspiring to inspire", and
 - (d) to celebrate this important milestone, the Muslim Women's Association plans to share with the broader community the highlights, achievements and challenges of its 30-year journey.
2. That this House notes the outstanding leadership over three decades of the Muslim Women's Association, including Maha Krayem Abdo, OAM, Wafa Zaim and Dr Ghena Krayem, whose advocacy has ensured Australian Muslim women's voices are heard in public policy debates.
3. That this House congratulates the leaders and members of the Muslim Women's Association on the Association's thirtieth anniversary.

TWENTY-FIVE: STORIES FROM AUSTRALIA'S FIRST PARLIAMENT EXHIBITION

Motion by the Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) on Thursday 17 January 2013, Her Excellency Prof Marie Bashir, AC, CVO, Governor of New South Wales, officially opened the exhibition 'Twenty-Five: Stories from Australia's First Parliament' in the Fountain Court of the Parliament of New South Wales,
 - (b) the exhibition marks 225 years since the establishment of the colony of New South Wales and has been a great success with visitors to the Parliament over the summer period, including more than 2,000 people who came to the Parliament on Australia Day,
 - (c) the exhibition features important items from the archives and collections of the Parliament, many of which have never previously been on display to the public, and
 - (d) this is the first time the Parliament has mounted such an exhibition and welcomes this initiative.

2. That this House:

- (a) congratulates all the Parliament House staff responsible for curating and mounting the exhibition, particularly Nicola Forbes, Jeannie Douglas, Gareth Griffith, Brian Lindsay, Phil Goldsmith, Julie Langsworth, Samantha Brown, Steven Reynolds and Les Gonye, and
- (b) thanks the NSW Business Chamber, Thiess and Macquarie for their sponsorship of the exhibition.

PETITIONS

Macquarie Street and Stingaree Point Drive Turning Bay

Petition requesting construction of a turning bay at the intersection of Macquarie Street and Stingaree Point Drive, Dora Creek, received from the **Hon. Lynda Voltz**.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion by the Hon. Duncan Gay agreed to:

That this House at its rising today do adjourn until Tuesday 12 March 2013 at 2.30 p.m.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN [9.38 a.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that Private Members' item No. 1083 outside the Order of Precedence relating to the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras be called on forthwith.

The motion is urgent because this weekend the thirty-fifth Sydney Mardi Gras, with the theme "Generations of Love", will conclude. This weekend the famous parade and party will be held. Yesterday this motion was before the House to be dealt with as formal business, but unfortunately it was blocked. It is a shame that the House—which always sends congratulatory messages to members of and significant sectors in the community—blocked this motion yesterday. I believe it is urgent that the House sends a message of congratulations to and acceptance of the Sydney lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community—and, indeed, the Australian and international lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities—prior the Mardi Gras parade this weekend. Given that the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras makes a significant contribution to the New South Wales community, it is imperative that the New South Wales Legislative Council sends a signal and a message of acceptance to that community. I urge members to accept urgency on this motion. There is no better time for us to send this message than today. It is urgent that we debate this motion.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA (Parliamentary Secretary) [9.41 a.m.]: I seek to move that the question before the House—

The PRESIDENT: Order! This is a discussion on whether standing orders should be suspended. There being no further contributions to the Hon. Cate Faehrmann's motion, I will put the question to a vote.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 33

Mr Ajaka
Ms Barham
Mr Blair
Mr Buckingham
Mr Colless
Ms Cotsis
Ms Cusack
Mr Donnelly
Ms Faehrmann
Ms Fazio
Ms Ficarra
Mr Gallacher

Miss Gardiner
Mr Gay
Dr Kaye
Mr Khan
Mr Lynn
Mr MacDonald
Mrs Maclaren-Jones
Mr Mason-Cox
Mrs Mitchell
Mr Moselmane
Mrs Pavey
Mr Pearce

Mr Primrose
Mr Searle
Mr Secord
Mr Shoebridge
Mr Veitch
Ms Westwood
Mr Whan

Tellers,
Dr Phelps
Ms Voltz

Noes, 4

Mr Brown
Reverend Nile

Tellers,
Mr Borsak
Mr Green

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Order of Business

Motion by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann agreed to:

That Private Members' Business item No. 1083 outside the Order of Precedence be called on forthwith.

SYDNEY MARDI GRAS

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN [9.50 a.m.]: move:

1. That this House congratulates Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras on its thirty-fifth anniversary festival "Sydney Mardi Gras 2013—Generations of Love".
2. That this House notes the significant contribution of Sydney Mardi Gras to the community, including:
 - (a) being a global beacon of diversity, acceptance and of equal rights for all people,
 - (b) being a celebration of the dignity, integrity and pride of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [LGBTI] people and their families,
 - (c) supporting the campaign for full equality for all people regardless of sexuality, gender, sex or intersex status,
 - (d) providing resources and opportunities for creative and political expression within the LGBTI community,
 - (e) bringing the world's best artists, thinkers and entertainers to Sydney,
 - (f) a boon of more than \$30 million to the New South Wales economy each year, with approximately 20,000 interstate and overseas visitors coming to Sydney specifically for the festival.
3. That this House thanks the Sydney Mardi Gras Co-Chairs Peter Urmson and Siri Kommedahl, Chief Executive Officer Michael Rolik, all the board, staff and thousands of volunteers who have made the Sydney Mardi Gras 2013 possible.

Anyone who has ever been to a Sydney Mardi Gras parade knows that it is an absolutely electric celebration of a truly inspiring community, its achievements and the challenges ahead for full equality. And, of course, it is not just a parade; it is a festival for the arts, political expression and creativity. For me, Mardi Gras is about standing tall, being exactly who you are, and having a hell of a lot of fun while you are doing it. It is not just for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

Dr John Kaye: Point of order: I am finding it hard to hear the excellent contribution of my colleague the Hon. Cate Faehrmann.

The PRESIDENT: Order! There is always a level of noise in the Chamber following a division. Members should find their seats quickly and quietly or leave the Chamber. The Hon. Cate Faehrmann has the call.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: It is a celebration of diversity for everyone. I encourage those members who have not been in the parade before to participate in it. Sydney Mardi Gras is one of New South Wales's—indeed Australia's—most famous and well-loved events. It brings thousands of visitors to Sydney and, as the organisation itself describes, it "captures the imagination of Australia's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex and mainstream communities, taking over the city for weeks on end, culminating in the world-famous Parade: a colourful and dazzling night of pride, celebration and self-expression".

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members wishing to engage in private conversations should move to the members lounge.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: As the festival celebrates its thirty-fifth year it is important to remember the progress and achievements that have been made, and remember those who have suffered, and in some cases still do suffer, at the hands of bigotry and the worst forms of discrimination and violence. I draw the attention of the House to the presence in the President's gallery today of Mardi Gras co-chair Pete Urmson. I take the opportunity to personally thank him and co-chair Siri Kommedahl, along with Michael Rolik and the entire team, who put on the world's best party: a celebration of love, acceptance, coming together and supporting each other no matter who we are. An important part of this year's festival acknowledges the history and the battles—the Sydney Mardi Gras Museum. As the festival guide explains:

The outrageous fun and utter fabulousness, the costumes and controversy, the tears and triumphs of a glorious 35 years are spectacularly put on show in an exhibition that will entertain, engage and leave you proud. Drawing on a diverse array of archival material from public and private collections, the exhibition covers the key themes, events and wonderful personalities that have helped shape the festival into what it is today.

It is hoped that while the exhibition, currently showing at the corner of Oxford Street and Palmer Street, and which will close on Sunday, can soon become a permanent museum space recognising lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex Sydney and its rich and colourful history. Yesterday Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile blocked this motion from being dealt with and supported by this House as formal business. Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile's homophobic objection to recognising, congratulating and thanking the Sydney Mardi Gras festival is the very kind of display of general ignorance that has strengthened and built the Mardi Gras over the years. When the first march took place in 1978 it was met with appalling police violence. Despite ups, downs and challenges, it has grown stronger and larger, and now, as the motion describes, it is a global beacon of diversity, acceptance and equal rights for all people. Sydney Mardi Gras describes that first march in the following terms:

Several hundred gays, lesbians and straight supporters—some in fancy dress and some simply rugged up against the cold—gathered at Taylor Square and followed a truck with a small music and sound system down Oxford Street to Hyde Park. As revellers joined in along Oxford St, the police harassed the lead float along the route and when the march stopped in Hyde Park, where telegrams of support were to be read, police confiscated the lead float truck and arrested the driver Lance Gowland. Angered by this, 1500 revellers diverted up William St to Darlinghurst Road, where the police had closed the road. At this point the police swooped and violently arrested 53 men and women, many of whom were beaten in cells. Over the months that followed more protests and arrests took place and the actions of the police came to be seen as heavy handed.

They were not kidding. Perhaps Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile can fill us in on much of the rest of the proud history of the Mardi Gras, given that he seems to have been present for most of it. This omnipresent moral crusader has prayed for rain and protested, and continues to do so in this Parliament today. I think it is potentially an unhealthy obsession and perhaps Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile needs to talk to somebody about that. I hope that members will reject this kind of homophobia today—

Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile: Point of order: I object to that imputation by the member and ask her to withdraw it.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! I ask the member to withdraw her comment, which is obviously outside the standing orders. The Hon. Cate Faehrmann has made a direct imputation against a member of the House.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: I withdraw that imputation against Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, but I hope that members will reject this kind of homophobia today and send a strong signal, not only to young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people and the rest of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community but also to those within our community who, unfortunately, seek to propagate discrimination and sometimes hatred. We have to be a Parliament that supports diversity. We have to show that we support Mardi Gras and equality for all people. I hope that the Hon Duncan Gay, the roads Minister, will respond positively soon to calls that the new rainbow crossing at Taylor Square for Mardi Gras is a permanent fixture. This is another important message to the community that acknowledges the contribution of the community to Sydney and to New South Wales. There has been much fuss about the cost of the Mardi Gras, but the cost is no higher than the cost of any other similar cultural attraction—probably less—and a drop in the ocean considering the over \$30 million a year the Mardi Gras festival brings to the State's economy.

The flag on the street celebrates how far we have come from the dark days at the beginning of the Mardi Gras. The museum will be a major tourist attraction, if it becomes permanent, and will bring new life to

the precinct. So I very much hope the Government supports its permanency. Other highlights of this year's thirty-fifth anniversary festival include Tina Arena performing with the Sydney Symphony; British playwright, Jonathan Harvey's *Beautiful Thing*; Sydney Dance Company's *De Novo*; and so much more. The performing arts, visual arts, cultural and community events and political discussions are all fabulous and, of course, so are the parties.

The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox: Are you going to have a float?

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Unfortunately, I will not make it to the main after-party this year, but I have great memories of this amazing coming together of community. But I will be joining in the parade. The Greens float this year—and we have one every year—will feature Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, who has been the Greens voice for an end to discrimination in Federal Parliament since 2008 and an amazing champion for marriage equality. Greens Leader Senator Christine Milne will march with her gay son, Tom, in the PFLAG float—that is, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. This year's Mardi Gras theme is "Generations of Love", and our float is titled "The Greens: Doing Equality for Generations". It is a celebration of our work over the years for equality. It is a celebration of the recently retired Bob Brown, who as a doctor and activist came out as an openly gay man in rural Tasmania in the 1970s. It is a celebration of the Greens contribution to law reform in the 1990s, especially in Tasmania, where Christine Milne's bill to decriminalise homosexuality was successful. It is also a celebration of our work for marriage equality involving many bills over many years.

Fred may pray for rain this year, as always, but we will be singing to Kylie and Brittany regardless. Feathers do not like the wet, but as in previous years when it has rained the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community will relish the opportunity to show the world how strong it is. Those community members will not give up until they get full equality. They want the same as everyone else: a life free from discrimination and violence and, of course, one of equal opportunity. The Greens will continue to campaign until full equality is realised with the community for the community. In the meantime, I believe this Parliament has an obligation to acknowledge and celebrate Mardi Gras and to reject the homophobia too often displayed in our community and, unfortunately, sometimes in this Parliament. I truly hope that all members will support this motion.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA (Parliamentary Secretary) [10.00 a.m.]: I move:

That the motion be amended by omitting paragraph 2 (c).

I will support the motion provided paragraph 2 (c) is deleted. By utilising the term "full equality" subparagraph (c) encompasses the issue of marriage equality. The Standing Committee on Social Issues currently is inquiring into this issue and, as yet, has not tabled its report in the House. I believe the committee's report should be tabled before we deal with the issue. On that basis I ask that all members support the deletion.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN [10.02 a.m.]: Subject to the amendment being agreed to, I will support the motion. I do not wish to go through the full history of the Mardi Gras but I have some comments to make, particularly if the Hon. Lynda Voltz will hold her tongue just for a short time. The Mardi Gras began in 1978 following events in the United States, particularly commencing with the 1969 Stonewall riots. One cannot separate what has happened in Mardi Gras from the simple reality that the early seventies was the start of the recognition of the oppression of a minority group in Australia—the gay and lesbian community. Those who finally took to the streets in 1978 demonstrated their bravery. Some dressed in costume and covered their faces with makeup, et cetera, because it was an extraordinarily brave act at that time: None of the anti-discrimination laws that exist today existed then. People were subject to discrimination in their employment and in all walks of their lives. Those who went out on that day knew they were taking a bold step. They knew they would be exposed in the media. The names of the 53 people arrested that day were printed in the newspaper. All of them, effectively, were outed for taking a stand in support of being treated as normal human beings. That is what people wanted. In truth, to this very day that is what Mardi Gras is about.

I have attended only four parades, but standing on my balcony, as I will this weekend, hearing the roar of the motor bikes at the start, I know that the erupting noise of the crowd is an expression almost of relief that, unlike in the seventies, people can be out on the street without fear of being beaten or thrown out of their employment: they will be treated as normal human beings. That is what Mardi Gras is about—a celebration of acceptance and of being able to be accepted. This is not the place to score cheap political points when discussing such an important event. We live in a liberal democracy. Some members point out all the time in this House that we must be prepared to accept a diversity of views. That is right. But it is a two-way street. Some things said in this House I do not like

or accept. Indeed, because I am a member of a political party I have to vote to support those issues, but the nature of a liberal democracy entitles people to have different views on many issues, including marriage equality and changes in anti-discrimination laws. If that view does not agree with mine, then being a liberal democrat means that I have to suck it up. At times I have to be prepared to take a stand, be prepared to argue my view in the party room and hope to convince others. But if I do not that is the nature of things.

I am a member of a committee inquiring into what should be done regarding the defence of provocation. We all believe to a greater extent in the sanctity of life. We all believe that people do not deserve to be beaten up on the street or killed because they make, for instance, a homosexual advance towards somebody. One of the greatest proponents of that view is Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile. He has made it plain to the lobbyists that he does not believe people should be beaten up in Oxford Street because they are gay; nor does he believe that people should be killed because they have made a homosexual advance towards somebody. Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile should not be stereotyped simply for political gain. Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile and I have profound disagreements on matters, but a liberal democracy entitles him to disagree with me and me with him, and for both of us to respect the opinion of the other. Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile has a different perception of what "mardi gras" means, but he is entitled to that view as much as I am entitled to my view. I welcome the motion. I welcome that the Mardi Gras will be held this weekend and I hope everyone has a good time.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA (Parliamentary Secretary) [10.07 a.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to support the amendment to the motion. We all may not agree that celebrating diversity is a great thing. People have different points of view, but we live in a very liberal and just society where people of any sexuality—transgender, gay, lesbian, et cetera—can be together, congregate and celebrate, as long as that is done peacefully and in harmony. The Mardi Gras attracts a tourist element and many sightseers who may not necessarily be gay, lesbian or transgender but who attend for the fun of it. When Cate Faehrmann or any member of this Chamber respectfully congratulates a certain community on an event most of us will support it. However, the wording in paragraph 2 (c), "supporting the campaign for full equality for all people regardless of sexuality, gender, sex or intersex status", means supporting marriage equality. The initial innocuous and bipartisan motion to support the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras has been turned into a same-sex marriage debate. If that is not devious, what is? That is completely disingenuous and those opposite should be condemned for doing that.

If they really cared about congratulating the organisers of the gay Mardi Gras, they would not have muddied the waters with paragraph 2 (c) of the motion. The Hon. Cate Faehrmann is being disingenuous and is setting up the motion for failure. All I can say is that it is very poor of anyone who supported that paragraph in the motion—it is a poor show. The motion congratulating all those organisers could have been put and agreed to: it would have sailed through without any problem. But no, The Greens had to be smart, they had to be devious and they had to add paragraph 2 (c), which means acknowledging same-sex marriage. The member proposing the motion and those supporting her know that is a greatly divisive subject in this House and in the community.

Dr John Kaye: Point of order: I appreciate where the member is coming from and the member has a right not to like paragraph 2 (c) but she is accusing—

The Hon. Walt Secord: She has preselection, just like Cate.

Dr John Kaye: Cate does not have a preselection, Walt. My point of order is that by saying that the inclusion of paragraph 2 (c) is devious the Hon. Marie Ficarra is accusing the Hon. Cate Faehrmann of being devious. The member—

The Hon. Rick Colless: What is the point of order?

Dr John Kaye: It is offensive to the member. The member has a long track record of supporting full equality for all people. As long as I have known her she has been an articulate advocate for full equality. There is nothing devious about that. I think it is offensive.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Paul Green): Order! There is no point of order. The member against whom the comments have been made has not taken offence.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: I do not want to give offence to any honourable member. The procedure and the way it was approached were devious and everyone in the House is aware of that. Those opposite might be sitting back and smiling and saying, "We have won one here." Well, they have not. It has again highlighted that people can be disingenuous in the way that they put congratulatory motions to this House.

The Hon. Walt Secord: You would know: you put a lot up.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Calm down, Walt Disney. I am glad that the Hon. John Ajaka has moved for the exclusion of paragraph 2 (c), which gives me the opportunity to support the rest of the motion. There should not be a debate on same-sex marriage today. That is a huge issue for another day if it is brought before the House with plenty of notice. There will be extensive debate, because members represent an extensive community that wants us to be vocal on major family and social issues. I support the amendment.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ [10.12 a.m.]: I support the motion. I see it as an opportunity to congratulate the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras on its thirty-fifth anniversary and to celebrate the liberal values instilled in our community following the human rights movements of the 1960s. Whilst the Hon. Trevor Khan spoke about people being beaten in the 1960s and 1970s, I can also say that I had an uncle who was thrown into Long Bay jail for sodomy. It was not just that people were beaten or marginalised; people were put in jail for their sexual preferences. The human rights movement in the 1960s ensured that those things changed. Some in this Chamber believe that our adherence to liberal values may encourage illiberal behaviour; the reality is that it is those liberal values, fought for by grassroots movements and often implemented by this Chamber, that have changed our society.

This is a celebration of those liberal values that the people of New South Wales have long fought for and held dear. Often the New South Wales Parliament is dragged to a point where society already is. Those values make us a more inclusive society with less marginalisation of those who come from minority cultures. If it means that people are no longer imprisoned and that they have the right to live as who they are and why they are then we should celebrate those liberal values and continue to fight for them in this Chamber to ensure our society does not go backwards but always moves forward. That view is in no way meant to denigrate other people in the Chamber with other views. People have deep-seated beliefs and people in this Chamber respect them. It is our liberal values that allow us to embrace ideas and all the ways in which people want to live their lives.

I thank the organisers of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. I note that people such as Max Pearce and Di Minnes from the Labor movement played a significant part in those original demonstrations. In the days before The Greens and other movements, often the environmental, gay rights and land rights movements came from the Labor Party and the liberal values it holds. It is something of which the Labor Party is particularly proud.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE [10.15 a.m.]: I move:

That the motion be amended by omitting paragraphs 2 (a), 2 (b), 2 (c) and 2 (d).

I oppose the motion and indicate my disappointment. I understood the House was going to deal with the motion relating to Israel that the Hon. Rick Colless gave notice of on 19 February relating to the deputation from this Parliament—10 key members from the upper and lower Houses of Parliament. The Jewish Board of Deputies representatives were in the gallery expecting that debate this morning. I am disappointed that arrangement was not upheld. We are now dealing with the motion moved by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann on 26 February. The motion of the Hon. Rick Colless should have taken precedence today.

I thank the Hon. Trevor Khan for his remarks, which were obviously genuine and spontaneous. I had no knowledge of what he was going to say today. I appreciate his placing those comments on the record. I have stated that position over and over again because once one becomes involved with this issue and it is being debated one gets labelled, falsely in many ways, by the media because that suits the media headlines. I have always made it clear that I have no objections to homosexuals having a protest march any time or anywhere. I have no objection to a South American style Mardi Gras: I think those Mardi Gras are great fun occasions. I do have objection to an event that has been allowed over the years to include much material that is offensive, blasphemous, and indecent and includes personal denigration of individuals—opposite to the professed purpose of the Mardi Gras parade. It depends which side of the debate one is on.

As other speakers have said, I probably have attended more Mardi Gras parades than any other member of Parliament. I have led groups of Christians sharing a prayer vigil on the corner of Elizabeth Street and Oxford Street, where it becomes Liverpool Street, in order to register our opposition to what goes on during the Mardi Gras parade. I have had an opportunity to see what goes on. I am not giving second-hand reports or media reports; this is based on what I have seen. When I mention these incidents—and I will mention some in a moment—many people do not believe they could happen, but I am an eye-witness to these things.

The Hon. Cate Faehrmann was indignant that a motion congratulating an organisation was not being passed through this House without controversy. I agree that such a motion should be passed without objection—as long as propaganda is kept out of the motion. The member has deliberately included homosexual propaganda in the motion, knowing that it is controversial. She was hoping to have the motion passed formally yesterday, and today seeks to have it passed by vote of the House knowing, as other members have said, that the community has a wide range of views on this issue and on the Mardi Gras parade. The Hon. Cate Faehrmann is intelligent enough to know that had she put some thought into it she could have drafted a motion that could have been accepted by the House. Sadly, she did not try to do that. The member has included in the motion a lot of emotive language—both from my perspective and I would say from the perspective of many Christians in this State. She included words such as, in paragraph 2 (a):

... being a global beacon of diversity, acceptance and of equal rights for all people.

I am aware that the Hon. John Ajaka moved an amendment to remove paragraph 2 (c). In the same-sex marriage debate those archaic words "equal rights for all people" are used in the context of promoting homosexual issues and same-sex marriage. The Hon. Cate Faehrmann also deliberately included in paragraph 2 of the motion subparagraph (b), which I regard as inflammatory. It asks us to support "a celebration of the dignity, integrity and pride" of lesbian and gay people. We could say we know what lesbians are, and we know what homosexuals are, and we think we know what bisexuals are, but the motion moves into the grey area of transgender and intersex people. I suggest that many in this House would not know what "intersex" means, but that is included in the motion. In other words, the member goes for broke. The member included as subparagraph (c):

... supporting the campaign for full equality for all people regardless of sexuality, gender, sex or intersex status.

How someone could become an intersex person is a mystery to me. The member may explain that to us on some other occasion. She knows that that is the jargon of the marriage equality campaign people. That is why I support the amendment of the Hon. John Ajaka. Subparagraph (d) of the Hon. Cate Faehrmann's motion has the same sense about it:

... providing resources and opportunities for creative and political expression within the LGBTI community.

I have no objection to paragraph 1, or to paragraph 2 (e) and (f), which are factual, and I see no objection to thanking people who serve in a community event and acknowledge that people such as board staff and volunteers have worked hard in organising the event, whether or not I agree with the event. My amendment does not seek to delete those sections of the motion.

In summing up, I might say that many Christians do not recognise the blasphemy because they do not go to Mardi Gras parades or watch them on television. Sometimes television stations are very careful about what they show on television, with some censorship of what goes on. I know that because I have watched video films of Mardi Gras parades that I have attended in person, so I know that some offensive material was not shown in the broadcast of the Mardi Gras. But those who were at the Mardi Gras would see quite a lot of material that is blasphemous. Somebody asked me, "What is blasphemous at a Mardi Gras parade?" Well, it is blasphemous when men dress as Catholic nuns and call themselves Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence—when Catholic sisters are working at Saint Vincent's Hospital caring for homosexuals who have AIDS. I find that insulting and in bad taste. I see no reason for it. These men could dress up in costumes of different nationalities or whatever they like, but dressing to ridicule a religious order I find offensive.

I have met Mother Teresa and have great respect for her. I believe she is a modern Saint. But what is the reason for floats in the Mardi Gras parade denigrating her, with banners saying, "I'm Mother Teresa's lovechild"? Why send up a person such as Mother Teresa, whose life was committed to care and compassion for the poor and destitute? The Greens say they believe in care and compassion for the poor and destitute, but they seem to have a double standard. One of the Mardi Gras parades that I found most offensive had a float based on the design of St Mary's Cathedral. It must have been a very expensive float: it had an almost perfect model of the cathedral the size of a semitrailer. One could say, "Well, maybe that is in admiration of the cathedral." But no; all round the cathedral were homosexual men simulating sexual acts of sodomy. To me, that was yet another insult to the religious community, and in particular the Christian community of our State and our city. Often, in Mardi Gras parades, religious leaders are mocked and ridiculed. The Pope himself is ridiculed, as are cardinals, bishops and so on, with people dressed in their regalia.

I could go into a lot of detail about indecency, but I think most members would be aware of what happens in a Mardi Gras parade. There is a lot of almost nudity, particularly with males, bare-bottom men,

topless dikes on bikes, simulated acts of sodomy, on occasions a large float depicting a penis, with men on the float engaged in sexual acts, and so on. I mentioned personal denigration. Many of the Mardi Gras floats attack individuals. They never attack Greens leaders or Labor leaders, but they frequently attack conservative leaders, Liberal Party leaders such as John Howard, Tony Abbott, Bronwyn Bishop and so on. As members know, I have been sent up in a number of Mardi Gras parades, with a large float depicting my head and so on. People have said, "You should sue them." I have said, "Well, I don't particularly sue anybody."

I have been sued five times, but I do not feel I should use the courts in that way. I took it as a compliment because one float depicting me was based on John the Baptist, whose head was chopped off after Salome danced the Dance of the Seven Veils and was told she could have whatever she wanted, and said, "I want the head of John the Baptist", which is what her mother told her to say. So the idea was to have my head on a plate. Often homosexual protesters shout out, as they have done outside Parliament House, "We want Fred Nile dead; we want Fred Nile's head"—all very loving and peaceful comments by this minority group, who claim they have been persecuted and so on, but are very happy to persecute everybody else.

I also find it insulting—I do not know what other members think—to see a unit of our police force in full uniform parading in a Mardi Gras parade. I do not mind a police officer taking part in a Mardi Gras parade—if he is a homosexual, that is his choice—but he should wear a T-shirt and jeans; he should not turn up wearing his official uniform. He is not on duty in the parade; in fact, he is taking part in a controversial event. I find it even more insulting that the Labor Government has given approval for Australian soldiers to parade in full uniform. That, to me, is an insult to all the men and women who have served in the Australian armed forces over the years. I do not see it as a necessity for that to happen again. Individuals can take part as individuals, but not as representatives of those organisations. I oppose the motion and commend my amendment to delete subparagraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d) from paragraph 2.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD [10.29 a.m.]: I am pleased to speak in favour of the motion before the House moved by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann congratulating the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras on the thirty-fifth anniversary of the festival, Sydney Mardi Gras 2013, "Generations of Love". Previous speakers have noted much of the history of Mardi Gras but it should be acknowledged that these days Mardi Gras is a wonderful celebration that provides a great opportunity for members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex [GLBTI] community to come together with their families and friends to celebrate their relationships, their love, and their community and the wonderful culture that has developed from it. It is important to remember the history of Mardi Gras: the history of struggle and protest, when members of the gay and lesbian community had to take to the streets and risk arrest, risk being outed in a way that would work against them perhaps within their family but certainly within many workplaces, and demand human rights that many in Australia took for granted.

The Mardi Gras began at a time when we as a society were becoming aware of discrimination and its impacts on minority groups within our society. It was a time of real social change in Australia but the gay and lesbian community was one of the last groups to secure legislation that protected them from discrimination, and it was through the great efforts of the leaders of that community and many courageous people who ensured that that legislation came about.

As a Labor member of Parliament and a long-term party member, I am proud of the history of Labor in ensuring that gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex members of Australian society realise their full rights. I acknowledge that we still have some way to go but it is important to recognise that it has been overwhelmingly through the actions and votes of Labor members of Parliament that equality has been achieved for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex community in this country. This year the Labor Party has cause for great celebration because it is 30 years since the formation of the first gay rights group within the Australian Labor Party. Whilst Mardi Gras is celebrating its thirty-fifth anniversary, the Labor gay rights group—known as Rainbow Labor—is celebrating its thirtieth anniversary.

It is important for me to note the many achievements of Labor in reducing discrimination against the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex community. In 1984 New South Wales Labor decriminalised homosexuality. In 1985 Labor recognised same-sex couples for immigration purposes. In 1986 Labor declared anti-gay discrimination in the workplace a breach of human rights. In 1992 Labor ended anti-discrimination in the Australian Defence Force—and what a great delight it will be this year to see members of the Australian Defence Force marching in the Mardi Gras Parade. I know that they will be delighted to wear their uniforms proudly as members of the Australian Defence Force who give so much to our nation and as proud members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex community.

In 1994 Labor was the first government in the world to pass sexual privacy laws. In 1999 New South Wales Labor introduced property, hospital, next-of-kin, inheritance and relationship rights for same-sex couples. In 2003 New South Wales Labor equalised the age of consent—another very important reform, particularly for gay men in this State. In 2008 Labor removed discrimination in 84 pieces of Federal legislation, delivering equality for same-sex de facto couples. In 2008 New South Wales Labor recognised lesbian mums and removed discrimination from 57 New South Wales laws.

In 2010, in conjunction with the then member for Sydney, Clover Moore, Labor legislated for adoption by same-sex couples in New South Wales. Again it should be noted that the overwhelming majority of votes that supported that legislation were Labor votes. It was Labor who had the numbers on the floor of the Parliament and delivered that reform—a very important reform for same-sex parents and particularly children of same-sex couples. In 2011 Labor made obtaining a passport easier for transgender and intersex Australians. Also in 2011 Labor's national conference voted to support marriage equality in its party platform. In 2012 Labor launched the first National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Ageing and Aged Care Strategy.

Today the fight for marriage equality continues, but again I note that when the marriage equality bill was before the Federal Parliament the majority of members of Parliament who voted for it were Labor members. It is my very strong view that it will be Labor members of Parliament and a Labor government that eventually brings about the two areas of reform that are needed in legislation in the areas of anti-discrimination and, most importantly, marriage equality.

Despite all those achievements, we must recognise that many members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex community still suffer profound discrimination within their communities. I had the privilege of being part of the launch of a report called "We're Family Too", which documents the experiences of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex people from an Arabic-speaking background. The report examines the issues those people face within their families and the intolerance and lack of acceptance they experience. It is important for us to recognise that although many Australians who identify as gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual or intersex have benefited from the reforms—enhancing their quality of life and improving their legal and human rights—many Australians still suffer from hurtful and damaging discrimination within their families and communities because of their sexuality.

The challenge for all of us is to work with local communities and the gay and lesbian community to bring about a change of attitude. We have to challenge and change community attitudes so that all Australians who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex can live free from the fear of violence because of their sexuality, free from the fear of discrimination and free from the fear of rejection by their families. It is particularly difficult for young people from diverse backgrounds because often their culture and faith are pivotal to their identity. Their sexuality is also a pivotal part of their identity, but when they celebrate and embrace one aspect of their identity they place at risk other aspects, and it causes them great hurt.

Some great people are working with those communities. I acknowledge Sekneh Hammoud-Beckett, whom I have had the privilege of knowing for a long time. She is from a Muslim background but grew up in Australia. As a psychologist she works with young people from diverse backgrounds who are facing difficult issues within their families and cultures because of their sexuality. A few weeks ago she spoke at an event called "Queer Thinking", which was held as part of the Mardi Gras festival at the Seymour Centre. It was the best attended of all the events on the program. Whilst I was there I had the opportunity to meet and speak with young people, and for that matter older people, from diverse backgrounds. They spoke about the rejection and intolerance they still face from their families. In many cases, their sexuality has caused them to become alienated from their families, which has been painful and hurtful for them.

I remind the members of Parliament who talk of homosexual propaganda and refer to this motion as devious that many young Australians who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex still have a difficult time in their families. They also face significant mental health issues because of a part of their identity—their sexuality. To that end, I commend a number of councils that are doing great things, in particular, Bankstown City Council, where I had the good fortune to serve as mayor for some time. Under the great leadership of the current mayor, Councillor Khal Asfour, Bankstown council is consulting with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex people in the Bankstown area. That action came out of the "We're Family Too" report, which identified the serious issues faced by gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex people from Arabic-speaking backgrounds.

I also commend Darcy Byrne, the mayor of Leichhardt, who this year has extended Leichhardt Municipal Council's celebration of Mardi Gras. Recently, he held a reception for the community, which

included guest speakers and a panel discussion. Leichhardt council also will undertake consultation to ensure that its planning takes into account the needs of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex community. I commend Darcy for that. Of course, Rainbow Labor will again celebrate on Saturday night and participate in the parade with a rainbow float. A number of great Labor members of Parliament and activists will be a part of it, including the Hon. Tanya Plibersek, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, Mayor Darcy Byrne, Councillor Linda Scott from City of Sydney council and Councillor Jo Haylen from Marrickville Council.

Quite frankly, it depends on my arthritic knees, but I hope to be there as well and have some fun. I know it will be a great celebration for all members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex community. The intersex community is still largely ignored in terms of legislation, and their needs require serious attention. We have to do a lot of work to recognise them and address the discrimination they face. I commend the Hon. Cate Faehrmann for bringing this matter before the House.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE (Parliamentary Secretary) [10.43 a.m.]: I support the amendment of the Hon. John Ajaka to omit paragraph 2 (c). The inclusion of that paragraph means that members who support the motion are in effect committing themselves to supporting same-sex marriage. It is a backdoor method of putting on the record a member's support for same-sex marriage. It will be interesting to see whether the mover of this motion, the Hon. Cate Faehrmann, supports the amendment to omit paragraph 2 (c). I will not be surprised at all if she does not support the omission of paragraph 2 (c), and nor will many other members. The inclusion of paragraph 2 (c) is an outrageous attempt to dragoon members into effectively committing themselves to same-sex marriage. I do not want to be so dragooned.

Further, it would be disgraceful for anyone to suggest that any member of this House who supported the Hon. John Ajaka's amendment or opposed this motion in any form needed counselling or treatment or had a psychological problem. As I said, I will be supporting the amendment of the Hon. John Ajaka and I will be interested to see whether the Hon. Cate Faehrmann also supports it. As to the use of the word "obsession", I would suggest that those who seek to use a motion in support of Mardi Gras to try to dragoon other members into supporting same-sex marriage are demonstrating an obsession.

Dr JOHN KAYE [10.47 a.m.]: I wholeheartedly support the motion moved by my colleague the Hon. Cate Faehrmann. I also acknowledge in the gallery Councillor Michelle Tormey from Penrith City Council, the first Greens member of that council and an extremely fine councillor.

The Hon. Cate Faehrmann: There are many more to come.

Dr JOHN KAYE: As my colleague points out, there are more to come.

The Hon. Helen Westwood: I believe she receives mentoring from Councillor Karen McKeown, a good Labor councillor.

Dr JOHN KAYE: She does. I thank my colleague the Hon. Cate Faehrmann for bringing this motion before the House. I speak to this motion from a personal perspective but also from the perspective of someone who travels to rural and regional areas throughout New South Wales. When I speak to people in those areas the conversation almost always turns to the issue of youth suicide. If we are to seriously address the issue of youth suicide we must engage with the community and, as we do during the Mardi Gras festival, celebrate diversity.

I thank the Sydney Mardi Gras co-chairs Peter Urmson, who is in the President's Gallery, and Siri Kommedahl. I acknowledge their work in organising this year's Mardi Gras. I also thank the 35 teams who organised the previous Mardi Gras festivals. In particular, I acknowledge the first team 35 years ago. We have to cast our minds back and remember what they were dealing with. Homosexuality was illegal in New South Wales and was punishable by a jail sentence.

Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile: Homosexual acts, John.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I acknowledge the interjection by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile. Homosexual acts were illegal in New South Wales and were punishable by terms of imprisonment. People who were homosexual were ruthlessly pursued by the police and at the very least suffered massive stigma in the community. We were also on the cusp of one of the great tragedies of the twentieth century, the AIDS epidemic, and in the middle of an unspoken epidemic of youth suicide in both city and country areas, but particularly in rural and regional New South Wales.

The 35 teams who have run the Mardi Gras have enabled everybody in New South Wales and in communities across New South Wales—whether they are gay or straight, lesbian or intersex, bisexual, transgender, queer or really not sure of their sexuality—to have a sense of "It's okay". As somebody with a great interest in politics and human rights, I have to say that my own journey includes an important realisation, which probably came about in 1983 when I attended my first Mardi Gras. I was persuaded to do so in order to stand with my lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer brothers and sisters who were an oppressed group in Australian society. The realisation I came to was that love is love and that sexuality is sexuality. It does not matter much what equipment people use to express either. It does not matter what their gene structures are or what their gender expressions of those gene structures are: it is love; it is sexuality; it is part of humanity. We should all celebrate and engage with this part of humanity, and we should all recognise that there is diversity.

I would hate for us to have a conversation in this Parliament about the diversity of heterosexuality. It is true that there is enormous diversity in the way that two people of the opposite gender relate to each other and there is huge diversity within the categories of marriages, partnerships and casual sexual relationships. Yet we accept that. Nobody ever says, "Oh, you're a raving heterosexual." It is time we recognised that that diversity lives on in a continuum. I recognised that in 1983 when I was standing and watching the Mardi Gras parade. I also recognised that we lived in a State in which the police were profoundly hostile. I lived in a State where for many young people coming out to their parents and their community was unbelievably difficult. These issues were accompanied by human tragedies that wrecked lives, such as the HIV epidemic, or left people with awful choices such as who to tell whom they loved or what they did. In large measure, it is with thanks to the courage of the people in Stonewall, New York, in 1978 that the gay rights campaigns started.

In 1979 I was in the United States of America watching the evolution of the gay and lesbian community. I lived just across the bay from San Francisco. I was thoroughly delighted as well as deeply challenged by the gay culture that was emerging in San Francisco. That culture has survived all manner of complexities—a police force that was initially hostile and is now completely supportive; the start of the widespread HIV infection; and the assassination of a man whom to this day I count among my great heroes, Harvey Milk. He was assassinated partly because he was openly gay and partly because he was an exceptionally successful local government politician.

The Hon. Trevor Khan: And an extraordinarily abrasive character.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I acknowledge the interjection by the Hon. Trevor Khan. I did not know the man; he was assassinated some weeks before I arrived in San Francisco. But I knew people who knew him—not just the gay community but the progressive communities on both sides of the bay—and they were still mourning his loss in 1979. Harvey Milk was capable of being rude and abrasive, but he also was capable of great humanity. He had a huge capacity to lead his communities, not just the gay and lesbian community, towards a sense of acceptance of a diverse and multicultural society. Shortly after my first attendance at a Mardi Gras parade in 1983—and I am not suggesting there is any cause and effect—Neville Wran introduced a private member's bill to decriminalise homosexual acts. I emphasise that it was not a Government bill; it was a private member's bill. I still remember the night when the legislation was passed by the lower House and the excitement in my apartment building in Coogee. People were calling across the walls between apartments, "It's through."

From then on, thanks to an extremely committed group of gay, lesbian, transgender, intersex and queer activists, huge advances have been made in gay rights in New South Wales. I was pleased and honoured to be part of the vote that created equality in the partnership register. I pay tribute to every member of The Nationals who were then members of Parliament and who voted for that. I know the types of debates that take place in rural communities. In fact, I have been part of those debates in some rural communities, so I know how difficult that was for The Nationals members. I also know that those members of The Nationals were operating within the parameters and confines of their political party. They were taking a huge step forward for the sake of young gay men in rural and regional New South Wales who were facing the unspeakable tragedy of suicide. It is so difficult for young gay men in rural and regional areas to come out to their communities. Those members of The Nationals took a remarkable step forward for humanity. I do not have the statistics, but it is clear that we are moving to address that human tragedy.

I also wish to address the issue of HIV-AIDS. I have reached an age at which I have watched HIV-AIDS take far too many of my friends. I do not wish to speak about them now but, as I said, I have lost far too many of my friends through HIV-AIDS. Yesterday I attended the AIDS Council for New South Wales [ACON] briefing for parliamentarians. I was moved to tears when I heard the epidemiologists say that we are now within grasp of making HIV-AIDS—this epidemic that has ravaged innocent people across the State and this nation—a rare disease.

Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile: It is on the increase again.

Dr JOHN KAYE: It is on the increase again, but we now have ways of dealing with the infection rates. The infection emerged out of San Francisco, where it was referred to as the gay men's health crisis, it became the acquired immune deficiency syndrome and then it transitioned to become a human immunodeficiency virus. I also watched some truly great political leaders: the Australian Minister for Health, Dr Neal Blewett, and his Opposition counterpart, Senator Baume, who led their parties to perceive HIV-AIDS as a health crisis, despite some of their political colleagues being caught up in the AIDS hysteria. The efforts of both men led Labor and non-Labor political parties to deal with the infection as a health crisis, not as an opportunity to stigmatise a community.

I wish to acknowledge the change in attitude of the NSW Police Force. I remember the hostility of the Police Force at the 1983 Mardi Gras. From where I was standing, I could see that they were not violent but they were hostile. We have now reached the point where the Police Force recognises the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer community as part of the communities whom police officers are there to serve and protect. I take my hat off to older policemen who have the good hearts, brains and souls that have enabled them to make the transition and for being capable of recognising that Mardi Gras is about people and their lives, and the rights of individuals. It is a massive testament to the capacity of humans to understand where they have been wrong in the past and to make those transitions, and to understand that we are all essentially human beings.

I want to make a little bit of an apology to the Hon. Trevor Khan, and in this form. I am intolerant of intolerance. Having seen intolerance against my community, the Jewish people, having seen it in the United States against blacks and Chicanos, and having seen it against gays, lesbians, intersex, transgender and queer people—and particularly, I must say, still against intersex people—I believe strongly that we cannot tolerate it. I appreciate there is politics in the Hon. Cate Faehrmann's motion, particularly in paragraph 2 (c). I do not think the accusations of guile, deception and deviousness are warranted. Anyone in this Chamber who doubts that the Hon. Cate Faehrmann is a strong, cogent, articulate voice for full equality is kidding themselves. She has been in this Chamber for 2½ years now and has been one of the leading and articulate voices for marriage equality and full equality.

Because of the way the debate has progressed, paragraph 2 (c) draws in issues of marriage equality. I do not think the Chamber would be surprised to know that I also believe in full equality, as do many other people in most political parties represented in this Chamber. I acknowledge the work they do within their own communities to make that advance. I do not wish to make a political point here other than this: The fact that people like the Hon. David Clarke and Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile immediately go from full equality to marriage equality is an admission that the absence of marriage equality is an absence of equality.

I have no doubt that paragraph 2 (c) will be removed from the motion and I have no doubt that we will be debating this issue because it will not be over until we are equal. It is a fundamental and profound human rights issue, but it is also an issue of recognising a community and telling that community that what they do is what we do; their celebrations are our celebrations; their lives are our lives; and our children are you. Until we can all say that, this debate is not over. Until no young man in western New South Wales commits suicide because he cannot come out to his parents, cannot reconcile the urges he feels and cannot live a fully accepted life, it is not over. I thank the Hon. Cate Faehrmann for moving this motion, and I support it enthusiastically.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX (Parliamentary Secretary) [11.02 a.m.]: I shall make a couple of brief comments in relation to this motion. First, I congratulate the Hon. John Ajaka on moving his amendment, which seeks to delete paragraph 2 (c) of the motion. A number of the comments made in support of that amendment reflect what I understood to be the tradition of this House, generally speaking, insofar as it relates to motions that are of a nature congratulating, honouring and celebrating parts of our diverse community. It is generally the practice of the House for those sorts of motions to bring people together, motions that are tolerant and respectful of people's views across the Chamber.

What we have seen in this motion moved by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann is a continuation of her strong campaign in relation to marriage equality. I respect that. I respect her views in that regard. I do not share them, as the honourable member would know and as I have made clear in this Chamber on a number of occasions. That does not mean we cannot discuss them, and we can certainly have a civilised debate about these issues in this place and in other places. The comments of the Hon. Trevor Khan were absolutely on point in that regard. It is a fundamental part of being a member of a liberal democracy. Some would say the Hon. Trevor Khan

standing with Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile on this point is an unusual group of people standing together to celebrate the rights of people to express their points of view on issues they hold dear. That is an important point about debates in this place.

That goes to the heart of why some members are concerned that the Hon. Cate Faehrmann in this motion seeks to subtly continue that deliberate campaign, which we respect her right to do. Paragraph 2 (c) of the motion was blatant, clear. I do not believe the Hon. Cate Faehrmann was being devious in any way, shape or form. I think she was merely being deliberate and continuing her campaign on issues close to our hearts. I respect that, but I humbly submit to the mover of the motion that perhaps in the interests of bringing the Chamber together, ensuring all members can celebrate the diversity of our community and the great contribution the gay Mardi Gras makes to celebrating that diversity, as well as promoting equality in our community—a touchstone that everybody in this Chamber would support—she agree to the amendment moved by the Hon. John Ajaka. If she does so, we can all stand together and celebrate these important issues.

I note the comments of Dr John Kaye, who said that he is intolerant of intolerance. I cannot help but think that in the case of Dr John Kaye the reality is he is intolerant of intolerance so long as people agree with him. That is the underlying problem with this motion in its current form, but that is the experience I have generally with The Greens as a whole. They are intolerant of intolerance as long as people agree with them.

Mr David Shoebridge: Someone will have to work out what that means at a later point.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: That is a theme we can perhaps reflect upon. I am sure Mr David Shoebridge will have something to contribute in due course. I ask the Hon. Cate Faehrmann, who moved this motion, to submit to the suggested amendment so we can all stand together to celebrate diversity in our community.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN [11.07 a.m.]: I support my colleague Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile's amendment and the Hon. John Ajaka's amendment to the motion moved by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann. With the maturity of this House, there comes a point when we can agree to disagree. How we go about that is important. The Hon. Trevor Khan spoke incisively and well. There is a diversity of views in this House. The beauty of democracy is that everybody should be able to sit around the table and give the views of the people they represent. The Christian Democratic Party has values that it supports. Hopefully, what we bring to this Chamber with those views helps democracy and does not detract from it. There is no doubt that the maturity of this House is growing when everybody can put forward their views and not be persecuted for them.

I refer to something that Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile said. In our youth ministry, when we teach kids about the Word of God, there is a great saying, "I can't hear what you're saying for seeing what you are." If we are to unify to stop persecuting people, we must always be mindful not to create an environment of double standards where we do one thing but ask a lot of others, as mentioned by other members. If we ask for peace, we need also to show and act out of peace. We need always to try to bring to this House a focus on unity, not on disunity.

Comments were made that the motion moved by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann could have been drafted in a more unifying manner. Everyone has had their say about the motion. On the topic of youth suicide, it is absolutely tragic that some people, especially our youth, believe the only option for their fear is suicide. Their mind becomes closed and they believe they cannot work through an emotional obstacle. We need to do everything we can to support them. All members would agree that this House always will try to do what it can to help people identify another way out. It is tragic that some situations lead to suicide.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE [11.11 a.m.]: As a member of The Greens, I proudly and strongly support the motion moved by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann to congratulate the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras on its thirty-fifth anniversary festival "Sydney Mardi Gras 2013—Generations of Love". I feel privileged that throughout all of my life—I am 41 years of age—the Mardi Gras has been a fantastic part of Sydney, with its extraordinary annual celebration of our city's diversity, tolerance and acceptance of a wonderful part of our community: the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [LGBTI] community.

Other members spoke about the ground-breaking work of the first Mardi Gras. I respect all of its history and praise those brave 78ers who stood up to police brutality and a much less tolerant society and made that first march. Recently I saw some sketchy footage of the 1978 march available on YouTube. I got a shiver down my spine recognising the courage and strength of those people and was reminded of how far we have

come in the 35 years since. The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras has been a constant in the constellation of Sydney for as long as I can remember. It has made Sydney a richer, more tolerant, more welcoming and more culturally sexually diverse city, which, for me, is a great part of the story of Sydney, New South Wales and Australia. We as a Parliament should not only congratulate the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, but also celebrate it.

The motion notes some of the core contributions of the Mardi Gras. First, it is a global beacon of diversity, acceptance and equal rights for all people. Discussion in this Chamber about people feeling uncomfortable has emanated from a fairly traditional source of opposition to the Mardi Gras: the Christian Democratic Party—Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile and the Hon. Paul Green—and from the Hon. David Clarke. The contribution of that relatively small part of this House suggests an ongoing intolerance to the Mardi Gras celebration. That intolerance is evidence that the Mardi Gras is as relevant and essential today as an expression of equality as it was 35 years ago. The community needs to fully accept with an open heart that people have differences, such as sexual identities, and should be welcomed and celebrated as a full and active citizen in this society.

Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile: The objection is to the blasphemy and indecency of the Mardi Gras, not to homosexuality.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: The interjection of Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile confirms the lack of acceptance and tolerance. The Hon. Paul Green said we should respect difference in this Chamber. I agree. But I do not respect a political intolerance towards those who identify as homosexual, gay, lesbian, intersex, queer or transgender. I do not respect that form of politics as it divides people and makes individuals feel less worthy. It also reduces our democratic society and diminishes some of its great values of equality and tolerance. The motion notes that the Sydney Mardi Gras is a celebration of the dignity, integrity and pride of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people and their families. The reference to families is an important part of the motion. Often parents and siblings stand by or with their children, brothers or sisters when they face intolerance simply because they want to be open and proud of their sexuality. I pay my regard to those parents and family members who stand up for the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community because of their personal experience with their children, sisters and brothers.

Unfortunately, it appears from the majority of comments in this debate that paragraph 2 (c)—noting that the Mardi Gras supports the campaign for full equality for all people, regardless of sexuality, gender, sex or intersex status—will be deleted. It is remarkable that in 2013 a group of democratically elected legislators will not support full equality for such an important part of our community. I find it extraordinary that the campaign for full equality faces such political opposition. I ask members to reflect upon how relatively backward Australia and New South Wales has become on the full equality debate by reading the opinion piece in today's *Sydney Morning Herald*, if nothing else.

The respected journalist puts forward her observations of the marriage equality debate in the House of Commons, the overwhelming support for full marriage equality on a conscience vote, and the mature and reflective procedure of that debate. Compare that to the divisive and narrow way in which the major political parties in Australia and New South Wales have run the marriage equality debate and the core argument about full equality. Democratically elected representatives should reflect on how they can advance that debate rather than seek to be divisive and single out paragraph 2 (c) as somehow detracting from a motion for the Mardi Gras. The overwhelming majority of participants in the Mardi Gras would strongly support full equality for all people regardless of sexuality, gender, sex or intersex status. For that reason, this House in celebrating the Mardi Gras should celebrate also that truth about the Mardi Gras, its participants and organisers.

The motion comes at an extremely timely moment. The Mardi Gras will be held this weekend and it will be a wonderful celebration. It will build on an extraordinary history of triumph over adversity, of increasing tolerance and increasing acceptance. I congratulate the organisers. I congratulate the community and the great bulk of New South Wales society that supports the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. I hope everybody has a wonderful Mardi Gras on the weekend.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE [11.20 a.m.]: I support the motion and commend the Hon. Cate Faehrmann for moving it. Mardi Gras has a long and rich history in New South Wales. As outlined and ably described by previous speakers, there are many good reasons why we should be supporting this motion. I will talk about what Mardi Gras has meant to me as a lesbian in Sydney. I went to my first Mardi Gras in 1992 at the

age of 20, which seems not long ago but I now realise it was decades ago. I was a volunteer at my first Mardi Gras. I volunteered out the front of the Flinders Hotel, putting up barricades before the parade began. At that time I was not out.

I was a student activist and I had been involved on campus setting up the queer department and supporting the first queer collaborations conference, which happened in Sydney that year. I went to the Mardi Gras for two reasons: first, to support our newly minted lesbian and gay officers who were volunteering and, second, the half price party ticket—as a student, that was an important motivating force. For me it was an opportunity to be part of a massive protest, a celebration and an inclusive event that had everybody there. I was fortunate to be standing in front of the barricades next to the Sydney gay and lesbian deaf contingent. They had signers there and we had a fantastic night. That was my first Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. I mention to the House—this is self-indulgent and I promise not to do it very often—that I was participating for my now partner. She was not my partner then, but she is my partner now. We will celebrate our 20-year anniversary this year. So maybe there was something in the water—although it was not raining that year.

I want to talk about what the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras means to individuals. We know the macro reasons why we should support the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, but the really important reason for me is that it provides visibility. For people who live in Darlinghurst or Newtown it is pretty easy for them to be out, proud and accepted for who they are, but for many people in many suburbs and in many families it is really hard to be gay. It is very difficult. When people see others in the community out and proud, and celebrating who they are, they think that perhaps there is a community for them and perhaps they can find their place in that community. That is really the story of Mardi Gras.

Mardi Gras is about taking new kids at university to Fair Day for the first time and letting them see 100,000 people having a picnic—people with kids and dogs, people who are into sport and the police. They see that acceptance can be found in our community if they look for it. Acceptance is there and it is the majority position for Australians; they are tolerant and accept people for who they are. People can see that if they cannot find acceptance in their community, there is a visible community for them.

Mardi Gras is an opportunity for proud parents to support rainbow babies and kids. I wish them well this year. I know that more than 250 kids will be walking in the parade this year, and they always have a waiting list. Unfortunately, it is too late for kids to participate this year. My children have participated in that parade. This year they will be participating with Rainbow Labor. It is not something people should fear for their kids; the kids love it. They dance with the police officers, they get to talk to people, they see colour and movement, they see a lot of love and support, and they see a great deal of diversity in the crowd and the parade. It is something they enjoy every year. Every year they line up to participate. It is something we should encourage. There is nothing blasphemous or wrong about Mardi Gras. Mardi Gras is a celebration that is inclusive of all who wish to participate in it.

I want to reflect on the Mardi Gras parade. It is one of the biggest parades of its kind in the world. It has more than 10,000 participants. While there are beautiful and large floats in the parade that we all enjoy, it is the smaller groups that stand up and take part, and say we are here and we want to celebrate, that are inspirational. It is the small groups from Wagga Wagga, it is the 2010 float of all of the kids, and it is the AIDS Council of New South Wales [ACON], which has been fighting the HIV epidemic in this State for over 30 years. The AIDS Council of New South Wales has had great success and New South Wales is now at a point where it has the lowest transmission rates of HIV compared with almost anywhere else in the world. Mardi Gras is also a time to reflect and commemorate all who have died from that terrible disease. Those who have died of HIV have had their ashes spread at Mardi Gras and their friends have used that opportunity to commemorate their lives.

Mardi Gras is also a place where people come out for the first time—it happens every year. Some people thought that they would never do that, they thought that they would not have the courage. But Mardi Gras gives them that courage, and that is something to celebrate. Of course, I will be marching with Rainbow Labor at Mardi Gras this year. Rainbow Labor is commemorating and celebrating a very important milestone: 30 years ago the first group of gay and lesbian activists met in a small lounge room in Sydney and started to talk about what the Labor Party should do to progress equality. This group of people, many of whom are still around and I am proud to be associated with, drew up the first gay rights manifesto for what the Labor Party should be doing.

When one reads that manifesto now one can see how far we have come and that change is possible. I can see the change as a result of the work and focus—the time spent campaigning, talking to people, working

with community groups and, importantly, working within a major political party. I refer to two changes, in particular. First, during 16 years of Labor Government we removed every form of discrimination against same sex couples in this State. That matters. It matters to people writing their wills, to those visiting partners in hospital, to mothers who do not have to go through the legal fiction that their children do not have two parents. It also matters to gay foster parents caring for damaged young people that they wish to adopt, and now they can. All those things matter and have changed because of Labor.

There is one last thing to do: marriage equality. I know that there are lots of views about marriage equality. I have to say here today that I think the time has come for marriage equality. The majority of people in Australia believe that it is quite reasonable and, in fact, unfair that people like me are not allowed to marry the person that we love. Our community is dragging our politicians to this debate. While it has been unsuccessful in the first round, there has been a lot of progress. I point to the important work that Rainbow Labor, in concert with groups across Australia, has done to change the platform of the Australian Labor Party to that of supporting marriage equality for Australians. This weekend Mardi Gras will be fantastic. All of the nay sayers that continue to have that view will again be shown, for the thirty-fifth time, that the spirit remains and continues.

I thank all of the volunteers at Mardi Gras. The volunteers who are "gate people", trying to get a cheap ticket, may meet the love of their lives. I thank the people at the top who spend incredible hours on the parade organisation and have to deal with many armchair critics with an opinion about what should, could and cannot be done. They manage to pull it off every year. Happy Mardi Gras to all.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY [11.29 a.m.]: I rise to participate in this important debate taking place this morning and probably going into the afternoon. In doing so I do not wish to repeat a number of comments made by other members, because those interested in the debate can read the record of it after the event and know exactly what everyone said. But there are one or two points that have been made, and at least one or two that have not been made, that I would like to speak about briefly. I have no doubt in my mind that the motion brought before the House by the Hon. Cate Faehrmann has been crafted in a way that will deliberately split the House. I refer specifically to paragraph 2 (c), which is quite deliberately worded to embrace same-sex marriage. The member knows that only too well. She knows full well that she, with others, last year placed a notice of motion on the *Notice Paper* of this House. It is still there and will be debated in due course. She also knows that the Standing Committee on Social Issues has underway an inquiry on that matter, and that it will deliberate and produce a report with recommendations. But for her that is not enough.

The Hon. Trevor Khan: Perhaps it is crafted to glean what your position will be, Greg.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: She wants the debate now. I agree with the Hon. Trevor Khan's observation. There can be a range of different views on this issue of the recognition of and attitude towards the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras—the views of those in this House would be quite varied—but to try to convert a motion dealing with the Mardi Gras into something else is disingenuous. The Hon. Cate Faehrmann knows that she could have brought before the House a motion that probably would have been carried without need for this debate. It is unfortunate that the member crafted her motion quite deliberately in this way, and I think that reflects very badly on her.

The issue of blasphemy was raised by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile. I have no doubt in my mind that in the past some participants in the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade, through their behaviour and what they have said in public, have been quite blasphemous. I appreciate that we live in a liberal democracy and that people have a variety of views towards religion and people's attitude towards religion. But I always find it quite paradoxical that in debates on homosexuality and related matters a person who does not have what I might term a progressive view is deemed to be homophobic and bigoted. The language used to condemn those who have a different view is rejected in the first instance. In other words, if we express a different view—I say "we" because I certainly do not share the views of the Hon. Cate Faehrmann on this matter—we are deemed to be homophobic. But if the member expresses a view that we do not share that is all right. So it is all right for the member to use certain phrases which others might think suggest a narrowness of mind, and perhaps prejudice, but it is not all right for others to express contrary views.

That comment applies to people's attitudes toward religion and various faith traditions. Religion and faith traditions bring to people a sense of moral compass on a range of matters, including human sexuality. To the extent that those people have a view different from those of other persons, that view should be respected. To simply turn that around and use it as a sort of club to knock people down is quite unacceptable. On the question

of blasphemy, there is no question that the Catholic Church, an institution of major faith traditions, has a view about sexuality, and people know that. Year after year participants in the march ridicule the Catholic Church. Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile made some references to that.

I put aside for the moment the issue of homosexuality. I think there are many in our community who have difficulty with a public parade that is so overtly sexual in its nature. At the end of the day sexuality is what it is. We know there are differences in sexuality and the ways in which it is expressed. But if heterosexuals had a parade this weekend and were overtly sexual in parading down Oxford Street a number of people would express concerns about that. There may be some in this House who would not, and I accept that, but many in our community genuinely regard overt expression of human sexuality in a public domain as a matter of concern. In a completely different context, I have raised concerns with respect to the issue of sexualisation of children and young people. If there was a parade down Oxford Street on Sunday involving heterosexuals parading in such an overtly sexual way I too would be expressing concerns about that. We need to appreciate that objection to the overt sexual parading of oneself is not just because it is homosexual; it is to do with the overt expression of sexuality in that public sense.

The last thing I want to touch on is something that I have really struggled with for some time. I still struggle with it because I do not claim to fully understand it, and I am the first to appreciate that there are very strong, and different, views about this matter. That is the issue of gender identity disorder. The motion picks up gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. Although Q was mentioned, it is not expressly included in the motion. Gender identity disorder is a real issue amongst some children and young people. It is medically recognised as an issue.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: This is irrelevant to the motion.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I am entitled to put this on the record because it is a view that I have.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: At another time.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: At the Mardi Gras coming up this weekend there will be a lot of children and young people, and some of them will be struggling with the issue of their sexual identity. This is a matter that needs to be carefully looked at.

The Hon. Helen Westwood: Let us be grateful we have a place where it is actively embraced, not discriminated against.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: The member says "actively embraced". There are a number of issues that need to be looked at.

The Hon. Helen Westwood: And not made to feel as though they are deviates.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: It is not fair and reasonable to dismiss out of hand that this is a matter that does need to be looked at carefully. The attitude of just embracing it holus-bolus is not the end of the story; there is a lot more to it than that. There is much more that I would like to put on the record, but—

Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile: We would like to hear a lot more. You have another five minutes.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: There is a lot more that I would like to put on the record, but—

Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile: We have all had time limitations.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I thought we would be tolerant in this debate. I am entitled to address the House, and I have said some things. I have more that I could say, but I will leave my comments there.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO [11.38 a.m.]: I want to state publicly my support for the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, and to say that on Monday night I had the pleasure of attending Leichhardt Council, where for the first time they had a reception for Mardi Gras and flew the rainbow flag over Leichhardt Town Hall. This motion has been brought forward by a member of The Greens. The Greens had control of Leichhardt council for a long time before the Labor mayor Darcy Byrne was recently elected and they did not do anything about

celebrating Mardi Gras or recognising the gay and lesbian community in Leichardt; it took a Labor mayor to do that. So I find the hijacking of Mardi Gras and the hijacking of the gay issue by a Greens Senate candidate in this House personally offensive.

Having said that, I support Mardi Gras wholeheartedly. It is an opportunity for friends and relatives to show their support for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. It is an opportunity for families to celebrate their family members who are marching down the street. This is the thirty-fifth Mardi Gras and in the past 35 years community attitudes have evolved immensely: tolerance and inclusion are now accepted and young people in high schools believe that it is wrong to discriminate against people on a whole range of issues, including whether they are gay or lesbian. Those are the sorts of changes that Mardi Gras has helped to bring about by simply giving the gay and lesbian community an opportunity to say that they are proud of who they are and they are proud of the role that they play in society.

A whole range of different occupational groups march in Mardi Gras, including the police. They are proud of who they are and Mardi Gras gives them the opportunity to show that and to celebrate it. Mardi Gras is an opportunity for people who live in country areas in New South Wales and across Australia and people who live overseas, perhaps in repressive societies, to come to Sydney and for some, often for the first time in their life, to be free to demonstrate who they are in public without fear of reprisal. That is why we should accept and support Mardi Gras.

I hope all those who participate in Mardi Gras this year have a good time. I hope all the people who view Mardi Gras from the footpaths have a good time. I hope all the people who have helped in the background to develop the floats and the costumes also have a good time. Despite the worst wishes of some people who are totally opposed to Mardi Gras, I am hoping and I am praying that we have very good weather on Saturday and that it does not rain on the parade—one of the most important and successful parades we have in Sydney.

Pursuant to standing orders debate interrupted to permit the mover of the motion to speak in reply.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN [11.42 a.m.], in reply: I thank all members for their contributions, particularly my colleagues Dr John Kaye and Mr David Shoebridge. The contributions of the Hon. Penny Sharpe, the Hon. Helen Westwood and the Hon. Trevor Khan are worth noting. I am rather bemused by some of the comments about my intentions and motivations in moving this motion. First, it should be remembered that I moved a similar motion last year. Secondly, the Hon. Marie Ficarra said that including paragraph 2 (c) in the motion was a very devious move. Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile called the entire motion "homosexual propaganda". Paragraph 2 (c) states:

That this House notes the significant contribution of Sydney Mardi Gras to the community, including: ... supporting the campaign for full equality for all people ...

It is a fact: The significant contribution of Mardi Gras to the community is that it supports a campaign for full equality. The paragraph has nothing to do with this House saying whether or not this House supports full equality or whether or not individual members of this House support full equality. It is a fact that Mardi Gras supports full equality and runs a full campaign. I would not call that devious; it is simply a fact that Mardi Gras supports the campaign for full equality. We are very proud of Mardi Gras for running that campaign and for being a beacon for diversity. The fact that Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile wants to remove paragraphs 2 (a), (b), (c) and (d)—

Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile: The propaganda sections.

The Hon. CATE FAEHRMANN: Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile calls it "homosexual propaganda". Some members in this place had a go at me because I suggested that some members are homophobic. But that is a fact. Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile then said that it is homosexual propaganda to include that Mardi Gras—

[*Interruption*]

Listen to them; they are hysterical every time this issue comes up. The reaction by some members in this House has been completely hysterical when part of this motion was to note the significant contribution of Sydney Mardi Gras to supporting the campaign for full equality for all people. We saw where members were at with the conscience vote on the marriage equality motion. I can understand that the Hon. John Ajaka moved for the removal of paragraph 2 (c) due to the politics of the issue, but I do not support the removal of the paragraph.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly spoke about having different views from another person and being Catholic. I think in some ways he was trying to say that being Catholic and people saying a person has homophobic ideas or homophobic views because they are Catholic is similar to being gay or lesbian. The Hon. Penny Sharpe spoke about a lot of the discrimination that occurs. I do not believe that people with different religious views—for example, kids at school who are Catholic—are being bullied to the point where they want to commit suicide. I believe this is on a different scale. I urge the House to support this motion. I note my disappointment at people suggesting that my intentions were devious or that I was misleading the House. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. John Ajaka: I request that the question in relation to paragraph 2 (c) of the motion be put separately.

Question—That the amendment of Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 4

Mr Borsak
Mr Brown

Tellers,
Mr Green
Reverend Nile

Noes, 30

Mr Ajaka
Ms Barham
Mr Blair
Mr Buckingham
Ms Cotsis
Ms Cusack
Ms Faehrmann
Mr Foley
Mr Gallacher
Miss Gardiner
Mr Gay

Dr Kaye
Mr Khan
Mr MacDonald
Mrs Maclaren-Jones
Mr Mason-Cox
Mr Moselmane
Mrs Pavey
Mr Pearce
Mr Primrose
Mr Roozendaal
Mr Searle

Mr Secord
Ms Sharpe
Mr Shoebridge
Mr Veitch
Ms Westwood
Mr Whan

Tellers,
Ms Fazio
Ms Voltz

Question resolved in the negative.

Amendment of the Hon. Fred Nile negatived.

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

Amendment of the Hon. John Ajarka agreed to.

Question—That the motion as amended be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 30

Mr Ajaka
Ms Barham
Mr Blair
Mr Buckingham
Ms Cotsis
Ms Cusack
Ms Faehrmann
Mr Foley
Mr Gallacher
Miss Gardiner
Mr Gay

Dr Kaye
Mr Khan
Mr MacDonald
Mrs Maclaren-Jones
Mr Mason-Cox
Mr Moselmane
Mrs Pavey
Mr Pearce
Mr Primrose
Mr Roozendaal
Mr Searle

Mr Secord
Ms Sharpe
Mr Shoebridge
Mr Veitch
Ms Westwood
Mr Whan

Tellers,
Ms Fazio
Ms Voltz

Noes, 4

Mr Borsak
Reverend Nile

Tellers,
Mr Brown
Mr Green

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion as amended agreed to.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Clerk announced, pursuant to the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, the receipt of a Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled, "Managing drug exhibits and other high profile goods: NSW Police Force", dated February 2013, received and authorised to be printed this day.

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

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that Private Members' Business item No. 1067 outside the Order of Precedence relating to a study mission in Israel be called on forthwith.

Order of Business**Motion by the Hon. Rick Colless agreed to:**

That Private Members' Business item No. 1067 outside the Order of Precedence be called on forthwith.

PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDS OF ISRAEL STUDY TOUR

The Hon. RICK COLLESS [12.02 p.m.]: I move:

That this House notes that:

- (a) the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Israel under the auspices of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies hosted a delegation of New South Wales parliamentarians on a study mission to Israel from 6 January 2013 to 10 January 2013,
- (b) the purpose of this study mission was to build an understanding amongst the delegates of the complex and various issues impacting on Israel and other jurisdictions within the Middle East,
- (c) the delegates on this study mission comprised all parliamentary political parties represented in the New South Wales Parliament with the exception of The Greens,
- (d) delegates met with a wide range of religious, political, media, military, judicial and business personnel in Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv and Bethlehem during the course of the mission, and
- (e) delegates also inspected the Knesset, Old Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, the Church of Nativity, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Israeli Supreme Court, the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Museum, the Gush Etzion Settlement Block at Efrat, the Israeli Foreign Ministry, the Australian Embassy, the town of Sderot and the Erez Checkpoint on the Gaza Border, the Park of the Australian Soldier and the Commonwealth War Cemetery in Be'er Sheva, and the town of Metula on the northern border with Lebanon.

It is with great pleasure that I move this motion. I welcome to the President's Gallery members of the Jewish community, particularly Mr Vic Alhadeff who is the chief executive officer of the Jewish Board of Deputies. From 6 January 2013 to 10 January 2013, the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies and the Parliamentary Friends of Israel, which comprises the chairman and member for Vacluse, Ms Gabrielle Upton, and the vice-chairman, the Hon. Walt Secord, hosted a delegation of New South Wales parliamentarians on a five-day study mission to Israel. Parliamentarians from this House who participated in the tour were the Hon. Luke Foley, MLC, and the Hon. Walt Secord, MLC, from the New South Wales Labor Party; Reverend

the Hon. Fred Nile, MLC, and the Hon. Paul Green, MLC, from the Christian Democratic Party; the Hon. Robert Borsak, MLC, from the Shooters and Fishers Party; the Hon. David Clarke, MLC, and the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox, MLC, from the Liberal Party; and me from the New South Wales Nationals.

In addition, two members of the Legislative Assembly participated, the member for Vaucluse, Ms Gabrielle Upton, from the Liberal Party and the member for Monaro, Mr John Barilaro, from the New South Wales Nationals. Members of the study mission group were accompanied by friends and spouses. The tour group was accompanied by two representatives of the Jewish Board of Deputies, Mr Yaron Finkelstein and Mr Yossi Tal. Our tour guide in Israel was the very capable Mr Mark Deckelbaum. Noticeably absent from the group were The Greens from New South Wales. The Greens were the only political party represented in the New South Wales Parliament that did not participate in this very important mission.

The purpose of the study mission was to build an understanding of the complex and various issues impacting on Israel and other jurisdictions within the Middle East. To gain that understanding, delegates met a wide range of religious, political, media, military, judicial and business people in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Bethlehem. Following a brief housekeeping session on the morning of Sunday 6 January, Dr Tal Becker from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs addressed the group and gave an overview of the political situation in the Middle East. He is a person who has been actively involved in peace negotiations in the region, and he provided an excellent introduction to a very enlightening few days.

The second presentation was given by Chief Rabbi David Rosen, who spoke about the historical connection between Israel and the Jewish people. Rabbi Rosen is a very enthusiastic and charismatic speaker. He has served in many positions in many parts of the world and has been a member of many inter-religious organisations. Currently he is the International President of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, which is a worldwide inter-faith body incorporating approximately 15 religions in more than 50 countries. The final formal presentation on the first day was given by Mr Isi Leibler, who is a veteran Jewish international leader with a distinguished record of contributions to the Jewish world and human rights.

Mr Leibler came to Australia as an infant just prior to the outbreak of World War II. In 1962 he was responsible for Australia becoming the first country in the world to raise the plight of Soviet Jewry at the United Nations. Mr Leibler moved to Israel some years ago. He was able to give the group a very in-depth assessment of the political and religious situation in Israel. He has worked as a journalist and writer. Currently he produces a weekly column for the *Jerusalem Post* and the *Israel Hayom*, which is the Israeli daily newspaper. Mr Leibler addressed the group at his home and provided a very succinct overview of the way he sees the problems that arise in the Middle East.

Later on the first day, the group had the honour of visiting the Knesset, which is the Israeli Parliament. Although there was not much in the way of formal proceedings at the Knesset that day, the group found the visit very interesting and enlightening. At that time, the Israeli parliamentarians were very much involved in an election campaign. The election was held just a few days after the group departed. The Knesset has representatives of 28 different parties and is renowned as one of the most robust debating chambers in the world, so of course members of the group were very interested in that. On the same day, the group visited the Old City of Jerusalem—a place of great historical and religious history significance. The Old City is split into four quarters—the Christian, Armenian, Jewish and Muslim quarters. The group was intrigued by the people who adhere to each of four different faiths and belief systems yet live in peace and harmony in the Old City.

On the same day, the group also visited what is referred to by many people as the Wailing Wall and inspected tunnels adjacent to the Old City walls. The huge stones that formed the foundations and structure of the wall were laid during the reign of King Herod. Later that night we had dinner with a gentleman named Gerald Steinberg, a professor of political studies at the Bar Ilan University, who directs a program on conflict management and negotiation and heads the non-government organisation Monitor. He specialises in Israeli political development and Middle East diplomatic and security issues and is a fellow of the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs. Once again, we found it very interesting to have people of this calibre enlightening us on the situation that exists in the Middle East.

Day two saw a tour of Bethlehem. This was particularly interesting given that the city of Bethlehem is now within the Palestinian area of the West Bank. Our Israeli friends were not permitted to go there with us. They left us at a checkpoint where we were taken to meet the Governor of Bethlehem. He outlined to us the Palestinian authority's perspective of what was happening within the Middle East. Also, as part of that inspection we looked at the Church of the Nativity, where Jesus Christ was born. Of course that is a special place that holds a great deal of interest for Christians.

Following the tour of Bethlehem we had a visit to the Supreme Court and after that lunch with a Muslim journalist, Khaled Abu Toameh. I think everybody in the group found his address particularly interesting, given that he once worked with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation as a communications person and has since had a regular column in the *Jerusalem Post*. He is well known throughout the Middle East for his writings on Palestinian and Middle East affairs. He was the person I found most interesting and who had the most impact on me during that tour.

This particular gentleman talked about the Arab Spring and the rising of the Arabic nations throughout the Middle East. He told us that he did not see it as an Arab Spring at all. He saw it as an Islamic tsunami. He made the point that the problems in the Middle East are largely generated by Islamic extremists rather than the Islamic people as a whole. He also said that once the extremists get the upper hand in many of these areas they will then come after Israel once again. He told us that they would start by eradicating the Jews, they then would eradicate the Christians and then they will come after the moderate Muslims and eradicate them as well. To hear that sort of talk coming from a Muslim journalist in the Middle East sent a chill up the spines of many of us.

Following lunch with Khaled we visited the Yad Vashem, which is the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Museum. Once again, that had a huge impact on all the members of the group. It graphically shows what happened during World War II, something that every one of us has a responsibility to make ourselves aware of, given the horrors that occurred. That night we had a dinner meeting with a couple of people involved in the election process. That also was very interesting.

Day three saw us visit the Gush Etzion Settlement Block. I know the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox will speak more about this visit and our meeting with Mayor Oded Revivi in the town of Efrat. He will talk about the work he did in conjunction with the member for Monaro at that venue. Gush Etzion is a Jewish settlement block within the Palestinian area. It shows there is a great deal of will amongst the Palestinian people, the Muslim people and the Jewish people to work together towards a peaceful solution in that greater area. We also had a meeting at the Israeli Foreign Ministry with the Deputy Director of the Asia Pacific Department, Ruth Kahanoff. She gave us a very good overview of the situation from the foreign ministry's point of view.

Later that evening we met with Mr Arnold Roth, a Jewish person formerly from Melbourne who has since gone back to Israel. He told us about the trauma he went through not long after he returned to Israel when one of his daughters was killed in a terrorist attack. To hear what the people have to endure in these terrorist attacks really makes one aware of the sort of terror the people in Israel live with every day. We had dinner that night with a Muslim family in the Palestinian area. It was extremely interesting to talk to them and get their views on where the area was heading.

The next day we had an address from a strategic military point of view, given by Brigadier General Mike Herzog about the changing Middle East landscape. We then departed for a town called Sderot, which is on the border of the Gaza Strip. We met the police behind the police station. The first words a police officer said to us were, "If you hear a siren, you have 15 seconds to get into a bomb shelter." The people in the area live with that situation every day. At that site there was a great big rack of exploded rocket fragments that the police had picked up from around the streets of this village. To think that the children, in particular, in those communities live with that sort of stuff exploding every day really brought home to us the their quality of life. We also inspected some of the bomb shelters in that town. Every bus shelter along the street was a reinforced concrete bomb shelter. We went to the school playground where there was a bomb shelter in the form of a large caterpillar. When the children hear sirens go off they can easily run into that bomb shelter knowing they will be safe. In Australia we cannot comprehend the sort of terror that must emanate from those sorts of attacks.

After being at Sderot the group went to the Park of the Australian Soldier and to the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery in Beersheba. At the Park of the Australian Soldier there is a memorial to the Charge of the Light Brigade, which occurred on 31 October 1917. It is funded by the Jewish National Foundation and principally Mr Richard Pratt. It is a marvellous memorial to the Australian Light Horse. Of particular interest to me was the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery where I found the grave of my grandmother's brother, my great uncle Karl Hargrave, who was killed on 31 October 1917 in the charge of the Light Horse Brigade. That was very moving for me. When I got home I talked to my father about it. I was greatly moved when he said that as far as he was aware that was the first time anyone in our family had visited Uncle Karl's grave.

At dinner we met with Mr Paul Israel, members of the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce and a number of business people. The next day, the final day of the tour, we took a plane trip to the northern border with Lebanon and visited the town of Metula where we had lunch in a nice boutique hotel. Our hostess told us

about the lovely and peaceful town. Someone asked, "What about the rockets?" She said, "Well, we're very peaceful and close to the border here. When they fire the rockets they generally go straight over the top of us." Someone else asked, "What if they start shooting at you?" She said, "Well, if they start shooting at us, we shoot back." Their matter-of-fact attitude to address terrorist activities coming across the border makes one appreciate their resilience. They live with that threat almost daily, yet they simply deal with and treat it as part of their environment. The constant threat does not seem to worry them to any great extent.

Our final meeting when we returned to Tel Aviv that night was with the Australian Ambassador, Andrea Faulkner. We gave her a deal of feedback about the sorts of things we had seen and done in our few days. That concluded the formal part of the tour. My wife and I spent four extra days in Israel. We had another day and a half in Jerusalem to inspect some of the religious and biblical sites in which we were interested. We had half a day in Masada near the Dead Sea. The next day we inspected some water recycling and irrigation projects with people from the Israel water industry.

Obviously, with my interest in water issues, I found that most worthwhile. We had another day sightseeing in the Beersheba area. I was able to return to spend some quality time with Uncle Karl in the cemetery before we returned to Tel Aviv to fly out the next morning. I thank the Jewish Board of Deputies for arranging this extremely worthwhile trip. Our hosts, Yosi and Yaron, were fantastic and our guide, Mark Deckelbaum, knew so much about Israel's issues and the Middle East generally. They made the trip a worthwhile exercise. I give my special thanks to Mr Vic Alhadeff and his group for coordinating the trip. I am sure all group members had a marvellous time.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY (Leader of the Opposition) [12.22 p.m.]: Why would a group of State parliamentarians undertake a study mission to a foreign country, in this case Israel, given that the Australian Constitution provides that foreign affairs is a matter for the Commonwealth Government? I believe the answer is twofold: firstly, the role of the New South Wales Jewry in the life of our State; and, secondly, flowing from that is Israel's emotional appeal to the New South Wales Jewry. Jews came to Australia on the First Fleet. The first policeman in the New South Wales colony, a freed convict, was a Jew. In the nineteenth century Jews went on to play an increasingly prominent role in the life of the colony. Jews were prominent in the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. The Clerk may correct me if I am wrong, but I believe the first Jew to serve as a member of the New South Wales Parliament was Sir Saul Samuel, who entered this place in 1854. Of course, he went on to be long-serving colonial Treasurer. Sir Julian Salomons was another prominent nineteenth century Jew who served as a member of this place in the Legislative Council.

Vic Alhadeff, whose presence in the gallery I acknowledge, is a distinguished former editor of the *Australian Jewish News*. Vic would know that a Jewish press has existed in New South Wales since the late nineteenth century. The first edition of a Jewish newspaper, the *Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, was published on 1 November 1895, a copy of which has been gifted to me by the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies. That very first Jewish publication quotes the first speech of Sir Julian Salomons in this place when he faced ferocious assault from his political opponents. Some criticism directed at him targeted his Jewishness. Sir Julian Salomons said:

I am a Jew. I was born a Jew ... and I should be a poltroon and a coward, as well as a fool, if I were not proud of belonging to a race which has given an Isaiah to the world; the Psalms of David, and all the mighty mysteries of the Bible, upon which the civilisation, the consolation, and the happiness of the world depend.

That comes from the speech of one of New South Wales's most distinguished Jewish citizens in this place in the late nineteenth century. So it is the case that Jewish citizens of the colony and then the State of New South Wales have always played a prominent role in the affairs and governance of our society. Why did we take a trip to Israel? Israel exercises an extremely powerful and emotional pull on Australian Jews. Professor Philip Mendes wrote recently that Australian Jewry have the highest rate of aliyah—that is, emigration to Israel—in the western world. A 2009 study by the Monash University Centre for Jewish Civilisation found that 80 per cent of Australian Jews regarded themselves as Zionists, 76 per cent felt a special fear if Israel was perceived to be in danger, 74 per cent had relatives living in Israel, and 86 per cent had visited Israel.

The country of Israel has an intense connection with our Jewish citizens. The New South Wales Parliamentary Friends of Israel group is not merely a friendship group with a foreign State, that being Israel. It also is a friendship group with the New South Wales Jewish community. Given that powerful, emotional attachment of the Jewish citizens of our State with Israel, it was therefore appropriate for members of the New South Wales Parliamentary Friends of Israel to embark on a study tour. Indeed, I do not believe it is possible to

fully understand the Jewish community of our State without making an attempt to familiarise ourselves with and understand the State of Israel. I note for the record that the 10 parliamentarians who went on the trip met their own airfares and accommodation costs.

The establishment of Israel was a decision of the international community, the United Nations, to provide a homeland and a sanctuary for the Jewish people after the holocaust. The most powerful experience of my trip to Israel last month was a visit to Yad Vashem, the holocaust memorial. I have spoken in this House before of the literature of Vasily Grossman, who wrote, amongst many works, *The Hell of Treblinka*. He was the first outsider to enter that death camp in Treblinka 13 months after it had been liberated by allied forces. He writes in harrowing detail of the conveyor belt execution blocks. He writes of the soil trembling under his feet with the human bodies buried beneath the soil. Then he sees human hair. He writes, "You feel as if your heart must stop now, gripped by more sorrow, more anguish, more grief than any human being can ever endure."

To go from merely being a reader of holocaust literature as powerful of Vasily Grossman's to visiting Israel's official memorial to the holocaust, Yad Vashem, was an intensely moving and powerful experience for me and I believe for all of those parliamentarians on the delegation. The mover of this motion has given a good overview of the meetings and engagements that the delegation undertook through the course of that busy week. We had a jam-packed itinerary. I acknowledge that in addition to our activities in Israel we also visited the Palestinian territory, the West Bank, and were guests of the Palestinian authority. We met with the Palestinian authority governor of the Bethlehem district and some of his colleagues. They, like our Israeli hosts, were most gracious with their time. I conveyed to them the strong support of the Palestinian community in New South Wales for their legitimate national aspiration for a Palestinian nation state recognised by the United Nations and the international community.

I will not take up any further time of the House. I believe that the reasons for a group of State parliamentarians visiting the country of Israel can be summarised by reference to the prominent role that the Jewish community plays in the life of our State and the incredibly powerful emotional attachment that our Jewish citizens have to the nation of Israel. I am so glad that the Parliamentary Friends of Israel embarked on this study mission. I am proud to have been part of it. I thank the Jewish Board of Deputies for organising the trip and I commend the motion moved by the Hon. Rick Colless to the House.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE [12.30 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak to the motion moved by the Hon. Rick Colless concerning the study tour that was conducted by members of the New South Wales Parliament. Members of the upper House and lower House took part in the study mission to Israel during January. I spent nearly three weeks in Israel in January and visited many of the pilgrim sites following the official tour. The deputation included two members of the Christian Democratic Party, the Hon. Paul Green and I; two members of the Shooters and Fishers Party, the Hon. Robert Borsak and the Hon. Robert Brown; two members of the Australian Labor Party, the Hon. Walt Secord and the Hon. Luke Foley; three members of the Liberal Party, the Hon. Gabrielle Upton, the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox and the Hon. David Clarke; and two members of The Nationals, Mr John Barilaro and the Hon. Rick Colless. The members of the deputation were accompanied by their wives and partners.

The study tour occurred during Israel's winter, but we did not anticipate freezing weather with the heaviest snow falls, particularly in Jerusalem, for more than 20 years. The Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council Chief Executive Officer of the Board of Deputies, Vic Alhadeff, arranged in cooperation with the Israeli ministry of foreign affairs an excellent, informative and strategic study tour of Israel for all parliamentarians. I have been to Israel on three other occasions and have a good association with Israel. I did not have to go on this study tour to be convinced to give Israel support. I have always been on the record as strongly supporting the Jewish community in Sydney and supporting the state of Israel.

The study tour involved a great variety of presentations by highly qualified people, ranging from those who worked in the Israeli ministry of foreign affairs, to a retired major general in the Israeli army. We knew we were getting quality information. One of the first presentations was by Dr Tal Becker of the Israeli ministry of foreign affairs, who had grown up in Australia. He served as senior policy adviser to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Israel. He explained the complexity of peace negotiations since 2007 with the Palestinian side and spoke of the issue of terrorism and the rethinking of the rules of state responsibility. He referred to his role at the United Nations in negotiating the comprehensive convention against terrorism in the international court and the need to maintain hope in Israel.

One issue had a big impact on me after we visited Gaza. I know there are a lot of statements made that Israel has to give up land for peace. Sadly, when Israel gives up land for peace, as it did with Gaza, it gets

rockets in return from both Hamas at the southern end of Israel and Hezbollah in the north in Lebanon. We also had an interesting presentation by Rabbi David Rosen, who explained the historical connection of Israel to the Jewish people and their strong desire for a homeland following the murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime in World War Two, of which we are all well aware as we are of that generation.

We met with a prominent Australian Jewish businessman, Isi Leibler, at his home. Mr Leibler now lives in Jerusalem. He discussed the success of Israel's economic policy, which makes Israel, even though a small nation, one of the most successful in the world. He has specialised in helping save Soviet Jewry and assisting them to assimilate into the Israeli nation. Many tens of thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union have been able to come to Israel since the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in the ability to leave and travel. Mr Leibler shared his views of the dangers of radical Islamic nationalism that is now occurring throughout the Middle East.

I was interested, as a member of Parliament, to visit the Knesset, Israel's Parliament House. It has 120 members. The deputation learnt that this was based on the historical biblical Jewish Sanhedrin, which had 120 members. The Knesset is made up of a number of political parties, including the governing party, which has now been re-elected, in coalition with other smaller parties, to be the government of Israel. The Labour Party in Israel is similar to our Australian Labor Party. There are some small religious parties that have some similarities to the Christian Democratic Party, but we are not in any way identical. There are other left-wing parties and a green party.

I was interested to visit Kotel tunnel. It is a large underground tunnel being excavated alongside the Temple Western Wall. You feel as though you are in an area of famous important archaeological evidence of where the temple originated. Of course, there is a negative side: the excavations are causing some reaction from the Islamic community, which feels the excavations might affect the temple mount. But I do not believe that is in any danger.

The tour of Bethlehem was very interesting. It was previously a Christian city; now it is Muslim, with only 20 per cent of it Christian due to Christians leaving Bethlehem, now a key city in the Palestinian, that is PLO, territory. Sadly, a lot of the Christians have experienced persecution and discrimination, and that is why the majority have left, though some have left for better economic circumstances. I was pleased that we were briefed by the PLO Governor of Bethlehem, who gave us his report and shared some of the problems they were facing regarding finance and water. I was also pleased that we were able to visit the Church of the Nativity where Jesus Christ was born; that was a very moving, spiritual experience for me.

We saw the huge wall that had been built by Israel between Israel and Palestinian territory to protect Israel's security from suicide bombers. I know this has had a very dramatic impact on the Palestinians, but I agree with Israel that it had no choice but to do that. Since the building of the wall there have been almost no suicide bombers in Israel. That was the only reason that Israel built the wall; it was in no way, as some have said, to make the Palestinian people feel like they are imprisoned, because there is tremendous movement from Palestinian territory into and out of Israel. I was there at peak traffic times, particularly late in the afternoon, when hundreds of men who had been working in Israel returned to Palestinian territory. So there is freedom of movement in and out of the Palestinian territory; and, of course, those who go into Israel are able to get employment and income for their families.

Another interesting aspect of our tour was the visit to Israel's Supreme Court, which is a remarkable institution. It is the highest court in Israel, similar to our Australian High Court, but it deals with thousands of issues. It almost acts like a second house of parliament; it is like a senate. We were briefed by one of their most experienced judges, Justice Dalia Dorner. During her presentation, one of the first things she mentioned was Australia's rejection of Jewish refugees prior to World War II. Obviously that action registered with senior leaders of the Jewish community in Israel; and, even though I was not the delegation leader, I did in my remarks apologise for that rejection—hopefully it will never occur again.

We were briefed by a Palestinian Affairs expert, who is of Palestinian background, Khaled Abu Toameh, on the whole issue of a Palestinian state concept. His briefing was, I think, surprising for us; we assumed he would be an enthusiastic supporter of the two-state solution. However, during his presentation he indicated just how many problems they are facing in trying to get to the point of having two states. I took from his presentation, whether he intended it or not, that it is going to be very difficult to have a two-state solution, now or in the future, for many, many reasons.

As the Hon. Luke Foley noted, one of the other places that had a big impact on me was the Holocaust Martyrs Memorial and Exhibition, which we were able to inspect in great detail. The exhibition they now have is very professional and informative. It shows the horrors of the Nazi death camps and the human tragedy that occurred. I was impressed that they had a little section of railway track, depicting the railway track into Auschwitz, which I had visited on another occasion.

One night we had an Israel Election Panel discussion at which three qualified experts with different views on the policies of the two states, the Israeli state and the Palestinian state, shared with us their views. Obviously, there was controversy between those speakers, who held different positions. I suppose that was the only controversy that we saw personally between leaders on that community who had strong views in different directions. One of the experts, from the organisation Peace Now, spoke very strongly in favour of a two-state solution. He believes that is the only option in the future. The other participants were far more negative on that issue.

We visited a remarkable Israeli town of Efrat, in the Region Gujsh Etzion. We were briefed by the energetic mayor of that city, Oded Revivi, concerning the remarkable progress by the citizens of Efrat. In 1983, 12 pioneering families moved into that town, which is like a settlement, located 10 minutes from Jerusalem. Today Efrat numbers 9,000 residents and hopes to achieve 25,000. What impressed me was the way that Jewish families are working in harmony with their Arab neighbours, who farm land right on the borders of Efrat and even within the town council boundaries—without any conflict or violence, but in a peaceful manner. We were also briefed by an Arabic Christian pastor, Pastor Steven Khoury of the Arabic Calvary Church, who supervises six churches including Bethlehem, with other staff. I found his presentation very interesting.

Another of the briefings that I thought was quite remarkable, and the only one we had with Palestinian leaders in their own village, was at the Abu Gosh Palestinian Arabic village. The Arabic Municipal Director of Education, Issa Jaber, invited us to his home for that briefing. That visit included having dinner with him and a number of Arabic staff from the Arabic schools who shared their success in conducting their own Arabic schools and what they were achieving.

I was impressed with Brigadier General Mike Herzog, now retired. The Brigadier General gave us an excellent briefing on the military dangers facing Israel, especially from Iran with its development of a nuclear bomb. It will be extremely difficult to destroy Iran's nuclear facility because apparently it is being built deep inside a mountain, under 15 metres of rock. We also visited the Gaza border and saw the challenges there evidenced by the remains of rockets that had been fired into that community. We also saw reports of the trucks that go backwards and forwards from Israel into Gaza. Gaza is not a concentration camp; every day, trucks are carrying in food, constructions materials and so on, and so that community is able to get the supplies that it needs.

We visited the Australian Soldier and Anzac Cemetery at Beersheba. That reminded us of the vital impact of Australian soldiers in Israel's development in both World War I with the Light Horse and World War II at El Alamein. There were many other aspects of that tour. We went up to the Golan Heights, on the border of Lebanon and Syria, which is still a very hot spot. Another remarkable place was seen on our visit to Masada, the ancient Jewish fortress. The Jewish citizens of Israel have adopted the slogan "Never again Masada". So their intention is to maintain Israel as a modern state, never to be defeated in the future, even though surrounded by millions of enemies. I thank God for the opportunity to go on that tour. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. WALT SECORD [12.50 p.m.]: I support the motion and formally express my appreciation to the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies for its assistance in Israel. I speak as deputy chair of the New South Wales Parliamentary Friends of Israel and as the newly appointed duty member for Vacluse. I attended this study tour to Israel as one of two Labor representatives. In a job that can be overwhelmed by discussion papers and briefings, I try to keep in mind that seeing things first hand provides the greater insight. That is why I try to see things for myself and that is why I support parliamentary study tours. I thank and congratulate the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies on organising this tour, and I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the executive director of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, Vic Alhadeff.

The New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies delegate Yosi Tal and the Board of Deputies vice-president Yaron Finkelstein were fantastic as hosts in Israel. Yosi Tal's decision to organise the visit to the wedding of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies president Yair Miller and his wife, Sandra, was inspired and personal. Yaron was a true fixer of problems for the delegation. Their personal touches made the

study tour a special experience. I liked the multi-party nature of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies mission and enjoyed interacting with my non-Labor colleagues in a non-combative context. I hope that we will continue this format for future tours.

This was my second visit to Israel in two years. The organisation and planning of the trip struck the right balance between expertise and getting on-the-street experience. Too often, study tour organisers want participants to listen to a long line of speakers on the same subject, but there was no repetition in this tour and there was a genuine attempt to present different perspectives. I acknowledge the effort to provide Palestinian and Israeli Arab perspectives, such as the Governor of Bethlehem and the Abu Gosh Israeli Arab education officials.

I always try to do my study tours in a sequence, with a theme and a specific purpose. Last year, I did a March of the Living-inspired trip, culminating in a trip to Yad Vashem. I used to write about the March of the Living tours when I was a journalist at the *Australian Jewish News* from 1988 to 1991. My 2011-12 study tour started in Armenia so that I could learn more about the first genocide of the twentieth century and to visit the national Armenian genocide museum in Yerevan. The context here is of course Adolf Hitler's infamous 1939 quote:

Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?

After Armenia I visited Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland and then flew directly to Israel and visited Yad Vashem. I then travelled to Halabja in Iraqi Kurdistan near the Iranian border to see a contemporary context of genocide. Halabja was where in March 1988 Saddam Hussein unleashed chemical gas attacks on the Kurds, killing 5,000 people. As a person who has studied the Shoah, I believe that, as Nobel Prize winner and Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi said: Those who deny Auschwitz would be ready to remake it. So while visits such as these are often challenging, they are vital to promoting that which must never be forgotten.

On my study tour this year, 2012-13, I visited the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Armenia and Georgia, where I visited the Tbilisi synagogue and mosque as well as a number of Armenian religious sites; Israel and the Palestinian Territories, including Bethlehem and the Aida refugee camp; the ancient ruins of Western Armenia; Turkey, Istanbul, Anzac Cove at Gallipoli; and, finally, Cairo and Giza in Egypt. Before I speak about Israel, because it is relevant let me briefly discuss why I visited Turkey and Egypt. I visited Turkey for two reasons. First, I wanted to continue my exploration of the Armenian Genocide and I visited ancient Western Armenian sites at Kars and Van. Secondly, I wanted to see Turkey within the context of what the late Harvard University Professor Samuel Huntington has described as the "clash of civilisations"—that is, the interaction and conflict between Islam and the West.

Turkey is interesting in light of the recent activity of the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in regard to Israel and the flotilla, and the struggle in Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara and the rural areas between political Islam, embodied by the debate on the scarf, against the backdrop of the secular tradition. Incidentally, I was in Istanbul on the sixth anniversary of the assassination of Hrant Dink, the Armenian editor murdered by a Turkish nationalist because of his outspoken views on the Armenian Genocide and Turkey's failure to recognise its past.

I have to admit I have complex and contradictory views on Turkey. Turkey has to face and acknowledge the Armenian Genocide. But we in the West have an interest in supporting democratic, secular Islamic States like Turkey and Indonesia. As for Egypt, I have to admit that my visit was for what I describe as almost selfish reasons. Admittedly, my Egypt portion of the trip was depressing but most enlightening. I hope I am wrong, but I fear that it will be very difficult to travel to Egypt in about a year. I also fear for its Christian minority there and for their future. If events there continue to worsen, I believe that there is a case for Australia to consider giving Coptic Christians in Egypt recognition as refugees. I admit that I fear for the future of non-Muslim minorities in the whole region as events unfold there.

On my tour to the Jewish and Christian sites in Egypt I asked how many people usually take the tour and the guide said about 60. Only two of us were on that tour. Tourism is the third largest contributor to the national economy there. The current events and unrest are having an important impact on Egypt, which will only worsen the situation. I was there two days before the second anniversary of the events of Tahrir Square. I will now make some brief observations on Egypt. If the Egyptian president, Mohamed Morsi, loses the next election he must willingly hand over power to a new government. I believe that the true test of a post-conflict society is the second election.

In Cairo I also visited Coptic Christian sites and Ben Ezra Synagogue. I was excited to visit Ben Ezra Synagogue as it was where the famous rabbi Moses Maimonides worshipped when he lived in Cairo, which leads me back to the subject of Israel. Many moments will stay with me for life. The light plane flight to Metula on the Israel-Lebanon border was one such memory. One sees the security concerns and geography in the starkest terms: Israel at its narrowest. The emotional meeting with Arnold Roth, the father of a victim of terrorism, was unsettling but extremely worthwhile. It put a face to terror and its impact, but also showed someone rebuilding their lives after unspeakable tragedy.

There were personal highlights too, such as taking my parliamentary colleague Luke Foley to his first Shabbat meal. We shared a Shabbat meal in Tel Aviv with Guy Spigelman, his wife, their children and Guy's parents, Dr Mark and Rachel Spigelman. Other highlights included gatecrashing the wedding of Yair and Sandra Miller in Jerusalem; seeing my parliamentary Nationals colleague Rick Colless and his wife, Geraldine, locate the World War I grave of his great-uncle at Beersheba Commonwealth war cemetery; and going out on the Sea of Galilee with Paul Steiner, who is the son-in-law of Jewish communal leaders and inter-faith activists in Sydney, Josie and Ian Lacey. It transpires that Paul Steiner is the president of the Israeli Greywater Recycling Association, so we took the opportunity to talk about the water policy in Israel.

As a general observation, the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies tour added more layers of appreciation to the complexities of the region. The Erez Checkpoint operated by the Israel Defence Forces between Israel and the Gaza Strip showed the complexities of balancing security concerns of Israel. One thousand trucks a day go through the facility, and they balance the day-to-day operational needs of Gaza residents and businesspeople such as medical support, including transferring people to Israeli hospitals for cancer treatment.

In addition to the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies portion of the trip, I added on several days to explore Israel myself. Last year I visited the Gadot Observation Point near the Golan, Masada, Tiberias, Sderot, Gush Etzion, the Dead Sea, Ramallah, Nazareth, Jerusalem, East Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Eilat as well as Jordan. This year, as part of my exploration of other faiths, I visited the Baha'i Temple and Gardens in Haifa. The gardens are one of the two holy places for the Baha'i faith—a religion founded in the middle of the nineteenth century. I take this opportunity to thank the Baha'i World Centre's Yasmin Hedayaty in Haifa and Venus Khalessi-Rad of Sydney, who is the Australian Baha'i Community's Director of Public Information, for facilitating the visit and helping me to discover more about their faith and the history of their faith.

The Baha'i faith was founded in 1844 in Iran, but, regrettably, they face discrimination, prejudice and grave violations of their human rights there. I note that on 20 December the Australian Government co-sponsored a successful United Nations resolution expressing deep concern at Iran's "serious ongoing and recurring" human rights violations in relation to the Baha'is there. I congratulate the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Bob Carr, for his support for Iran Baha'is. After my visit to the Haifa temple I travelled and stayed at Kibbutz Kadarim in Israel's north. To get real first-hand experience, I caught an Egged bus from the roadside at Kibbutz Kadarim to Akko and then Tel Aviv. I sat among Israel Defence Forces soldiers on their way home for Shabbat.

As I said, some things should be experienced firsthand because it can really shift one's views on matters. This raises the question of whether this trip has shifted my view on any matters in relation to Israel. I still wholeheartedly support a two-state solution for Israelis and the Palestinians. But I am a realist. Currently Israel does not have a partner in peace. Fatah in the West Bank is a struggling administration and its leadership is unable to even go to Gaza. Hamas in Gaza is the Palestinian version of the Muslim Brotherhood and it does not recognise Israel's right to exist.

Egypt is sending mixed messages and is in internal conflict. It still has shaky peace with Israel, but it is a negative or a cold war type of peace. Syria is in crisis and is a failed state, which affects Israel and the security of the whole region. This calls for realism and for clear support of Israel's right to defend herself. But I hope for many things. I hope that I am proven wrong in relation to my urgency about Egypt. For example, who would have imagined that Anwar Sadat would go to Israel, make peace and address the Israeli Knesset in November 1977? I hope that shifts in the Palestinian leadership allow for a two-state solution to once again be a real, not theoretical, ambition.

In conclusion, I hope that my parliamentary colleagues will seize future opportunities offered by the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies to study these things firsthand. As a small aside, I give a personal thank you to Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, the Hon. Robert Borsak and the Hon. Paul Green for helping me to

rebuild the photographic record of my trip after an unfortunate technological incident. Finally, I thank the Jewish Board of Deputies president, Yair Miller, and the chief executive officer, Vic Alhadeff; Pratt Foundation Israel director, Peter Adler; and Mr Mark Deckelbaum, who served as the group's guide. I, for one, am grateful for the insights and experiences gained. I thank the House for its consideration.

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

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

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

KEMPS CREEK WASTE SITE

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Given that there are 1,958 voters on the electoral role at addresses within five kilometres of Kemps Creek, does the Minister acknowledge that his statement last week on the 7.30 NSW program that Kemps Creek is five kilometres from any residences was false and misleading?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I am pleased that the Leader of the Opposition has raised the issue of false and misleading statements about Kemps Creek because I recall that on 4 September last year Mr Foley gave an interview on Triple M radio. The interviewer began by saying, "Opposition's Foley says the State Government is guilty of fudging the figures on radioactive material at Hunters Hill so it can get the all clear to move it to Kemps Creek." Cut to Mr Foley, who said in his best swelled-up and self-righteous radio voice, "They've diluted the findings in order to send it to the one place they were always going to send it: Kemps Creek."

The Hon. Luke Foley: I will give him an extension of time.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I would like an extension of time.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Is that the best you can do?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Absolutely. Mr Foley was caught out on radio for running a scare campaign. It was associated with the scare campaign that he tried to run when he talked about a report that was supposed to be a new report to the Government on Kemps Creek and on the material at Hunters Hill. He claimed that the report said that the material at Hunters Hill would have to be monitored for 300 years. He did not say, because he is an expert at running scare campaigns and being misleading, that the report he was referring to was in fact commissioned by the Keneally Government. Remember them? Remember the Labor Party?

The Hon. Steve Whan: Remember you promising it would not go to Kemps Creek?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: What I have always said and promised is that hazardous radioactive material will not go to Kemps Creek. The report from Parsons Brinckerhoff was concluded on 2 February 2011. But when was it actually handed to the Government? It was handed to the Government on 30 March 2011. Members opposite hid the report. They kept it under wraps during the election campaign.

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: Walt sat on it.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: That could explain why it is so flat. And what is the conclusion of this report? The conclusion is that the material should go to Kemps Creek.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer with particular reference to my public commentary on Kemps Creek?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Not only did Parsons Brinckerhoff in its report commissioned by the Keneally Government say that the conclusion was that the material at Hunters Hill was appropriate to go to Kemps Creek, the only facility—

The Hon. Steve Whan: What did you say before the election?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I just said it to you during the previous answer, you ning-nong.

The Hon. Steve Whan: No, what did you say before the election? You said it would not go.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I said that hazardous radioactive material would not go to Kemps Creek.

The Hon. Melinda Pavey: For Hansard, how do you spell "ning-nong"?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Yes, how do you spell "ning-nong"? Not only did the Keneally Government's report recommend that the material go to Kemps Creek, it also said that the Government should explore whether the New South Wales Labor Government could reconsider its announcement ruling out Kemps Creek. So the Labor Government had its own expert doing its own report telling it that the material was appropriate to go to Kemps Creek and that it should reconsider its decision.

The Hon. Steve Whan: So you acknowledge now it was just political point scoring before the election?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: It was political point scoring by you guys, absolutely. You simply made a political decision. The truth is that if members opposite were concerned about this they had 16 years in which to build another facility or to remove the material to somewhere else. What did they do? The committee, which included the Hon. Lynda Voltz and the Hon. Helen Westwood, recommended that the material go to Kemps Creek and that is what John Della Bosca announced would happen when he outlined the program to move the material to Kemps Creek.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS SUPPORT

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. What is the latest information on the Government's commitment to protecting the victims of domestic violence?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I thank the honourable member for her question. Domestic violence is a crime and should have no place in our society, but speak to any police officer and they will talk of their frustration of having their hands tied by ridiculous red tape in their efforts to protect families—women and children in particular, but also men—from violence in the home. With that in mind, I am pleased to inform the House of an important reform this Government has announced to make what I believe is the single most practical meaningful reform in memory to combat domestic violence. This Government, with the support of the NSW Police Force, is taking action to allow for police-issued apprehended domestic violence orders [ADVOs]. These changes will allow police officers at the rank of sergeant or above to issue provisional apprehended domestic violence orders as well as allowing an officer to detain a defendant for up to two hours for the purposes of making and serving such an order if they refuse a direction to cooperate.

Fundamentally, the amendment will do three important things. It will remove defendants from a potentially volatile situation whilst victims can remain at their home, whereas the current system encourages the opposite to occur. It means that apprehended domestic violence orders will be able to be served immediately after a suspected domestic violence incident so that the police will not have to chase defendants around the countryside in an attempt to serve the papers for an apprehended domestic violence order, thereby leaving victims unprotected. But, most importantly, it will demonstrate to defendants, who may be detained and taken to a police station, how serious the legal system considers the issuing of an apprehended domestic violence order to be.

At present, the police request a defendant to wait at the scene of a domestic violence incident while the police leave the scene to obtain an apprehended domestic violence order, which often means that victims have to leave as well. Nobody wants the victim of domestic violence feeling as though they have to leave their home instead of remaining at their home with the alleged perpetrator while an apprehended domestic violence order is sought. By the police being empowered to detain someone during the process, the police, having obtained the apprehended domestic violence order, will not need to return to the scene, only to find either a defendant has left while they were absent and completing the application and obtaining the order or, worse still, that the victim has been assaulted.

From the victim's point of view, previously they were left unprotected by an apprehended domestic violence order until the police had located the alleged offender and served the order. Often that resulted in court dates being missed and the matter having to be relisted for hearing. The changes not only will improve the immediate safety of victims of domestic violence but also will allow the police to issue an apprehended domestic violence order and then return to other duties, instead of spending crucial hours applying for provisional apprehended domestic violence orders, which is the current practice. The Government believes that officers of the rank of sergeant or above are suitably experienced to be responsible for issuing apprehended domestic violence orders, given that they routinely set conditions for bail that are as onerous as any apprehended domestic violence order condition.

Provisional apprehended domestic violence orders will last for 28 days until the matter is heard before a court and the court has considered the merits of the matter. In metropolitan areas, the court hearing usually takes place no longer than 48 hours after the incident. However, in some regional areas where courts sit only on particular days, the court appearance may be up to 28 days later. Police officers have been advocating for these changes for a very long time. Put simply, the proposed amendments are sensible and are potentially lifesaving. I particularly thank the New South Wales Police Association, which is led by Scott Weber and supported by organiser Tony Bear, for their commitment to reforming the manner in which police officers deal with domestic violence. I congratulate all those involved.

FORMER MEMBER FOR CLARENCE

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Why did the NSW Police Force not interview Deputy Premier Andrew Stoner in relation to admissions made by the former member for Clarence about falsely signing a statutory declaration?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition knows full well that a question of that nature should be addressed directly to the Commissioner of Police. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition knows the proper process. He should adopt the proper process instead of allowing glib remarks to be made by other members of the Opposition. If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is alleging this is a serious matter, he should know—and I suggest he does know—the proper manner in which to deal with that matter.

ORANGE WATER SUPPLY

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for the Environment. Has the Office of Environment and Heritage made any assessment about the sustainability and efficiency of the plan to pump water from the Macquarie River to supply Orange? Does the Office of Environment and Heritage believe that assessment of the effects on aquatic life near the extraction point has been adequate?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I must say I always enjoy being asked a question by the Hon. Robert Borsak. His questions always are very interesting and well-researched and they usually ask for a quite detailed response. The question he has asked today meets those criteria also. I will take the question on notice and provide the member with a detailed response.

M5 EAST TUNNEL AIR QUALITY

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will the Minister update the House on actions to improve air quality in the M5 East tunnel?

The Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane: It is about time.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the Hon. John Ajaka for his question and I acknowledge the Opposition's interjection. The Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, who is part of a political party that was in government for 16 years, said, "It's about time." Too damned right it is about time! We had to wait for a change of government and for a Minister to hold the portfolio for longer than six months to get something to happen. As members know, the New South Wales Government has been actively looking at ways in which to improve air quality in the M5 East tunnel. I am pleased to report the commencement of a new Smoky Vehicle Enforcement Program with substantially increased fines which will assist in improving air quality in the M5 East tunnel. Last October I announced that the New South Wales Government was serious about improving air quality in the tunnel and that the Government would crack down on heavy vehicles that emit excess smoke. The

announcement followed an 18-months trial of the air filtration plant. Sadly, the trial revealed that the plant had a minor impact only on air quality. Although it had some impact, it was only a minor impact. The plant was installed in 2010 after community concerns were raised about haze in the tunnel.

From 1 March there will be increased fines for operators of smoky vehicles. They will face fines of \$2,000 for each of their first two offences. A third offence will attract a penalty of a \$2,000 fine but also an automatic three-month suspension of the vehicle's registration. The increased enforcement will target air quality offences through warning letters, penalty notices, registration suspensions and invitations to join our new diesel retrofit and repair initiative. For heavy vehicles that qualify under the retrofit initiative, the Government will pay 50 per cent of the costs of engine repairs and fitting a particulate trap to the vehicle's exhaust, with the assistance being up to a maximum of \$10,000. To encourage operators to take greater responsibility for the condition of their vehicles, the Smoky Vehicle Enforcement Program is being rolled out by Roads and Maritime Services and the Environment Protection Authority. The M5 East Air Quality Improvement Program addresses pollution at its source.

I encourage heavy vehicle owners and operators to improve their vehicles' performance and avoid penalties. The Government does not want to ping heavy vehicle operators for excessively smoky emissions. The Government's strategy in the first instance is about education and helping to clean the trucks that are emitting excessively. As a last resort, it is also about fines and registration suspension for those who do not get the message. The Government recognises that there is a problem. From 1 December last year to the close of business on Monday 25 February 2013, the camera system had detected 5,250 heavy vehicles emitting excessive smoke in the tunnel. Of those vehicles, 181 have been confirmed to have breached environmental law. Warning letters have been issued.

The Government wants to improve air quality, not to penalise operators of heavy vehicles. If the problem is attacked at its source—the smoky vehicles that are emitting particulate matter—we not only will assist in clearing the air in the tunnel for the 20 minutes or less that the vehicle is in there, but also will ensure that the trucks are clean during the eight to 10 or 14 to 16 hours they are being driven throughout the city. The Government has adopted an innovative approach to solving the problem that involves working with industry. The Government will allow the air filtration plant to continue to operate for at least three months while an assessment of air quality is undertaken. [*Time expired.*]

MINING INDUSTRY

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 a recent claim by The Greens member, the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham, that the social and environmental costs of mining far outweigh the economic benefits? What financial and economic impact would an immediate cessation of all mining in New South Wales have on the State? Does the Minister have any indication of how The Greens and the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham would make up for such a loss of income?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The Hon. Robert Borsak always asks me the tough questions. I am pleased that at least one representative of the red Greens is in the House along with one of the green Greens and one of the pink-red Greens. Many people would say that The Greens' only wish is for us all to freeze in the dark. The Greens envisage that future for New South Wales and their vision is probably akin to what their North Korean colleagues would like to be the future of New South Wales as well. Obviously, without the mix of resources within our primary industries area New South Wales would be missing out on a lot. Some of the best towns in New South Wales—to visit, to stay and live, or to work—have a mix of mining and other industries.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: Name one.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Name one, she says. I can name two off the top of my head—Orange, Parkes. I do not think you would find a better place in Australia to live than Orange—a good climate, good schools, a good theatre and arts community, and an economy that is underpinned by mining. Where does the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham choose to live? Orange. He moved there because it is a mining town and he knows that the best towns in regional New South Wales are mining towns. That is why he chose to move there. I will ask my colleague the Minister for Resources and Energy for the details of what an end to mining would mean to the New South Wales economy.

FORMER MEMBER FOR CLARENCE

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Why did the NSW Police Force not interview all of the witnesses relevant to the self-confessed false signing of a statutory declaration by the former member for Clarence?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I refer the member to my earlier answer.

ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Will the Minister update the House on the control of asbestos in New South Wales?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: This is an important question. I am sure honourable members will agree that the management of asbestos has traditionally been a complex issue mainly because different State and local agencies are responsible for different parts of the asbestos management chain. The House will recall that in November 2010, the New South Wales Ombudsman released a report into the level of coordination between intergovernmental agencies entitled, "Responding to the asbestos problem: The need for significant reform in NSW". As part of the response, this Government has committed \$1 million over four years to programs, under the responsibility of government agencies and local councils, to secure the safe management of asbestos in the New South Wales community.

The Hon. Walt Secord: Big bucks.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: We are responding to a 2010 Ombudsman's report exposing the failure of the Labor Government to do anything. In addition, a further \$6.3 million in funding will be provided over three years for a risk mitigation program at the abandoned Woods Reef Mine site in northern New South Wales. The Heads of Asbestos Coordination Authorities has been established to better coordinate and manage asbestos handling across government agencies and local government. The group comprises representatives of a number of government agencies and an official representing local councils and is chaired by the chief executive officer of Safety, Return to Work and Support. This means that for the first time one group is responsible for the management of asbestos throughout its entire life cycle.

The group was tasked with developing in consultation with the community a statewide asbestos plan for the safe management of asbestos to better prevent asbestos-related diseases. The plan aims to secure the safe management of asbestos to reduce the incidence of asbestos-related diseases in New South Wales. It targets actions around four priority areas: research, risk communication, prevention and coordination. I can advise the House that the statewide asbestos plan has now been finalised and will be launched in the near future. The Heads of Asbestos Coordination Authorities has overseen the development of a model asbestos policy for all local councils and a support program to build their capacity to address asbestos issues in local council areas.

The model asbestos policy for New South Wales councils and a supporting guide was launched during Asbestos Awareness Week on 26 November 2012. An extensive asbestos education campaign was also launched to raise public awareness, promote the safe handling of asbestos within the New South Wales community and help prevent the risk of exposure to asbestos. On 18 January 2013, WorkCover released information warning residents of the dangers of asbestos in bushfire-damaged buildings. WorkCover is waiving the five-day asbestos removal work notification time frame to allow immediate clean-up of asbestos debris after bushfires as the State experiences one of the worst fire and flood seasons in recent years. On 22 January, WorkCover convened an out-of-session meeting of the Heads of Asbestos Coordination Authorities group and the Ministry of Police and Emergency Services to provide a coordinated approach to responding to the needs of the communities in bushfire affected areas. The New South Wales Government's response to the Ombudsman's report, the statewide asbestos plan and the establishment of the Heads of Asbestos Coordination Authorities is evidence of our ongoing commitment to keeping the people of New South Wales safe from asbestos-related diseases.

MOBILITY PARKING SCHEME

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. A review of the mobility parking scheme took place in 2012 by an independent advisory committee, with the report due last year. When will the report be released and will it restrict the eligibility criteria to ensure permits are only available to those who genuinely need them?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: That is a good question. The report will be released soon. In answer to the final part of the question, will it be available only to people who genuinely need it, I certainly hope so. That is the whole idea of the review.

FORMER MEMBER FOR CLARENCE

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Given that reports suggest a number of offences that the Minister's former parliamentary secretary—the then member for Clarence—should have been investigated for, such as, making a false statement on oath, will the Minister consult police about what actions they have taken to address these matters and report back to the House?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: If the honourable member is implying that police have not acted properly, I suggest he speak to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and avail himself of the proper process to request police to advise him through the Ombudsman or through the Police Integrity Commission.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer with respect to why as the Minister for Police and Emergency Services he will not consult police about this important matter of public interest?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: As the honourable member has concerns, he must have some information. The last thing he would want to do is give that information to someone other than a police officer. Therefore, I suggest he take the matter directly to the police.

STRIKE FORCE WOOLCOTT

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister inform the House about Strike Force Woolcott, which has recently made the single largest seizure of the illegal drug ice in Australian law enforcement history?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: Strike Force Woolcott is an investigation of the Joint Organised Crime Group. The Joint Organised Crime Group is a joint taskforce comprising—

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Point of order: My point of order is that this is clearly an operational matter—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Greg Donnelly will resume his seat. He is making a debating point and wasting the time of the House. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: The Joint Organised Crime Group is a joint taskforce comprising the NSW Police Force, the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service, the NSW Crime Commission and the Australian Crime Commission. This investigation commenced following information received. That information was referred to the NSW Police Force's Asian Crime Squad. The Asian Crime Squad and the NSW Crime Commission then commenced a full strike force investigation. The Australian Federal Police also agreed to participate in the investigation and the matter was referred to the NSW Police Joint Organised Crime Group.

Customs identified four sea cargo consignments linked to the Strike Force Woolcott investigation. Customs officers inspected the consignments, which consisted of one tonne bags marked as "cleaning chemical", and within those larger bags were located 38 smaller plastic bags. Police will allege that each smaller bag contained a crystalline substance that has tested positive for methamphetamine. Police replaced the illegal drugs with a fake consignment and monitored the men who collected the consignment from the Sydney wharf. Three men were arrested when attempting to transport the drugs from a storage facility at West Ryde. The three men have been charged with a range of offences, including the attempted importation of a commercial quantity of a border controlled drug.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Point of order: Mr President, I seek your guidance on this matter.

The PRESIDENT: Order! If the member would like that he can do so at the end of question time; otherwise he should take his point of order.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: My point of order is that the Minister is referring to a matter that obviously is before the courts. Charges have been laid. Therefore, this matter should not be reported to the House in the way it is. Sub judice is associated with the matter, which is before the court.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: To the point of order: This matter is in the public domain right now. The matter will be reported during the course of the day and will not in any way have a sub judice impact.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: It is before the courts.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: No, it does not have a sub judice impact.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Charges have been laid.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: It does not have a sub judice impact. This matter is in the public arena.

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

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: In total, police located approximately 580 kilograms of methamphetamine with an estimated street value of up to \$438 million—the largest single seizure of the illicit drug ice in Australian law enforcement history. Police conducted searches on properties around the Sydney metropolitan area and uncovered a clandestine drug laboratory. This outstanding result shows the capabilities of State and Federal law enforcement agencies. The Joint Organised Crime Group has dismantled a sophisticated organised criminal enterprise and stopped more than half a tonne of dangerous drugs from making it onto our streets. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer on Strike Force Woolcott?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I congratulate all agencies and all officers involved; I think all members of the House would congratulate them, despite the silliness of those opposite. In particular, I recognise the incredible work of the NSW Police Force and the New South Wales Crime Commission.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: What about the citizen who made the phone call that tipped them off?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: Again I remind members that this House initiated reforms that refocused the New South Wales Crime Commission, resulting in a level of transparency to guarantee a restoration of confidence with law enforcement agencies around the country—

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: Why don't you thank the member of the public who tipped them off?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: —to ensure that confidence is in place. The New South Wales Crime Commission can be very proud of its work assisting law enforcement agencies. Of course, the Hon. Amanda Fazio, in her little interjection—

The Hon. Melinda Pavey: Nasty ones.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: No. It just demonstrates how stupid some people are when they would want put on the record details that may identify an informant or informants in this matter.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: Point of order: My point of order is that the Minister has made imputations about me. He also referred to me as being stupid. The only person who is stupid in this debate is the Minister, who deliberately misinterpreted what I said. I did not ask him to name the informant. I said that he should have thanked the member of the public who was an informant.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Amanda Fazio will resume her seat.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: You want me to identify how they informed the police? Thank you very much—silly, silly person.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: Don't call me silly. You're the one taking the glory for the Federal operation.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Amanda Fazio to order for the first time. The member and the Minister will cease interjecting across the Chamber. The Minister's time has expired.

DOMESTIC GAS RESERVATION POLICY

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Resources and Energy. In an article in today's *Australian* James Baulderstone, head of the eastern Australia division for Santos, admits that his company is keeping gas away from the market in order to extract higher prices from customers. The article quotes him saying:

We've worked out how to turn the wells down and store gas, so what you're seeing now is a mad dash for gas from those in the manufacturing industry who stood out and haven't recontracted.

Does this Government support Santos's actions? Will the Government ensure gas supplies for manufacturers in New South Wales through a national domestic gas reservation policy?

[Interruption]

The PRESIDENT: Order! The House will come to order. Does the member want an answer?

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: I've asked the same question for a week.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: There is no shortage of gas in this Chamber—no shortage at all from The Greens. With such a complex question trying to analyse the thoughts of the North Korean mafia I will refer it to the Minister for a detailed answer.

HUNTING IN NATIONAL PARKS

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, representing the Premier. Will the Minister confirm that the Government has suspended its amateur hunting in national parks program?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I will take that question on notice, as the member has requested. I have not got an answer to it.

[Interruption]

Do those opposite want me to give an incorrect answer? I will take the question on notice and report back.

FIREARMS AMMUNITION LEGISLATION

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister inform the House when the new ammunition laws will commence?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I make it very clear to every member of this House, particularly some on the crossbench who continue to fail to hear, that this Government has in no way resiled from its commitment to new ammunition laws. Yesterday a commencement proclamation and a supporting regulation were endorsed by the Lieutenant Governor and the Executive Council. This proclamation will commence the new ammunition laws in stages, as the Government announced previously. New record keeping requirements that require firearms dealers to record the details of their ammunition sales and to make that information available to police will commence on 4 March 2013. New requirements for people purchasing handgun ammunition to present their firearm registration papers will commence on 8 April 2013. A new ammunition permit will also commence upon the date of publication of the new laws. These dates have not changed since they were reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* last year, despite what some may have claimed in the past 24 hours.

The Government has announced previously that it will defer the rollout of the requirement to show registration papers to other classes of firearms until the NSW Police Force has had the opportunity to investigate

possible information technology solutions, such as smart card licences. I am advised that the NSW Police Force Firearms Registry recently published a number of bulletins on its website. These bulletins outlined the commencement dates for the new ammunition laws. I am advised that it is not regular practice to post such information in advance of the formal commencement of legislation. I am advised also that the registry bulletins proposed a number of changes to the way that a licensed firearm user applies for a permit to acquire a new firearm.

Following discussions with the NSW Police Force, I am advised that the Police Force removed the bulletins from the registry website. This does not in any way signal any intention for the new ammunition laws to be diminished in any way. Of concern is that all such bulletins are accurate and do not mislead the public in case there are delays in the formal approval process that force a change to the proposed dates. Further consultations on any changes to the permit-to-acquire process also will be undertaken before further announcements are made about this process. I understand that revised bulletins will be posted on the registry website shortly if, in fact, that has not happened already.

With respect to a public report today claiming that my reference yesterday to my "parliamentary colleagues" referred to the members of the Shooters and Fishers Party, I make it clear to the House that when I refer to my "parliamentary colleagues" I refer to members on this side of the House. When I refer to crossbench members I, like most members, say "the crossbench" and when I refer Opposition members in this place I say "those on the losers lounge". I make that very clear indeed. I trust this information clarifies this matter.

WESTERN SYDNEY INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will the Minister update the House on the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals commitment to improving western Sydney infrastructure?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I thank the member for her question. It is the sort of a question I would expect from the Labor Party on the eve of the Prime Minister's well-publicised visit to western Sydney. Now it is news when a Labor Prime Minister visits western Sydney. That should not be news; that should be de rigueur for the Labor Party. These days it is a headline when a Labor leader visits western Sydney. I take this opportunity to update the House on the work the New South Wales Government is doing to build the—

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: Point of order—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister will resume his seat.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: My point of order is that questions may be asked of Ministers on matters for which they have carriage; that is, matters of public affairs that relate to their portfolios. I fail to see how the Minister making stupid comments about a visit by the Prime Minister—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The member will resume her seat. If the member had a problem with the question she should have taken her point of order before the Minister commenced his answer.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: As I was saying, I will take the opportunity to update the House on the work the New South Wales Government is doing to build the roads and infrastructure that the people of western Sydney need and deserve. The M5 West widening is underway, with a target completion date of 2014. This Government secured in nine months what Labor, including former Ministers in this House, could not deliver in years. The M2 motorway widening is well progressed between Windsor Road and Lane Cove Road, and will be completed this year. This Government is full steam ahead on the Erskine Park Link Road—

[Interruption]

Those opposite are not interested in western Sydney; they just want to play petty politics. We will bat on for the people of western Sydney. As I was saying, this Government is full steam ahead on the Erskine Park Link Road connecting the western Sydney employment area and the M4 and M7 motorways, with completion due about the middle of this year. The first sod has been turned on the \$46 million first stage of the Richmond Road, delivering what Labor promised year after year but never delivered. We have started the \$65 million upgrade of Schofields Road between Windsor Road and Tallawong Road in the north-west growth centre. The

\$110 million upgrade of the 4.4 kilometre section of Camden Valley Way between Ingleburn Road and Raby Road has been commenced. In April the Government is expecting to start the \$75 million, three-kilometre section of Camden Valley Way between Raby Road and Oran Park Drive. If that is not enough, the Government is easing congestion for families by fixing pinch points across Sydney—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Who started that program?

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

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: —with a \$125 million investment on seven critical projects in western Sydney. The Government has committed \$1.8 million to WestConnex, the next major motorway project in Sydney, connecting western Sydney with our international gateways; Australia's busiest airport and second largest port. The Government is getting on with the job of delivering vital upgrades to support the economic growth of western Sydney. I am pleased the Prime Minister and Federal Labor have discovered western Sydney, which Labor abandoned so long— [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I was having trouble answering the question because the Opposition is not interested. The Prime Minister now has the opportunity, even at this late stage, to join the Liberals and Nationals in recognising western Sydney as one of Australia's fastest growing regions and to join this Government in investing in western Sydney's future. Here are just three areas that the Prime Minister can support in western Sydney today: first, she can match the Government's \$1.8 million commitment to build WestConnex—Tony Abbott and Warren Truss have already come on board with \$1.5 million. So Albo and company are missing out. Second, the Prime Minister can match the Government's commitment to any of the roads in western Sydney, such as Schofields Road or Richmond Road, that can help unlock employment lands and create new housing. Third, the Prime Minister can match the \$351 million that the Government has spent on western Sydney roads just this year.

What a difference that would make to the people of that region. The Government welcomes the Prime Minister to western Sydney. She can be assured that the people of western Sydney will welcome her if she joins the O'Farrell-Stoner Government in investing in the infrastructure the people of western Sydney deserve but missed out on for so long with successive Labor governments in New South Wales. The Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, the Hon. Anthony Albanese, has deserted New South Wales. He spends his whole time interstate, deserting New South Wales.

CATHOLIC CHURCH AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. What action has the Minister taken, or will he be taking, to review the involvement of a New South Wales police officer from the Sex Crimes Squad who was placed on the Catholic Church's New South Wales Professional Standards Resource Group, apparently to advise the church on the law and review its practices and investigations concerning clergy child sexual abuse? I remind the Minister of the criticism of this practice by the former Director of Public Prosecutions, Nicholas Cowdrey, who declared it was a conflict of interest and potentially gagging police, given they were not given the names of the victims or perpetrators.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I will take the question on notice.

HUNTER RAIL TRACK WORK

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Why has the Government scheduled track work on the entire rail network in the Hunter this weekend when it coincides with one of the biggest annual events in the Hunter, the Newcastle Regional Show?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: Labor members have finally discovered Newcastle. We tried to work out how they found it: They get an atlas and they point.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: Like Eddie or Macca.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: Yes. They go, "There, that is Newcastle". The fact is they can rest assured—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: The fact is they cannot get the train to the show.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: How many times have you been to the Newcastle show, Penny?

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Lots.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: How many times? Penny, tell me where it is held?

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: At the showground.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: In Broadmeadow. Where in Broadmeadow?

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: Point of order—

The PRESIDENT: Order! There is so much noise in the Chamber that I did not hear that a point of order had been taken.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: My point of order is that the Minister was asked a question. It is not appropriate for him to ask questions across the Chamber of other members. He should address his remarks through the Chair.

The PRESIDENT: Order! While that is true, I remind members that interjections are disorderly at all times. I remind the Hon. Penny Sharpe that she is already on a call to order. The Minister has concluded his answer.

SYDNEY WATER QUALITY

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services, representing the Minister for the Environment. On 28 December 2012 some Botany, Pagewood and Eastlakes residents complained that their tap water had a strong petrochemical odour and taste. Given that Sydney Water advised affected residents to flush their taps for 15 to 20 minutes, and reports that a Sydney Water safety officer had warned a Pagewood resident not to drink the water, will the Minister tell the House exactly what substances were found in the water supply? How did this happen? And given it is now February, what steps has the Government taken to ensure that this does not happen again?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: On Friday 28 December 2012 Sydney Water received complaints about water quality from customers in Botany, Pagewood and Eastlakes. Earlier that day Sydney Water had completed maintenance work on a water main in the area, which had unknowingly affected the taste and odour of the drinking water to some customers. Once Sydney Water was aware that there was an issue with water quality it sent its water quality scientists to the area to investigate.

On the same evening Sydney Water notified NSW Health of the issue and sought its advice. Sydney Water kept NSW Health informed of the test results as they became available as well as the progress of remedial actions being undertaken. It is NSW Health's responsibility to consider the possible health impact of any issues with water quality. Sydney Water liaised with the Environment Protection Authority during the incident, and kept my office informed during and after the incident. NSW Health considered that the most likely cause of the taste and odour issues being experienced by customers was the prolonged exposure of the water to the bitumen lining of the water main before the maintenance work was completed.

Bitumen lining is a known source of hydrocarbons called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. These hydrocarbons are known to change the aesthetics of the water including taste and odour. Given this and knowledge of previous incidents, NSW Health considered this the most likely cause of the taste and odour issues. The presence of these hydrocarbons was also then confirmed by testing. Under the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines, the only polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon that has a health guideline limit is benzo(a)—unlike bozo-A over there—

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Point of order: I think the Minister was pointing directly at me. I take great offence and ask him to withdraw that comment.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Mr President—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister will resume his seat. Unfortunately, I was not able to see the angle of the Minister's finger, but I am sure the Hon. Greg Donnelly is not right. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: The only polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon that has a health guideline limit is benzo(a)pyrene, and this was not detected in any of the water samples taken as part of the event. Sydney Water took water samples from a home in the area at 12.44 a.m. at the height of the incident and other samples from hydrants during that night. The samples taken from hydrants service many properties in the area and gave a good indication of the water that was being provided to numerous customers. These test results are available on Sydney Water's website. I am pleased to advise that the water tested at the height of the incident met the Australian Drinking Water guidelines for the parameters that were tested.

I understand claims have been made about the presence of chloroform and bromine in the water during the incident. I am advised that chloroform is a well-known by-product of disinfection. It is commonly found in drinking water supplies worldwide where chlorine and chloramine are used as disinfectants—as it is here in Sydney. I am advised that bromide can occur in naturally occurring waters and, if present, can react to form disinfection by-products known as brominated trihalomethanes. The most important point to note here is that levels of these trihalomethane compounds, including chloroform, in Sydney Water's samples were typical of those found throughout Sydney's water supplies at this time. They were also well within the acceptable levels specified by the Australian Drinking Water guidelines.

CLARENCE RIVER REGION FLOOD ASSISTANCE

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Why did the Deputy Premier tell the *ABC* on Tuesday this week that New South Wales was waiting on the Federal Government for category C assistance for the January flooding in the Clarence River region, when apparently no application had been lodged by New South Wales? When will an application be lodged?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I was not listening to the Premier's comments—

The Hon. Walt Secord: The Deputy Premier.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I still take with a grain of salt anything that a member opposite would say about comments alleged to have been made on radio. I will take the opportunity to make myself familiar with the comments. If any concern is raised, I obviously will address that issue.

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer as to when applications will be lodged for category C assistance for flooding in the Clarence River region in January?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I have just answered that question. I will have a look at the comments to which the honourable member referred.

EMERGENCY SERVICES RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

The Hon. SCOT MacDONALD: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. Will the Minister update the House on the work of the Government to improve the services and efficiency of vital radio communications for our public safety agencies?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I am pleased to report that the New South Wales Government continues to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of radio communications used by our emergency services agencies. Radio communications provide an essential link for police, emergency services personnel and other government officers who operate throughout the community, especially those in remote locations. It is not a funny matter, Walt.

The Hon. Walt Secord: Point of order: For clarification, the Minister is taking phantom interjections.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I was not taking any interjections from the phantom; it was the bozo.

The Hon. Steve Whan: Point of order: The Minister's remark was clearly directed at a member on this side of the House. I ask you to direct the Minister, firstly, to address members by their correct titles and, secondly, to not reflect on members across the Chamber.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: To the point of order: We are told, on the one hand, that the interjections did not take place and then, on the other hand, that interjections did take place. It is difficult to determine what they are going to—

The Hon. Steve Whan: Point of order—

The PRESIDENT: Order! All members will resume their seats. It would assist the Chair if the Minister would answer the question and ignore interjections, or what he thinks may be interjections.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I am always keen to assist the Chair. Ensuring that these government officers have access to reliable communications is important for their safety and the safety of the community. A number of major inquiries and reviews, such as the responses to the Victorian bushfires and the Queensland floods, have highlighted the need for robust radio communications. To ensure that New South Wales agencies are getting the best out of this essential radio infrastructure, the Government has begun a process of improving the sector from the top down. The cornerstones of the reform are giving the New South Wales Government Telecommunications Authority responsibility for coordinating policy and strategy across the sector, improving services, and the consolidation of radio communications.

I am pleased to advise the House that in 2012 the Government appointed members to the board of the authority to lead this important work. The board is particularly focussed on improving levels of service delivery for government mobile radio users, through a more integrated and efficient delivery model. The board's chairperson, Mr Rod Gilmour, has extensive executive and board experience in a number of public and private sector roles. Other members of the board have industry experience, and several have emergency and essential services expertise. The board will ensure that the telco authority leads the development and implementation of statewide policy affecting planning, operations and maintenance. Technology for wireless communications is constantly improving, so it is vital that we get the planning right. That is why the telco authority is undertaking a far-reaching audit of the State's existing infrastructure. The audit, once fully analysed, will reveal what assets each agency has, and it will help with planning for replacement of equipment. It will help reduce duplication, improve inter-operability, increase efficiency and reduce costs. I will have much more to report to the House on a later occasion.

WARRAGAMBA DAM PROJECT

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I ask the Hon. Greg Pearce, representing the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure: Is the Government aware that the Federal Government has announced funding for preparatory works to raise the level of Sydney's Warragamba Dam by 23 metres? Is the Government aware that when the work is completed 50,000 homes in western Sydney could be removed from the flood-risk zone? What funding will the State Government pledge for this project and what are the estimated times of commencement of the construction and completion of the project?

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I thank the member for that question. One could not have missed the stunt this morning when we discovered that the Labor Prime Minister of this country, Julia Gillard, announced that she had found western Sydney at a Federal level. They exported her from the State to the Federal level. Get the map and there it is—western Sydney.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The Minister was asked a question by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile about proposals to heighten the wall at Warragamba Dam. The question did not mention the Prime Minister. The Minister is not being relevant.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister must be generally relevant in his answer.

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

The House continued to sit.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: Did I see the announcement about Warragamba Dam? Did I see the announcement that the Prime Minister of Australia has discovered western Sydney? Yes, I did, but does the House think that I or any other person in western Sydney, in Sydney or anywhere in New South Wales or Australia believed a word of it?

Government members: No.

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: No, not a word of it. No-one believed a word of it.

LIVE TRAFFIC NSW WEBSITE

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. The quarter one progress report on the Roads and Maritime Services 2012-2013 Delivery Plan reports that the project to review and improve the Live Traffic website has not been delivered. Yesterday the Minister told the House that he understood it had been. Is the Minister in a position today to advise the House why it has not been delivered and when it will be done?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I indicated yesterday that I would get an answer on this, and I was certainly going to come back with an answer at the end of question time today.

The Hon. Walt Secord: Why don't you give it now?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Just be quiet for a moment. The world does not exist on glossy brochures, Walt; there are words attached.

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

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I indicated to the member yesterday—and her question today is reasonably accurate—

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: It's not for you to question the question.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: It was accurate in that I said I would come back with an answer today on whether that had happened or not. I said yesterday that I thought it had happened, but we checked overnight and it has not happened. It should have happened and it is underway with a rocket today to make sure it happens. I apologise; I thought it had happened. It should have happened and it had not happened. The funding that was needed to make sure it did happen has been pushed across today. I thank the Hon. Helen Westwood for the question alerting me to something that I was not aware of.

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

Questions without notice concluded.

Pursuant to sessional orders Government business proceeded with.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

The PRESIDENT: I report the receipt of the following message from Her Excellency the Governor:

Marie Bashir
GOVERNOR

Office of the Governor
Sydney 2000

Professor Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Council that she re-assumed the administration of the Government of the State on Thursday 28 February 2013.

Thursday 28 February 2013

DEATH OF SENIOR CONSTABLE DAVID RIXON ANNIVERSARY

Motion by the Hon. Michael Gallacher agreed to:

1. That this House notes that:
 - (a) 2 March 2013 marks the first anniversary of the passing of Senior Constable David Rixon after he was fatally shot whilst conducting a traffic stop.
 - (b) at the time of his funeral, NSW Commissioner of Police, Andrew Scipione, said, "In the best traditions of policing, David embraced his role as a police officer ... for the safety and harmony that he could promote ... for the good that he could do. He never wavered from this approach, right up to his moment of passing."
 - (c) Senior Constable Rixon was the 251st police officer to have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty in New South Wales.
2. That this House conveys to the family, friends and colleagues of David Rixon their thoughts and prayers on this difficult day.
3. That this House expresses its deep gratitude to all police men and women for their dedication to protecting our community.

ADJOURNMENT

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER (Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Hunter, and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [3.36 p.m.]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

DOMESTIC GAS RESERVATION POLICY

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM [3.36 p.m.]: This afternoon I speak on the need for a domestic gas reservation policy. The Minister for Resources and Energy Minister, Chris Hartcher, is running a scare campaign in cahoots with the gas companies and their lobbyists at the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association. They are telling the people of New South Wales that we are about to run out of gas. Minister Hartcher told the *Sunday Telegraph* recently:

If we are unable to access gas the lights will go out.

Yet at the same time as we are apparently running out of gas the big multinational oil companies are spending tens of billions constructing export terminals at Gladstone in Queensland to export gas. What a contradiction. The truth is that there is plenty of conventional gas in Australia, not only in Western Australia but also gas connected to the east coast gas markets from the South Australian desert and from Bass Strait. The chief executive of AGL, Michael Fraser, admitted as much in today's *Australian* when he stated:

If you look at New South Wales and Victoria, we would argue right now and for the next two to three years, those markets are well supplied with gas and there is no reason for prices to step up.

Currently the main influence in the east coast gas market is the rush by a few multinational oil companies to export to markets in Asia. Gas companies are signing multibillion dollar export contracts. Gas companies can command prices up to 300 per cent higher in the greater Asia-Pacific region than they can in Australia. The liquid natural gas export terminals being built at Gladstone will act as giant vacuum cleaners sucking up all the gas they can find to sell at high prices. The effect on the domestic gas market will be a surge in the price of gas towards parity with the export price.

This means household consumers and industry in Australia will have their prices doubled or tripled. After all, why would a gas company sell to Australian companies for \$3.50 or \$4.00 a gigajoule when it could see the same gas go to South Korea, Japan or China for \$9.00 a gigajoule? The cost will be borne by Australian households, Australian businesses and the Australian environment. Last year the Australian Industry Group released a report entitled, "Large scale export of East Coast Australia natural gas: Unintended consequences." The report notes.

... without a subsequent assurance of reliable, competitively priced supplies of gas for domestic industry Australia has only a few years before significant economic loss is likely to be felt from the failure to secure an affordable supply of natural gas to domestic users.

The Australian Industry Group calculates that the overall loss to annual gross domestic product will be \$22 billion more than it would be with secure and affordable gas. Rather than implement a sensible gas reservation policy to ensure supply for domestic markets, Minister Hartcher and the gas industry just want to let the coal seam gas industry loose all over New South Wales and Queensland. But why should homeowners of western Sydney have their suburbs turned into a toxic gas field so that big oil can export gas to Asia? Why should we drill toxic coal seam gas wells in the Sydney drinking water catchment so that big oil can export gas to Asia? Why should the farmers and residents in Gloucester have their beautiful valley and aquifers pockmarked with gas wells so that big oil can export gas to Asia? Why should we risk the highly productive black soil of the Liverpool Plains so that big oil can export gas to Asia? And why should the farmers and communities of the Northern Rivers be industrialised so that big oil can export gas to Asia?

The gas beneath the ground belongs to all Australians. Why should we let a few very large companies flog it off overseas at the expense of Australian consumers, Australian jobs, and the Australian environment? What Australia needs is a nationwide domestic gas reservation policy. Under this policy gas companies would be required to keep a certain percentage of gas within Australia for domestic use. The DomGas Alliance, an alliance of energy and manufacturing companies pushing for a domestic gas reservation policy, notes that of the top 20 countries with natural gas reserves only one country allows unrestricted gas exports. That country is Australia. Even that bastion of global capitalism, the United States, places restrictions on gas exports. There is plenty of conventional gas in eastern Australia. The question is whether we are sensible and will reserve some Australian gas for use by Australian consumers. Australian governments should be working towards a domestic gas reservation policy now.

TAMWORTH ELECTORATE EVENTS

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL [3.41 p.m.]: This afternoon I will update the House on some recent events in which I have participated in the great town of Tamworth. The first event which I was fortunate to attend was the official launch of the AviSkills training education centre. The event was held on 8 November 2012 at BAE Systems Dining Room at Tamworth Airport. It was an exciting event, with very interesting speakers, including Mr Doug Nancarrow, editor of *Aviation Business* magazine, and retired Air Vice Marshal John Quaife, general manager of BAE Systems Aviation Solutions.

AviSkills is located at Tamworth Airport and specialises in aviation engineering training with the aim of providing accredited education programs for the aviation industry both in Australia and overseas. It provides training to some of Australia's largest civilian and defence organisations. AviSkills was officially established in 2002 in response to the national and international shortage of skilled and qualified aviation engineering staff. AviSkills operates in partnership with the TAFE NSW New England Institute as well as QantasLink, Tamworth Regional Council and BAE Systems.

At the conclusion of the launch a tour was conducted of the AviSkills facility, which gave those present a chance to view student learning in action. I had the privilege of touring the centre and was extremely impressed with the state-of-the-art training that is on offer. Amongst the high-tech equipment at the 2,500-square metre centre are two Jetstream aircraft, six light aircraft and a helicopter for students to practice maintenance and have hands-on training. The workshops and training rooms provide students with real-life experience including installation and repair of engines, taxiing and refuelling of aircraft, installation of aircraft systems, and training in the operation of radar and pneumatic systems.

The facility provides a fantastic service to students across Australia and in particular from the New England region who seek to acquire a specific skill in the field of aviation. AviSkills has access to a range of resources which enhance the scope and quality of the training process for those seeking to work for regional, national and international airlines or to have finely honed careers in services such as aerial agriculture. I pass on my thanks and congratulations to the entire team at AviSkills, in particular the chairman, Mr Charles McCarthy, and the business development manager, Mr Darren Keegan, for their commitment to the aviation industry. The AviSkills launch was a wonderful opportunity to showcase the work of the academy. I know that the event was enjoyed by all who were in attendance, including my National Party colleagues the member for Tamworth, Kevin Anderson, and Senator John Williams.

I attended another fantastic event in Tamworth in December last year, which was the opening of the E-Link Electronic Recycling Solutions centre. It is an electronic waste recycling facility servicing the Tamworth region and is a Joblink Plus social enterprise project. Electronic waste, or e-waste, is being sent to landfill at

roughly three times the rate of general waste. More staggeringly, it was recently found that 75 per cent of the three million computers bought in Australia every year will end up in landfill. E-waste can come from a variety of sources, including computers, photocopiers, printers and televisions.

As all members in this House are aware, technology is updated at a rapid rate and, as such, the older products are becoming the fastest-growing contributor to Australia's waste stream. Waste products of this nature usually contain toxic elements such as lead, mercury, antimony trioxide and even arsenic. They are damaging not only to humans but also to the environment. The e-link facility in Tamworth takes in and dismantles these potentially hazardous items and recycles the toxic materials for re-use. Once the materials have been sorted appropriately they are sent to manufacturers or other recycling plants to be processed into new products. This type of innovation is a positive step in the battle against harmful waste disposal and the enterprise should be congratulated.

Furthermore, the e-link facility is a self-funded social enterprise. This means that, as a business, the employers seek participants who have been out of the workforce for an extended period or have suffered from significant disadvantage. These participants gain valuable experience and also have the opportunity to receive accredited training and personal support. E-link therefore provides a stepping stone for participants to join or rejoin the workforce with on-the-job experience. I thank all of the staff at the centre for their hospitality. In particular I acknowledge Joblink Plus Chief Executive Officer Mr Chris Sheppeard and Mr Glenn Jones. They both were only too happy to answer any questions that I had. The E-Link Electronic Recycling Solutions centre has found an innovative way to deal with a growing waste and recycling issue at the same time as providing an employment opportunity to those who really need it. I believe all who are involved in the centre should be congratulated on such a worthwhile initiative.

TRIBUTE TO RON QUILTER-FEINBURG

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE [3.46 p.m.]: This Saturday I will join 10,000 participants to march in the thirty-fifth annual Sydney Mardi Gras. We will be joined by hundreds of thousands of others in person and online as we make our way up Oxford Street. I take this opportunity to wish a happy Mardi Gras to all those who are veteran parade watchers or participants and those who will attend for the first time. I also give my thanks to the Mardi Gras committee and legions of volunteers, who every year take on hours and hours of unpaid work to put together one of the best street parades and civil rights protests in the world.

I also acknowledge and congratulate the many New South Wales government agencies that will be taking their place in the parade. These include the Rural Fire Service, Fire and Rescue, the State Emergency Service, the Ambulance Service and—with one of the most popular floats—the NSW Police Force. There has been massive change in our society. In 1978 police were arresting participants and now they are joining the parade to show their support for diversity, inclusiveness and community-based and responsive policing. As the shadow Minister for Transport I am particularly pleased to see that RailCorp will have a float in the parade.

At the thirty-fifth Mardi Gras parade there is a man who will be in many peoples' thoughts as they make their way along the parade route. This year Mardi Gras will have to happen without Ron Quilter-Feinberg. Ron recently passed away aged 83. I cannot do justice to the words spoken by others about Ron so I will share an edited version of the words of those far more eloquent than I am. Ron's friend Michael Flynn painted a wonderful picture about the life of Ron Quilter-Feinberg. He told us:

Ron Quilter-Feinberg was born in Sydney on 16 September 1930. Ron's ancestors were all English Jews who came to Australia between 1840 and 1860.

By the time he started school Ron's family had settled in Bondi. He attended school at Randwick and at Sydney Boys High and was part of the Eastern Suburbs Jewish community.

In their later years Ron's grandparents were live-in caretakers of the Great Synagogue in Elizabeth Street, Sydney.

After returning to Sydney from London in 1952 Ron attended the Rathbone School of Dramatic Art run by Miss Judy Rathbone-Lawless and Miss Winifred Healey in Rowe Street, the bohemian heart of the city.

He belonged to a theatre company and acted in radio serials and was a strong supporter of the ballet.

Clothes were always his forte. He was the best dressed octogenarian in Sydney.

The great relationship of his life was with Cameron.

Ron and Cameron were keen participants in the many social groups, balls, dances and picnics of Sydney's gay community.

In later years Ron was involved in a variety of charitable and community groups, including the Bobby Goldsmith Foundation, of which he was president in the late 1980s.

In 1999 he received a Commonwealth Recognition Award for Senior Australians for contributions to the gay and lesbian community. As he got older he seemed to get even more involved in community activities, working tirelessly with ACON, the Positive Living Centre, the Asylum Seekers Centre, the Emanuel Synagogue and Dayenu, marching with Dayenu in many Mardi Gras Parades.

Rabbi Jackie Ninio spoke of Ron's "presence and connection to the Jewish community" and the Emanuel Synagogue. He said:

Yesterday and today we begin the month of Adar in the Jewish calendar.

Ron was a man who brought the joy and delight of Adar into the world.

He loved people and everyone he encountered he embraced with his warmth, his compassion and care.

He constantly gave to those around him, striving to make a difference in the world and the lives of others.

He volunteered in so many aspects of our community's life, from cooking for and meeting asylum seekers, and volunteering in the canteen at Matthew Talbot to greeting people at the synagogue, handing them a book and making them feel welcomed and comfortable.

Ron was a remarkable presence.

And he helped make the lives of others more joyful, to bring a little sunshine into the world.

And he did it with his unique mix of care and compassion, with his cheeky grin and twinkling eyes, behind which there was always a sneaky little joke or comment, something a little naughty and clandestine.

Ron was passionate about his Judaism and about community.

He devoted himself to his religion and his people, reaching out to those around him with advice, guidance and lots of fun. He was age defying, every year until recently, treading the boards, singing and dancing in our Purim spiel, [and] grinning out at the crowd, loving his time in the spotlight once more.

And he had a spiritual connection too, attending services, linking himself to the long chain of tradition, to his family and holding hands forward into the future; helping us to shape a Judaism which is inclusive embracing of diversity and welcoming.

He was a stalwart at our Shabbat dinners and a key member of Dayenu, our GLBTQ group. Every year he participated in the Mardi Gras float, dancing, singing outpacing people half his age.

And more recently when the physical demands were too great, there he was on the float, riding, waving and still in the centre of the fun.

Although Ron is physically gone from amongst us, he will never really be gone as long as we continue to tell his stories and to live our lives as he did in his greater moments; with joy, fullness of heart, loving people, caring for them and working to make the world a better place.

For the many family, friends and organisations that had the honour and pleasure of knowing Ron Quilter-Feinberg, and who will be marching in the parade this weekend, I hope they have a very happy Mardi Gras. I know they will have Ron in their thoughts and in their hearts during the thirty-fifth Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

COUNCIL AMALGAMATIONS

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK [3.51 p.m.]: I wish to address the vexed issue of council mergers. I know that this week the topic was again discussed in Nyngan at the annual local government conference. It is no secret that the Government would like a reduction in the number of councils across the State, but it has said it will not be "forcing" any mergers. Recently we were told by the Independent Local Government Review Panel that council mergers would potentially stimulate job growth rates. Apparently the panel examined employment figures from 40 regional New South Wales councils that had been consolidated into 21 new local government areas as part of the 2004 boundary changes and found that, overall, staff numbers actually increased by 11.7 per cent.

The panel's chair, Professor Graham Sansom, said that the councils had experienced a range of long-term benefits following amalgamation, including the ability to tackle larger-scale projects and attract new

investment as well as improved service and infrastructure delivery. However, he also pointed out that amalgamation was not a panacea for all the ills of local government and must be considered as part of a wider package of reform. The Professor hit the nail on the head with the statement that "amalgamation and boundary changes need to be carefully planned and handled sensitively".

We should remember that being part of something bigger is not always better. In Queensland we have an example of big not necessarily being better: the Noosa experience has been bitter. In 2008 Queensland went down the merger path and turned 156 councils into just 73. Noosa was swallowed up in the larger centres of Caloundra and Maroochydore to form the Sunshine Coast mega council. Many people are now complaining that the town's identity has been lost and moreover that the policy of "harmonisation" threatens Noosa's distinctive casual character which sees it, so far, still free from parking meters, high-rise buildings and unbridled population growth. The new Queensland Premier conceded that Noosa might have a point. He is allowing Noosa and four other towns to vote on whether to undo the merging of their councils. The result will not be known until next month.

The fear of a wholesale slashing of staff in New South Wales following council mergers led the Shooters and Fishers Party to have provisions included in the Local Government Amendment Bill 2011 to protect local government workers for at least three years when councils amalgamate. The United Services Union, which includes most council workers, helped us to negotiate the retention clauses. I am grateful to Steve Hughes for his assistance on that issue, and indeed on a number of other issues of interest to his members. We know that some local government functions, such as infrastructure and back office services, can be more efficient and cost-effective on an increased scale, but we also have evidence of previous amalgamations that showed efficiency gains, but not necessarily any reduction in rates. In many cases local government is the heart and the lifeblood of local communities. Indeed, local councils sometimes are the main employer in their region. Local government workers deserve consideration and protection in any amalgamation scenarios.

There is no point in merging weak or unsustainable councils if doing so only produces a larger council that is still weak and unsustainable. Furthermore, I doubt that amalgamations are possible when physical distances between communities and service centres are simply too great. Professor Sansom's panel also found that previous council mergers in New South Wales had been poorly planned and executed. That should put the Government on notice to ensure such changes are better managed in the future for the benefit of council workers and local ratepayers.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.55 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to imminent appointments to the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission. I have spoken about this topic on a number of occasions—on 22 November 2012 and most recently yesterday during debate on the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Bill 2013. During last year's estimates hearings the Opposition welcomed the then Treasurer, who is now also the Minister for Industrial Relations, announcing that new appointments would be made to the commission. Recently those undertakings were reiterated. I have referred previously also to the great strain on the commission as a result of its workload and a backlog of 1,025 matters with which the commission is now struggling.

Over the years approaches adopted by governments at different levels to the selection of members of courts and tribunals have differed. The traditional approach to appointment to courts has been selection after consultation with legal professional bodies. In more recent times that has given way to advertisement and seeking expressions of interest, particularly for the Federal Court, the Federal Magistrates Court and for the New South Wales District Court. That is not particularly new: for many years the magistracy made appointments after seeking candidates through a selection process that included expressions of interest and assessment by a selection panel. But of course the magistracy originally grew out of the public service. People would work their way up through the court system to be the Clerk of Petty Sessions and then seek appointment as a magistrate. In the modern era it is well recognised that members of courts and tribunals are not members of the public service and are not employees of any person—albeit they fulfil very important public functions.

However, the approach taken to the selection of persons for appointment to courts and tribunals is the subject of legitimate discussion and debate. One thing is certain: appointments to the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission have never been made by seeking expressions of interest through an advertisement process—at least, not until now. On 2 and 5 February we read that a number of persons recently applied and had been interviewed for appointment as commissioners of the New South Wales Industrial

Relations Commission. That is fair enough. It is a matter for government how it seeks to inform itself of who are the most appropriate candidates for appointment. However, no advertisement appeared until 15 February, when the Sydney media published an advertisement that sought expressions of interest in relation to appointment to the commission. In the case of judicial appointments the contact person is usually the head of the Department of Attorney General and Justice. In relation to some tribunals the head of the tribunal has been the contact person. Intriguingly, and for the first time that I can recall, the contact person was not the head of the department or the head of the tribunal, as was the case when people sought appointment to a court

In the present case the contact person is a recruitment consultant. Moreover, the recruitment consultant is based in Melbourne. That represents a very significant change of policy that has not been the subject of any discussion or announcement by the Government. For example, previously when governments have decided to change the process for selecting judges in a number of ways there has been significant public discussion and a statement has been issued by the government of the day to explain how and why the process was changed. This has not occurred in relation to appointments to the Industrial Relations Commission. I am not criticising the process. As I stated previously, it is a matter for government how it chooses to inform itself. But a significant change of policy such as using a private firm to winnow the pool of candidates or indeed to select the candidates is an innovation that should be the subject of some discussion before it is implemented.

There has also been no discussion or announcement about what process would be followed, either by that recruitment consultant or, indeed, by government having received any feedback from the consultant. I would not necessarily make comment about such a matter except, having read the advertisement closely, I find one aspect of it faintly disturbing. Apart from setting out all the usual criteria and conditions one would expect, there is this statement:

The appointee will possess a very good understanding of New South Wales industrial relations legislation or the ability to quickly obtain such an understanding.

The whole point of specialist courts and tribunals is that the people selected for appointment have the requisite skills and specialist knowledge, they have stood in the court or tribunal or they have disclosed through their professional experience their capacity for appointment. That should so in this case.

TRIBUTE TO ANDREW HABIB HARB

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA (Parliamentary Secretary) [4.00 p.m.]: It is with sadness that I talk about the loss on Wednesday 20 February 2013 of an outstanding young man, Andrew Habib Harb, following a heart-related illness at the young age of 20 years. Andrew's parents, George Habib Harb and Souad "Sue" Habib Harb, nee Moussa, married and came to Australia in 1989 from Tannourine, North Lebanon, to make a life for their family. They worked hard for the benefit of their four boys: the first, Gebran, born in 1991; Andrew in 1992; Shaddie in 1995 and Martin in 1998. Many honourable members have had the privilege of meeting their son Gebran "Gaby" Habib, who is a fine young community leader and works for the New South Wales Parliament.

Upon arriving in Australia George and Sue became extensively involved with the Church of our Lady of Lebanon, Harris Park, as well as charities such as the Harb Charity Association, raising money for the Maronite Youth Organisation and the Lebanese forces. Sue has dedicated her life to helping children with a disability. She also serves on Our Lady of Lebanon Seniors Committee, cooks for the elderly and takes them on picnics and outings. Andrew and his brothers all followed in their parents' footsteps, having a generous, selfless nature and involving themselves with charitable and religious organisations.

Andrew grew up in Merrylands and Baulkham Hills and attended Our Lady of Lebanon College, Harris Park, Jasper Road Public School in Baulkham Hills and Gilroy Catholic College in Castle Hill. Following school he worked in the family business, Advanced Excavation and Demolition. Andrew was a spirited boy who endeared himself to all he came into contact with. He was described as BFG—a big friendly giant. Indeed, he was a hard boy to miss at six feet seven inches in height and size 14 shoes. Andrew loved cars, Brazilian jujitsu, hunting, his dog, Ralph the kelpie, his mates and family. Many have described Andrew as being steadfastly truthful, speaking his mind and fearless in telling people what he thought, and standing up for what he believed was right.

Andrew was a people person, and he would make friends with people of all backgrounds and ages. He attended events organised by the Maronite Youth Organisation and could always be relied upon to lend a

helping hand with its organisation and the running of events. Andrew was influenced greatly by his nine loving female cousins who adored him: Sandra Gabrael-Latouf; Natalie, Stephanie and Ashleigh Gabrael; Jacki, Yana, Maggi and Marie Harb; and Chanel Moubarak. They were all like sisters to him. On behalf of the family, Sandra said:

It wasn't his height that gave him such a humble bird's eye view on humanity, it was his own journey of trials that gave him his strength and his sorrows, that gave him his wisdom. At a very young age he went on the medical merry-go-round more times than most of us in our lifetime. Andrew's ability to dismiss the daily trivia and see the big picture whilst laughing along the way was inspirational. He punched above his weight and age.

Andrew's friends Jeremy Roumanos and Robert Tatko also spoke of what a special person their mate was. More than 1,500 family and friends attended Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Harris Park, with the service conducted by Monsignor Shora Maree. Andrew's brother Gaby has dedicated the following to him:

I wish I could hear your great big laugh again and the feel of your bear tight grip.
I wish we could've gone hunting together like you always wished we would.
I wish you could've been there at my right hand side on the day of my wedding.
I wish you could've been there as the Godfather at the baptism of my first child.
I wish we could've celebrated our achievements and the joys we shared as we grew old together passing on to our children what our parents passed on to us.
I was your Batman and you were my Robin. May the Lord place you amongst his countless choirs of Angels and Saints in the hope that we'll see each other once more.
To the best man I ever knew, my one and only Andrew.

As the favourite grandson of his mother's father, Antonios Tobia Moussa Harb, Andrew lies opposite his grandfather's resting place and is with him in heaven. My heart and my sympathies go out to Andrew's beautiful family. God bless you and your soul, Andrew Habib Harb.

RARE DISORDERS WITHOUT BORDERS

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES [4.04 p.m.]: I speak on the sixth annual World Rare Disease Day, which is held on 28 February. This year's focus is Rare Disorders without Borders. Currently, more than one million people worldwide are living with rare diseases. There are more than 8,000 known rare diseases affecting more than two million Australians, of which 400,000 are children. A rare disease, as defined by the Therapeutic Goods Authority, is a condition, syndrome or disorder that affects one in 10,000 people or less. Most of these diseases are genetic, chronic or debilitating and although each disease is rare, collectively they affect up to 10 per cent of the population.

Most of these diseases begin in childhood and continue throughout life, with neurological and intellectual disabilities occurring in about half of all cases, regardless of disease type, and lead to loss of independence and opportunities. Obtaining a diagnosis is often difficult and delayed and more often than not there is no cure. Individuals affected by rare diseases and their families often feel isolated, not knowing where to go for treatment, what is the best treatment and how to manage or live their lives with the condition. Rare Disorders without Borders addresses the problems associated with fighting diseases that affect only a small few in each country. It enables those affected and their families to reach out to others to find common solutions and support. For expertise and treatment, cross-border cooperation is needed.

[Time for debate expired.]

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

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 4.06 p.m. until Tuesday 12 March 2013 at 2.30 p.m.
