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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday 20 March 2014

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

The President read the Prayers.

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

ASSYRIAN AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE PROPOSAL

Motion by Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE agreed to:

- (1) That this House considers and supports a resolution by the Australian Assyrians that demands the Iraqi Government to accord the new proposed Nineveh Plains Province an autonomous status—self-administrated region—to the Assyrians and other Christian minorities on the land of their ancestors in the north of Iraq—the territory located between the greater Zab and the river Tigris—and that the newly created Assyrian region in the said territory shall be administrated and protected by the Assyrians, under the jurisdiction of the central national Government.
- (2) That this House considers it will be absolutely necessary to the security and survival of the Assyrians in Iraq, and that the establishment of such an Assyrian region as promulgated under article 121 of the Iraqi Constitution will allow greater local Assyrian control within the context of its integrated, sovereign Iraqi State and, furthermore, such an Assyrian area would allow for political, educational, linguistic, religious and cultural protection.
- (3) That this House calls on the Federal Government to use our seat in the United Nations Security Council to adopt a similar motion supporting a new province for the Assyrians in Iraq at this critical time before the next Iraq national election.

AUTISM ADVISORY AND SUPPORT SERVICE AND AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

Motion by the Hon. MARIE FICARRA agreed to:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) April is Autism Awareness month, with autism affecting more than one in 100 children;
 - (b) the Autism Advisory and Support Service [AASS] has invited all schools, community groups and workplaces to Dare to be Different, promoting the message that we are all different, be it in our appearance, our likes, our feelings and individuality, but that it is important to embrace each person's unique gifts and talents;
 - (c) a Dare to be Different pack, written by clinical psychologist Kellie Knapton, that discusses what autism is and how all people are different is being used as an anti-bullying program for students; and
 - (d) the Autism Advisory and Support Service:
 - (i) was established in 2007 by a group of parents from South Western Sydney to fill the void in the health care sector encountered by families of children with autism to provide a support network and advisory service to empower children with autism and their families through knowledge and support, and to positively impact and influence their children's social and emotional development;
 - (ii) is run by volunteers, is a not-for-profit incorporated charity and relies on funding grants, donations and sponsorships to meet its operational costs and assist families, carers and professionals from New South Wales, around Australia and overseas;
 - (iii) opened the AASS Community House drop in centre located in Memorial Avenue, Liverpool, and has established, coordinated and hosted support groups, respite programs, a sensory toy and resource shop with affordable prices, a parent library and toy library, Australia's only 24-hour Autism hotline, individual advocacy, workshops, seminars and other information and Autism awareness programs; and
 - (iv) continues to provide these services free or at a nominal fee to the parents and carers of children with autism spectrum disorder and handles approximately 200 inquiries or cases per month.
- (2) That this House:
 - (a) acknowledges and commends for their outstanding service to the AASS executive committee founder and president, Ms Grace Fava, Adjunct Fellow of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Western Sydney and mother of two sons with autism and global developmental delay; Fiona Zammit, vice president and secretary; William Johns, treasurer; Bassem Ghaznavi; June Young, OAM; Craig Kelly, MP; and Elizabeth Dadd; and
 - (b) acknowledges and commends AASS workers Janine Power, Kathy Zannino, Leanne Stanton, Lina Nashmi, Stephanie Cusack, Suzana Katic, Jenny Lam, Maria Strangio, Taylor Saunderson, Brad Power, Jayke Stanton, Domenica Leonello, Bruno Flaiban, Giovanni Carbone and Taylor Saunderson.

NATIONAL BOWEL CANCER SCREENING PROGRAM

Motion by Dr JOHN KAYE agreed to:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) bowel cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer in Australia, and around 80 Australians die each week from the disease;
 - (b) bowel cancer can be treated successfully if detected in its early stages, but currently fewer than 40 per cent of bowel cancers are detected early;
 - (c) the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program will see up to 4.8 million eligible Australians offered free bowel cancer screening between 1 July 2012 and 31 December 2015;
 - (d) the program will be further expanded in 2017 and 2018 when a phased implementation of biennial screening will commence, and when fully implemented all Australians aged between 50 and 74 years will be offered free screening every two years, consistent with the recommendations of the National Health and Medical Research Council; and
 - (e) the expansion of the program means that more than 12,000 suspected or confirmed cancers will be detected each year and between 300 and 500 lives saved annually.
- (2) That this House congratulates the Federal Department of Health and the medical practitioners who agitated for, designed and implemented this program and its effective preventative measures to reduce the incidence of bowel cancer.

SYDNEY BUS MUSEUM AUSTRALIA DAY RIDES

Motion by the Hon. MARIE FICARRA agreed to:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) the New South Wales Premier's Australia Day Council invites the Sydney Bus Museum each year to operate a vintage double-decker bus service around Sydney's central business district throughout Australia Day and in 2014, 14 double-decker buses and more than 50 crew provided voluntary services on Australia Day;
 - (b) the Sydney Bus Museum is a not-for-profit registered charity first established in 1986, and is a working museum made up of more than 250 members who together help to preserve a rare and invaluable collection of historic buses dating from the 1920s to the 1980s, consisting of more than 70 vehicles, mainly former government buses, ranging from primitive 1920s type buses, through to 1940s and 1950s Leylands and Associated Equipment Company as well as the more modern 1980s Mercedes-Benz city buses;
 - (c) the museum also houses Australia's largest collection of historic double-deckers, including those from Sydney, Adelaide and London;
 - (d) the Sydney Bus Museum has continued to exist for more than 25 years thanks to its entirely voluntary workforce that ensures that vehicles are regularly made available for various community and charitable events;
 - (e) following the relocation of the museum from Tempe to the former tram sheds at Leichhardt in Sydney's inner west and whilst this new location is awaiting works to be carried out, the museum is closed but continues to participate in a raft of community events, almost on a monthly basis, including school visits to teach children about the history of the New South Wales public transport system, and various charity and local council events; and
 - (f) the Sydney Bus Museum's vision for the new premises at Leichhardt is to provide Sydney with a world-class interactive transport museum where the community can experience Sydney's road transport history, including a historic double-decker bus service each Sunday connecting the inner west with the Sydney central business district.
- (2) That this House acknowledges and commends for their outstanding voluntary service to the preservation of New South Wales' transport history and Australia Day, Mr David Bennett, voluntary general manager and fellow volunteers Leonie Addison, Douglas Aitken, Richard Bailey, David Bennett, Keith Bentwitch, Tony Bishop, Phillip Brown, Liam Brundle, Andrew Chechlac, Matthew Crouch, Bill East, Simon Ford, Ron Franks, Roy Gould, Andrew Griffiths, David Griffiths, Gwilym Griffiths, Micheal Heinrichs, Robert Hood, Malcolm Inglis, Peter Jacono, Peter Kahn, Andrew Kandelas, Bob Kendall, Geoffrey Lanham, Alan Lee, Bob Lewis, Duncan Mac Auslan, Brendan Magee, Bruce Magee, Ian Mair, Peter Molchanoff, Kevin Moore, Malcolm Morgan, Bill Myers, Tristian Phipps, Bruce Reynolds, Col Rhodes, Spencer Ross, Phillip Rubie, Gary Russell, Barry Ryan, Graeme Scott, Alan Sewell, Alan Seymour, Phillip Stanton, Arthur Stathakis, Peter Stathakis, Robert Tillack, Greg Travers, Robert Trevillion, John Ward, Scott Wilson and Malcolm Wright.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Formal Business Notices of Motions

Private Members' Business items Nos 1736, 1737 and 1738 outside the Order of Precedence objected to as being taken as formal business.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Postponement of Business**

Private Members' Business item No. 2 in the Order of Precedence postponed on motion by the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps, on behalf of the Hon. Robert Brown, and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

Private Members' Business item No. 6 in the Order of Precedence postponed on motion by Dr John Kaye and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

Private Members' Business item No. 8 in the Order of Precedence postponed on motion by Dr Mehreen Faruqi and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

Private Members' Business item No. 9 in the Order of Precedence postponed on motion by the Hon. Trevor Khan and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion by the Hon. Duncan Gay agreed to:

That this House at its rising today do adjourn until Tuesday 25 March 2014 at 2.30 p.m.

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

Motion by Dr John Kaye agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that Private Members' Business item No. 1445 outside the Order of Precedence, relating to the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014, be called on forthwith.

The PRESIDENT: Order! If there is any more noise from the gallery, I will clear the gallery.

Order of Business

Motion by Dr John Kaye agreed to:

That Private Members' Business item No. 1445 outside the Order of Precedence be called on forthwith.

TAFE CHANGES MORATORIUM (SECURE FUTURE FOR PUBLIC PROVISION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING) BILL 2014

Bill introduced, and read a first time and ordered to be printed on motion by Dr John Kaye.

Second Reading

Dr JOHN KAYE [9.51 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014 expresses the will of the Parliament to take fees for TAFE courses and funding for private providers back to the 2010 level and to freeze them at that level. It expresses a will of the Parliament that TAFE funding should be taken to its 2010-11 level. The bill insists that the Minister for Education introduce policies that ensure TAFE is a dominant provider and specifically that no policies are introduced that increase competition for TAFE. The bill is a moratorium bill. It will reverse damage done to TAFE by budget cuts and fee increases, it will stop the so-called Smart and Skilled market, and it will remove the need for TAFE managers to cut courses, slash staff and destroy support programs in preparation for the Smart and Skilled market, which is scheduled to begin on 1 January 2015.

It is important to be clear: This bill is not about to create a future for TAFE; that is a task we are all challenged with. This bill invites every member of Parliament, TAFE manager, teacher and student to enter into

debate on securing a future for TAFE. This bill stops TAFE being destroyed entirely. For the first time in 120 or more years history of TAFE and its predecessors we are confronting the real prospect of a future where public provision of vocational education and training is no longer dominant but is in a state of collapse. Budget cuts of more than \$800 million in the forward estimates are seeing 800 jobs disappear from TAFE. The answer to a question on notice from The Greens to the Minister for Education advised that 395 jobs disappeared from TAFE in 2013. The O'Farrell Government is halfway towards its target of cutting 800 jobs. Anecdotally, in early 2014 there were more TAFE cuts.

When The Greens released these figures in public, the Director General of TAFE, Pam Christie, appeared on Robbie Buck's program on the morning of 11 March 2014. Miss Christie said that she was disappointed "that people are talking down TAFE and making alarmist claims". What Miss Christie is seeking to do is ensure that nobody criticises the Government's policy and nobody makes a stand for TAFE. Miss Christie went on to say, "We are talking about the opportunity to really look carefully at how we deliver services and where demand is for our services." It is extraordinary that Miss Christie—who has presided over a TAFE system that has devastated support services for people with special needs, outreach programs and second-chance learning, and undermined entirely the opportunity for people with intellectual disabilities to learn cooking and food skills at the North Sydney Institute—says we are the people talking down TAFE and that all TAFE is doing is looking carefully at where the demand is for its services. The reality is that there is strong demand across TAFE and trying to deliver those services with 400 fewer people—soon to be 800—is a physical impossibility. Miss Christie went on to say:

But like any business our customer needs are changing. We are constantly reviewing the way we operate and our customers are telling us that they want services delivered more flexibly.

I point out to Miss Christie that she is not running a business; she is running a public service. She is running a key ingredient in creating social justice in our community. She is running a part of the social contract that exists between New South Wales and its people. She is not in any way running a business. It is wrong of her to say so. The interviewer, Robbie Buck, asked, "When you say customers, you are talking about students?" Her reply was, "Yes, students, and employers though, because they are an important part of our business." Therein lies the underlying fault in Miss Christie's thinking. She is convinced that her customers, as she calls them—I do not believe that TAFE has customers; it has students—are employers. TAFE has a great track record of responding to market conditions.

This year's Government review of government services spoke strongly of how TAFE has responded to demand for its services. Fundamentally TAFE responds to the demands of the community. The reality is that Miss Christie is saying it is important for TAFE New South Wales to become more efficient. She says that, like every other government agency, TAFE needs to become more efficient. Anybody who talks about TAFE becoming more efficient now is ignoring the reality of past budget cuts. Between 1997 and 2010, using National Centre for Vocational Education Research data adjusted in per student terms and for inflation, the State's annual recurrent contribution for TAFE fell by 48 per cent. If TAFE were still funded in 2010 at the same level per student, adjusted for inflation, as it was funded in 1997 there would be an additional \$962 million in its budget each year. I invite members to think carefully about what \$962 million would purchase in respect of additional teachers to satisfy the real demands.

TAFE has already been cut to the bone. The point at which efficiency gains end and exploitation of TAFE teachers begins was passed a decade ago. More than 10 years ago all the efficiencies that were available to TAFE were exploited entirely and the reality is that TAFE teachers and staff members were paying the price for any additional cuts to TAFE's budget. The capacity to exploit teachers and staff members has been fully exhausted and the human limits have been reached; that lies behind us. Every dollar that is now cut out of TAFE's budget is a course that is lost or shortened, a student whose education is compromised or an opportunity for second-chance learning that is denied. Rising fees during this period have gone from 14.3 per cent of the total cost of educating a student to 23.7 per cent of educating a student. Rising fees are closing the doors on young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who, research shows, will not pay additional costs for education and will be driven out of public education.

The serious damage, however, results from the implementation of Smart and Skilled, which is scheduled to begin in January 2015. Smart and Skilled has been delayed twice already as the O'Farrell Government comes to grips with the challenges of trying to rewrite the TAFE and the vocational education systems. At the heart of Smart and Skilled lies a plan to strip TAFE of its core funding for bread-and-butter courses. Certificate I, II and III courses will no longer be funded directly through TAFE. Instead, the money will be given to eligible students as a once-in-a-lifetime entitlement—effectively, a voucher that they can cash in at a

public or private provider of their choice. In effect, Smart and Skilled takes hundreds of millions of dollars out of the TAFE budget and makes the funds contestable in a market about which there is little information. The only information available will be informed by the opinions of the young people who hold the entitlements. The question then arises: What will they know about the quality of education and training provided by each of the registered training organisations in the market? Even the neoliberals, who are infatuated with the concept of markets, must see—

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Hear, hear!

Dr JOHN KAYE: I acknowledge the interjection of the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps because he too can see how doomed to failure the effort is when student choice is driven not by the quality of education and training but by course duration and gimmicky giveaways offered by private providers. It is clear that private providers will offer the same courses as TAFE but with much shorter duration, lower quality, lower standards of assessment and lower outcomes. We have already seen that in the lead-up to Smart and Skilled. It is absolutely clear that the high-speed, low-quality private providers will win this competition. They will change the minimum standard, cut corners and avoid expensive students such as those with special needs, diverse learning needs, students from non-English speaking or low socio-economic backgrounds and Aboriginal students. Students who pose increased costs for any reason will be turned away by private providers.

The competition that Smart and Skilled presents to TAFE to recover its funding is unwinnable. It is a race to the bottom for training quality not just in the short term but also in the long term as teacher salaries and conditions will fall to equal the lowest common denominator, which may be that set by the modern award in the national award system. Community service obligations will be cashed out and will become add-ons. Second chance, outreach and disability support will become nothing but afterthoughts that will be provided only where they are cost-effective, not where they are needed. They will no longer be part of the integrated whole within the TAFE system; they will become things to be added on where a private provider can find a cost-effective way of delivering them.

Added to this is a skills list, which supposedly responds to demand. Across New South Wales fine arts courses have gone from costing a couple of hundred dollars a year to between \$8,000 and \$12,000 a year. Fine arts courses are collapsing. Students at Hornsby TAFE were told a week before the fine arts course was due to begin that there would be no course. The O'Farrell Government argues that fine arts courses are not in demand. We beg to differ, as did the creative arts industry in its report to the Government. It begged the Government to reverse the cuts and to return all the creative arts funding.

The community is also concerned about the future of the creative arts industry. I have travelled around New South Wales and spoken to countless students who have had to abandon their studies in fine arts. They told me what they had intended to do with a fine arts education. They spoke about wanting to get involved in community arts, create their own artistic endeavours or work in companies requiring artistic skills. To say that there is no demand or labour market need for fine arts courses is simply to ignore the realities of modern economies. The complex reality is that not everything can be measured in dollars and cents; the cultural value is also important. My colleague the Hon. Jan Barham has had a lot to say about fine arts. She will be the first to argue that our culture will go into decline without affordable fine arts courses provided by TAFE. Not only is our culture at risk but so too is our skills base and the social justice fabric of our society that guarantees every member of the community has access to education and training.

This same trick was tried in Victoria, where it failed dismally. For the first time Victoria TAFE now provides less than 50 per cent of all vocational education and training. Between 2008 and 2012 the non-TAFE sector share of vocational education and training funding went from less than one-eighth to 41.3 per cent. Contestable funding went from just below one-quarter in 2008 to just below three-quarters in 2012. Now, 71.3 per cent of the vocational education and training budget is contestable and TAFE is losing rapidly. The quality of vocational education and training in Victoria has nosedived. Bizarrely, and against the predictions of those who designed the Victorian market, costs have blown out and vocational education and training truly is in crisis.

We are lucky in New South Wales because we can look south across the Murray River border. If we were genuinely smart and committed to increasing skills we would learn from Victoria and not repeat its mistakes. Stupidity is seeing something happen, repeating the causes and expecting a different outcome. We cannot expect a different outcome in New South Wales. If we go down the route of employing the principles of the global education reform movement and neoliberalism to TAFE by implementing Smart and Skilled we will

repeat the errors of Victoria. That will have disastrous consequences for individuals, TAFE teachers and society as a whole. We will lose the economic, social, cultural and political benefits that come with having a skilled workforce. South Australia and Queensland have tried similar vocational education and training funding contestability schemes that have had the same results. In fact, Queensland TAFE institutions now have to compete with private providers just to access their own buildings.

Why is this competition so appallingly bad for TAFE? The answer lies firstly in the nature of the private providers and, secondly, in the nature of the market. The Australian Skills Quality Authority is responsible for maintaining skills in registered training organisations around Australia. In a report published earlier this year, the authority said that up to half of registered training organisations are potentially misleading consumers. The authority pointed to practices of promising qualifications irrespective of the outcome of assessment and guaranteeing jobs after training.

These organisations collect fees in advance that are above the limits set for registered organisations. Most importantly, the organisations set time frames for courses that fall far short of the volume of learning required. The Australian Skills Quality Authority is the chief regulatory body of vocational education and training in New South Wales. Its report points to the phenomenon in which is writ the doom of vocational education and training in this State if we do not avert the sudden and rapid growth of private providers. The Industry Skills Council consultation also raised a number of concerning findings. The council found that private registered training organisations have applied:

- An inappropriate use of online learning that lacked work-based context;
- Training delivery that does not provide the appropriate knowledge and skills ...;
- Inappropriate use of recognition of prior learning;
- Trainers who lack recent industry experience;
- Enrolling students without required prerequisites;
- Delivering training that the registered training organisation is not registered to deliver;
- Training (delivery and assessment) that varies in quality for certain target groups; and
- Pressure to push students through programs quickly to address skill shortages or deliver qualifications for required employment.

In short, registered training organisations offer a rapid path to the bottom in quality, skill and education. But it is not just the existing private providers that ought to concern us; it is also the incursion of the corporate sector into the private provision of vocational education and training. Macquarie Bank's \$300 million vehicle for gaining market share in the emerging market for vocational education and training is a company called Vocation. The non-executive chairman of Vocation, John Dawkins, is a former education Minister in a former Labor Government. He turned up again as chair of the National Skills Standards Council, which is the national body responsible for establishing skills standards and regulating registered training organisations.

Yet at the same time as Mr Dawkins was chair of the National Skills Standards Council he was also the chair of the company that is seeking to move in and dominate the market. In its prospectus, published late last year, it was quite open about its intention to gain market share through mergers, acquisitions and partnerships. The future under Smart and Skilled is not of a number of small, warm and fuzzy community-based private providers. The future under Smart and Skilled is very clear; it is writ large in the prospectus of Vocation and in the corporate desires of its shareholders—it is about making a profit. Making a profit can only be done by cutting corners on vocational education and training, making students suffer, lowering wages in the sector, turning education and training as a profession into a training activity, reducing qualifications, reducing pay and reducing the desirability of vocational education and training.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century do we really want to reduce the qualifications and the quality of training in the sector by creating a corporate provider who is pushing down pay and conditions? This is not only the end of an era for education and it is not only about destroying the social contract; it is about enriching a small number of corporations that will move in on vocational education and training. But there is a second aspect of Smart and Skilled that is unconscionable: the impact it will have on TAFE. That is already writ large in the way TAFE is behaving. TAFE managers have been told they need to trim down their colleges in preparation for the Smart and Skilled competition. They are throwing overboard every activity they feel is going to be too expensive and non-competitive within the market.

Important activities—such as food handling skills for people with an intellectual disability; outreach programs, which teach people who have been out of the workforce for a long time or who have never been in the workforce; support for people with disabilities; learning support, tertiary preparation certificates; and

training for people who wish to get back into education—are all being downgraded, shortened or thrown overboard. Courses are being shortened, which puts pressure on students. We are also seeing an unhealthy, unnecessary and dangerous focus on online delivery. Online delivery plays an important role but it is not a replacement for face-to-face delivery of vocational education and training. The impact of the market on TAFE is already being felt before it begins. Who knows what will happen next year?

I will speak briefly about what this means for students. I refer to a man named David, who submitted his story in a submission to the Senate inquiry. David's story is one of tragedy, hope, promise and success. He began his life living in women's refuges as a child who had been, in effect, living in an abusive household. He suffered from dyslexia and poor self-esteem. He passed through 12 different primary schools and three different high schools. He describes himself as being school phobic and says he has dyslexia. In a moment of inspiration he took himself off to a TAFE college where he obtained a tertiary preparation certificate, which led him on to a Certificate IV in Community Services, a Diploma of Community Services and a Diploma of Community Services (Case Management). In each of those courses he won a series of awards for his work.

David then went to Charles Sturt University where he completed a Bachelor of Social Science (Social Welfare). He is now studying for his Masters of Social Work at Southern Cross University while working part-time in the disability sector with adults who have an intellectual disability. David's is a success story, and his capacity to transform himself from somebody who was struggling into somebody who is a key contributor in our society is replicated across TAFE. As I travelled around the State promoting this bill I was constantly confronted with people who told me time and again of the role that TAFE played in their life: the crucial role, the critical role, the transformational role of public sector vocational education and training—its libraries, its teachers, its support staff and even the administrative staff. The role of everybody who is engaged in that wonderful activity that is TAFE is unique to TAFE. Smart and Skilled fails to understand the uniqueness of TAFE and that no other institution can deliver it.

I spoke to students at Richmond TAFE who told The Greens, the two unions involved and the TAFE Community Alliance of their fears about what was going to happen to their tertiary preparation certificate. The students were three fine young men for whom school did not work. There are many people in our society for whom the rigours of school are not a success. Having left school these young men decided they wanted to go back into education and become learners. One wanted to go on to university, the other two wanted trade skills. But their fear was that with the constraints being imposed on Richmond TAFE they would not be able to complete their tertiary preparation certificate.

As I said, David's story is replicated across New South Wales. Young men and women—many from an Aboriginal background—have engaged in a now defunct Diploma of Aboriginal Studies. I have time to mention only one today—Dasha Newington, a young Aboriginal woman who is now a doctor in Tasmania. Her study started with a Diploma of Aboriginal Studies at the Open Training and Education Network [OTEN]. Without that pathway into learning she would not have obtained that diploma and she would not now be a doctor. Hundreds of thousands of young people every year across New South Wales have access to skills and quality education that they would not get through a private provider because they do not come to vocational education and training with learning skills.

It is not just The Greens saying this; this is being said across New South Wales. This is being said by students who I met at Casino TAFE—hundreds of them, I suspect—who told us in their own unique way that they did not want TAFE devastated. These are stories about what is happening even before Smart and Skilled begins and before TAFE prepares itself for the changes. It is incredibly difficult to understand why we are headed in this direction in New South Wales. There is a deep evil behind this. Why is the magic of TAFE NSW, its teachers, its staff and its specialists being abandoned to a market in which they cannot survive?

There seems to be a group of decision-makers involved. Mr Eccles, the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, is directly responsible for the Victorian and South Australian reforms that so devastated those States. In 2009 Mr Eccles appeared before an Australian Education Union TAFE Council meeting and he told the angry TAFE teachers that reforms were "a natural-end point when the system was reorientated around the needs of individual students". He went on to say:

I trust that 2009 can be the year when the VET sector finally recognises that additional funding ... is not the only answer. It needs to be accompanied by genuine and far-reaching reform, and one element of that is market design.

Mr Eccles is saying that we need to privatise in order to achieve the world that he wants. I tell Mr Eccles this: Education is not a commodity. The delivery of education through a market—turning it into a commodity, taking

it away from being a social good, taking it away from being part of the social contract and turning it into a commodity—is not only absurd, it is deeply dangerous. This bill is to stop the loss that that would cause. It is not just The Greens who have been saying this. I refer to a bill introduced in 2007 by the then shadow Minister for Education, Mr Andrew Stoner. Mr Stoner's TAFE (Freezing of Fees) Bill shares some rather remarkable ingredients with the bill before the House today. Mr Stoner in 2011 signed the TAFE five-point plan, along with two of his colleagues. The five-point plan included the Government guaranteeing TAFE funding and ensuring that TAFE jobs and courses are not contracted out to the private sector.

Mr David Shoebridge: A promising man.

Dr JOHN KAYE: A promising man. Interestingly enough, one of the other signatories to the New South Wales Teachers Federation five-point plan TAFE for a Better State was none other than Mr Adrian Piccoli, now education Minister. Mr Piccoli and Mr Stoner seem to suffer from collective memory loss. Mr Piccoli denied that he had signed it; and then, when he said he did sign it, he said it was too prescriptive. Mr Stoner told an NBN reporter, "The Greens support a TAFE system that wastes taxpayers' money." Mr Stoner said:

Things like Fine Arts and basket-weaving, these are things that The Greens would like to see in TAFE.

Mr Stoner has resorted to nothing much more than abuse because he has been caught out. I have been around New South Wales. I launched this TAFE bill outside the Wollongong TAFE in November 2013. Since then I have been to Springwood, Wentworth Falls, Port Macquarie, Kempsey, Coffs Harbour, Grafton, Casino, Lismore, Kingscliff, Ballina, Bathurst, Orange, Gosford, Mount Druitt, Richmond, Armidale and a well-attended public forum in Leichhardt—adding to other TAFE colleges I visited before we launched the bill. Everywhere I went I was accompanied not just by students and teachers but also by the New South Wales Teachers Federation, the Australian Education Union and the Public Service Association, the Community and Public Sector Union, and the TAFE Community Alliance—whose officers and members' support for this bill, support for the system of TAFE and support for the values of TAFE stands as a beacon in the twenty-first century.

This bill is not a solution for TAFE. This bill does nothing much more than put a hold on the damage that is being done by Smart and Skilled. This bill, however, does lay down a challenge that confronts the future of TAFE. That challenge has to be answered by every member of Parliament, every member of the community, every TAFE teacher and every TAFE student. It has to be about restoring funding; it has to be about a future that addresses the challenges of a difficult twenty-first century. It has to be about creating values and working together; it has to be about defending TAFE. [*Time expired.*]

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Restoration of Business

Motion, by leave, by Dr Mehreen Faruqi agreed to:

That Private Members' Business item No. 8 in the Order of Precedence be restored to its place in the Order of Precedence notwithstanding it had been postponed for a second time.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE [10.22 a.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that Private Members' Business item No. 1730 outside the Order of Precedence, relating to an order for papers regarding the light rail project proposal, be called on forthwith.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY (Minister for Roads and Ports) [10.23 a.m.]: We oppose this matter coming on as a matter of urgency. On 8 December 2011 the New South Wales Government announced it had short-listed potential routes for expanding light rail in Sydney, and at the time the Government said that the

George Street alignment in the central business district had been assessed as the best option for the city. Why is this matter not urgent? Well, that was 27 months ago. Twenty-seven months ago a lazy, lazy Opposition had an opportunity to do something about that.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: The Minister is not speaking to why the matter is not urgent. He is talking about the substantive matter of the light rail.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister was directly addressing the issue of urgency when the point of order was taken. The Minister may proceed.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Twenty-seven months ago was the time to have brought on such a motion. If it was not urgent then, why is it urgent now? Fifteen months ago the New South Wales Government announced the final route for light rail. That is right: in December 2012 we announced we would build a \$1.6 billion 12-kilometre light rail project that will link Circular Quay and Central via George Street, the Moore Park Sporting and Entertainment Precinct, including the cricket ground and Randwick Racecourse, the University of New South Wales and Prince of Wales Hospital. That would have been the time that the Opposition could have moved such a motion. But it was not urgent then, and that was in December last year.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: Point of order: When debating urgency the Minister is required to demonstrate why this matter is not more urgent than any other matter on the *Notice Paper*. The Minister is not doing that.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I have the gist of the point of order. There is no point of order.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: If the Opposition believed this matter was urgent, it should have moved a motion then. But even more importantly, on 14 November last the light rail business case summary was released, with full details of the economic aspects of the project that will deliver 10,000 jobs and more than \$4 billion in economic benefits to the State.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: The Minister has now well and truly strayed from debating why this matter is or is not urgent.

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

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: On the same day the full environmental impact statement of the project was released, outlining the key features of the project. So thousands of pages of documents were released on that day—thousands and thousands of pages of documents. I bet this lazy Opposition has not read one of those pages.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: What rubbish.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: This is the same person who said, "I got 400 boxes of rubbish" the last time the Opposition moved for production of documents under Standing Order 52. How could one imagine that this lazy shadow Minister has read one of those? That is why the motion is not urgent.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: I chose not to speak on this matter because I was trying to expedite the process.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Is the member taking a point of order?

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Yes, Mr President.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Please take it. If the member is not taking a point of order, the member will resume her seat and stop wasting the Minister's time.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: My point of order is that if the Minister wants to move a motion against me, he should do so.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I have the gist of the point of order. The Minister should not reflect on members in his contribution.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: The point is that, given the Labor Party has had 27 months since the Government's initial announcement and 15 months since we confirmed the route of light rail to ask questions and become informed about the project, it is ridiculous for Opposition members to suggest that there is any sort of urgency in regard to this motion.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 19

Ms Barham	Mr Foley	Ms Westwood
Mr Borsak	Mr Moselmane	Mr Whan
Mr Brown	Mr Primrose	Mr Wong
Mr Buckingham	Mr Secord	
Ms Cotsis	Ms Sharpe	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Donnelly	Mr Shoebridge	Ms Fazio
Dr Faruqi	Mr Veitch	Ms Voltz

Noes, 19

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

Pair

Mr Searle

Mr Ajaka

The PRESIDENT: Order! The votes being equal, I cast my vote with the noes and declare the question to be resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

Motion by the Hon. Marie Ficarra agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that Private Members' Business item No. 1716 outside the Order of Precedence, relating to International Women's Day 2014, be called on forthwith.

Order of Business

Motion by the Hon. Marie Ficarra agreed to:

That Private Members' Business item No. 1716 outside the Order of Precedence be called on forthwith.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2014

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA (Parliamentary Secretary) [10.38 a.m.]: I move:

(1) That this House notes that:

- (a) International Women's Day was held on 8 March 2014, with the theme "Inspiring Change" to encourage advocacy for women's advancement everywhere in every way, and calls for challenging the status quo for women's equality and vigilance inspiring positive change;

(b) on 7 March 2014 the New South Wales Women of the Year Awards were held, with the following being recognised:

(i) Premier's Award for Woman of the Year category Finalists:

Mo'onia Gerrard

Turia Pitt (Winner)

Fiona Shewring

Fiona Simson

(ii) A. H. Beard's Community Hero category:

Faten El Dana OAM (Winner)

Annette Holmes

Josie Parata

Susan Pinckham

(iii) Harvey Norman's Young Woman of the Year category:

Kimberley Abbott

Lakshmi Logathassan (Winner)

Bee Orsini

Jennifer Star

(iv) Local Women of the Year:

Narelle Burke, Tamworth; Trish Cerminara, Albury; Hayley Bellamy, Penrith; Lou-Anne Mitchell, Manly; Trudy Taylor, Monaro; Clarice Hamling, Cessnock; Lynda Dries, Londonderry; Elaine Hall, Port Stephens; Susan Coghlan, Willoughby; Jeanette Holland, Myall Lakes; Val Ryder, East Hills; Fadwa Kebbe, Canterbury; Christine Prouty, Strathfield; Helen Brennan, Riverstone; Helen Slater, Bega; Pamela Richardson, Charlestown; Dorothy Dixon, Oatley; Yvette Rutherford, Maroubra; Suzanne O'Connor, Mulgoa; Lydia Scuglia, Ryde; Polly Grundy, Campbelltown; Sharon McCarthy, Swansea; Helen Rose, Baulkham Hills; Mona Luxton, Rockdale; Faye Urquhart, Coffs Harbour; Jan Savage, Orange; Dr Lisa Cottee, Lismore; Coralann Shead, Menai; Patricia (Jane) Cush, Goulburn; Rhonda Brain, Dubbo; Jess Miller, Sydney; Muriel Burns, Clarence; Jo Allen, South Coast; Carol Lynette Beresford, Terrigal; Vicki Tiegs, Wollongong; Vicki Quinlan, Wakehurst; Ms Sandra Hiscock, Burrinjuck; Pamela Richardson, Heffron; Shirley Templeton, Gosford; Sandra Griffin, Wallsend; Joan Treweeke, Barwon; Alia Halabi, Granville; Elizabeth (Win) Newton, Hornsby; Lynn Yeh, Parramatta; Judith Galloway, Wagga Wagga; Sarah MacFarlane-Eagle, Northern Tablelands; Jane Lea, Coogee; Jennifer Anderson, Davidson; Margaret-Anne Hayes, Ku-ring-gai; Helen Cummings, Newcastle; Kim Rosen, Ballina; Pam Rimmer, Keira; Lisa Smajlov, Balmain; Michelle Davis, Maitland; Iris Crane, Camden; Shubha Kumar, Castle Hill; Betty Breese, Murrumbidgee; Valda Barton, Lake Macquarie; Sonia Trichter, Tweed; Ulrike Eichmeyer, Lane Cove; Tanyia Harris, Wollondilly; Colleen Kime, Blue Mountains; Tracey Roberts, Drummoyne; Dianna Hammond, Epping; Anthea (Chick) Taylor, Upper Hunter; Dr Karen Crawley, Cronulla; Betty Siegman, The Entrance; Christine Hopton, Pittwater; Elizabeth Campbell, Oxley; Finn Callanan, Marrickville; Judy White, Bathurst; Charlotte Feldman, Vaucluse; Anne-Louise O'Connor, Kiama; Blanche Hughes, Wyong; Pamela Lord, Murray-Darling; Lorraine Rose Chambers, Port Macquarie; Lois Casserly, Hawkesbury; and

(c) on 6 March 2014 International Women's Day Awards for Local Government were presented in the following categories:

(i) Elected Representative from a Metropolitan Council:

- Highly Commended—Councillor Elaine Malicki, Ku-ring-gai Council
- Winner of the Award—Councillor Michelle Byrne, Mayor of the Hills Shire

(ii) Elected Representative from a Rural or Regional Council:

- Highly Commended—Councillor Leigh Vaughan, Great Lakes Council
- Winner of the Award—Councillor Sharon Cadwallader, Ballina Shire Council

(iii) Senior Staff Member—Metropolitan Council:

- Highly Commended—Sima Truuvert, Randwick City Council
- Winner of the Award—Janice Bevan, Ku-ring-gai Council

- (iv) Senior Staff Member—Rural or Regional Council:
 - Winner of the Award—Kay Whitehead, Tumbarumba Shire Council
 - (v) Non-Senior Staff Member—Metropolitan Council:
 - Highly Commended—Ashlee Hodson, Bankstown City Council
 - Highly Commended—Vandana Ram, Bankstown City Council
 - Winner of the Award—Suzanne Flynn, Penrith City Council
 - (vi) Non-Senior Staff Member—Rural or Regional Council:
 - Highly Commended—Margaret Ferguson, Snowy River Shire Council
 - Winner of the Award—Robyn Cooper, Wollondilly Shire Council
 - (vii) Women in a Non-Traditional Role—Metropolitan Council:
 - Highly Commended—Margaret Diebert, Waverley Council
 - Winner of the Award—Kerry Whitehead, Fairfield City Council
 - (viii) Women in a Non-Traditional Role—Rural or Regional Council:
 - Highly Commended—Amanda Colbey, Lake Macquarie City Council
 - Highly Commended—Norma Toweel, Wollondilly Shire Council
 - Winner of the Award—Kristie McLachlan, Coffs Harbour City Council
 - (ix) Lifetime Achievement Award:
 - Councillor Esme Martens, Mid-Western Regional Council
- (2) That this House:
- (a) congratulates and commends all those outstanding women who won and were nominated for awards in the 2014 International Women's Day Awards for their extraordinary contribution to the New South Wales community; and
 - (b) acknowledges Dr Eman Sharobeem, Master of Ceremonies of the International Women's Day Awards; the *Daily Telegraph*, awards media partner; Harvey Norman, awards sponsor; A.H. Beard, awards sponsor; judges Katie Page, CEO, Harvey Norman; Garry Beard, Chairman, A.H. Beard; Jeni O'Dowd, Editor, *Daily Telegraph*; and Cathy Foley, Chief Scientist, CSIRO and 2013 Premier's Award for Woman of the Year winner.

It is with great pleasure that I support my motion on International Women's Day with this year's theme being ending poverty for women and girls through economic empowerment. That is the global theme and nationally we also had the theme of inspiring change. Each year these celebrations give us the opportunity to recognise the contributions made by women across our communities who help make our State and nation stronger. We are often frustrated at the slow rate of progress but we have achieved much; the glass ceilings have been broken in many sectors. We were proud to witness our first female Governor-General, first female New South Wales Governor and first female Prime Minister all serving in office at the same time. However, we know only too well that there is much more to be done locally and internationally and this was well expressed by Prime Minister Tony Abbott on 3 March this year in recognition of International Women's Day when he stated:

The gender pay gap has widened over recent years. Female participation rates in the workforce lag their male counterparts. All too often women are forced to choose between families and career. We need policies that allow more women to make choices that combine work and family.

I want my daughters and the young women of Australia to have more opportunities than any other generation before them. Equality is always a result of opportunity.

The Government's plan for a strong, prosperous economy recognises that a key to long term productivity is lifting the female participation rate in the workforce. This will create more jobs, more growth and greater economic opportunities for all Australians.

The key to lifting the female participation rate is implementing a fair dinkum Paid Parental Leave scheme. Parental leave is not a welfare measure. Parental leave is a workplace entitlement and that's why it has to be paid at someone's actual wage.

Opportunity postponed is always opportunity denied. The Government will honour the commitment it took to the election and our Paid Parental Leave scheme will commence on 1 July 2015.

I, along with so many men and women of Australia, congratulate Prime Minister Abbott on championing this vital issue through his party room, the joint party room, the community and the Federal Parliament in face of strong opposition and intense business sector lobbying. Prime Minister Abbott will indeed go down in history as having made a significant contribution to releasing women from their fears of having to postpone childbearing due to the financial constraints that face them and their families. The multiplier effect that this empowerment will give to women will be invaluable, both financially and socially.

This year's theme highlights that women are far more likely than men to live in poverty because of discrimination and lack of access to education, employment and financial services. Only last week I had the pleasure of hosting a seminar held by the United Nations Association of Australia, New South Wales division. The Australian National Committee for UN Women helps women around the world access education, training and paid employment. It notes that securing women's rights means a stable food source and the ability to break the poverty cycle. Empowered women and girls who have equal access to opportunity and work will lead to more prosperous economies and a better future for all.

I acknowledge Dr Nadine Shema from the Great Lakes Agency for Peace and Development, which covers the nations of Rwanda, Uganda, the Congo and Burunda. It is a not-for-profit humanitarian group assisting migrants and their families settle into Australian communities. Nadine is a qualified public health physician who intends to study to be a general practitioner servicing our rural and regional areas of New South Wales and Australia. It is fantastic to meet migrants such as Nadine who contribute so much to our communities. I acknowledge also Dr Affie Adagio, the current and former executive members of the United Nations Association of Australia, New South Wales division for organising the meeting and the many other events, both this year and in past years, and for highlighting the challenges that still face us as legislators in the elimination of gender equality and discrimination.

As members will be aware, the New South Wales Government, through Women NSW, provides leadership on action to improve the lives of women in New South Wales. This is achieved by developing policy and collaboratively working on projects that benefit women and promote gender equality. Currently Women NSW is working on progressing the domestic and family violence framework reforms to prevent violence against women, promoting the Women in Trades strategy, aimed at increasing the number of women working in male-dominated trades, Investing in Women, a funding program designed to promote economic empowerment of women, and implementing strategies that will increase the representation of women on New South Wales-appointed boards and committees.

The New South Wales Government is committed to supporting and promoting Women in Trades. Improving the number of women in trades can only have positive effects on the economy. For industries and for women, increasing women's labour options also increases financial security and promotes independence. Leaders from traditionally male-dominated industries, including the electrical, construction and automotive industries, have been working closely with us to increase the number of women participating in these sectors. The Investing in Women funding program was introduced by the New South Wales Government as a platform for community stakeholders to develop solutions to support women's participation in trade occupations. The program challenges many of the stereotypical ideas of what women seemingly can and cannot do. It has opened up trade apprenticeship opportunities that otherwise would have gone unrecognised. Local councils, peak organisations, not-for-profit organisations and industry bodies are eligible to apply for funding.

I am pleased to advise the House that in the past 18 months the New South Wales Government has partnered with stakeholders to roll out more than 20 successful Women in Trades projects and initiatives, projects that have supported women in their pursuit of careers as butchers, painters, builders, boilermakers, carpenters, mechanics and horticulturalists, to name a few. The NSW Council for Women's Economic Opportunity is another initiative providing specialist advice to the New South Wales Government on strategies aimed at improving women's economic options. This initiative was launched by the Minister for Women, the Hon. Pru Goward, in April 2012 and seeks to examine why women continue to be unrepresented in large sectors of the workforce. It investigates solutions to increasing the participation of women in non-traditional roles and brings together experts from the engineering, construction, manufacturing, education and training industries.

Last year I was delighted to host in this Parliament, together with White Ribbon Ambassador Councillor Vincent De Luca, OAM, the tenth anniversary of the White Ribbon Foundation for the Prevention of Violence Against Women. Special presentations were made to the retiring chairman, the great Andrew O'Keefe, and Charles Curran, who have been the heart and soul of the foundation since they assisted with its establishment in Australia. The anniversary celebration raised \$25,017 for the White Ribbon Foundation to

continue its great work and deliver programs to schools, sporting clubs, juvenile justice centres and community organisations to make violence against women a thing of the past and to encourage people not to remain silent about violence against women.

Members will be aware that recently Australian actress and lead White Ribbon Australia champion Rachael Taylor spoke out about domestic violence as part of a White Ribbon Australia awareness campaign, Uncover Secrets. Ms Taylor hopes her story will raise awareness of the seriousness of men's violence against women in Australia, where at least one woman is killed every week by a current or former partner, and encourages Australians to break the silence around violence by supporting them to speak out against it. The New South Wales Government is serious about addressing violence against women through its domestic and family violence framework for reforms. I am sure all members would agree that breaking the cycle of violence requires action from everybody. It requires a cross-government approach that improves coordination across agencies and key non-government organisations.

In February this year the New South Wales Government announced a major milestone towards ending domestic and family violence. It was the culmination of 12 months of consultation with service providers, experts, victims and government agencies. "It Stops Here" is our response to the very clear need to keep women and children safe. This means changing the way in which we deliver services and support to victims of violence and stop perpetrators from reoffending. The new framework aims to prevent domestic and family violence, identify it early when it does occur, support victims to recover and be safe, and support the sector to be as effective as it can be. It is supported by a \$9.8 million domestic and family violence prevention and investment program. Research studies into prevention and early intervention are already underway. They target changing men's and boys' behaviour, helping children exposed to domestic and family violence and communities considered to be most at risk.

A skills strategy to support the front-line workers is in development and changes to key legislation to strengthen the criminal justice response are in progress. The new service referral system is the backbone of the reforms. It is a new way of connecting services and sharing information so the victims do not need to repeat their difficult stories. It means we will identify high-risk victims sooner and keep them safe. Another key platform of the reforms is targeting particular groups: Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Indigenous communities and people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable. The framework aims to identify and respond to specific needs with an emphasis on changing attitudes, combating social isolation and breaking down the barriers to accessing help. The framework encompasses a five-year period with trials of the new system commencing in the first half of 2014 in Orange and Waverley.

This month the Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Donald Page, together with the Minister for Women, the Hon. Pru Goward, presented awards to some outstanding women in local government as part of International Women's Day. I particularly draw the attention of the House to the winner of the 2014 Ministers Awards for Women in Local Government, metropolitan elected representative, Dr Michelle Byrne-Fuentes. Dr Byrne is the youngest person to hold the office of mayor in The Hills shire. Dr Byrne is an outstanding young woman who in a short time has achieved significant results for her community.

Dr Byrne's qualifications and achievements include: a medical science PhD for researching the role played by resistant genes in cancerous cells; a bachelor of law; spearheading the council's mental health strategy, assisting many local youth and families; founding The Hills Mental Health Interagency Inc.; and using her position as mayor to advance the status of women and girls in the community. Having a deep commitment to social justice, Dr Byrne is currently working to establish a community legal centre in The Hills council area and with her husband, Matthew Fuentes, has continued to support a wide variety of charitable and community initiatives. They are a committed hands-on grass-roots couple who are sincerely dedicated to the welfare needs and interests of their community.

I would like to highlight to the House another outstanding woman who was a finalist in the Premier's Award for Woman of the Year, Ms Mo'onia Gerard. Ms Gerard is an Australian of Tongan heritage. She commenced her netball career at a very young age, often participating in training sessions with her mother, Kalesia Gerard, and the senior Dee Why beach netball club team. When Ms Gerard was old enough to register in a team she commenced playing with the Narrabeen youth club and was later selected to represent Manly-Warringah Netball Association at New South Wales State age, State championships and State league competitions.

Ms Gerard received an Australian Institute of Sports scholarship and was first selected to represent Australia in the 17 and under team in 1997, followed by the 19 and under team in 1998-99 and the 21 and under team in 2001. Ms Gerard competed at the World Youth Netball Championships in 2000 and in the Australian open team in 2001 and 2013. Ms Gerard played a major role in Australia reversing its losing streak against New

Zealand in mid-2006 and in November 2007 played a key role for Australia when the team won the World Netball Championships. In 2010 Ms Gerard represented Australia at the Commonwealth Games in Delhi, winning a silver medal. She again represented Australia in 2011 at the World Netball Championships and her team won the championship. Ms Gerard has earned 58 test caps for Australia.

At the domestic level Ms Gerard played five years with the Sydney Sandpipers. During this time she received the 1999 best new talent award and the players' player award in 2003. Ms Gerard became a member of the New South Wales Swifts netball team in 2003 and is now its co-captain. From 2008 to 2010 Ms Gerard played for the Adelaide Thunderbirds in the new ANZ Championship. She played three seasons with the Thunderbirds and each year the team reached the play-offs culminating in a championship win in 2010. She was awarded the Holden Australian International Player of the Year. In 2011 Ms Gerard played her fiftieth ANZ Championship match, her 150th domestic match and was the only current Australian player to have her team in the final series on four separate occasions, with the Thunderbirds from 2008-10 and the Swifts in 2011.

Ms Gerard is greatly admired for her extensive community work both in Australia and internationally. Ms Gerard is responsible for establishing the Oceania Cup held last year throughout New South Wales to encourage and engage different cultures to play netball. It is now included in the Netball NSW annual calendar for under 13s, under 15s, and under 17s. She travels across New South Wales to disadvantaged communities teaching kids netball skills, giving them life advice, promoting nutrition, multicultural awareness, and anti-bullying and pro-diversity attitudes. Ms Gerard conducts Polynesian-Indigenous netball clinics in various areas and has established, now in its fifth year, an annual netball tournament in Tonga called Mo'onia's Cup.

Mo'onia Gerard mentors young women and girls and encourages them to aspire to sporting and personal excellence. In honour of Ms Gerard's service at an international level to promote the development of women and girls the Prime Minister of Tonga, Siale'ataongo Tu'iavakano, has dedicated land to Ms Gerard for the establishment of an international sporting centre of excellence. This year Ms Gerard has been called upon to be a specialist coach for the NSW Swifts and is mentoring and coaching a young group of players in the City of Sydney Netball Association, Sydney University Netball Club, to compete in the NSW State League competition. She is an extraordinary young woman who is dedicated to sport and the care, welfare and development of so many young women from our diverse community. She is now seeking to represent Australia in rugby. Some outstanding women were nominated for the Premier's Award for Woman of the Year. Turia Pitt is an incredible lady recognised for her pioneering work in the male dominated area of mining.

Mr Scot MacDonald: Mining?

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA: Yes, a mining engineer. She has shared her inspirational story as a burns survivor in a book titled *Everything to Live For: The Inspirational Story of Turia Pitt*. It is an incredible story. The synopsis states:

Everything to Live For is the story of one young woman's survival against extraordinary odds and is a remarkable testament to the human spirit. In September 2011, Turia Pitt, a beautiful 25-year-old mining engineer working her dream job in the far north of Western Australia, entered an ultra-marathon race that would change her life forever. Trapped by a fire in a gorge in the remote Kimberly region, Turia and five other competitors had nowhere to run. Turia survived with catastrophic burns to 65 per cent of her body.

With too little unburned skin left for skin grafts, Turia was put in an induced coma in the Burns Unit at Sydney's Concord Hospital while her body fought life-threatening infections and her surgeons imported skin from California. She lost the fingers on her right hand and her fingers on her left are partially fused together. She needed a new nose. There have been numerous operations, yet there are many more to come.

While the story of Turia's survival involves many people—other race competitors, her rescuers, medical professionals—at its core is the strong will of Turia herself as she continues the long rehabilitation process with the loving support of her partner, Michael Hoskin, and that of their families in their New South Wales south coast hometown of Ulladulla, where the local community has rallied, raising funds to help with huge medical bills.

I commend the efforts of the Speaker in the other place and member for South Coast, Shelley Hancock, who has been part of the community that has rallied around Turia. *Everything to Live For* is also a love story. Michael, Turia's handsome teenage crush who became the love of her life, now cares for her as they plan a new life together. The real tragedy of this story is that it should never have happened. Despite these challenges Turia seeks to inspire others with hope as follows:

Despite facing a future with multiple challenges, Turia is optimistic. She is driving again and studying for her Master's degree. She is walking in marathons and would one day like to run again. Above all, she wants her story to make a difference. Her mission is to make skin a more prominent organ in the repertoire of donated organs.

It is a miracle Turia lived when she was expected to die. Turia is indeed a remarkable woman.

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE (Parliamentary Secretary) [10.59 a.m.]: I support this motion moved by the Hon. Marie Ficarra noting that International Women's Day was held on 8 March 2014 and congratulating all the women who were honoured at the New South Wales Women of the Year Awards. I join others in paying tribute to women of heroic virtue who have fought and agitated for good and decent values throughout the ages and especially in more recent times, not only for women but also for all mankind. I was especially pleased to see the master of ceremonies at the recent New South Wales awards was Dr Eman Sharobeem, who has been a leader in this country in fighting the widespread, evil and barbaric practice of female genital mutilation and the herding of young girls into forced marriages. She has fought long and hard for these vicious and criminal practises, and for these abuses of human rights to be exposed and for those who promote and participate in them to be brought to justice.

Very often in the past and even now International Women's Day has been hijacked by the hard Left, pro-communist Left. I note that it is an official holiday in communist Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea. In each of these nations democracy does not exist and human rights for both men and women are a total sham. Today I pay tribute to four women whom I believe deserve special recognition in the pantheon of women for their achievements for freedom, democracy and human rights. The first is the late Margaret Thatcher, the first female Prime Minister of Great Britain and its longest-serving Prime Minister in the twentieth century. She will be remembered for her triumph over adversity, for her promotion of free enterprise principles that subsequently spread throughout the world and brought economic freedom to hundreds of millions of people. Above all she will be remembered for her leadership, together with American President Ronald Reagan of the free world, which vanquished communism and brought human rights, democracy and freedom to a substantial proportion of mankind.

The second woman who comes to mind is the late Nancy Wake, who, whilst born in New Zealand, adopted Australia as her homeland. She will be remembered for her heroism and the part she played as a leading member of the French Resistance during World War II. Decorated by Australia, the United States, Great Britain, France and other countries, she is famous as a heroic opponent, fighter against tyranny. The display of her medals of honour and decorations in the Australian War Memorial Museum stand as a testament to the special place she has in the heart of Australia. The third woman who comes to mind when I think of women of great deeds and a woman cast in a hero's mould is the late Mother Theresa, who devoted her life to the underprivileged, the poor, the sick and the dispossessed. At the time of her passing she left behind the Missionaries of Charity, a Catholic order of nuns devoted to the poor with humanitarian activities carried out in 135 countries.

As a woman who exalted the traditional family and the sanctity of life and therefore opposed abortion, Mother Theresa was vehemently hated by the sisterhood who hang out with the hard Left and with the likes of Marxists like Tariq Ali. Whilst hated by these elements Mother Theresa was and is admired by countless millions of others, especially in India. Although Mother Theresa worked for humanity, and the uplifting of the sick and dispossessed the Left could only spew out slogans and Marxist rhetoric as their contribution to mankind. Her contribution to mankind will be remembered and that of the hard Left, including its sisterhood, will not. The fourth woman of note I pay tribute to during this debate regarding International Women's Day is Condoleezza Rice, the first female African American Secretary of State for the United States of America who served in that capacity for four years from 2005.

Mr Scot MacDonald: Which party?

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE: She served under a Republican administration, and only under such an administration would a lady like Condoleezza Rice have been appointed. During those years she carried a heavy responsibility in the war against international terrorism and in the preservation of democracy throughout the world, a fight led by the United States of America and supported by Australia. Once again my thanks go to the Hon. Marie Ficarra in moving this motion, which provides us with the opportunity to highlight women who have made major and positive contributions to mankind, rather than those from the hard Left who highlight women who are involved only in their own narrow and unrepresentative agendas, and who are basically rejected by the great majority of women throughout the world.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI [11.04 a.m.]: I speak in support of the Hon. Marie Ficarra's motion on International Women's Day and women's equality. This year, as I have done every year, I have been fortunate to speak at and participate in many events celebrating International Women's Day 2014. Heartiest congratulations to all women who have been acknowledged and are being celebrated across the world and in Australia for their achievements for women's equality and causes. International Women's Day is a good opportunity to reflect on

where we have come from and where we still have to go. As members are aware I grew up in Pakistan, a country that ranks 135 out of 136 in the global gender gap. From an early age I was acutely aware of the inequality and discrimination that exists in law, as well as in societal norms and cultures that prevent women from access to education, work opportunities, or full participation in any decision-making. Domestic violence and abuse in those parts of the world is widespread.

Within this context of oppression and patriarchy I was lucky enough to grow up in a progressive household under the guidance of an aunt who was a strong feminist, and a father who believed strongly in equality and social justice. It was really no surprise I ended up studying and practising civil engineering. I would love to say it was a passion for civil engineering when I chose it as a profession, but if I am really honest with myself it was more about proving a point—particularly in Pakistan—that women can and should be able to have the same choices as men. Of course, things are quite different in Australia but I believe we have not yet achieved gender equality here. When I lived in Pakistan I always imagined prosperous countries like Australia had achieved gender equality, and equality in all spheres of life. I was quite surprised when I arrived in Sydney 22 years ago and started my postgraduate studies in engineering to discover only one female academic amongst 50-odd male teachers in the School of Engineering at the university.

Judging gender equality is much more sophisticated than measuring numbers and ratios in one particular institution and profession. Nonetheless, it is a good indicator of existing marginalisation. There is no doubt at all that much has been achieved through the successive three waves of feminism over the past century. We have fought hard and we have won many battles: the right to vote and run for Parliament, to join the workforce and to pursue careers in all professions. Laws have been enacted that attempt to create equal pay and equal opportunity and to protect women from violence. While these much-needed reforms have vastly improved women's rights and opportunities, change has been painstakingly slow, and inequality and discrimination still pervade many parts of our laws, workplaces, society and democracy.

For example, gaining the right to run for Parliament has not yet led to equal representation. I sit like other members in the New South Wales Parliament where only one-quarter of the members are women. The first woman was elected to the lower House of the New South Wales Parliament in 1925. It is quite unacceptable that after almost 100 years there are only 18 more in an Assembly of 93. It was this male-dominated Chamber that last month voted to pass unnecessary and dangerous legislation that will have serious consequences for women's reproductive health and our right to choose. Even though more and more women complete university degrees than men—and that is a great achievement for women who have fought for this right—they are still less likely to reach higher management positions. The gender pay gap shamefully still stands at 17.5 per cent.

Not only has women's journey for equality been slow; it is disappointing that women are moving backwards and unwinding some of these hard-fought rights. The gender pay gap has increased by 2.6 per cent since 2004. Women's participation in politics is a key measure for women's empowerment, but in Federal Parliament women's representation has dropped significantly, moving from twenty-fourth to forty-third in the world in the past 12 years. I am, however, very proud to be a member of The Greens in this Parliament. We have always had a very strong feminist focus in policies, and six of our 10 senators are women. Unfortunately, this is not replicated in the current Federal Parliament. Prime Minister Tony Abbott's Cabinet has only one woman. Given this widening gap in gender equality and concerted moves to wind back some women's rights, it was especially inexcusable for the Prime Minister to try to justify his decision of having just one woman in the Cabinet by highlighting that very strong and capable women are knocking on the door of Cabinet.

More of us should knock down rather than knock on doors, call out sexism and gender bias for what it is, and take up our rightful place in politics and in society. It is quite clear that women in Australia cannot yet take their rights for granted. There has never been a lack of strong and determined women in society. I have been very lucky to have many of them as my mentors—my teachers both in Australia and in Pakistan, my grandmother, my aunt. At the moment I am particularly inspired by young people in society, especially one young Pakistani woman, Malala Yusufzai, who has been standing up so strongly for a woman's right to be educated. She is a role model for a whole generation. One thing she said really inspires me:

I don't mind if I have to sit on the floor at school. All I want is education. And I'm afraid of no one.

I want to make sure that this year we are afraid of no-one and we will take responsibility for closing the gap, both in Australia and across the world. Women's empowerment and equal participation are a whole-of-society responsibility. I already see many supporters of women's rights and social justice joining up across politics,

across class, across gender and across ethnicity. It is extremely inspiring and energising to see a new wave of feminists—young and old, men and women—working together for equality. As a passionate feminist and the New South Wales Greens spokesperson for women, I will be standing shoulder to shoulder with them. We will turn the tide, as we always have in the past. I thank the Hon. Marie Ficarra for moving this motion.

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS [11.12 a.m.]: I congratulate the Hon. Marie Ficarra on moving this motion and congratulate the women nominated for the New South Wales Premier's Women of the Year awards, as well as the winners of the awards. I also congratulate the Local Heroes and the women appointed to the honours roll. I hope that next year the Government will allow members of the upper House to nominate women for the honours roll. I know that women can be nominated through the competitive process but I understand that the Labor Government and this Government in its first year in office allowed members of the upper House to nominate women for the roll.

On Saturday 8 March women around the world celebrated International Women's Day—an opportunity to reflect on the achievements of women. It is also an opportunity to reflect on those areas where gender gaps continue to exist and where women continue to be disproportionately disadvantaged relative to men. One area of concern is domestic violence. One in four women in Australia experience domestic violence during their lifetime. Each year more than 240,000 Australian women are physically assaulted, with nearly one-third of victims being physically assaulted by a current or previous partner.

Domestic violence has been estimated to cost the New South Wales economy at least \$4.5 billion a year, yet domestic violence is widely underreported. The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research has revealed that only half of domestic violence victims reported their most recent incidence of violence to the police. I note that the Government recently made some announcements in this area and it is my sincere hope that these announcements, together with the work of the Standing Committee on Social Issues from a couple of years ago, will increase the protection available to women who are in fear of violence, improve the support services available to women who are fleeing violence, and ensure that women who have been the victims of violence receive the full measure of justice owed to them. However, I note the O'Farrell Government's patchy record in this area.

Last year, a number of women's organisations, including the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, raised concerns about the effect of the O'Farrell Government's budget cuts on Local Court services. By cutting the budget for Local Courts, the O'Farrell Government has made it harder for women who are the victims of domestic violence to take out an apprehended violence order or access other essential services. In May last year the O'Farrell Government passed legislation that significantly cut the compensation available to victims of crime. The O'Farrell Government's changes dramatically cut the assistance that had previously been available for long-suffering victims of domestic violence and victims of sexual assault. These changes show that the O'Farrell Government has much work to do—including undoing its own actions—if it is to get serious about domestic violence.

I have real concerns about the cuts to homelessness services announced by the Government, particularly the tender process and the millions of dollars that will be ripped from many inner-west services. This cut will affect the provision of important services, such as crisis accommodation for victims of domestic violence or women seeking a way of getting out of relationships. The Government has a lot of work to do. I call on the Government to provide additional funding and reverse the cuts to homelessness services. Another issue that is important for women, the economy and the community is equality at work. The Australian Bureau of Statistics has found that a full-time working woman earns 17 per cent less than a full-time working man.

That difference works out to \$262.50 per week. Contrary to what some people claim, this gender pay gap is not because women go off to have babies; rather, it is a problem that is evident when women start work. The Australian Workplace Gender Equality Agency has reported that female graduates can expect a starting salary \$9,000 lower than a male graduate. This is not a question of disparity in pay levels across the professions—although that is an issue in itself—rather, it is a problem within professions. For instance, a female dentistry graduate earns about \$14,000 less than a male dentistry graduate and a female law graduate earns almost \$5,000 less than a male law graduate.

Having started at a disadvantage, women face further problems if they choose to start a family—and this is where it gets worse, as women are being punished for leaving work to start a family. They are also punished if they leave the workforce to look after elderly parents or someone with a disability. Then they are penalised financially when they retire because they do not have enough superannuation for their retirement

years. A recent survey of 900 respondents by the Public Service Association revealed that more than 70 per cent of women reported that they had missed out on opportunities for promotion and had been subjected to inappropriate comments by supervisors while pregnant.

We must be vigilant about this issue. We are talking about women who are skilled and professional. We must ensure that when women return to work after having a baby they return to the position they held before they had their baby, that they are given flexible working hours and that they are promoted based on their qualifications and skills. They should not be teased or subjected to inappropriate comments about their being pregnant. It is absolutely disgraceful. The Government must send a very clear message to those who are making such comments or who are not promoting women in the public service because they are pregnant that this type of behaviour is not acceptable.

The New South Wales Government should be a model employer, but the Government is failing to act as a flag-bearer for workplace equality. Years ago when Kerry Chikarovski was the Minister for the Status of Women I recall her being vigilant about these issues. She was campaigning and advocating, making sure that more women were coming into the public service and that women had flexibility to have a family and then return to work. This Government has dropped the ball. Unfortunately, the current Minister for Women, Pru Goward, is letting women down. The consequences of a lifetime of workplace discrimination are evident for women as they approach retirement. Despite almost two decades of compulsory superannuation in Australia, retirement benefits for women are still relatively low, and lower than they are for men.

On one report, the average 65-year-old woman who retires today will retire with \$40,000 less superannuation than will a 65-year-old male. The problems older women face are compounded if their personal circumstances change and they find themselves in need of new accommodation. I am particularly concerned about older women's homelessness. The O'Farrell Government has taken a short-sighted approach to housing, as was demonstrated yesterday with the disgusting announcement about the eviction of more than 400 people from Millers Point and around the city. This Government is building fewer new social housing properties and has inflicted massive budget cuts on the social housing sector. This means that an additional 2,000 people are eligible for public housing, but are stuck on a waiting list.

The Auditor-General estimates that by 2016 that figure will grow to more than 86,000. In some cases, these people have to wait for up to 10 years to access public and social housing. This is particularly concerning for older women who are at risk of homelessness. Imagine a woman aged 50, 55 or 65 who finds herself unemployed and in a precarious financial position after having to retire early due to an injury. The O'Farrell Government's short-sighted budget cuts mean that less public housing will be available for women in need. This very important issue must be addressed. I hope that by International Women's Day next year, the O'Farrell Government will have begun to give women's issues the attention they deserve.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES [11.23 a.m.]: I welcome the opportunity to speak in debate on International Women's Day and I thank the Hon. Marie Ficarra for moving this important motion. This year's theme for International Women's Day is "Inspiring Change", and is an opportunity to thank the women who campaigned for change and to honour their achievements. Australia has always been a pioneering country for the advancement of women in society and we have much to celebrate. We led the way for women to have the right to vote and also to run for Parliament.

It is unfortunate that, despite representing more than half the population, women are a massively underutilised resource in the workforce, particularly in leadership roles. We are poorer as a society when women are not adequately represented among our leaders. Research conducted by the Australian Institute of Company Directors reveals that as of last month, 14.7 per cent of board directors of the top 200 companies listed on the Australian Securities Exchange were women—up from 8.4 per cent in 2010. However, a total of 50 boards on the Australian Securities Exchange 200 list still do not have any women in director positions.

An approximate comparison with other countries that have a similar style of corporate governance shows that Australian boards have more women than the United Kingdom and New Zealand, but unfortunately we are behind the United States, Canada and South Africa. To date, women comprise 39 per cent of new appointments to Australian Securities Exchange 200 boards. In 2012 and 2013 women comprised 22 per cent of new appointments; in 2011 they comprised 28 per cent, compared with 25 per cent in 2010; only 5 per cent in 2009; and 8 per cent in 2008. At a State level, company directors in New South Wales are 18.5 per cent female, while in Western Australia, the worst-performing State, only 7.7 per cent of company directors are female in the 39 companies listed in the Australian Securities Exchange 200.

The 2012 Australian Census of Women in Leadership reveals that as companies reduce in size so does the number of women in leadership positions, with only 9.2 per cent of women holding directorships in Australian Securities Exchange 500 companies. Currently there are only 12 chief executive officers in the Australian Securities Exchange 500, and seven of those are chief executive officers of Australian Securities Exchange 200 companies. There has also been insignificant growth in the number of female executives, with six female chairs in the Australian Securities Exchange 200 and 13 in the Australian Securities Exchange 500. In the Australian public service women are doing better than they are in publicly listed companies. As at 30 June 2012, women held 38.4 per cent of government board appointments. But it is in the not-for-profit sector where women are significantly better represented than they are in publicly listed companies. According to research conducted in 2008 by Women on Boards, 30 per cent of directors in not-for-profit organisations are women.

Last year's Women in NSW report presented some positive change in gender leadership, specifically in TAFE NSW, where senior management comprised 57 per cent women in 2012—up from 43 per cent in 2006. However, other sectors continue to lag behind. We must harness this momentum to start driving bigger and bolder gains in this area. It is unfortunate that the percentage of companies with no women in senior executive roles has increased from 60.6 per cent in 2010 to 61.9 per cent in 2012. We must continue to promote broader structural change to ensure that women's leadership opportunities are realised. Of interest are the industry sectors, which have the highest percentage of female directors across both the Australian Securities Exchange 200 and Australian Securities Exchange 500; these are in insurance, banking and retail industries. The number of women in pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and life sciences industries is rising slowly.

According to the Australian Census of Women in Leadership, representation of women in the fields of automobiles and components, and capital goods has remained low over the past decade. These findings are perhaps not surprising as engineering, building and construction are traditionally male-dominated industries. In New South Wales women currently make up less than 2 per cent of trades workers in automotive and engineering, construction, and electro-technology. In 2006 the Productivity Commission released a report entitled "The Role of Non-Traditional Work in the Australian Labour Market". The report found that 38.9 per cent of women were engaged in non-traditional work.

When the first International Women's Day was recognised in 1911, more than one million women and men attended International Women's Day rallies, campaigning for the right of women to work, to vote, to be trained and to hold public office, and to end discrimination. Women in Australia have more choices than they have ever had; they can choose what subjects to study, whether to go to university, whether to work after they are married and whether to return to work after they have had children. But to be truly competitive we must make the most of our potential workforce. "Inspiring Change" is an opportunity for us to consider the challenges that remain in achieving equality of opportunity for women.

We need only to remember that at the end of 2013 women made up just 0.6 per cent of employed workers in construction trades across New South Wales. We must pursue opportunities to bring about change to support women, grow our financial security and challenge stereotypes and perceptions of what is women's work. In particular, the New South Wales Government is committed to increasing the proportion of women employed in non-traditional trades. The New South Wales Government's Women in Trades initiative funds projects and activities to increase the participation of women in non-traditional trades. It also breaks down barriers for women and girls entering and remaining in workplace environments traditionally dominated by men. The Government has also set up the Investing in Women Funding Program to support organisations across the community to run their own projects to boost women's economic prospects in non-traditional trades. Increasing the number of women in trades makes sense—for the economy, for industries experiencing skill shortages, and for women who are seeking new employment opportunities.

But mainly, increasing women's labour options increases their financial security and independence. Opening up trade apprenticeships in areas such as construction and electrical trades helps girls and women realise that they can enter occupations that are beyond the roles traditionally held by women. With this aim as a driving force, over the past 18 months the New South Wales Government has partnered with stakeholders to roll out more than 20 Women in Trades projects and initiatives. One example of a successful project is a partnership with Supporting and Linking Tradeswomen, also known as SALT. Using their try-a-trade trailer, Supporting and Linking Tradeswomen delivers hands-on workshops to girls and women in towns and cities across New South Wales. This project is helping women who are seeking a trade career to build their confidence and learn new skills.

The Investing in Women Funding Program is also providing support to the National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy to run a week-long careers, leadership and aspirations camp for 30 Aboriginal girls

and young women from Western Sydney. The camp will focus on supporting access to non-traditional trades, including the opportunity for participants to gain experience in set design and construction with Opera Australia. Lend Lease is also a partner in this project and offers opportunities at a number of its large development sites across Sydney. A recently funded project under Investing in Women round two will provide small business management skills development, business mentoring support and networking opportunities for 10 tradeswomen. The project will focus on tradeswomen who have completed their apprenticeships in non-traditional trades and are seeking management roles or looking to establish their own trade business. This project, although small, will support leadership development opportunities for women in the Coffs Harbour region.

The New South Wales Council for Women's Economic Opportunity was established in 2012 by the Minister for Women, the Hon. Pru Goward, to provide specialist advice to the Government on strategies aimed at providing women with greater economic opportunities. Members of the council include representatives from major construction companies including Lend Lease and John Holland, apprenticeship centres, and industry bodies such as the Institute of Automotive Mechanical Engineers. In April this year the Minister and the Deputy Premier will host a women in construction trades industry roundtable with the support of the New South Wales Council for Women's Economic Opportunity. The roundtable will bring together major employers and industry bodies to develop ideas to support greater representation of women in construction trades.

At the event Minister Goward and the Deputy Premier will launch the Women in Trades Industry Pledge, which will ask Lend Lease and other major construction industry leaders to sign up to show their commitment to actions that increase the number of women entering and being employed in non-traditional trades. This commitment will encourage the development of further initiatives to support and increase the number of women in trades. Considered together, our Women in Trades initiatives are collectively helping to ensure that women receive the same training and job opportunities as men. Only then will more women be represented in leadership roles across sectors and industries.

The Government's NSW 2021 plan has made a priority of increasing the number of women completing apprenticeships in non-traditional trades to ensure that girls have a broader range of choice in career. As members know, I am strongly opposed to quotas and I have spoken in this Chamber on that issue. Also, I do not support affirmative action. I believe women need to use their energy not to complain but to work harder and smarter. But we must continue to identify the barriers that are preventing women from participating and develop practical solutions to encourage more women to take up leadership positions. The New South Wales Minerals Council surveyed 170 of its current and former female employees covering a variety of topics including working conditions, career opportunities, balancing work and raising a family, and the potential and perceived barriers to entering the New South Wales mining industry.

In its report "NSW Minerals Council Women in Mining: A Snapshot" it found that less than 1 per cent of people at the board or executive management level were women and only 9 per cent of the full-time total workforce were women. Of these, more than 30 per cent were employed as machinery operators or drivers. On International Women's Day in 2012, NSW Mining established the New South Wales Women in Mining Network to address the shortage of women in the mining industry. Since its launch the network has grown to more than 500 members. It holds regional forums and the first New South Wales Women in Mining Award was presented this year. I congratulate Cate Sims, a specialist in Aboriginal relations with Rio Tinto, who was awarded for working to break down employment barriers and to promote diversity within the New South Wales mining industry.

Before I conclude I will acknowledge a number of women who were nominated and received Women of the Year awards for their significant contributions to the community. This year, 239 nominations were received across the four categories of the Premier's Award for Woman of the Year, Harvey Norman's Young Woman of the Year Award, A.H. Beard's Community Hero Award and the Local Women of the Year Award. The Premier's Award for Woman of the Year recognises women who have excelled in their career, field or passion and who have had great success in traditionally male-dominated areas. I congratulate Turia Pitt for her work, particularly as a mining engineer. As was mentioned, she not only excelled at university level but was an inspiration following the unfortunate Kimberley fires.

The Harvey Norman Young Woman of the Year Award is a new category this year. It shines a spotlight on young female Australians aged 18 to 30 years. The A.H. Beard Community Hero Award acknowledges local heroes and volunteers and women who are making outstanding contributions to their community. At a local level, 78 women were honoured, but due to time constraints I will not be able to acknowledge them individually. Finally, again I congratulate the Hon. Marie Ficarra on bringing forward this important motion.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE [11.36 a.m.]: I support the comments made by all members who have spoken in this debate, but in particular I congratulate the Hon. Marie Ficarra on moving this motion. It is a thorough motion, which includes the names of well-deserving women throughout the State who have been recognised through receipt of a number of awards. I note that International Women's Day was held on 8 March 2014, with the theme "Inspiring Change", to encourage advocacy for women's advancement everywhere in every way, and calling for challenging the status quo for women's equality and vigilance inspiring positive change. I note the rest of the motion which, as I have said, entails recognising women who won well-deserved awards.

I will mention a few of those women in my contribution. Before doing so, I must say that this is a great initiative by all concerned. It reflects a longstanding initiative of the United Nations, which has demonstrated its great commitment to tackling the challenges and concerns of women throughout the world. Many women are now finding their voices in various and new ways. Nations do progress, but when they progress they do so not only in protecting women's fundamental human rights but also in ensuring that those women have access to opportunities. Women may choose traditional ways as well as new and innovative ways, and we should always ensure they are supported in whatever endeavours they choose. No nation can hope to move forward if its women are trapped in an endless cycle of poverty, racism, discrimination and abuse. Women, like all other members of our community, deserve our attention and our support to bring out their talents and enable them to speak out.

I was not surprised, but very proud, that one of my staffers, Fadwa Kebbe, who is also a councillor on Canterbury council, won Local Woman of the Year. Councillor Kebbe has lived in Canterbury for almost 40 years since coming to Australia from Lebanon with her family in 1969. After 26 years working for the Department of Defence, Ms Kebbe became the first female Labor councillor at Canterbury council in 1999. That is a recognition not only of her contribution to local government but also of her significant contribution to the community. I congratulate her on her well-deserved award. In 2011 she was the first woman from a non-English speaking background to be elected to the Australian Local Government Women's Association National Executive, which is also a significant achievement.

I will also mention some of the people identified by the Hon. Marie Ficarra. The Government named Mrs Alia Halabi the Granville District Woman of the Year in recognition of her marvellous contribution to the community over the years. Many women in various migrant communities do not get the recognition they deserve. These awards are a significant part of recognising all they do for the community, which is why I have shown my support by placing their names on the record. Ms Mona Luxton from Rockdale is the founder and full-time volunteer of Bay City Care. This initiative offers assistance to people who are homeless, unemployed, sole parents or otherwise disadvantaged, and provides food hampers to those in need. Mona was recognised for her remarkable efforts in helping women and children experiencing domestic violence and other abuse. Mona Luxton certainly deserves her award. Later in my contribution I will refer to a number of other groups who also work to minimise and hopefully eliminate domestic violence and other abuse of women and families.

Betty Breese, who lives in my duty electorate of Murrumbidgee, was recognised for her unwavering commitment to her local community through her involvement in local events and community groups such as the Rotary Club, show society and sports club. Betty is also a deserved winner. The mayor of Rockdale presented three awards at the council's Australia Day celebrations this year: Rockdale Citizen of the Year, Rockdale Young Citizen of the Year and Rockdale Sportsperson of the Year. All the recipients were successful women. The Rockdale Citizen of the Year award recipient was Patricia Will, who has been a Bexley resident for 60 years. She has a passion for helping those in need and has dedicated a lot of her time to assisting community organisations in and around the city of Rockdale. In 2001 Patricia formed the group Gabbie's Sewing Angels with four women who wanted to make a difference. In 2013 the group had more than 24 volunteers and produced more than 5,000 garments that have been distributed to those in need, primarily children and babies in Australia, Timor-Leste, Cambodia, New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Samoa and the Philippines. Patricia was a well-deserved winner of the Rockdale Citizen of the Year award.

Many women in various ethnic communities do a great job and are rarely recognised. I have spoken about the following group of women before in this House but I will mention them again. In 2013 volunteers at the Muslim Women Support Centre at Lakemba were awarded the Law and Justice Volunteer Award for their dedication to providing an inclusive and culturally appropriate service for women and children escaping domestic violence. Their work is greatly valued by the Arabic-Islamic community and the wider community as they speak out in support of women in need who do not have a voice. To give an example of that type of work, the United Muslim Women Association Inc. issued a media release about a 26-year-old student who was before a court after being charged with having sexual intercourse with a minor. The release stated:

The Muslim Women's Association as a peak body representing Muslim women in NSW would like to unequivocally state its position on this issue—'there is no religious leader, Imam or scholar in Australia that we work with that would conduct an Islamic wedding ceremony that involved an underage child. In fact Islam condemns any action that involves breaking the law of the country that one lives in', said Ms Maha Abdo, Executive Officer of the Muslim Women's Association.

The association spoke out because it was mindful of community backlash. I congratulate the women on ensuring their voices are heard and that their community members are looked after. Women around the world are finding their voices, being empowered and speaking out as they enter education and escape the terrible cycle of poverty. I congratulate the Hon. Marie Ficarra on moving this motion.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL [11.46 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the Hon. Marie Ficarra. This debate is timely given that International Women's Day was celebrated only two weeks ago. During my contribution I will touch specifically on paragraphs 1 (b) and (c) of the motion about the nominees for the Premier's Award for Women of the Year. The winner of the award was Turia Pitt, whom other members have referred to in their contributions. I have not had the opportunity to meet Ms Pitt in person or to hear her speak, but from what I know from the papers and the television we could not have a more inspiring person chosen to be the Premier's Woman of the Year. I know members are aware of her story. Her biography discloses that things she did before her horrible accident were just as inspiring as the work she continues to do.

Turia Pitt gained a degree in engineering and carved out a successful career in what I think we would all agree is a male-dominated industry, mining. Turia was also involved in a range of community and philanthropic projects. She volunteered with St John's Ambulance, taught English to students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, cycled in Cambodia for ChildFund and worked in Mongolia with Habitat for Humanity. In 2011 Turia, as a marathon runner, was trapped in the Kimberley region when bushfires swept through the area. She suffered deep burns to more than 60 per cent of her body. Since then, Turia said she has accepted it and moved on. She has become an incredible advocate for a wide range of charities. She has shown women that they can triumph over adversity. I hope that one day I will have the opportunity to hear her speak in person or to meet her. The work she is doing is incredible and it is appropriate that she be commended in this way.

Another nominee for the Premier's Woman of the Year award was Fiona Simson, who is the president of the NSW Farmers Association. I have been lucky to know Fiona for a number of years; she lives not far from my hometown of Gunnedah. She is a councillor on the neighbouring Liverpool Plains Shire Council and is now in her third term since becoming the first female president of the Farmers Association. Although I do not think any agricultural operation would survive without women, it is traditionally a male-dominated environment. Therefore, it is a real achievement for Fiona to be in that role doing such a wonderful job as well as serving on the board of the National Farmers Federation and as the Australian delegate to the women's committee. As this is also the International Year of Family Farming it was timely that Fiona was a nominee. I congratulate her on being given the honour.

I turn now to the Local Women of the Year awards and focus specifically on a nominee whom I know personally—Narelle Burke from Tamworth, who also is involved in the agricultural industry. Narelle runs a mixed farming business with her husband, Bede, with an emphasis on integration and sustainability. They have a poultry facility that produces up to 100,000 eggs per day where 27,000 pullets are raised from day old to point of lay. They crop 3,000 acres of winter and summer crops and these crops are integrated into the on-farm feed mill where they mill 5,000 tonnes of feed for the poultry. They have fat lamb production and a small beef feedlot. They farm in a sustainable manner, using zero till technology. They also produce on-farm compost that is used as a sustainable soil conditioner. A couple of years ago my husband and I had the privilege of looking through the operation with Bede and Narelle and found the compost area to be really innovative. They can go through the whole cycle on-farm—from the poultry, into the compost, onto the crops, then feeding that back into the poultry side of the operation.

Recently this incredible business just outside Tamworth won the Brownhill Cup for conservation farming and efficient management practices. The partnership has involved on-the-job skills training by hosting Primary Industry Centre for Science Education and Vocational Education and Training students. They have run excursions for numerous schools, university and agricultural groups. Narelle is also a member of the Egg Industry Consultative Committee for Education and Training and assists the Cooperative Research Centre in the production of resources. She is currently vice-president of the Tamworth City Swimming Club and has held a range of positions in that organisation since 1994. She is a Learn to Swim coordinator and past president of the New England and North West Swimming Area Association. She is also a qualified referee.

Narelle is a member of the Council for Catholic School Parents and a member of the Bishop's Commission for the Armidale Diocese and is also a scripture teacher. In addition to all those things Narelle is the mother of five children. Bede and Narelle have Gillian, Andrew, Christopher, Richard and Katherine. Narelle is a very busy woman but she is also an inspirational local woman and I am pleased to see her

recognised in this way. She is someone I call a friend. She is a quiet achiever and despite all the contributions she makes to the community she would be the last person to seek this sort of recognition. However, these are the type of people who deserve recognition because they are the ones who keep communities, particularly regional communities, ticking along.

I briefly mention a couple of women who were awarded the Minister's award for Women in Local Government, in particular, the elected representative from a rural or regional council. The winner of the award was Councillor Sharon Cadwallader from Ballina Shire Council. Sharon has been living in the Ballina region since 1998 and when she first moved there her aim was to set up and strengthen the Ballina Chamber of Commerce. She was able to build its membership to more than 300 members. During that time she assisted many business owners and operators in establishing and driving their business success. Sharon also initiated the Ballina Shire By-pass Ready Taskforce. Following the 2010 Lennox Head tornado she provided assistance by arranging an event for victims so that they could share their experiences and make plans for their future in Lennox Head.

Sharon has been a member of the New South Wales branch of the Australian Local Government Women's Association for the past 10 years and was elected to the executive in 2011. She is currently the country vice-president. Sharon strives passionately to promote women to stand in local government elections and continuously lobbies to have information designed specifically for women. I am fortunate to know Sharon also in her capacity as president of the New South Wales Nationals Women's Council, an organisation set up only a couple of years ago under the chairmanship of Christine Ferguson of The Nationals New South Wales branch. I was happy to be part of the working group that set up that organisation.

The organisation had been in existence for a long time federally but there had not been a New South Wales branch. Sharon was the first president and is now serving her second term and doing a wonderful job. This great group of innovative women, capably led by Sharon, meets twice a year to support each other and to inspire each other. We often talk in this place about having more women in Parliament and what we can do to support each other. Regardless of party political lines encouragement for more women involved in politics—local, State and Federal government—is to be admired. Sharon deserves due credit for her role within the women's council.

I also briefly mention Councillor Esme Martens from Mid Western Regional Council. I had the opportunity to meet Esme a couple of times when I was working with Federal member Mark Coulton. It is fair to say that Esme is an icon in the Mudgee region. She has had more than 40 years experience in local government and has been on the Mid Western Regional Council since 2006. She too has put herself forward in a non-traditional role. She started as a civil engineer and at age 27 she was the first female shire engineer on the council. She has been a member of many committees and donates many voluntary hours to the community. To see her honoured with the lifetime achievement award is very appropriate and I am pleased that she has been recognised in this way. I conclude my contribution by referring to paragraph 1 (a) of the motion, which states that the theme of this year's International Women's Day was "Inspiring Change"—

... to encourage advocacy for women's advancement everywhere in every way, and calls for challenging the status quo for women's equality and vigilance inspiring positive change.

I am pleased to inform the House of a women's forum conducted by the local council in my hometown of Gunnedah on 28 February 2014. I was happy to attend that day and also to be the guest speaker at the forum dinner. The theme of the forum was "The Power to Dream, Believe, Achieve" and it was designed to encourage women throughout the district to come along, network and talk about what they wanted to achieve in the future through commitment and passion. A range of topics was explored during the day by the 11 speakers. The topics included social media, balancing home and career, opportunities for Indigenous women, mentoring women, and the importance of health, wellbeing and lifelong learning.

Several of the speakers spoke naturally about their health battles, which was interesting. This demonstrated the tenacity of many of these women and their strength in rising above obstacles to achieve. It certainly helped to make it a powerful forum. I will mention a couple of the guest speakers. The first was Lauren Robertson, a girl I have known for a number of years and who is the general manager of Ewing Real Estate in Gunnedah. Lauren is the fourth generation to sell real estate in Gunnedah. She is an accomplished triathlete and has been the world champion in her age group. She is a mother and a wife. Lauren spoke well about her achievements in her career and triathlons and about how much her family means to her. She told the forum how she maintains her work-life balance. It was great to hear from her because although I have known her for a long time, I learnt things about her that I had not previously known.

Robbie Sefton, managing director of public relations company Sefton and Associates, also spoke at the forum. She is a board member of the National Australia Day Council and has served on a range of other boards too numerous to mention. Robbie had a stroke earlier in her life. It was interesting to hear her story about how people can deal with horrendous occurrences in life but if they maintain positive attitudes they can go on to achieve great success in both their personal and professional lives. Dorothy Koukari, a senior engineer from Asset Standards Authority, Transport for NSW, spoke about her journey into engineering. The forum also heard from Amanda Trieger, a girl I went to school with, who runs the Wellness Centre in Gunnedah. Amanda gave a great speech about how women need to work hard at achieving work-life balance and consider their health and their whole lives as they go about their daily business. It was an enlightening speech for many women who tend to compartmentalise life rather than take a whole-of-life approach. It was wonderful to hear from her.

There were contributions from Rebecca Ryan and Colleen Fuller of Gunnedah Shire Council. The single male speaker, who was probably quite brave, was the human resources manager Glenn Learmont. He informed the audience how to sell the sizzle and not the steak. It was an interesting contribution from him. It is a great initiative by the Gunnedah Shire Council. This was the second forum and I hope to see it take place again in the future. It is nice to have an opportunity for women to get together, network and share their stories, particularly in regional communities. It was well attended and I enjoyed being there. The dinner that evening was a lot of fun. Hopefully that forum will occur again. I conclude by congratulating the Hon. Marie Ficarra on introducing the motion and I am happy to lend my support to it.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO [12.01 p.m.]: Private Member's Business item No. 1716 relating to International Women's Day was placed on the *Notice Paper* by the Hon. Marie Ficarra. It is important to debate issues such as this and to recognise the work that women do across the community. A problem that we have in Australia, and in New South Wales, is an under-recognition of the value of women and the work of women. It is particularly noticeable in the Australian honours system, where the imbalance between men and women receiving those awards is far too great. In part it is due to men and their willingness to congratulate colleagues, pat them on the back and nominate them for honours. However, it is also due to women believing they have to do something miraculous to receive an Australian honour. Many businessmen receive these honours merely for earning very good salaries year in, year out.

This is a great opportunity to recognise the value of the contribution that women make. I congratulate all the nominees and winners in the New South Wales Woman of the Year Award. I will mention three nominees whom I know personally: First, Councillor Fadwa Kebbe, who is a very strong worker in her local community and who has been a long-serving councillor on Canterbury City Council; and, secondly, Jane Cush, who is director of the Regional Gallery of Goulburn and an old school friend of mine. We used to get into trouble in the art classes, an area that Jane has pursued more actively than I have given that she is the director of an art gallery and I get to work here. Thirdly, I came to know Councillor Leigh Vaughan from Great Lakes Council when I was the duty member for the Legislative Council for Myall Lakes. She is a great supporter of the arts and I was able to get her an internship working for a couple of weeks with Premier Carr's arts adviser, which was something she enjoyed. I was glad I could organise that for her. The skill must run in her family as her daughter is now an arts administrator.

I want to talk about the status of women in New South Wales. It is a pity that in some ways women are going backwards in New South Wales. Under this Government and Premier Barry O'Farrell we have seen the abolition of the Premier's Expert Advisory Council on Women, removal of the Office for Women's Policy from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and the abolition of the requirement for equal representation of women on government boards. Many of the Government members who contributed to the debate spoke of women in business, but Premier Barry O'Farrell's Government has abolished the Women in Business Mentoring Program.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell spoke of opportunities for women to network on International Women's Day, yet the Government has made the petty and mean decision to abolish local government funding for International Women's Day. It was only \$1,000 a year per council, but that provided the opportunity for councils to have functions such as morning teas to recognise local heroes and to assist in integrating new arrivals into the community. Some councils used it as an opportunity to have representatives of female refugees meet with other women in the community. It was a mean-spirited action by this Government.

The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones stated that she does not support quotas or affirmative action and women should be elected on merit and not complain about an inequality of female representation in the New South Wales Parliament. The status of women in the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is obvious; only 19 per cent of Coalition members are women whereas the Labor Party has 37 per cent representation of female members.

That is a direct result of the Federal Australian Labor Party introducing affirmative action quotas for women 20 years ago. It is only through systemic structural change within political parties that the number of women in Parliament will increase. The opposing argument of, "We want quality, not quantity. We want talented women, not just women", is avoiding the issue—if the old boys club barriers are not broken down women will have trouble achieving equal representation.

The number of women who are represented on government boards is minuscule. The WestConnex Delivery Authority demonstrates the old fashioned attitudes and views of some Ministers of jobs for the boys. The authority has seven members but not one is a woman. I refuse to believe, given the pool of talented women in New South Wales, that the Government and the Minister for Roads and Maritime Services could not find an appropriately qualified and talented woman to sit on the board of the WestConnex Delivery Authority. If these issues are not kept at the forefront of discussion women's talents will continue to be overlooked and blokes will appoint blokes to jobs they think are in blokey fields, such as building a motorway.

Changing these attitudes requires leadership. If we look for leadership in New South Wales the Premier's public comments about women such as former Premier Kristina Keneally, the current Deputy Opposition Leader, Linda Burney, and his colleague and senior Minister Gladys Berejiklian, exhibit a deplorable attitude. I commend the Hon. Marie Ficarra for bringing this debate before the House. I say to Government members that they must lift their game and remind the Premier that women should be treated equally and they deserve better than the treatment they are receiving from him at the moment.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN [12.08 p.m.]: I speak on behalf of the Christian Democratic Party to the motion moved by the Hon. Marie Ficarra concerning International Women's Day. I note that in the Shoalhaven the mayor is a woman, the Speaker in the other place who represents the electorate of South Coast is a woman and the Federal member is a woman, Ann Sudmalis. I congratulate all women who were nominated for International Women's Day Awards, and those who were not nominated; their roles in our communities should be noted. In our role as parliamentarians it is important to protect the dignity of women. This House will soon be debating a bill that proposes to increase the penalty for female genital mutilation. I urge all members of the House to support that bill. It is important to note that the church acknowledges the importance of preserving the dignity of women and is heavily involved in parts of the world that are struggling with that issue. For example, in Africa, as Kathy Erb recently blogged:

March 8 was designated as International Women's Day by the United Nations in 1975. While the world has seen significant progress in rights and empowerment for women and girls, sexual and gender-based violence still touches every part of the globe and is tragically widespread in some areas.

Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo face shockingly high rates of rape, including reports of mass rapes by soldiers, especially in the conflict-ridden province of Kivu. One Christian hospital, operated by the Free Methodist Church in the Nundu mission, works to treat injured women and heal psychological trauma.

Grace (not her real name) had spent the day working in the fields near her home in Kivu Province in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The 42-year-old mother was walking home with her two daughters, ages 20 and 16, when they were stopped by a group of 15 uniformed men. All three of the women were raped by the men and left with horrible injuries. They were brought to the Nundu Hospital, operated by the Free Methodist Church, where they received medical and psychological treatment for four weeks.

The Nundu Hospital identified 1754 survivors of sexual violence in 2012, and all but 98 of those were women or girls, according to Dr. Lubunga Eoba Samy, medical coordinator for the Free Methodist Church and coordinator of the hospital's Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Project. This project aims to reduce the occurrence of sexual violence by promoting human rights, raising awareness and strengthening the capacity of community-based organizations to address the issue. It also includes training of local authorities and improving coordination among local non-governmental organizations.

Dr. Samy sees sexual violence as a weapon of war, since it aims to humiliate women, destroy their families and intimidate communities. However, he explains that over the last six years the proportion of rapes carried out by uniformed men has shifted and now sexual crimes are increasingly committed by civilians.

"It is verified by researchers that many conflict zones and countries in post-conflict transition experience much higher levels of domestic violence among civilians and continue to do so for a number of years after transitioning out of conflict," he said. A report released by the United Nations in March 2010 confirms that gang rapes committed by men in uniform and civilians remain a serious concern in the DRC, even in areas not currently affected by armed conflict."

Unfortunately, according to Dr. Samy, prosecuting soldiers and other combatants implicated for crimes in the DRC is extremely difficult.

"Commanding officers often arrange for combatants accused of sexual violence to be quickly transferred elsewhere, making prosecution far more difficult and often impossible," he said. "The reluctance to arrest fellow soldiers or to investigate them thoroughly continues into the trial process as well. Few of the cases that reach military court end in conviction, in part because those prosecuting are from the same institution as the accused."

Fear of further attacks, stigma, and shame also keep victims from coming forward and accusing attackers.

"They have been told by authorities—usually men—to stay silent, said Dr. Samy. Women and girls who seek justice must have at least the cooperation, if not the support, of authorities."

After receiving treatment and counseling at the hospital, Grace now serves as an educator in her community on sexual violence, and her two daughters returned to school with financial assistance from the project.

"The Christian and the church mission is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in order to save human beings from sin and all its consequences: hunger, sickness, ignorance, misery, and stigmatization; and to promote communal development for the spiritual and physical well-being of people," said Dr. Samy. "The church cannot stay silent where a population is in trouble. That is why the Free Methodist Church works to give victims hope that these actions are not the end of life."

Obviously there are still parts of the world where women's dignity is not respected and we pray that is rectified quickly. However, in terms of recognising the day itself, International Women's Day is an opportunity to honour all women, particularly the great women in our lives, both young and old—for those in the gallery, their parents, and grandparents. It is a great opportunity to honour them. I recently attended the funeral of another great woman, Effie Berry, who passed away on Monday, 10 March, aged 94. I honour her as an example of an unsung hero and a great woman. Before her current marriage she met Tom who joined the Navy and sadly was lost in the destruction of HMAS *Sydney*, along with a great number of others. To quote from her eulogy delivered by her son:

Effie had been working for a year when World War 2 started. Effie contributed to the war effort by doing classes in First Aid and Home Nursing and then volunteered in Hospital Casualty Wards on a Saturday night wearing her Red Cross uniform. Effie also did Air Raid preparation training. She had her own kit containing what she might need in the event of an air raid. Included in the kit was a long-handled broom and shovel for sweeping up incendiary bombs that might have landed in the street where she lived!

She met her husband, and:

The wedding took place during the war years and no wedding invitations were sent out. A number of cadets from the College turned up to be a guard of honour. The conservative war time bridal outfit was a blue angora 2 piece, with burgundy shoes, hat and handbag.

The bride promised to obey as was the custom in those days—Effie preferred the modern version where couples promise to share everything. The 'Open House' reception was held at Effie's home.

Later on, with [her husband] confined to bed for long periods of time, Effie took the opportunity to earn herself some 'pin money'. At one stage she had seven part time jobs, including running a polling booth, an interviewer for Morgan's Gallup Poll and working as a census taker. Effie had a goal with the money she earned - to attend her first Order of St Luke Triennial to be held in 1981 in Melbourne. The Order of St Luke is the Healing Ministry of the Christian Church. Effie held the position of Treasurer of the local chapter for 22 years.

Effie lived a simple, yet generous life. She gave herself to the Order of St Luke, to her church and to her community. She represents the countless women around the world who quietly put themselves out for those around them. Women make great contributions to our society. I note briefly another great woman. I recently had the honour of making an adjournment speech about Melita Misoni, a young mother who is a real hero. She gives herself completely to raising money for children to receive treatment for debilitating illnesses.

Rather than selfishly indulging in a fortieth birthday present she took that opportunity to invite her friends and loved ones who would be involved in the party and raised funds for her daughter for a Westmead Children's Hospital program for very sick children. Rather than the night being about her, she made it about her daughter and the many kids who have been taken ill with a particular disease. These are the sorts of champions who are not acknowledged in these awards. They are throughout our communities, our regions, our nation and the globe. Many of them are giving of their time, their effort, their breath, to do something for others who are vulnerable and who suffer illness. Many go unnoticed when making a contribution to our society.

Today we give credit where credit is due and honour all women around the world. I take this opportunity to particularly honour my wife, Michelle, the mother of my six children, and a most awesome mother who has given tirelessly of herself, not only to my life but also to our children's lives. She has continuously tried to engage in events such as International Women's Day with its theme of "Inspiring Change". She is also committed to the YWCA and trying to help kids not to look at the scars. Sadly, many of these young kids have scars. I recently heard a wonderful quote on the radio during a program discussing memorable quotes, and I thought about International Women's Day and the role my wife plays. The quote is, "Scars do not say who you are; they show where you have been."

I am very proud of my wife. She tries to help young people, in particular young women, change their scars in the stars. My wife is committed to ensuring these young people will lead a full, prosperous and fruitful life, whatever that means to each one of them. My wife is such an amazing person that God made two of her: she has an identical twin. I acknowledge Susan Gorman in the Chamber, my wife's twin. I know Susan Gorman is as capable and, although I say my wife is better, I am sure Mr Gorman would argue counter to that claim. Susan Gorman has given up her time to work tirelessly for young people in the Western Sydney region. She has never asked for thanks; she does this because she believes in others.

With concurrence, the time for debate was extended by one hour.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS [12.22 p.m.]: I speak about three remarkable women who changed the course of the twentieth century in ways we could not imagine. These women are Isabel Paterson, Rose Wilder Lane and Ayn Rand. Not so long ago thoughtful, well-intentioned, educated people understood that socialism was the way of the future. The average citizen might have retained a quaint belief in the system of free enterprise, limited government and individual rights, but among the cognoscenti—academics, artists, newspaper and radio pundits—it was widely recognised that the capitalist experiment had run its course. The overwhelming consensus was that the coming century would see economies managed by benevolent experts: the chaotic, dog-eat-dog competition of the market would give way to rational central planning.

History has been unkind to the old conventional wisdom, but the intellectual sea change preceded the visible collapse of socialist economies. The first real sign of the resurrection of classical liberal ideals came with the publication in 1943 of three groundbreaking books unabashedly defending individualism and free market capitalism. Almost as unorthodox as the books' contents in the climate of the 1940s were their authors, three remarkable women described by the libertarian journalist John Chamberlain in his memoir:

If it had been left to pusillanimous males probably nothing much would have happened ... Indeed, it was three women—Paterson, Rose Wilder Lane and Ayn Rand—who, with scornful side glances at the male business community, had decided to rekindle an old American philosophy. There wasn't an economist among them. And none of them was a Ph.D.

In fact, it was Isabel Paterson's *The God of the Machine*, Rose Lane's *The Discovery of Freedom* and Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead* and later *Atlas Shrugged* that brought the conception of social power into detailed reality. These books made it plain that if life was to be something more than a scramble for government favour, a new attitude towards the producer must be created. Paterson, Lane and Rand began to do just that. Each was an original thinker in her own right, but each also was a great populariser of liberal ideals. A few of the liberal economists argued, with great force, that no planned economy could match the productive efficiency of the capitalist system, yet these economic arguments, despite their technical force, were unable to match the power of the utopian socialist vision to capture the popular imagination.

These three women—Lane and Paterson, it must be remembered, were almost entirely bereft of formal education and Rand was writing fiction in her second language, English—did just that. The sweeping histories of Lane and Paterson chronicled humanity's ascent from barbarism to civilisation in a way that uncovered the necessary links between civil liberties, stable property rights and material progress. Even more successful was Rand's allegorical tale of a brash and brilliant young architect struggling to maintain the integrity of his work in the profession where his independence of mind was despised and resented. Above all a romantic epic, *The Fountainhead* also serves up a blistering satire of the day's intellectual fads and hints at the Objectivist philosophy of rational self-interest that she would develop in greater detail in *Atlas Shrugged*.

The effect the trio had was no accident. They were frequent correspondents—and friends too, at times—who saw each other, despite quarrels over fine points of ethics or conflicting religious views, as comrades in arms engaged in a war of ideas. The odds in that war looked less than encouraging, however. Even the captains of industry who were emblems of free enterprise had, as often as not, succumbed to the prevailing orthodoxy. Undaunted, Rand wrote to Paterson in 1945, "You were right, we can do it without their help. We'll have to save capitalism from the capitalists." Surveying the disheartening intellectual climate of the 1940s, F. A. Hayek wrote, "We must make the building of a free society once more an intellectual adventure"—and that is what these three women did.

History has shown the battle is not yet lost, and this is due in no small part to Rand, Paterson and Lane's belief in the power of ideas. Unconstrained by conventional political categories, they savaged the collectivist economic nostrums of the left even while, in their lives and careers, they exploded the rigid gender roles seen as sacrosanct by so many on the right. In the process, they laid the foundations of the modern libertarian movement. Today, 71 years after their monumental triple achievement, I pay homage to three women without

whom contemporary libertarian thought would not exist. Rose Wilder will be familiar to those who have read *Little House on the Prairie*, because she was the baby Rose written about by Laura Ingalls Wilder. Rose's adult life, while less well known, is at least as exciting as the adventures related in any of her mother's books. In an autobiographical piece, Lane described her varied experiences:

I have been an office clerk, telegrapher, newspaper reporter, feature writer, advertising writer, farmland salesman. I have seen all the United States and something of Canada and the Caribbean; all of Europe except Spain; Turkey, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq as far east as Baghdad, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan.

The extensive travels to which she refers include stints as a reporter in San Francisco and as a Red Cross publicist, as well as several months in New York's Greenwich Village, where she became involved in radical socialist politics. After the end of World War I, she was sent to the Balkans by the Red Cross. However, crucially, Lane also stayed for a time in the newly formed Soviet Union, an experience that would shake and ultimately destroy her sympathy for communism. Lane publicly disavowed her youthful socialism in a long 1936 article entitled "Credo", later reprinted as the pamphlet *Give Me Liberty*.

She related her disillusionment—and that of her Russian friends—with the new Soviet regime, as well as anecdotes about the bureaucratic red tape she encountered in Parisian markets and the behaviour of police in Budapest to enforce mandatory work rules. Her experiences and her travels had taught her that central economic planning was incompatible with prosperity and individual liberty. In an autobiographical essay she said about her change of heart:

In 1917 I became a convinced, though not practicing communist. In Russia, for some reason, I wasn't and I said so, but my understanding of Bolshevism made everything pleasant when the Cheka arrested me a few times.

I am now a fundamentalist American; give me time and I will tell you why individualism, laissez faire and the slightly restrained anarchy of capitalism offer the best opportunities for the development of the human spirit. Also I will tell you why the relative freedom of human spirit is better—and more productive, even in material ways—than the communist, Fascist, or any other rigidity organized for material ends.

Her pioneer novel *Free Land* was published in 1938. She also began work in the early 1940s on her seminal work *The Discovery of Freedom*, which, by her own account, was written in a "white heat". Lane was not merely a theorist but also an activist. In 1945-46 she led a campaign against the introduction of zoning, which she saw as a violation of individual property rights. She grew her own food to avoid wartime rationing and later quit her editorial job so as not to pay social security taxes. The direct influence of *The Discovery of Freedom* was lessened by its unavailability for many years, yet its influence cannot be underestimated. Lane changed many lives, both through her writing and her personal example. If it turns out to be true that, as she wrote in *Give Me Liberty*, "individualism has the strength to resist all attacks", Rose Wilder Lane will have helped to make it true by lending so much of her own strength to individualists everywhere.

The second woman I will speak about is Isabel Mary Paterson. Paterson was amongst the most erudite, conservative authors and political thinkers of her time, yet the sum total of her formal education consisted of two years in a tiny log schoolhouse. She was born in Canada but later moved to rural Michigan. The economic importance that Paterson would later attach to productive "self-starters" was likely to be at least a partial product of her own early history. Her family was quite poor, often living in tents, and the work she was required to do at a young age was arduous. As a teenager she had a series of low-paying jobs, but her writing career began in the same year as her marriage—although it would be far more successful than her marriage. While working as a secretary for the publisher of the Washington State's *Inland Herald* she criticised his prose so vocally that he replaced her and made her an editorial writer instead.

Paterson met editor Burton Rascoe in 1921 and took up a job with the *Herald Tribune*. She persuaded him to take her on as his assistant. She was writing a column under the initials "I.M.P." for the paper's books section. Her acerbic wit soon made her infamous, and was exemplified in such jabs as her observation that a talk titled "The History of English Literature as I Understand It", given by Paterson's *bête noire* Gertrude Stein "should be a very brief lecture". Author John O'Hara confessed on the occasion of the release of one of Paterson's novels that he was "afraid of Isabel Paterson". A 1937 study of American letters remarked that Paterson had "more to say than any other critic in New York today as to which books shall be popular". These columns would introduce, in embryonic form, many of the central themes of *The God of the Machine*.

During the 1930s Paterson would lead discussions with a group of young conservatives who would stay at the *Herald Tribune* offices late into the evenings. One of these was a fledgling author by the name of Ayn Rand. Paterson would later use her column to promote Rand's work and Rand would reciprocate by

recommending Paterson's books to her own acquaintances. By the time *The God of the Machine* was published, Paterson was living in Connecticut, where she would remain until the early fifties when she moved to Princeton, New Jersey. Her increasingly unfashionable political views led editors to push her out of her job at the *Herald Tribune* in 1949.

But Paterson's investments enabled her to live well enough without resorting to the acceptance of social security benefits. Indeed, her social security card remained in her papers with the original envelope unopened. Conservative icon Russell Kirk, with whom Paterson corresponded during World War II, believed that Paterson would be forever remembered for her columns, novels and literary commentary. Instead, it is *The God of the Machine* and its effect on the nascent libertarian movement for which she is best remembered. It is hard to imagine that this would have brought anything but pleasure to the woman who once wrote:

If there were just one gift you could choose, but nothing barred, what would it be? We wish you then your own wish; you name it. Ours is liberty, now and forever.

The third woman I will speak about is Ayn Rand. A week before her twenty-first birthday, Alissa Zinovievna Rosenbaum left the Soviet Union, never to return. Officially, she had gone only to visit her family in Chicago, but Rosenbaum had other plans. As a girl she had watched the Bolshevik revolution reduce her middle-class family to poverty and she was convinced that communism would destroy Russia as well. After staying several months with her relatives, practicing her English, she headed to Hollywood to begin a new life under a new name: Ayn Rand.

Rand's career as a professional author began in 1932 with the sale of a screenplay, *Red Pawn*, which was never produced. Nevertheless, the income from the sale allowed Rand to quit her job as a clerk in RKO's wardrobe department and to focus on her writing full time. Within two years she had completed a novel and a play, in addition to her many short stories. In 1936 Rand published *We the Living*, the story of a woman named Kira who, in the years after the Russian Revolution, feigns love for a communist official to help her aristocratic paramour Leo. It is the closest thing to an autobiographical work that Rand wrote and shows how collectivist systems perversely crush what is most noble in the human spirit.

In 1937 Rand penned the novella *Anthem*, which depicts a dystopian collectivist future where even the word "I" has been forgotten. The book was published the following year in England, but did not appear in the United States of America until 1945. On 26 June 1938 Rand began writing *The Fountainhead*, a project that would occupy her through to the end of 1942. After selling the movie rights to Warner Brothers she returned with her husband to Los Angeles to begin work on the screenplay. In the back of her mind were the first rudiments of a plot for another novel, tentatively titled *The Strike*. As the fame of *The Fountainhead* and its author began to spread, both by word-of-mouth and, after 1949, through the film based upon it, Rand returned to New York. There she began to attract a group of young intellectuals who had been inspired by the conception of personal virtue articulated in her book, which emphasised scrupulous integrity and the pursuit of rational self-interest.

By 1957 *The Strike* had become *Atlas Shrugged* and its publication by Random House transformed Rand from a novelist of ideas to the leader of a fully fledged intellectual movement. The novel is epic in both its length and theme. Where *The Fountainhead* had trumpeted the value of individualism as a virtue of personal character, *Atlas Shrugged* set out to illustrate the conflict between two diametrically opposed moral and political philosophies. *Atlas* would be Rand's last foray into fiction. For the next 10 years she promoted her philosophy through her nonfiction writings, including *The Virtue of Selfishness*, *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* and *For the New Intellectual*. However, today is not a day to simply think about the great women of the past. Today the tradition of radical, liberal thought continues in Australian political culture. We have many great women, such as Jennifer Buckingham, Helen Dale, Julie Novak, Jenny Lindsay, Louise Staley, Paula Matthewson, Helen Rittelmeyer, Sabine Wolff, Elle Hardy and even the Australian Labor Party's Cassandra Wilkinson—all of whom are flag-bearers for the ideas of liberty and individual freedom, which we so need in this age.

Even more pleasingly there is a new generation who are coming through the ranks—the younger generation of women who prize liberty more than anything else and who see that individual freedom and individual self-worth are the keys to both prosperity and moral righteousness. They are women such as Trish Jha, Lara Jeffery, Rachel Connor, Marguerite Iliescu, Siobhan Harris, Lydia Bevege and Erin Riley—great women who are doing great things in Australia today for the cause of freedom and liberty.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD [12.37 p.m.]: I am very pleased to support the motion moved by the Hon. Marie Ficarra. In doing so, I particularly acknowledge the contribution of women in this place, the women

who have gone before me. In particular I acknowledge Labor women who have led so much of the social change agenda in this State, but who so often did not receive recognition from their male parliamentary colleagues. International Women's Day has always been an occasion for asserting women's political and social rights, for celebrating women's cultural activities and for recognising the diversity of women and their interests.

While the celebration is important, we should not forget the history of International Women's Day. Its origins are firmly in the union movement; in fact, trade union and socialist women in the United States of America initiated International Women's Day on 8 March 1908 with demonstrations calling for the vote and other rights for women. The following year women garment workers went on strike for better pay and conditions. The decision to inaugurate International Women's Day was taken in 1910 at a women's conference in Copenhagen and the day was celebrated on 19 March 1911 with meetings and demonstrations.

In Australia, the first rally was held just outside this place, in the Domain, in March 1928. That rally called for equal pay for equal work, an eight-hour day for shopgirls, abolition of piecework, a basic wage for the employed and annual holidays on full pay. Today, pay equity and conditions for working women are still high on women's agendas, especially here in Australia. International Women's Day is an opportunity for women in Australia to celebrate what has been achieved. But, unfortunately, I fear that we are now going backwards. Women in full-time employment still earn only 83 per cent of what their male counterparts earn. The disparity is far greater for part-time women workers. One need only to reflect upon the casualisation of our workforce to understand the implications of that for women. It means that the disparity is getting greater.

Thirty years ago women marched in the streets of Sydney in pursuit of pay equity. Today, in 2014, it is still an issue for many Australian women, particularly working class women or those on middle to low incomes. To compound the problem, we now have the Federal Employment Minister, Eric Abetz, about to cut red tape by diluting the gender reporting requirements of large employers—requirements which had only just come into force and which were intended to track women's workforce participation and remuneration. It is an important reporting regime that would provide us with a basic measure of women's contribution to the economy. The last Federal Coalition instituted a similar rollback, and a good 15 years worth of valuable measurements were lost as a result.

International Women's Day has always been an opportunity for us to celebrate and highlight what has been achieved; it is also an important time for us to reflect upon what has still to change. I also congratulate all the women from around the State who were named in the motion and acknowledged or received awards for their tireless community work. I also congratulate the women in local government who were award recipients. I am happy to see that the Coalition Government has continued with these awards. However, it is disappointing that they have been quite politicised.

I will mention a number of women who received awards. Faten El Dana, OAM, was the winner of the A. H. Beard Community Hero category. Faten is a wonderful woman whom I met whilst I was a councillor and then mayor of the City of Bankstown. Faten works with the Muslim community radio station, which is based in Bankstown but of course broadcasts across Sydney and beyond to the Muslim community. She is also involved in the Muslim Women's Welfare Association of Australia. Faten is well known for her contribution to the community. She is one of those women who do not just work for the Muslim community; her work goes beyond that community. I have had the opportunity to join her on her radio program and see the difference that she has been able to make in women's lives. I commend her for that.

Another woman that I mention was a nominee for Local Woman of the Year, Fadwa Kebbe. Fadwa is a councillor on Canterbury City Council. Like Faten, Fadwa also is an Arabic speaker. Of course, Fadwa is from the Christian Lebanese community and Faten is from the Muslim Lebanese community. Another councillor I mention is Leigh Vaughan from Great Lakes Council. I know both Fadwa and Lee will be at Broken Hill today because the Local Government Women's Association is holding its conference there over the next few days. A number of women from councils across the State will gather together at Broken Hill to network and to share information and ideas, as well as to receive presentations and to hear from very inspiring women. One of the women they will hear from is Liz Collier, the General Manager at Lachlan Shire Council. Liz is another woman whom I have had the privilege of working with. Liz worked at Bankstown council in our community development section.

The Hon. Melinda Pavey: A very impressive operator.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: She made a great contribution to community development in Bankstown and to council's social planning processes. She brought them up to speed and modernised them.

I know she is now doing great work in Central New South Wales. Because of Liz's interest in social justice, she is going well beyond what would normally be the role of a general manager, while looking at many of the issues that face that community, particularly gaps in services. That is just another example of why it is very important to have more women in senior management positions in local government. Liz is one of the few women in New South Wales who is a general manager of a council. That is something we still have to work towards. I also acknowledge Dr Eman Sharobeem, who was the master of ceremonies on the occasion. I have also had the pleasure of working with Dr Sharobeem on issues relating to women. She worked with me when we were looking at the centenary of International Women's Day a few years ago.

Coincidentally, Dr Sharobeem also speaks Arabic. The Arabic-speaking women of New South Wales, and particularly of Sydney, were well represented in the awards this year. Women in Australia and in other parts of the world are still oppressed and disadvantaged simply because they are women. As we pass another anniversary of International Women's Day it is not just in the area of pay equity that women are at a significant disadvantage; we need also to consider the consequences of pay inequity. One of the key consequences of pay inequity is poverty. Here in Australia the large number of women living in poverty is on the increase. Single women aged 60 or more have the highest poverty rate of any family group in Australia—at 35.8 per cent, according to last year's Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia survey. They were also more likely to be in poverty for six to 10 years. This is a disgrace for modern-day Australia.

I cannot let International Women's Day pass without expressing my disappointment, indeed outrage, at the decision that the previous Federal Government made—regretfully I have to say it was a Labor government—to reduce benefits to sole parents whose children reach eight years of age. I do not know what possessed the Labor Government to do that. I am gravely concerned that it will lead to many more children living in poverty. I do not accept the argument that it was about moving sole parents, who were overwhelmingly women, into jobs. If it were about that, programs would have been targeted at training and retraining, and also at out-of-school-hours care. The reality is that for many women it is very difficult, indeed impossible, to find jobs from 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. Therefore, they need some out-of-school-hours care.

Thankfully, many in the Labor Party at the Federal level have recognised that mistake and acknowledge that they should not have gone down that path. I hope the current Federal Government regards it as important to rectify that problem. We do not want more of our children living in poverty. Many sole parents have to raise their children in poverty, through no fault of their own. International Women's Day provides us with the opportunity to celebrate the achievements of women and to reflect on the challenges women continue to face. In Australia there is a distinct lack of women in decision-making roles. While I recognise that all parliaments have women members, it seems that those numbers are diminishing with each election.

We are also a long way from equal representation for women in senior management positions, on boards, and at all levels of government in this nation. There is still an awful lot that needs to be done in this area. Of interest to me at the G20 meeting last month was the perfect photo opportunity provided by the United States Federal Reserve Chairwoman Janet Yellen, International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde and outgoing Governor General Quentin Bryce. It conveyed their great successes and achievements. On the face of it, you would think that women have made it. This was also the case back in 2010 when I gave my International Women's Day speech in this place and said:

In Australia we have two women Premiers, a woman Deputy Premier, a woman Governor, a woman Governor-General, a woman Deputy Prime Minister, a woman Lord Mayor of Sydney, a woman Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the other place, and a woman President in this Chamber.

I went on to say:

I look forward to the day when we have a woman leader in this country who is allowed to have grey hair and a couple of wrinkles and maybe is a bit overweight.

At that time I castigated the media for the way in which prominent women were stereotyped and portrayed and how women leaders continue to be judged only by their appearance. Little did I know at the time the disgraceful way our first woman Prime Minister Julia Gillard was to be vilified and degraded by the media, and by shock jocks. The disrespect shown to the position of Prime Minister was unprecedented simply because a very competent woman had the role. Unfortunately, that will be to our eternal shame as a nation.

I am bitterly disappointed that at the Federal level we have only one woman in Cabinet and women make up only 14 per cent of the total Ministry. It is a fact that women's representation in senior levels of

government under any Coalition government inevitably goes backwards. I have so much more I would like to touch on but time does not allow me. We must address the horrendous levels of violence against women in our community. On International Women's Day it is important to note that there is much to celebrate but there is certainly a lot more to do.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE [12.51 p.m.]: In the short time available I pay tribute to the women who have had a great influence on my life, commencing with my mother, Marjorie Nile, nee Clark and my two sisters. When my mother was a small girl in Wellington, New Zealand she was deserted by her mother, who left with a next-door neighbour and came to Australia. Sadly, my mother told me she spent time in many foster homes in New Zealand, and in a number of them she was sexually abused. That fact has been hidden until recent days. I thank God for my mother and her faithfulness in caring for me, my two sisters and my brother, Jim, who only recently passed away suddenly.

I also pay tribute to my wife, Elaine, who served in this House with me for 14 years and six months. Unfortunately, she died some three years ago as a result of cancer. She served two terms in Parliament and made a great contribution as a woman on women's issues, particularly HIV-AIDS, pornography and domestic violence. God was very good and led me to a new wife, Silvana Nero, who is another amazing woman and who has also had her struggles. She was deserted 20 years ago by her husband, who walked out on her while she was pregnant with her third child. She survived those 20 years, got her degree and became an accomplished schoolteacher. She is a marvellous, loving and caring woman. I also pay tribute to my office staff. Judy Russell, my personal assistant, will soon celebrate her twentieth anniversary of working with me. She probably needs a medal for putting up with me for all that time, but she has stuck to her job and been a great personal assistant. She has supported and encouraged me in my role.

I also acknowledge my other staffer in Parliament House, Belinda Dover, who worked with me more than 10 years ago before she went to Perth to work. I received a phone call from the Speaker of the Queensland Parliament, who asked me for a reference for a Belinda Dover because she wanted to join his staff. I said I would not give her a reference, but that I would contact her and re-employ her, which I did. I hope she remains with me for a 10-year stint. Kaia Thorpe is another very unusual lady; she has worked with me from the 1970s. She worked with me in my years with the Festival of Light and continues to assist me in Parliament, particularly with producing the *Family World News*. Kaia is a very quiet achiever. I thank God for all these women who have played a very important role in my life.

Debate adjourned on motion by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

[Deputy-President (The Hon. Trevor Khan) left the chair at 12.55 p.m. The House resumed at 2.30 p.m.]

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

TAFE FEES

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: My question is directed to the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services. What financial support is available to TAFE students with intellectual disabilities who are now forced to pay \$825 for courses that were previously free?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: As the member knows, there is a large amount of support for all people with disabilities in New South Wales, including students with disabilities who are undertaking certain courses. The member is well aware of that. Let us go back a little bit—

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: As long as they pay for it there's plenty of support. Go on, just explain the money.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: It never ceases to amaze me how members opposite ask questions and do not listen to the answers. The Government's budget for all disability services is \$2.7 billion. As members opposite are well aware, that budget will increase to \$6.4 billion with the transitioning to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Included in the transitioning and in the supply of all additional funds necessary for people

with disabilities will be those factors that are coming into effect. There will be additional funds for students with disabilities, just as there will be additional funds for all people with disabilities for any activities they wish to undertake.

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Given the severity of the recent bushfire season, will the Minister update the House on the influence of the 1994 bushfires in shaping today's modern Rural Fire Service?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: January marked the twentieth anniversary of the tragic 1994 bushfires. As many members would be aware, the 1994 bushfires were a watershed moment not only for the people of New South Wales but also for the broader firefighting community. Over a three-week period, fire dominated the coast and ranges from the Queensland border to Batemans Bay in the south, as well as the heavily populated areas of greater Sydney, Blue Mountains and the Central Coast. Between 27 December 1993 and 16 January 1994, more than 800 fires started and the total area burnt was around 800,000 hectares.

The fire encroached on Sydney and nearby metropolitan areas in a way never before seen. While the areas had burned previously, they had not burned simultaneously. The headquarters of the then Department of Bush Fire Services became the focal point of the operation and resources were marshalled from every State and Territory, and also from New Zealand. At the height of the campaign around 20,000 personnel were deployed. Despite the extent of the fires and their severity, losses were thankfully not as extensive as they might have been. Even so, 206 homes were destroyed and many others sustained damage.

The low level of loss compared to the devastating conditions which prevailed is testimony to the skill, courage and untiring endeavours of the many emergency services personnel and others who played a role in life and property protection and fire suppression. Tragically, however, four lives were lost during those fires—one civilian and three Rural Fire Service members. That is four lives too many, and our thoughts are still with their families. Australian fire services learned much from those terrible events, including the vital importance of a coordinated firefighting effort. The 1994 fires and the lengthy coronial inquest following them were the catalyst for forming today's modern NSW Rural Fire Service.

Since 1994 significant investment in technology such as incident management tools has helped to improve the coordination of resources and deliver information and warnings to the community. The NSW Rural Fire Service website and the bushfire information line are among an increasing number of options available. Social media is increasingly delivering information on bush, grass and scrub fires, as well as allowing the community to ask about fire safety and prevention. That is not to say that the NSW Rural Fire Service ignores more traditional press, broadcast media and community meetings in areas threatened by fire, as evidenced by more than 30,000 people attending community meetings in the Blue Mountains last October.

Ongoing development of the NSW Rural Fire Service website will make it more resilient and increase capacity. The NSW Rural Fire Service stresses the importance, however, of never relying on only one source of information; people are advised to use the variety of sources available to them. While our emergency services have come a long way in the past 20 years, as Australians we know that bushfire remains a constant challenge—as this recent fire season demonstrated—but, as was the case then, volunteers of the NSW Rural Fire Service stand ready to protect communities. We now have new and consistent messaging, fire danger ratings and the Prepare.Act.Survive framework for information and warnings. But if a fire is approaching, people should not wait for a warning before taking action. While we have seen many changes in information communications, one thing will never change: that is the need for us all to work together, behave responsibly and to be prepared for bushfires.

PUBLIC HOUSING

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: My question is directed to the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, in his capacity as Minister representing the Minister for Family and Community Services. In light of yesterday's announcement of the sale of 293 properties at Millers Point, will the Minister provide a full list to the House of other public housing properties slated for sale?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I thank the member for her question and for giving me another opportunity to speak on this important issue. As I have said on previous occasions, I am surprised that the shadow Minister

with responsibility for housing has not taken the time and made the effort to look at what previous Labor housing Ministers have said on this vital issue. As members are well aware, I indicated yesterday what some of those Ministers had previously said. Ministers such as Labor Minister David Borger—

The Hon. Steve Whan: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. I have listened carefully to the Minister. He is re-answering a question he said he was asked yesterday but not answering the one he was asked today, which requested a specific list of the properties that the Government has slated for sale.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: To the point of order: The question was about Millers Point and housing, so I am being relevant.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: To the point of order: Surely it is within the remit of an answer to investigate the historical circumstances leading to the current situation, which is what the Minister is doing.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: To the point of order: The question specifically asked: Will the Minister provide a full list to the House of other public housing properties slated for sale? The Minister is not being relevant to the question.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The scope of the question was not large and while some generality is always permitted there must be some nexus between the context being provided and the answer being given. I uphold the point of order.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Let us look at the reason for the sale of housing properties, the reason why a list is being created and the reason why the Minister is moving in the direction she is. The previous Government said:

We will be offering long-term leases to the private sector for a limited number of high value heritage listed properties owned by the Department of Housing in Millers Point. This means that the proceeds of these leases can be reinvested to provide better housing for those most in need in our community. The focus of this reinvestment will be in areas located in Sydney's inner west.

That message was delivered by the very good housing Minister in the previous Government, Cherie Burton. The former Minister not only made the statement but also printed it in full colour. Members opposite want to forget that statement. They want to pretend that the first time that the sale of Millers Point properties or any properties was proposed was by this Government and the Minister for Family and Community Services. What nonsense. Members opposite want to pretend it never occurred during the 16 years they were in government. Housing Minister David Borger stated, "Properties sold for a combined"— [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS: Will the Minister elucidate his answer in respect to whether the Ivanhoe Estate is on the Government's hit list?

The PRESIDENT: Order! That is a new question. I rule the question out of order.

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, representing the Premier. Will the Minister inform the House whether the Government is aware of reports throughout the media and Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiries regarding members of Parliament transferring assets to immediate family members, such as their wife and/or children, to avoid detection? Will the Minister inform the House whether the Government will immediately amend the pecuniary interest disclosure for members to include immediate family members to increase accountability and to be transparent and above reproach?

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Point of order: This matter is currently being considered by the Privileges Committee and I respectfully suggest that it should not be raised as a matter of Government policy in this House at this time.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Do any other members wish to take a point of order?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: To the point of order. It is a simple question and I would appreciate an answer from the Minister rather than the Government Whip.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I do not think the Assistant-President would object to my characterising that as a speech rather than a point of order.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: To the point of order: It is not a reported matter of the Privileges Committee and therefore it should not be considered to be outside of what can be debated in this Chamber.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Further to the point of order: Standing Order 65 (3) (b) states, "Questions must not refer to proceedings in committee not yet reported to the House." This is such a matter.

The PRESIDENT: Order! It is clear that this is a general policy issue, not actual deliberations in a committee. It is not about the work of a committee, so it is quite in order. The Premier is the relevant Minister for this particular regulation. The Leader of the Government may answer the question.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: Because the Premier is the appropriate Minister, I will take the question on notice.

WESTCONNEX MOTORWAY

The Hon. JENNIFER GARDINER: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will the Minister update the House on developments in relation to Australia's largest urban road project, WestConnex?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Members love this topic. Last week I was pleased to announce the short list of preferred contractors to build the first section of WestConnex, Australia's largest urban road project. WestConnex is a game changing project—

The Hon. Steve Whan: It is not a game; it is serious business.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: —that will provide first class transport and infrastructure to connect Sydney's west and south-west with the central business district, airport and port. I advise the people of the south that the Hon. Steve Whan is against them having better roads. The first section of the M4 widening involves widening the road between Church Street, Parramatta, and Homebush Bay Drive from three to four lanes in each direction. I am aware of the tremendous support for this project from all sides of the House. As members are aware, this 33-kilometre motorway is well overdue.

Short listing is an important step towards starting construction and this Government is delivering. WestConnex will revolutionise the way Sydneysiders travel about our great city, cutting 40 minutes from a typical journey from Parramatta to the airport and bypassing up to 52 sets of traffic lights, easing congestion, creating jobs and connecting communities. The Government received strong interest from Australian and overseas contractors to design and construct the M4 widening with six submissions received in response to the expressions of interest invitation. The WestConnex Delivery Authority has had a difficult task reducing the list to four. A request for tenders will be made soon and the contract will be awarded later this year.

I have been pleased with the level of interest in WestConnex from both the local and overseas equity and construction industry players. As we saw with NorthConnex, this level of market interest bodes well for receiving competitive construction prices and creating innovative approaches to design and delivery for critical infrastructure that will ensure we get the best deal for taxpayers. I am pleased to say that the four successful contractors who will be invited to tender are: Lend Lease Engineering; McConnell Dowel OHL, a joint venture; Rizzani De Eccher Leighton, a joint venture; and Thiess.

The environmental assessment of the M4 widening is underway and progressing well. An environmental impact statement is expected to be displayed for community comment in the middle of this year. The environmental impact statement is a detailed assessment of a wide range of project factors ahead of planning approval. The community will be invited to provide feedback. The Government is on track to start work early in 2015. I encourage all members to visit www.westconnex.com.au for more information, which has been provided in eight community languages.

MURDER TRIAL JURY DISCHARGE

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Given the importance of unbiased and impartial juries to the State's criminal justice system, has there

been any investigation by police of the circumstances in which the jury was discharged as a result of a very disturbing note being handed by the jury to the judge in the murder trial of *R v Dacey* in the Supreme Court on 10 December 2013? If not, why not?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I thank the member for his question. The member and I had a brief opportunity before question time for him to raise this matter with me.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: It is not a question without notice.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: It is. He wanted further information. It is fair to say that Mr David Shoebridge's concerns are worth examining. I have no information before me and the police have not given me any information, but I will make inquiries into this matter for the member's information.

BLUE MOUNTAINS BUSHFIRES

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Why are small businesses affected by last year's bushfires in the Blue Mountains still unable to access low-interest loans that were promised more than 12 weeks ago? When will small businesses be able to access these loans?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: Could the member indicate who promised it 12 weeks ago? I did not promise it.

The Hon. Helen Westwood: There is a media release with your name and Senator Brandis's name on it.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: We were talking about the overall package that the Government has given to the community of the Blue Mountains. I refer the member to the answer I gave earlier in response to a similar question about the package. It is something that the Government is continuing to consider. When the Government finalises its position on the supplementary package, which is also of concern to the member and other people in the Blue Mountains community, I will make an announcement.

SAMARITANS FOUNDATION MAITLAND OFFICE

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: My question is addressed to the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services. Will the Minister update the House on the Samaritans Foundation in Maitland?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I thank the member for her question. On 29 January 2014 I had the pleasure of opening the Samaritans Foundation new Maitland office. The property will be used to provide day programs for people with disabilities, an early-intervention service and a support group for parents over the age of 65 who are caring for an adult with a disability. It will also provide office space for management and accommodation outreach programs. The Samaritans Foundation receives more than \$20 million in funding from the Department of Family and Community Services Ageing Disability and Home Care. These funds assist Samaritans to provide a range of services for people of all ages with disabilities.

The services include residential support, day programs, early intervention, respite and therapy. I am aware that families, people who are homeless, people with mental health issues and young people in the local community receive much-needed services and assistance from the Samaritans Foundation. The office is to be shared with the Salvation Army's out-of-home care team. This is a great example of like-minded organisations working together for the benefit of the Maitland community. The Anglican Church has been involved in social welfare work in the Newcastle area for more than a century. It would have seen a lot of changes in that time, but no more than we are currently experiencing.

The launch of the National Disability Insurance Scheme is one of the most significant reforms in the history of services for people with disabilities. It is due to be implemented in Maitland from 2015. I had the privilege of meeting a number of ageing parent carers who were supported by the Samaritans, together with that great local member, the Hon. Robyn Parker. Their stories reminded me of the great contribution that carers of people with disabilities make to the community. It was heartening to hear their gratitude for the Samaritans and the support they receive. The carers' stories also reinforced the pressing need for reform of the disability sector through the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

I had also the opportunity to meet with Mr Cec Chevels, chief executive of the Samaritans and a well-known and respected member of the Hunter community. I was heartened to hear how the organisation is preparing for and embracing the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I was able to assure him and his staff of the great opportunities the reform will bring to people who work to assist people with disabilities. Through person-centred planning and individualised funding the National Disability Insurance Scheme allows people with disabilities greater choice and control over the services they receive. Local service providers such as the Samaritans Foundation will provide an important local contact point for people with disabilities in Maitland and the surrounding areas. I commend the work that the Samaritans Foundation continues to do.

PUBLIC HOUSING

The Hon. JAN BARHAM: My question is directed to the Minister for Ageing and Minister for Disability Services, representing the Minister for Family and Community Services. Will the Minister advise what proportion of the proceeds from the sale of public housing in Millers Point and The Rocks will be spent on the construction of new social housing? Given that the Government has still not produced the Asset Portfolio Strategy that the Auditor-General recommended be completed in December 2013, and that the use of proceeds from previous sales in the area have not been transparently accounted for, what guarantee has been given to the more than 57,000 people on the social housing waiting list that the money from the sell-off will deliver much-needed housing stock and will not be used as a temporary fix for the Government's \$330 million maintenance shortfall?

The PRESIDENT: Order! I am sure the Hon. Jan Barham was hoping to receive an answer from the Minister, not from the rest of the Chamber.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I thank the member for her question. Let me assure her, as I indicated only yesterday, that all of the proceeds will go back into the public housing sector. I repeat: all of the proceeds. The Hon. Pru Goward has made it clear—

The Hon. Sophie Cotsis: Even the Minister didn't say that.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I cannot hear you when you mumble. Speak up a little bit so I have a chance of hearing you.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I do not want to hear her at all. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: The Hon. Pru Goward has made it clear that the purpose of selling the properties is so that substantial money can be reinvested in public housing. Members opposite screamed and carried on when I mentioned the list. They should have listened when I spoke on this question the other day. I will read the list to them again and maybe this time they will listen.

The Hon. Jan Barham: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. I specifically asked about the breakdown between maintenance and new housing.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I think the Minister thus far has been largely generally relevant in his answer. He should ensure he remains so during the balance of his answer.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: As I stated previously, the former Ministers responsible for public housing made it clear in a number of statements that these properties needed to be sold so that the proceeds could be reinvested in public housing. That is what the Government is doing. I made it clear on the last occasion I was asked about this that the maintenance costs for these properties can be as high as \$44,000 per annum, compared with other properties where they are only \$8,000 to \$10,000 per annum. This means there will be substantially more money. The Hon. Pru Goward announced that the Government will sell its public housing properties—and this is the list as I announced it—in Millers Point, Gloucester Street and the Sirius building in The Rocks. The Minister said the reason for the sale was the high cost of maintenance and that the significant investment required to improve properties to an exceptional standard will result in a high potential resale value. It is a pity members opposite did not listen on the previous occasion.

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: My question is directed to the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services. Will the Minister guarantee ongoing State Government support for any current Ageing, Disability and Home Care clients who find themselves ineligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I am surprised the member asked this question. He more than anyone else in this Chamber put in so much work when it came to individualised funding and the concept of choice for people with a disability. He knows full well that the current budget for disability services is \$2.7 billion. That budget sadly assists only approximately 93,000 people with a disability. Under the new regime—a bipartisan regime that then Labor Prime Minister Julia Gillard put to Premier Barry O'Farrell in the heads of government agreement—funding increases from \$2.7 billion to \$6.4 billion. We will have more than 2½ times the current funding. What does that mean for people with a disability? It means increased numbers can be helped. Instead of being able to assist 93,000 people, we will be able to assist 140,000 people, an additional 50,000.

My answer to the Hon. Peter Primrose is: Not only will we be able to assist more people—I do not have to give a guarantee in relation to that—but with funding we will also be able to assist an extra 50,000 people. That is what signing up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme means for the people of New South Wales. Remember, New South Wales was the first State and Premier O'Farrell was the first Premier to sign up for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I am very proud to be part of the first Government to sign up for the scheme. More people than ever before will receive funding.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I ask a supplementary question: Will the Minister elucidate by guaranteeing that no individual currently a client of Ageing, Disability and Home Care services who becomes eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme will ineligible for ongoing State Government support?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I have already answered the question. I said 93,000 currently receive assistance through the available \$2.7 billion. Not only will those 93,000 receive assistance but an additional 50,000 will receive assistance. I do not know how else I can put it.

POLICE TRANSPORT COMMAND

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister update the House on recent successful crime detection by the Police Transport Command as well as community engagement initiatives the command has implemented?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I thank the member for his question. As members will recall, yesterday I spoke about Operation Javelin IV, which sees the Police Transport Command and Transport for NSW's transport officers joining forces to target fare evasion and other offences on the public transport network. Today I can report to the House on one of the successes achieved during this operation. I have been informed that Police Transport Command officers have detected a commuter with illegal drugs after stopping him for not having a valid rail ticket in the city's south-west.

I am told that yesterday afternoon, Police Transport Command officers stopped the man at Liverpool railway station to check if he had a valid rail pass. I am informed that one of The Greens' favourites, a drug-detection dog, made a positive indication on this gentleman's backpack, which led to police searching it and they found a bag of methyl amphetamine and a bag of precursor drugs. They also allegedly found drug paraphernalia and several empty drug satchels. Reasonably the man was arrested and has subsequently been charged with supplying prohibited drugs, possessing prohibited drugs and the possession of drug equipment.

Police Transport Command officers patrol trains, buses, ferries, stations, interchanges, secure taxi ranks and car parks near public transport. These officers work both in plain clothes and in uniform. Police Transport Command officers have the skills necessary not only to promote a secure travelling environment but also to effectively engage customers and commuters. Over the past year the Police Transport Command has launched several community engagement campaigns targeting alcohol consumption, crime reporting, student safety and theft. The aim of these community engagement campaigns is to equip transport users with strategies to minimise their risk of victimisation.

In December 2013 a proactive safety message for commuters using the transport network was filmed at Blacktown railway station. The actors were volunteers from Police Transport Command. The message dealt with crime prevention tips, including avoiding travelling alone, where possible carrying personal property securely, travelling near the train guard or driver, sitting in carriages with other people, and being assertive and moving away if another passenger makes you feel uncomfortable. In keeping with the important message "if you see something, say something" commuters are reminded to call 000 if they see an emergency or witness a crime occurring. The message has been uploaded to the force's YouTube channel and also made available on Police Transport Command and corporate police Facebook pages. Police Transport Command also developed a transport safety flyer in conjunction with Transport for NSW and the Department of Attorney General and Justice.

Our crime prevention partner, the Department of Attorney General and Justice, funded the printing of 50,000 of these safety flyers. The flyers provide personal and vehicle safety tips for commuters on the public transport network and are wallet sized. They provide personal safety tips for commuters using transport hubs, such as to walk in commonly used areas with lights, to keep personal belongings close to your body and to wait behind the yellow line on train platforms and away from the curb if at a bus stop, especially if you have been drinking. The flyers also provide vehicle safety tips for commuters who park near train stations. Tips include ensuring all valuables remain out of sight, and keeping clues to their existence hidden—for example, GPS or phone mounts and audio cables. The flyers also provide a list of important numbers and advice about when to call them, including 000, the Police Assistance Line, Crime Stoppers and the Graffiti Hotline.

COASTAL PROPERTY PROTECTION

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: My question is addressed to the Minister for Ageing, and Minister Disability Services, representing the Minister for the Environment. Last year the *Australian Law Journal* published a paper asserting that beachfront landowners have no legal right to defend their homes from the ocean, nor do governments have a duty to intervene. What legal advice has the Government been given on this paper, and will the Minister provide this advice to the House?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I thank the honourable member for the question. I will refer the question to the relevant Minister, get an answer and refer back to the honourable member.

YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES SUPPORT SERVICES

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: My question is directed to the Minister for Ageing, and Minister Disability Services. Will the Minister rule out cutting New South Wales Government funding for home modification and maintenance services for younger people with a disability?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I am at a complete loss to understand why members opposite no longer want to congratulate this Government for being the first to sign up for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I do not understand why members opposite have not been able to do the mathematics and see that going from a budget of \$2.7 billion to a total budget of \$6.4 billion will provide substantially more funding for people with a disability. The Hon. Mick Veitch is well aware that the main purpose of the National Disability Insurance Scheme is to give people with a disability the right to choose the services they want as they need them and that upon attaining their funding they will be in a position to determine how that funding will be utilised. That seems to have been forgotten by members opposite. I am certain that all of those extra people who will receive funding for the first time, together with the 93,000 who currently receive funding, will be able to choose for the first time how they utilise their funding. Whether it is funding for respite, further education, care, home improvement or accommodation, it will be their choice.

ROADSIDE TRIBUTES AND MEMORIALS

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Will the Minister update the House on the Government's relocation of a roadside tribute to Michelle Harrison on Camden Valley Way?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: In late February this year, Roads and Maritime Services invited community members connected to Michelle Harrison, who was involved in a crash 24 years ago and for whom the roadside memorial was placed on Camden Valley Way, to contact Roads and Maritime Services before upgrade work started. Camden Valley Way is undergoing a major upgrade, including the stretch of road at Catherine Field where the memorial for Ms Harrison was placed. Roads and Maritime Services and NSW Police had not been able to confirm contact details of relatives or friends of Ms Harrison.

The member for Camden, Chris Patterson, issued a media release, which generated a radio interview to encourage those who knew Ms Harrison to contact Roads and Maritime Services. A family member then made contact with Roads and Maritime Services and advised where they would like the tribute to be relocated. Roads and Maritime Services has worked hard to ensure the tribute was relocated in consultation with Ms Harrison's family. Roads and Maritime Services understands the importance to families of roadside tributes, and this tribute has been an important part of the grieving process of the family and friends of Ms Harrison.

Roads and Maritime Services supports members of the community who have experienced the loss of a loved one as a result of a road trauma. Only this week the *Guardian News* of Nambucca Heads reported that

Roads and Maritime Services had worked with the family of David and Ryan Goswell, who were killed 14 years ago, about a roadside tribute. After discussions with the family, the tribute on the Old Coast Road was relocated due to the Pacific Highway upgrades between Nambucca Heads and Macksville. The family chose to relocate the tribute and praised Roads and Maritime Services for being "sensitive and respectful"—as it should be—in ensuring the repositioning of the tribute.

If a roadside tribute is placed on a road which is to undergo an upgrade, such as Camden Valley Way, Roads and Maritime Services works with families to ensure the tribute is safely stored, while some families opt to relocate the tribute. Guidelines were developed in 2011 to assist communities to plan and prepare roadside tributes and to ensure that they do not present a safety risk to drivers. These guidelines remain in place. The New South Wales Government has committed \$280 million to complete the remaining section of Camden Valley Way, including \$30 million this financial year to build the final 3.2 kilometre section from Bringelly Road to Ingleburn Road. The short answer is that we have no plans to change the existing guidelines. The existing guidelines are appropriate and have been developed through consultation over a number of years.

NATIVE VEGETATION LEGISLATION

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: My question is directed to the Minister for Disability Services, representing the Minister for the Environment. Has the Minister received any correspondence from the NSW Farmers Association expressing concern about delay in the review of the native vegetation regulations and their implementation? Has the association asked for an urgent commitment from the Government for a broader change to the laws immediately, and will the Government be implementing its suggested targeted amendments to the Native Vegetation Act?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: As the question seeks an answer about what information the Minister herself has obtained, I will refer it to the Minister and report back to the House.

STONEY CREEK ROAD ROADWORKS

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports. Why did Roads and Maritime Services fail to provide the required 28-day notice before it undertook extensive night work, subjecting families living on Stoney Creek Road in the St George area to seven nights of jackhammering?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: With the usual proviso following a question from the Opposition, the best thing we should do first is to check whether the facts are correct. We will carefully evaluate the issue and come back with a detailed answer.

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services and Minister for the Illawarra. Will the Minister update the House on the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the Hunter trial site?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Again I regretfully advise the House of further union opposition to vital disability reform in New South Wales. Yesterday I informed the House how disability advocates have been forced to confront the NSW Nurses Association and the Newcastle Greens, who opposed the transitioning of people with disabilities out of large residential centres. Today I learned that on Monday the Public Service Association issued a directive to:

... ban work which requires their cooperation with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), which is the Agency responsible for overseeing the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Today we see the Public Service Association openly opposing the National Disability Insurance Scheme, putting their own interests ahead of those of people with disabilities. Let me be crystal clear: Only people with a disability will be impacted by any disability service work bans and any slowing down of the National Disability Insurance Scheme rollout. I remind the House that in December 2012, Premier Barry O'Farrell signed a historic agreement with then Prime Minister Julia Gillard to become the first State to sign on to the scheme. As the Premier said at the time:

This landmark agreement will empower and support people with disabilities, their families and carers across New South Wales. It is an issue that is above politics and deserves the bipartisan support it has achieved.

The Leader of the Federal Opposition, Bill Shorten, said in February this year:

With the NDIS, Australia's disability care system will be transformed from one of the most backward in the developed world to among the very best.

Former New South Wales Minister for Disability Services the Hon. John Della Bosca said in April 2013:

There can be no doubt now that all the leaders and members of Parliament from every political party have got the message: hundreds of thousands of NDIS campaigners—people with disability and their families and carers—will not tolerate the NDIS being put on the back burner.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard also had this to say:

The NDIS does not represent just Labor values, or just Liberal values. The NDIS represents Australian values. Disability Care starts in seven weeks' time and there will be no turning back.

No turning back—unless you are a Public Service Association boss. This historic agreement apparently went unnoticed by the Public Service Association until recently, but it now claims to be unaware of this vital point contained within the heads of agreement:

... following commencement of the full NDIS, the New South Wales Government will not provide any residual specialist disability services or basic community care services." (Clause 33)

That is contained in clause 33 of the heads of agreement signed by the then Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, and the Premier. So, contrary to statements by the Public Service Association, New South Wales is not the only State transitioning its services to the non-government sector. Neither Western Australia nor Tasmania provides any direct services, as all services are provided by the non-government sector. Furthermore, Queensland has committed to moving its direct services into the non-government sector.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Thanks to the enabling Act, which was agreed to by all sides in this Parliament, the Government has guaranteed that New South Wales employees will transfer to the non-government sector on the same terms and conditions that are in their awards now, and with all their leave and other entitlements preserved. The New South Wales Government will continue its discussions with staff about their industrial arrangements as the National Disability Insurance Scheme is rolled out, and has in good faith established a consultative forum with all relevant unions. So why has the Public Service Association chosen to wage war on the National Disability Insurance Scheme? I will leave it to members to determine. The very nature of reform is that it requires change. We need to look beyond self-interest to make it happen—for the benefit of the most vulnerable in our society: people with disabilities.

WALLARAH 2 COAL PROJECT

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: My question is directed to the Minister for the Central Coast. In his capacity as Minister for the Central Coast, what has the Minister done to implement the Premier's promise that the Wallarah 2 coalmine would not go ahead?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: As I have said publicly, and continue to say, matters that relate to an individual part of the Central Coast or in one electorate are a matter for the local member and the primary Minister to continue to negotiate. And as I have indicated, I will continue to adhere to my practice when Minister for the Hunter in dealing with local issues: when they are Hunter wide, I will deal with those issues. If they are Central Coast wide then I will deal with those issues.

LOCAL LAND SERVICES

The Hon. STEVE WHAN: My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Ports, representing the Minister for Primary Industries. Will the Minister, further to his answer on Tuesday, advise the House why the Government will not release the voting figures for the Local Land Services elections?

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: It is a question for the Minister for Primary Industries.

The Hon. Steve Whan: You are her representative.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: Thank you for that. That saves me reading the standing orders. There he is, sitting on the losers lounge. He wants to take a tilt at Goulburn but has not got the—

The Hon. Adam Searle: Point of order: The Minister is debating the question and is not coming within a cooeee of relevance.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Interjections are disorderly at all times. I encourage the Minister not to respond to them.

The Hon. Mick Veitch: He just got a piece of paper that says "Do not respond to interjections."

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: "Do not respond to interjections." As I said earlier, I will take the question on notice and refer it to my colleague.

TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY PATROL COMMAND

Mr SCOT MacDONALD: My question is addressed to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Will the Minister update the House on some of the recent activities of the Traffic and Highway Patrol Command?

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I thank the member for his question. The Traffic and Highway Patrol Command undertakes a wide range of enforcement activities across the State. Whilst there are a number of statewide operations, such as Operation Saturation—which is a month-long operation set up in response to some recently identified speeding and antisocial driving problems—there are also activities undertaken locally. Operation Saturation will conclude this Sunday, 23 March. But just because the Highway Patrol is involved in this specific operation, drivers should not think that other forms of reckless driving will go unnoticed.

In addition to Operation Saturation, the Riverina Highway Patrol teamed up with Roads and Maritime Services—very ably overseen by my ministerial colleague—to inspect 60 trucks and 58 trailers on 13 and 14 March. They found two speed limiters that had been tampered with and a truck carrying a 42-tonne load with significantly worn brakes, issued 34 defect notices, identified nine work diary offences and three unregistered vehicles, and breath tested more than 200 truck drivers. Meanwhile, up in Armadale, the New England Highway Patrol intercepted a vehicle that had been used in a number of break-ins. Stolen property was recovered from the vehicle and the offender was charged with multiple counts of aggravated break, enter and steal, illegal use of a conveyance, attempted illegal use of a conveyance, possession of housebreaking implements, negligent driving and unlicensed driving, and was also found to have breached his parole conditions.

Back in Sydney, the Botany Bay Highway Patrol was proactively cracking down on dangerous driving in busy built-up precincts. Over the course of the weekend they detected six drivers exceeding the speed limit by more than 45 kilometres an hour and two novice drivers exceeding their speed limit by more than 30 kilometres an hour. They also issued 15 other speeding infringements and conducted more than 440 breath tests. One novice driver was charged with high-range drink-driving, and one mid-range drink-driving charge was laid. They suspended eight driver licences on the spot and confiscated two sets of numberplates. Infringements were also issued for parking-related offences. I understand there was activity recently in the Coffs Harbour area, on the mid North Coast of New South Wales, a magnificent area. Members will recall that I spoke about the proactivity of the Highway Patrol during our last sitting week. In that area I understand the Highway Patrol found a vehicle—with the driver in it, obviously—in which there was a large quantity of prohibited drugs.

It is important for members to realise—as I am sure all members in this House do realise—that Highway Patrol officers are police officers first and foremost. You hear people saying, "Why is the Highway Patrol out there just worrying about speeding fines?" They are not. They deal with a broad range of offences. They look for criminality and driving offences as well as other driving behaviour. They are truly skilled officers. I will take every opportunity that I get to stand in this place and talk about the excellent work that the Highway Patrol are doing—under the new command structure that this Government put in place. That is one that those opposite would never have thought of—and it works. Not only do we have a highly visible Highway Patrol, but we have a Highway Patrol that is now focusing on not only driving offences but also serious criminal offences, including indictable offences. We should take every opportunity that we can to congratulate and thank the Highway Patrol for the work that they do. Today is one of those days.

HOME SCHOOLING

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, representing the Minister for Education. In the Minister's answer dated 30 January 2014 in relation to the New South Wales Ombudsman's 2012-13 recommendation for the Board of Studies to research the "academic attainment of home-schooled students compared to students who attend public or private schools", the Minister stated, "The terms of reference for this research are still in development and are not expected to be finalised until early 2014." Given that we are now moving into the second quarter of 2014, when will the terms of reference be made available?

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I thank Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile for his important and detailed question. I assure Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile that this afternoon I will contact the Minister for Education and ascertain the answer to his question and make it available to all members of this House.

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

Questions without notice concluded.

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

The House continued to sit.

CRIMES AMENDMENT (INTOXICATION) BILL 2014

CHAIR: I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Assembly:

Mr PRESIDENT

The Legislative Assembly having considered the message dated 19 March 2014 in which the Legislative Council requested the concurrence of the Legislative Assembly with amendments to the Crimes Amendment (Intoxication) Bill, informs the Legislative Council that the Legislative Assembly disagrees with the proposed amendments because:

Amendment No. 3 (discretion not to impose mandatory sentence)

This amendment is not supported.

It will give the Court the discretion not to impose a mandatory sentence if the Court finds that special reasons exist.

The Court may find that special reasons exist whenever it is satisfied that substantial and compelling circumstances exist.

This amendment fundamentally changes the character of the Bill and the sentencing exercise that the Court is required to undertake.

The minimum sentences specified in the Bill will no longer be 'mandatory'. They will be indicative.

Such a provision significantly dilutes mandatory minimum sentencing, and does not meet the community's expectations that serious violent offenders will serve a minimum period in prison.

Amendments No 1, 2, 4-9 (gross violence offence)

These amendments are not supported.

They will replace the Government's carefully constructed hierarchy of personal violence offences carrying a mandatory minimum sentence with one offence of 'gross violence'.

This offence will be one that is extremely difficult to prosecute.

The circumstances of 'gross violence' set out in the amendments are far too restrictive, unclear and impractical.

Under the amendments, serious offenders will be able to avoid a mandatory minimum sentence by requiring the prosecution to prove these unwieldy and uncertain elements of the offence of 'gross violence'.

That does not meet the community's expectations about mandatory sentencing.

The amendments are an oversimplification, unworkable and entirely unnecessary.

Legislative Assembly
20 March 2014

SHELLEY HANCOCK
Speaker

Consideration of the Legislative Assembly's message set down as an order of the day for a future day.

COOTES TRANSPORT

Ministerial Statement

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY (Minister for Roads and Ports) [3.32 p.m.]: I wish to make a ministerial statement. Members will recall that 14 days ago I made a ministerial statement in this House on a show-cause notice served on Cootes Transport. Today I will provide an update to the House on the status of the Government's ongoing enforcement and compliance program with regard to the Cootes Transport fleet. First, I acknowledge the comprehensive and broad program of works being undertaken by Roads and Maritime Services and the NSW Police Force in respect of the heavy vehicle industry generally. The unfortunate circumstance in which we have had to act has been difficult in the extreme for all involved, but I stand firm in my previous statements to the House that I will not compromise the safety of road users in New South Wales. I thank the House for its support on that. This means unsafe trucks will be taken off New South Wales roads.

On 6 March this year in this House I announced that Roads and Maritime Services issued to Cootes a notice to show cause—suspension of registration as a result of the on-going issues identified with the fleet since the October petrol tanker crash on Mona Vale Road. The notice demanded Cootes show cause why Roads and Maritime Services should not suspend the registration of each New South Wales registered fuel tanker. It also required Cootes to demonstrate to the regulator that the company could manage the safety and roadworthiness of its fleet. The company was given 14 days to respond and to take steps to rectify its safety and compliance issues. Today the company responded and sent to Roads and Maritime Services its corrective action plan in which Cootes will decommission 50 older units that will also be removed from its Transportation of Dangerous Goods licence and purchase or bring in new prime movers and tankers for its New South Wales fleet.

It will also implement a review and an improved maintenance capability and function, and increase the focus on brake, steering and suspension components. In-house maintenance will be reviewed by an independent third party approved by Roads and Maritime Services. Externally serviced and repaired vehicles will undergo a final check by Cootes' workshops including checks on brakes, suspension and steering components, and oil leaks, retrofit electronic stability control to all vehicles five years ahead of the Environment Protection Authority deadline, implement feedback processes for its maintenance systems to ensure quality expectations are met, increase on-road checks of vehicles by drivers and operators such as soapy water leak tests on LPG tankers for each shift, and implement new training and standard operating procedures to ensure staff are aware of their obligations in detecting and reporting defects.

The Cootes corrective action plan and commitment means it will be allowed to continue operations within New South Wales for the time being. I am encouraged to know the company has taken sensible action to address the issues. I am particularly encouraged by the board's commitment to ensure the company carries out the agreed program of corrective works. But it is not a time to be complacent. The company is aware that should compliance issues continue to be detected, action will be reinstated to ensure the safety of all road users.

The Hon. WALT SECORD [3.36 p.m.]: I respond to the ministerial statement on the Cootes Transport matter by the Minister for Roads and Ports in my capacity as the shadow roads Minister on behalf of the Opposition. First, I thank the Minister for Roads and Ports for the briefing on 18 March provided by senior executives of the Roads and Maritime Services to me, the Hon. Penny Sharpe and the Hon. Mick Veitch. Labor welcomes and supports the action commenced by Roads and Maritime Services against Cootes Transport. As I said previously and indicated in this Chamber on 6 March, we have provided our bipartisan support, and continue to do so. Unfortunately, Cootes has been a repeat offender in regard to truck defects.

The information provided earlier to the Chamber by the Minister is reassuring. No-one supports dangerous trucks being on our roads. I have been advised that Roads and Maritime Services gave Cootes until today to show cause as to why it's dangerous goods fleet should be allowed to continue to operate on New South Wales roads. The Minister said the Roads and Maritime Services has decided to allow Cootes to continue to operate, but Roads and Maritime Services will continue to monitor its operations—we welcome that.

Before I conclude I will make three brief observations. First, I hope the Minister and the Roads and Maritime Services has taken steps to work with other State and Territory authorities to ensure that the suspect vehicles from Cootes do not turn up in other jurisdictions and are not re-registered in other States or Territories. Again, no-one wants to see unsafe vehicles slipping into other States. Secondly, in regard to a long-term response to the Cootes matter I believe there are lessons to be learnt by the State, Territory and Federal governments. They need to diversify the industry as there is too much control by one player.

Cootes Transport provides 90 per cent of LPG supplies in New South Wales and about 40 per cent of our State's petrol supply. Furthermore, I have been advised that Cootes Transport provides 100 per cent coverage in Victoria. Therefore, I hope the Abbott and O'Farrell governments through the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission examine this area, and the Federal Government asks the commission to find ways to increase the number of players in the sector. Finally, and most importantly, I refer briefly to the O'Farrell Government's decision to slash 680 jobs from Roads and Maritime Services. This includes 21 heavy vehicle inspectors.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: That's not true. You just spoiled it. You started telling fibs.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: But today is not the day to focus on job cuts. However, I felt it was important to place them on the record. I will return to them at a later date. I thank the House for its consideration.

BLUE MOUNTAINS BUSHFIRES

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD [3.39 p.m.]: I seek leave to table a joint media release from the Hon. Michael Gallacher and Senator the Hon. George Brandis, QC, entitled "Disaster Assistance for New South Wales Communities", dated 20 February.

Leave granted.

Document tabled.

ADJOURNMENT

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY (Minister for Roads and Ports) [3.40 p.m.]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY INSOLVENCY

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK [3.40 p.m.]: Last year I spoke in this place about corporate thuggery in the construction industry and cited my experience of major operators screwing over the small contractors. Basically what happens is that big operators contract out work, which is then subcontracted and perhaps subcontracted again down the line. However, when the big guys get into trouble, the small contractors down the chain are the ones who lose out. I thought raising the matter in Parliament might prompt the big companies involved in my case to attempt to appear to be good corporate citizens—but guess what—all they did was start sending rude legal letters and threatening all sorts of dire consequences if I kept the spotlight on them.

The fact is that there is still an outstanding debt owed to my company, Australian Foundation Systems Pty Ltd, and the other fact is that Origin Energy is occupying and operating the Pongamia camp in South Western Queensland, which was built on Australian Foundation Systems foundations, but which no-one has paid for. Members should remember that these foundations were not certified by Australian Foundation Systems but, rather, the big guys brought in another company to certify the work of Australian Foundation Systems without the relevant data to support that certification. In seeking a resolution of this outstanding debt, we get bullying tactics from high-powered and obviously expensive lawyers—not a sign of any good faith negotiations. And, by the way, Australian Foundation Systems is not the only company being done over by these bullies.

I am aware that Fleetwood Corporation Limited, which is an Australian Stock Exchange-listed company, has forced another small contractor, Linnel, into liquidation by not paying its invoices to that company. In my case, the big boys—and let me name them, Origin Energy, Mirvac and Bendigo Relocatable Buildings, which is now rebranded by its parent company Fleetwood with the same name—now claim that the contract of Australian Foundation Systems was with Linnel and not with any of them. Well isn't that convenient? Despite the fact the contract was initially let and continued with assurances by Mirvac staffers Cameron Kirkwood and Liam Donaldson, according to prior case law Australian Foundation Systems had a verbal contract assuring the company that if the works were completed, it would be paid in full by Bendigo Relocatable Buildings or Mirvac, as principal contractor. Mirvac dealt directly with Australian Foundation Systems during the project to ensure completion within the allotted time frame to avoid liquidated damages from Origin Energy.

Australian Foundation Systems has now engaged an external company to mediate a resolution to this impasse and guess what happened to that company? It has been threatened with legal action to stop them from pursuing Mirvac, Origin and Fleetwood. It makes one wonder just what sort of ethics these companies have—if any at all. I note that in this place on Tuesday evening, the Hon. Adam Searle spoke on a similar matter, and I support his highlighting of the continuing failure of the O'Farrell Government to address the issue of insolvencies in the construction industry.

I also support his call for the Government to proclaim the legislation that passed both Houses, giving the Government the tools to deal with insolvencies in the construction industry, and to make a regulation addressing the problem of head contractors retaining money on building contracts and not providing those funds in a timely way to subcontractors. I know this is a personal experience, and I also know I am not alone as a small contractor being done over by the likes of Mirvac, Origin Energy and Fleetwood. I expect more rude letters after this speech is brought to their attention, but I will continue to shine the spotlight on them or any other big companies that I learn are doing the same thing and the wrong thing until this industry is cleaned up.

ACHIEVE AUSTRALIA

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL [3.43 p.m.]: Achieve Australia is a not-for-profit community business that currently supports more than 550 people with a disability and assists those who experience disadvantage in accommodation, employment and everyday services. Its driving principle is to help people with a disability in order for them to learn and maintain life and work skills, develop relationships, make choices about their lives and actively participate in the community. I was fortunate to have the work of Achieve Australia brought to my attention by a member of The Nationals, John Cameron, Treasurer of the New South Wales Nationals and a director at Achieve Australia. I am very lucky to be part of a political party that has such a diverse group of people in its membership base able to bring unique stories to our attention. John first informed me of the incredible work that was being undertaken across the country and of the thousands of people who have been helped since the establishment of Achieve Australia in 1952.

After hearing that Achieve Australia's mission is to deliver people with a disability a meaningful and valued life, I decided it would be beneficial to see firsthand how Achieve Australia was accomplishing social inclusion and assisting them towards a more independent lifestyle. Upon visiting its headquarters in Eastwood I was happy to meet with Anne Bryce, chief executive officer; David Rafferty, general manager of corporate development; and Sherie Avalos, chief operating officer. Achieve Employment supports people with a disability, injury or health condition to find and keep paid employment and to broaden their educational experiences. Achieve offers a no-cost service to assist jobseekers in developing a career path, learn interview techniques, create a resume and walk applicants through the sometimes daunting process of applying for jobs.

Furthermore, Achieve's factories in Sydney offer a range of employment opportunities for participants, including labelling and barcoding, collating, packaging and promotional assembly for some of Australia's largest companies. This not only presents an opportunity for employers to diversify their workforce and attain hardworking and dedicated individuals, but also provides a chance for those with a disability to build meaningful lifelong skills. Achieve also runs its own store called Fabric, Needlecraft and more, run by volunteers and those with a disability in order to raise funds for the organisation.

However, the main component of Achieve Australia is its accommodation and living services that enable people with a disability to live and participate in the community while at the same time develop skills for independent housing. We visited Crowle Home, a residential facility that has cared for hundreds of intellectually disabled children for more than 50 years, to understand how Achieve provides help to so many people on a day-to-day basis. I am impressed with what Achieve Australia has been able to accomplish with its team of full-time staff, 24-hour support and an adaptive strategy to deal with changing circumstances in accommodation needs. However, in our discussions with Anne Bryce and her team, it was clear that Crowle Home as a modern-day concept had reached the end of its time line. Institutionalised accommodation is now a somewhat antiquated approach to cared living and so in line with the Government's philosophy of changing the face of accommodation services for people with a disability Crowle Home closed in September 2013, to be replaced by group family homes and residential complexes.

We share the common goal of a more inclusive and supportive community but also, if possible, to shift accommodation services towards the individual to further promote a sense of meaning and value in the lives of those in care. Achieve also offers a range of services, including sport, recreation, visual and performing arts and music through its day program initiative. These programs run from morning to afternoon and are facilitated by

staff either in groups or on a one-on-one basis. When I visited the day program I was immediately struck by the happiness and comfort felt in the room. People were either playing the piano, helping themselves to afternoon tea, drawing or listening to music in the "mood room". It became evident that this place was a sanctuary for its guests where people could enjoy the simple things in life in a safe environment. By way of a day program Achieve hopes to establish friendships with others in the community and create linkages for further partnerships.

Once again I thank John, Anne, David and Sherie for hosting me on the day. It was an enlightening and fantastic experience and I congratulate them on the work they do for the community. I am very interested in support for people with a disability, particularly those in regional areas. We will have to face this big issue in the future, particularly supported accommodation. Indeed, it is often discussed in my hometown of Gunnedah and the surrounding north-west area. If we can look at examples where it is being done well in the city and we replicate the model one day in our regional communities, then it will be a big win for those communities.

LOCAL LAND SERVICES

The Hon. STEVE WHAN [3.48 p.m.]: Last week the first elections for the Local Land Services were finalised and successful candidates were announced. However, in the lead-up to and since the elections I have received a string of complaints about the election process being a debacle. Those complaints are at the heart of what is wrong with the Minister's administration of Local Land Services and its transition. In the lead-up to the elections the Government failed to ensure that people eligible to vote were enrolled to vote. The Government made the decision early in the process not to use existing rolls containing the names of eligible people who voted in the last livestock pest and health authorities election but instead asked people to enrol again.

It turns out that less than one in 10 eligible voters enrolled to vote in the Local Land Services election last weekend and—as far as I can tell—even less turned out and actually voted. The figures range from 5 per cent to just below 10 per cent of eligible voters voting. However, the formal figures are not available because the Government has made a decision not to release them. That places a shadow over the process and suggests that the Government is covering up a debacle. I received a complaint from Martin Butterfield, a resident of the Monaro electorate. Mr Butterfield wanted to vote in the election but found, after receiving the voting information, that the holding reference number was not included and he could not complete the field in the document asking for a holding reference number.

Mr Butterfield followed it up and was eventually told, "Don't worry about that, you don't need to fill in that field." He was not alone; a number of other New South Wales Local Land Services areas experienced the same problem. In some cases people felt they did not have the information required to vote and therefore their vote went in late or not at all. Very few people turned out to vote. One reason for that was explained to me by a person at the Bombala show. He said he had not bothered to enrol to vote because he did not think his voice would be heard. That inaction is a result of the majority of the members of the Local Land Services board being appointed before any elected members were selected. The Government appointed the executive officers who set in place a culture and direction for those agencies.

The people standing for election were aware they would be a minority in any effort to effect change. In that circumstance people felt their voice would not be heard and they did not bother to enrol. I have had complaints from those who did enrol that they feel the vote is not representative of the area and that there is a gender imbalance. Some Local Land Services boards do not have any women members at all. There is a situation where three elected members have a small group of constituents backing them. There were complaints in the media, including *The Land* newspaper, complaining that the election was effectively a gerrymander because of the limited number of people enrolled to vote. There are complaints from candidates and calls for fresh elections because of the stuff-ups in the mail-out of voting information to people around the State.

NSW Farmers state that prior to the election it received a string of complaints to its office from landholders about this process. It is a process that has been handled badly from the beginning. Members are aware that I have a fundamental problem with the establishment of the Local Land Services through a process of amalgamating two bodies that do not have enough in common to perform the purpose of the boards. As a result of this process there has been an exodus of expertise including 30 to 40 experienced extension officers and local agronomists, who are critical in determining when areas are in drought.

The lack of information is obvious in the seasonal conditions reports that the Government has published recently. That is a problem in itself, but to top off the incompetent administration of the process the election has been a debacle. It shows that Minister Hodgkinson is not capable of implementing change. The

Government should be ashamed of and embarrassed by this situation. It requires investigation, openness about the number of people who voted and an investigation as to whether the election should be allowed to stand when less than 5 to 10 per cent of eligible voters have turned out to have their say.

NATIVE FORESTRY BIOMATERIALS

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN [3.53 p.m.]: I congratulate the Minister for Resources and Energy on the decision to clear the way for the State's forests to be used to generate electricity—the fact that the decision was blasted by The Greens as "devastating" makes it doubly welcome and doubly correct. Without putting too fine a point on it, I would refer The Greens to the election results from Tasmania and South Australia. Their vote has tanked and it is hard not to think that it is their bizarre attitude towards sustainable industries such as forestry operations that led to voters deserting them in droves. It gives foundation to the truism: Greens cost jobs.

The New South Wales Government will modify environmental protection regulations to allow trees, otherwise destined for pulp and paper production, to be burnt in power stations. It could also see invasive native species and offcuts of sawlogs also burnt for power. In simple terms, the Government is making better use of the waste that already exists in the forests. The decision is long overdue and eminently sensible. Interestingly, the history of prohibition on the burning of native forest biomaterials for electricity generation goes back to 2003, and the rather grandly titled Protection of the Environment Operations (General) Amendment (Burning of Bio-material) Regulation.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Is that a Bob Carr special?

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: I think it might be, although it was 2003. There is no doubt that a compliant State Government at the time was forced into this regulation by The Greens, who, 10 years ago, were probably at the zenith of their power, but they are now on their way out because of such ridiculous policies—Greens cost jobs. Forestry is an industry that employs people, provides income and supports communities. For the life of me I cannot understand why The Greens are so opposed to what is, when properly managed, a valuable, sustainable and renewable resource, all the things they pretend to espouse. There is no reason we cannot generate energy in New South Wales from the use of forest biomass. Forest biomass really means the rubbish left on the floor of the forest after a logging operation.

Let us look briefly at what happens elsewhere. Both Sweden and Finland generate about 30 per cent of their total energy supply from forest biomass. In Bavaria more than 50 per cent of harvested trees are used for energy and Bavaria has about 700 operating biomass plants. Due to The Greens what occurs in New South Wales, and to a greater degree in Tasmania—may they rest in peace—contrasts with Europe's sensible use of forest biomass for energy. This process in Europe attracts strong public and political support. The forest biomass is mostly used to produce heat, or combined heat and power, in small and medium size co-generation units that are very efficient. The New South Wales Government has, through this decision to allow forest residue to be used to generate energy, made better use of low-quality timber and harvest waste. It is eminently sensible and overdue.

The Shooters and Fishers Party welcomes the Government's decision and looks forward to even better use of the forest residue, including logging for high-quality sawlogs in native hardwood forests. I point out that Tasmania was told last year that renewable forest biomass for energy could be an important component of Tasmania's future forest industry, make a significant contribution to local and regional employment, and replace energy production from fossil fuels. But, because there was a Labor-Green Government in Tasmania at the time, and The Greens were holding sway, nothing was done. However, given the result from last weekend, perhaps there is some hope for Tasmania into the future. The new Government has apparently indicated it will start talks on how to progress and reinvigorate the forestry industry down there, and has said the self-titled "conservation lobby" will not be invited to the talks. It is about time.

FRIEDRICH AUGUST VON HAYEK

PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS [3.57 p.m.]: Today I celebrate two notable anniversaries. The first began 70 years ago and the second a mere 30 years ago. Seventy years ago this month a book was published that would have a marked influence on western civilisation. It was written by a gentleman living in England at the time, but who had fled from Vienna. That person was a man by the name of Friedrich von Hayek and the book was titled *The Road to Serfdom*. To place the historical context of the time: It was 1944 and the Soviets were allied with the western powers in the fight against Nazism. Von Hayek was a visionary. He foresaw exactly what communism meant.

Von Hayek understood the inexorable connectivity between the totalitarian regimes of fascism, Nazism and communism as espoused by Stalin. It was a bold move. It drew criticism at the time because he was attacking an ally, but it was one of the most prescient books introduced to the political science canon. It was at the time when a whole range of bien pensants believed that the way of the future was inexorably towards the Soviet style of Communism, collectivisation and a return to totalitarianism in a kinder, gentler, more smiling form. But Hayek stood athwart the stride of history and said, "No. You have to realise that these are simply two sides of the same totalitarian coin."

Hayek went on to have a great career in academia and writing. Unfortunately, he never received a Nobel Prize, which is a great injustice. However, it remains that book *The Road to Serfdom*, which was published 70 years ago, that carried with it the clarion call of the future. At the time other people had been making the call, such as Muggeridge and Koestler in his great book *Darkness at Noon*. It was a vital period of time in which the future of western civilisation was being thought about and decided upon. His contribution cannot go unremarked 70 years on.

The second event to commemorate happened in the United States in January 1984. Precisely 30 years ago this year, an event took place that would have broader significance to a wider range of people than the publication of a book. I speak of course about the match between Hulk Hogan and the Iron Sheikh at Madison Square Garden. Again, it is important to realise the historical context in which this event occurred. The United States was coming out of the events of Vietnam, Watergate, the loss of the Panama Canal, the takeovers in Nicaragua and Afghanistan and the general malaise that had engulfed the United States for many years. By the time 1984 comes around there is a new resurgence. It is a blue collar, working-class resurgence. Reagan tapped into this as part of his grand strategy to link a blue-collar conservatism and libertarian tradition with the old Republican establishment from the north-east.

I will not delay the House; I am sure we are all aware of the academic works on professional wrestling in the United States. There is a wide range of academic scholarship on the topic of wrestling being the theatre of the working class, the morality play of the working class. It is important to remember that the fight in January 1984 was the first time someone was able to get out of the Iron Sheikh's signature camel clutch. The Iron Sheikh put the camel clutch on Hulk Hogan, but did Hulk Hogan surrender? No, he gradually moved his way up. The crowd was screaming, "Hulk, Hulk, Hulk!" and, "USA!" Members can see the frenzy the incident engendered if they watch the fight on YouTube. Hulk got up, slammed the Iron Sheikh into the ropes, executed his trademark leg drop and won the fight. It was a perfect exemplar of the way in which the United States, the West and Reagan would treat their enemies in the future. It is appropriate we commemorate it today.

PUBLIC HOLIDAY TRADING HOURS

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY [4.02 p.m.]: It is a political truism in Australia, and history has demonstrated it time and again, that Coalition governments can never resist the opportunity to try to abolish or reduce the entitlements of working people and their families. Typically the Liberal and National parties do not talk about such proposals when in opposition. They deliberately try to fly under the radar and draw as little attention as possible. Their language may sound attractive, using terms such as "boosting productivity", "cutting red-tape" and "achieving national uniformity" but in truth that is code for pushing down and in some cases abolishing the wages and working conditions of ordinary working people.

During its three years in office the O'Farrell-Stoner Government has displayed typical conservative impulses when it comes to workers in this State. A number of examples can be given but two are worthy of note. Major changes to workers compensation legislation have demonstrably reduced the entitlements for injured workers. In the State sector the Government has used the Parliament as a tool to sideline the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission in determining rates of pay. The same Government has crudely sought to use its regulation-making powers to cut the superannuation entitlement of these employees who serve the citizens of this State. Now with just 12 months to the next State election Treasurer Mike Baird has committed the Government to abolishing the Boxing Day public holiday for almost 15 per cent of the State's workforce.

In this State retail shops can trade 24 hours a day 360.5 days a year. On any reasonable assessment this is a liberalised retail trading hours regime. There are just 4.5 days a year that general shops, that is the large shops, must close. They are Christmas Day, Boxing Day, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, and Anzac Day up to 1.00 p.m. The Treasurer has made it clear that he is determined to allow all shops to open on Boxing Day. He has committed the Government to bringing this about and wants to achieve it as soon as possible. He has decided to use procedures available to him with the Council of Australian Governments to gain purchase on the issue. He wants to be seen as a member of the "cutting red tape brigade" and he believes cutting the public holiday entitlements of shop assistants will do his reputation some good.

Unfortunately for the Treasurer, he does not seem to understand that he is playing with fire. Using another metaphor, he is poking a wasps' nest with a stick, seemingly oblivious to what he is doing. Shop assistants work extraordinarily hard in the lead-up to Christmas. I am not talking about one or two days before Christmas; I am talking about the weeks leading up to the event. I am sure everybody in this House has found themselves at one time or another caught in a store trying to do their last minute shopping. It is organised—or should I say disorganised—chaos. Those same people who serve and look after us also have families. They too have presents to wrap and Christmas meals to prepare. They have family commitments to attend to and after working tirelessly for some time they, like all of us, look forward to a break. That break, of course, is the Christmas and Boxing Day public holidays. But if Mike Baird gets his way that break will be destroyed.

In changing the law to permit shops to trade on Boxing Day the Treasurer will smash to pieces this important break which hundreds of thousands of workers and their families currently enjoy. That will be an appalling outcome. Retail workers should have the same opportunity as others to enjoy and celebrate significant cultural and public holidays. They too should be able to spend time with family and friends without the pressure of having to go to work hanging over their heads. This issue is not just about shop assistants. If stores gain the right to trade on Boxing Day, distribution centre employees, truck drivers, cleaners, security staff and a range of other workers and their families will have their Christmas break destroyed thanks to Mike Baird and this Government.

The principal union in the industry, the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, is determined to stop in its tracks this dreadful proposal. Gerard Dwyer, secretary of the New South Wales branch, and Barbara Nebart, secretary of the Newcastle branch, are leading a public campaign called "Take the Time". In short, the campaign is all about protecting the public holiday rights of workers in this State. I acknowledge and congratulate Gerard and Barbara on the campaign thus far. They understand that a great deal is at stake. They are determined to hold their ground and stare down this latest challenge. As they said to me when I met with them recently: With the ongoing support of the Labor Opposition, the Christian Democratic Party, the Shooters and Fishers Party and The Greens the current threat to the Boxing Day public holiday will be overcome and defeated. They greatly appreciate the support provided by members of these parties and have asked that I place on public record their thanks on behalf of the workers of this State and their families.

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALLER RYAN ROWLAND-SMITH

The Hon. RICK COLLESS [4.07 p.m.]: I am sure members have heard that there is a big event on at the Sydney Cricket Ground this weekend. The Arizona Diamondbacks will play the Los Angeles Dodgers in an American major league baseball game. Tonight the opening match will be played between Team Australia and the Los Angeles Dodgers. Pitching for Team Australia tonight will be one Ryan Rowland-Smith. Ryan Rowland-Smith plays for the Diamondbacks in the major league and is the grandson of a former member of this House, Bob Rowland-Smith. Bob came from Orange and was a member of The Nationals, or Country Party as it was known in those days. Tonight Ryan plays for Australia against an American team and tomorrow night he will play for the Diamondbacks as they take on the Australia team. He is not yet sure whether he will be in the Diamondbacks team when they take on the Dodgers on Saturday night, but he is hoping to make the team and that there will be a return match on Sunday.

The Hon. Walt Secord: What position does he play?

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: He is a left-handed pitcher. I heard him interviewed this morning on radio. He said it was interesting taking the American major league baseball players into the change rooms at the Sydney Cricket Ground and trying to explain how a game of test cricket can take five days to reach a conclusion. I am sure all members of the House will join with me in wishing Ryan Rowland-Smith all the best in his games at the Sydney Cricket Ground this weekend and also for his future playing for the Arizona Diamondbacks. Congratulations to Ryan Rowland-Smith.

[Time for debate expired.]

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

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 4.10 p.m. until Tuesday 25 March 2014 at 2.30 p.m.
