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# LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday 19 June 2014

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**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.**

## SYDNEY ROYAL EASTER SHOW 2014

**Motion by the Hon. NIALL BLAIR agreed to:**

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) the Sydney Royal Easter Show will be held at Sydney Olympic Park from 10 to 23 April 2014;
  - (b) the Sydney Royal Easter Show has been running since 1823 and will this year be attended by Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, and their son Prince George;
  - (c) over 900,000 people attend the Royal Easter Show each year; and
  - (d) the Royal Easter Show is organised by the Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales, a not-for-profit organisation that promotes and rewards agricultural excellence.
- (2) That this House acknowledges the importance of the Sydney Royal Easter Show in allowing the Royal Agricultural Society to continue supporting rural and regional communities in Australia.
- (3) That this House congratulates all of the local volunteers and organisers including the President of the Royal Agricultural Society Board, Mr Glenn B. Dudley.

## FREE MEAT WEEK

**Motion by the Hon. NIALL BLAIR agreed to:**

- (1) That this House congratulates Federal member for Dawson, George Christensen, for his initiative Free Meat Week which encourages families around the country to support Australian farmers by purchasing Australian meat and putting on a free barbeque for their friends and family.
- (2) That this House condemns the organisers of Meat Free Week who:
  - (a) are encouraging people to abstain from eating meat for one week; and
  - (b) are attempting to compound the damage done to the Australian meat industry by the profound mismanagement of agricultural policy by the former Federal Labor Government.
- (3) That this House recognises the valuable asset that Australian farmers are to our State and our nation and all they contribute to both our economy and our regional communities.

## LEETON PHANTOMS RUGBY CLUB

**Motion by the Hon. NIALL BLAIR agreed to:**

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) on Saturday 7 June 2014, the Leeton Phantoms Rugby Club will celebrate its fortieth anniversary;
  - (b) the Leeton Phantoms Rugby Club is renowned as one of Australia's most colourful and social rugby clubs;
  - (c) the anniversary celebrations have been organised by club President John Hill and long-time player Carl King who has played over 700 games for the club; and
  - (d) the club has enjoyed much success on and off the field in its 40-year history, culminating in a first grade premiership in 1991.
- (2) That this House congratulates the club on its fortieth anniversary and acknowledges its contribution to the Leeton community.

**AUSTRALIAN MEN'S HOCKEY TEAM 2014 WORLD CUP TITLE****Motion by the Hon. NIALL BLAIR agreed to:**

- (1) That this House congratulates:
  - (a) the Australian Men's Hockey Team, the Kookaburras, for defending their World Cup title with a 6-1 victory over The Netherlands in the Hague in the 2014 Hockey World Cup Grand Final;
  - (b) the Kookaburra players from New South Wales including Kieran Govers from Wollongong, Simon Orchard from Maitland and Glenn Turner from Goulburn; and
  - (c) Glenn Turner for scoring three goals throughout the tournament including a goal in the World Cup Grand Final.
- (2) That this House notes that in the course of the World Cup the Kookaburras were undefeated and managed to score 30 goals in total while conceding only three.

**AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM 2014 WORLD CUP****Motion by the Hon. NIALL BLAIR agreed to:**

That this House congratulates:

- (a) the Australian Women's Hockey Team, the Hockeyroos, for placing second in the 2014 Hockey World Cup;
- (b) members of the team from New South Wales including Mathilda Carmichael from Willoughby, Casey Eastham from the South Coast, Kate Jenner from Tamworth, Emily Smith and Kellie White from Crookwell and Emily Hurtz from Camden; and
- (c) the Hockeyroos coach, Adam Commens from the Riverina, for his contribution to Australian hockey as both a coach and a player having also achieved 143 caps for the Kookaburras.

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****Formal Business Notices of Motions**

**Private Members' Business item No. 1911 outside the Order of Precedence objected to as being taken as formal business.**

**NARRABEEN LADIES AMATEUR SWIMMING CLUB EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY****Motion by the Hon. MARIE FICARRA agreed to:**

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) the Narrabeen Ladies Amateur Swimming Club was founded on 17 September 1933 and this year celebrated its eightieth anniversary and that the club colours adopted were black and lemon, which remain the same today;
  - (b) Mrs Lottie Wood was the founder of the club and initial membership was 30 which grew to 83 by the end of the first season;
  - (c) the first swimming meet was held on 8 October 1933 in the Narrabeen lagoon as the North Narrabeen Rockpool was yet to be completed;
  - (d) the ladies had to rally male members of the North Narrabeen Surf Club to assist them initially in providing boats to sit the judges and timekeepers in and to also help in roping off the area and providing touch lines and that the surf club also assisted in building a starting platform in the lagoon for the ladies;
  - (e) by season end the ladies had acquired all the skills and equipment necessary to continue holding their race meets by themselves and the rock pool was completed and races were held under easier circumstances from then on;
  - (f) Warringah Shire Council assisted the club and provided a club room which has since been extended and still stands today;
  - (g) Narrabeen Ladies Amateur Swimming Club has competed in inter-club carnivals since inception and enjoys meets with other swimming rock pool clubs to this day;
  - (h) long time club President, the late Miss Anne Hatton, BEM, was one of the first women ever selected to officiate as a swimming official at the Olympic Games;

- (i) on 18 October 1987, Mrs Crowley and Mrs Sadlier moved that the club's constitution be altered to allow male members into the club and that this was adopted with two men elected for the first time to the club's committee later that year;
  - (j) the learn to swim for free program was started in 1960 with the volunteer program teaching over 15,000 children;
  - (k) many children taught how to swim at Narrabeen went on to join the club and become involved in the swimming races available, with Jenny Turrell later winning a gold medal at the 1974 Commonwealth Games together with the 800 metres FINA World Championships as well as holding the 1500 metres world record in 1976;
  - (l) Miss Anne Hatton was awarded the Order of British Empire Medal in 1970 for outstanding service to sport;
  - (m) Mrs Judy Dubois, the chief instructor for learn to swim of more than 20 years, received the Outstanding Community Service Award from Pittwater Council in 1998 for her dedication and efforts in the learn to swim program;
  - (n) during 2009 and 2010, the Narrabeen Ladies Amateur Swimming Club changed its name to the Narrabeen Lakes Amateur Swimming Club to reflect the changing membership of the club while maintaining a link to the history of the club as it first started in Narrabeen Lake;
  - (o) the following members have been bestowed life membership: Mrs F. Kenna, Mrs E. Hatton, Mrs A. May, Mrs Thorn Snr, Mrs L. Woods, Miss A. Hatton, BEM, Ms R. Pirie, Ms D. Smith, Ms A. Pursehouse, Ms C. Trass, Mrs I. Slater, Ms M. Bennell, Ms B. Tyrer, Mrs J. Dubois, Mrs P. Sadlier, Ms M. Crowley, Ms A. Willan, Ms Sue Freshwater, Ms Maureen Rutledge and Mr Alan Gray; and
  - (p) the following members have been inducted into the club's hall of fame: J. Haywood, Maureen Thearle, Joanne Mitchell, Marilyn Munro and Judy Dubois.
- (2) That this House congratulates the Narrabeen Ladies Amateur Swimming Club on its eightieth anniversary and commends all those involved in ensuring the club's continuance over the past 80 years.

## GAME COUNCIL OF NSW REVIEW

### Production of Documents: Order

#### **Motion by the Hon. ROBERT BROWN agreed to:**

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 21 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents, excluding any documents previously provided to the House, which are referred to in the return to the order of the House of 21 November 2013 relating to the Governance Review of the Game Council:

- (a) the following documents in the possession, custody or control of NSW Trade and Investment:
  - (i) all email messages and all attachments to email messages in the email account *gamecouncilreview@dpi.nsw.gov.au* which was established at the request of Steve Dunn in an email dated 28 February 2013 numbered (b)7 in the index to documents returned to the order of the House by NSW Trade and Investment;
  - (ii) all documents contained in the Game Council TRIM folder referred to in the 6 March 2013 email from Department of Primary Industries' Jennifer Grant to Dianna Watkins numbered (b)10 in the index to documents returned to the order of the House by NSW Trade and Investment;
  - (iii) all documents held in the Game Council TRIM folder referred to in the 2 December 2013 email from Sarah Balamanno, Acting Director, Ministerial Liaison Office, Finance, Strategy and Operations, Trade and Investment to Jeannine Biviano, Deputy Director General, Finance Strategy and Operations, Trade and Investment numbered (g)35 in the index to documents returned to the order of the House by NSW Trade and Investment;
  - (iv) all documents held in the Game Council TRIM folder referred to in the 3 December 2013 email from Sharon Holland, Group Manager, Knowledge Management and Business Systems, Trade and Investment to Christopher Martin Chief Financial and Knowledge Officer, Trade and Investment numbered (g)43 in the index to documents returned to the order of the House by NSW Trade and Investment;
  - (v) all documents related to the conduct of reviews by Mr Dunn referred to by Mr Ron Taylor, Trade and Investment in his file note of 5 December 2013 contained in Mr Taylor's 26 November 2013 email to Angus Armour and others numbered (g) 65 in the index to documents returned to the order of the House by NSW Trade and Investment;
  - (vi) all records relating to the consideration of potential suppliers and the appointment of IC Independent Consulting or Mr Dunn to undertake the government review of Game Council NSW contained in the Ministers' IT Network which is referred to in the 25 November 2013 memorandum from the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Assistant Director General, Zoe de Saram to Karen Smith, Deputy General Counsel, Department of Premier and Cabinet numbered (g)16 in the index to documents returned to the order of the House by NSW Trade and Investment;

- (vii) the full contents of the email string initiated by Dianna Watkins, Director, Industry Policy and Regulation, Department of Primary Industries at 4.14 p.m. on 7 March 2013 to Steve Dunn, including the "Quoted text hidden" and the unattached document 'ICIContract SD comments.doc', numbered (a)2 in the index to documents returned to the order of the House by NSW Trade and Investment;
  - (viii) the original email from Tim Scott, on or about 22 May 2013, to which Mark Patterson replied to Tim Scott with an email at 15.32, 22 May 2013, regarding an outstanding invoice from Steve Dunn, numbered (e)7 in the index to documents returned to the order of the House by NSW Trade and Investment;
  - (ix) all emails concerning the Game Council sent or received by Cathie Warburton, formerly in the Legal group, Trade and Investment as mentioned in the 27 November 2013 email from Ron Taylor to David Kennedy and the email from Janine Kermode to Jacqueline Moore, Trade and Investment on 26 November 2013, document g(10) and g(8) respectively in the index to documents returned to the order of the House by NSW Trade and Investment;
- (b) the following documents in the possession, custody or control of Roads and Maritime Services:
- (i) all documents contained in Attachment 1 and Attachment 2 in the 29 November 2013 memo from John Menyhart, Acting Chief Audit and Risk Officer, Roads and Maritime Services to Maryanne Graham, Director Strategy and Engagement Roads and Maritime Services, numbered (g)29 in the index to documents returned to the order of the House by Roads and Maritime Services;
  - (ii) any written replies from Mr Chris Eccles, Director General, Department of Premier and Cabinet in response to an undated letter from then Minister for Roads and Ports, written on or about 18 November 2011, seeking approval to engage Mr Dunn to Chair the cross agency review of On Water Compliance, numbered (f)11 in the index to documents returned to the order of the House by Roads and Maritime Services;
  - (iii) the draft letter to Sally Barnes, Office of Environment and Heritage referred to by Mr Dunn in his email on 13 April 2012 to Chris Carmichael numbered (d)19 in the index to documents returned to the order of the House by Roads and Maritime Services;
- (c) the "separate email", in the possession, custody or control of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, referred to by Natasha Luschwitz, Senior Policy Adviser, Office of the Premier in her 30 July 2013 email to Michael Helleman, Department Liaison Officer, Office of the Premier numbered (e)6 in the index to documents returned to the order of the House by the Department of Premier and Cabinet;
- (d) any written replies from the then Minister for Police, in the possession, custody or control of the NSW Police Force, in response to an undated letter from the then Minister for Roads and Ports, written on or about 9 June 2011, advising him of a proposal by Mr Dunn, then Chief Executive NSW Maritime, to lead an initial fact finding cross agency review of On Water Compliance numbered (f)87 in the index to documents returned to the order of the House by NSW Police Force;
- (e) the final report from Stage 2 of the On Water Compliance review, in the possession, custody or control of Transport for NSW, referred to in an email of 15 October 2012 from Chris Carmichael, Transport for NSW, to Matt Jones, Departmental Liaison Officer, Office of Minister for Roads and Ports numbered (f) 201 in the index to documents returned to the order of the House by Transport for NSW;
- (f) the correspondence, in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Roads and Freight, from the Minister for Roads and Ports to which Vicki D'Adam, Acting Director General, Department of Premier and Cabinet, is responding in her letter of 18 November 2011 numbered (f)13 in the index to documents returned to the order of the House by the Minister for Roads and Ports; and
- (g) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

## GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 1

### Report: Allegations of Bullying in WorkCover NSW

**Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile** tabled, as Chair, a report entitled "Allegations of Bullying in WorkCover NSW", dated June 2014, together with transcripts of evidence, tabled documents, submissions, correspondence and answers to questions taken on notice.

**Report ordered to be printed on motion by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile.**

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE** [9.37 a.m.]: I move:

That the House take note of the report.

This is an important issue. As the committee conducted its investigation it was shocked to find that there was a culture of bullying in WorkCover NSW. The report details the evidence that the committee secured from witnesses and others who were employed at WorkCover NSW. I am sure that when members study the report they will be shocked by the revelations that the inquiry uncovered.

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

## **PETITIONS**

### **Northern Rivers Rail Services**

Petition calling on the Government to provide regular commuter train services in the Northern Rivers region, repair the rail track from Casino to Lismore and extend the current Casino XPT service to Lismore, received from **Dr Mehreen Faruqi**.

### **TAFE Funding**

Petition requesting that the Legislative Council pass The Greens TAFE changes moratorium legislation that will return TAFE fees and funding to 2010-11 levels, freeze funds to private providers, abolish Smart and Skilled, and maintain TAFE as the principal provider of vocational education and training, received from **Dr John Kaye**.

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Routine of Business**

*[During the giving of notices of motions.]*

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! If notices of motions are not heard in silence, members will be called to order for interrupting.

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

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

#### **Motion by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that Private Members' Business item No. 503 outside the Order of Precedence, relating to the St Shenouda Coptic Orthodox Monastery (NSW) Property Trust Bill 2014, be called on forthwith.

#### **Order of Business**

#### **Motion by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile agreed to:**

That Private Members' Business item No. 503 outside the Order of Precedence be called on forthwith.

### **ST SHENOUDA COPTIC ORTHODOX MONASTERY (NSW) PROPERTY TRUST BILL 2014**

**Bill introduced, and read a first time and ordered to be printed on motion by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile.**

#### **Second Reading**

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE** [9.55 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I thank the House for the opportunity to introduce this important bill and to give the second reading speech prior to the debate being adjourned, in accordance with the usual procedure. I am pleased to introduce the St Shenouda Coptic Orthodox Monastery (NSW) Property Trust Bill 2014, which has been listed on the *Notice Paper* for a long time. The objects of the bill are:

- (a) to constitute a statutory corporation to hold property on behalf of the St Shenouda Coptic Orthodox Monastery, and
- (b) to specify the functions of the statutory corporation, and
- (c) to vest in the statutory corporation property held in trust for the Monastery, without the need to pay duty.

The monastery was purchased in 1993 and was presented to His Holiness the Coptic Pope as a gift from the people of Sydney. It is located at 8419 Putty Road, Putty. In recent years the monastery underwent a large transformation with the construction of a church for the monks and congregation, the construction of a seven-room retreat house to accommodate 35 people as well as a large dining room and commercial kitchen, the construction of a large workshop housing the many farming vehicles used to cultivate the lands, the construction of a large building which houses 12 new monastic cells for the monks, and the construction of a big private library for the monks, just to name a few of the accomplishments of the monastery.

The monastery regularly welcomes thousands of parishioners from New South Wales and other parts of Australia every year who come to worship at the monastery and spend time in spiritual prayer and reflection. The monastery currently owns five lots of land comprising a total of 350 acres. On 8 August 2009, His Grace Bishop Daniel was enthroned as the first ever Bishop and Abbot of St Shenouda's Coptic Orthodox Monastery in Sydney. His Grace Bishop Daniel is only the second bishop to be ordained over a Coptic monastery outside Egypt after the late Bishop Karas of St Anthony's Monastery in California. Bishop Daniel, as Bishop and Abbot of the St Shenouda's Monastery, is the spiritual father of all those who entered the monastery, including the current fathers of the monastery, Father Wissa, Father Shenouda, Father Theodore and Father Anthony.

Although the St Shenouda Monastery was established in 1993, it was during the meetings of the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt in July 2009 that the St Shenouda Monastery in Sydney was officially canonised and now is officially recognised by the Holy Synod. This means that the St Shenouda Monastery is now considered an established monastery within the Coptic Orthodox Church and is able to ordain monks. Furthermore the current and future monks of the monastery can now hold the name of the patron saint of the monastery as their family name. The St Shenouda Monastery joins a small number of Coptic monasteries outside Egypt that have been canonised, including St Anthony's Coptic Monastery in Melbourne which also was canonised in 2009 under the leadership of His Grace Bishop Suriel. I was pleased to be present, with my late wife, when Father Daniel was consecrated as Bishop of the St Shenouda Monastery on Sunday 7 June 2009. It was a very inspiring service. My late wife and I were pleased to be able to attend as guests and to inspect the monastery grounds.

His Grace Bishop Daniel was born in Sudan in October 1952. He migrated with his family to Australia in 1970, finished his high school education in Australia and graduated with a diploma of accounting. In 1979 he went to Egypt to be consecrated as a monk by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III and entered St Anthony's Monastery near the Red Sea. Less than a year later he was ordained a priest and then a hegumen, and was sent by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III to Australia to serve in Melbourne. Since that time His Grace has served all over Australia. In the 30 years since his consecration as a monk, Bishop Daniel, then serving as Father Daniel, served in 26 different churches in six States and two Territories of Australia. More recently, Bishop Daniel was also serving in the newly established Coptic churches in the Fijian islands under His Grace Bishop Suriel, Bishop of Melbourne. He has also been actively involved in youth ministry and served as an executive member of the National Council of Churches Australia for about 10 years, representing the Coptic Orthodox Church.

In August 2006 Father Daniel, as he was then known, was appointed by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III to be the Abbot of St Shenouda Monastery in Sydney as Father Daniel Al-Antouny. On the Feast of Pentecost on Sunday 7 June 2009, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III and members of the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church laid their hands on Father Daniel Al-Antouny and consecrated him as Bishop Daniel, bishop of St Shenouda Monastery. Bishop Daniel was one of seven bishops ordained by His Holiness during the Holy Pentecost service that year.

Members may be interested to know the background to the Coptic Orthodox Church. The word "Copt" is derived from the Greek word "Aigypotos". The modern use of the term "Coptic" describes Egyptian Christians as well as the last stage of the ancient Egyptian language script. It also describes the distinctive art and



architecture that developed as an early expression of the new faith. The Coptic Church is based on the teachings of St Mark, who brought Christianity to Egypt during the reign of the Roman emperor Nero in the first century, a dozen years after Our Lord's ascension to Heaven. He was one of the four evangelists and the one who wrote the oldest canonical gospel: the gospel of Mark. Christianity spread throughout Egypt within half a century of St Mark's arrival in Alexandria. The Coptic Church, which is now more than 19 centuries old, was the subject of many prophecies in the Old Testament. Isaiah the prophet, in chapter 19 verse 19, says:

In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border.

Although fully integrated into the body of the modern Egyptian nation, the Copts have survived as a strong religious entity and pride themselves on their contribution to the Christian world. The Coptic Church regards itself as a strong defender of the Christian faith. The Nicene Creed, which is recited in all churches throughout the world, has been authored by one of the Coptic Church's favourite sons, St Athanasius, the Pope of Alexandria for 46 years from 327 AD to 373 AD. This status is well deserved; after all, Egypt was the refuge that the Holy Family of Mary, Joseph and Jesus sought in its flight from Judea.

The contributions of the Coptic Church to Christendom are many. From the beginning it played a central role in Christian theology, especially to protect it from the Gnostics heresies. The Coptic Church produced thousands of texts, biblical and theological studies, which are important resources for archaeology. The *Holy Bible* was translated to the Coptic language in the second century AD. Hundreds of scribes used to write copies of the *Bible* and other liturgical and theological books. Now libraries, museums and universities throughout the world possess hundreds and thousands of Coptic manuscripts. The Catechetical School of Alexandria is the oldest catechetical school in the world. Soon after its inception around 190 AD by the Christian scholar Pantanaeus, the school of Alexandria became the most important institution of religious learning in Christendom. Many prominent bishops from many areas of the world were instructed in that school.

Monasticism was born in Egypt and was instrumental in the formation of the Coptic Church's character of submission and humbleness, thanks to the teachings and writings of the Great Fathers of Egypt's deserts. Monasticism started in the last years of the third century and flourished in the fourth century. St Anthony, the world's first Christian monk, was a Copt from Upper Egypt. Saint Pachom, who established the rules of monasticism, was a Copt. Saint Paul, the world's first anchorite, was also a Copt. By the end of the fourth century there were hundreds of monasteries and thousands of cells and caves scattered throughout the Egyptian hills. Many of these monasteries are still flourishing and have new vocations to this day. All Christian monasticism stems, either directly or indirectly, from the Egyptian example. St Basil, organiser of the monastic movement in Asia Minor, visited Egypt around 357 AD and his rule is followed by the eastern churches. St Jerome, who translated the *Bible* into Latin, came to Egypt around 400 AD and left details of his experiences in his letters. St Benedict founded monasteries in the sixth century on the model of St Pachom, but in a stricter form. Countless pilgrims visited the Desert Fathers and emulated their spiritual, disciplined lives. There is even evidence that Copts had missionaries to northern Europe.

During my last visit to Egypt I was a guest of the Coptic bishops in Egypt who escorted me to visit a number of the monasteries that still operate in Egypt in those desert regions. I was fascinated to inspect those monasteries, to meet the monks who were there and to realise that, when the Copts came under a lot of persecution in later centuries, those monasteries became a refuge for Coptic Christians and enabled the Coptic faith to continue in Egypt in spite of very militant periods of persecution. Many of the monasteries were built as fortresses. They often had an outer wall and a wooden gateway that led to the next part of the monastery. The monks and others could retreat to the centre and pull up the wooden bridge so that others could not get into that part of the monastery, and they would have to store water and food there during that period of persecution. The monasteries played a more important part than one of only religious significance; they became defensive centres to maintain the Christian Coptic faith.

Members may be surprised to know that today there are still more than nine million Coptic Christians who pray and share communion and daily masses in thousands of Coptic churches in Egypt. During my recent visit I was privileged to be a guest of the Coptic Cathedral in Cairo, Egypt, which is hundreds of years old, to see the Coptic Church services conducted by the priests there. However, there are millions of Coptic Christians in other parts of the world. In fact there are 1.2 million immigrant Copts who practise their faith in hundreds of churches in the United States, Canada, Australia, Britain, France, Germany, Austria, Holland, Brazil and many other countries in Africa and Asia. I am pleased to introduce this bill.

I ask all members to pray for the Coptic Christians of Egypt, as well as Christians in other parts of the world, but particularly those in Egypt where there are still places of persecution and some Coptic Christians die

because of their faith in Jesus Christ their Saviour and their belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. This bill contains a number of aspects that are normal for such a bill: part 2 sets out the constitution and functions of the trust, part 3 sets out the vesting of property in the trust, and part 4 sets out the particular powers of the trust. I commend the bill to the House.

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

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

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

**Dr JOHN KAYE** [10.10 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. 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.

This matter is urgent. The Government has announced its intention to introduce the Smart and Skilled competitive training market on 1 January 2015. Already, TAFE colleges are losing staff, course hours and courses. It is urgent that this bill proceed through both Houses of Parliament to provide a secure future for TAFE and to create an environment in which a genuine future for TAFE and for vocational education and training can be debated by all parties in this Parliament and by the community. TAFE sits at the core of a successful society. If we allow Smart and Skilled to progress it will undermine all those benefits. I commend the motion to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **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**

#### **Second Reading**

**Debate resumed from 20 March 2014.**

**The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK** [10.13 a.m.]: The TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014 is a clear indication of The Greens' position on vocational education and training. The Greens want a TAFE and training system that is inflexible and stuck in the past. The Greens have shown that they do not want our training system to continue to evolve to meet industry and community needs. The Greens do not want the Government to focus on training leading to real job outcomes for students, and are willing to put at risk hundreds of millions of dollars from the Commonwealth. The New South Wales Government opposes this bill because it would reverse the growth of skills in New South Wales to support the ongoing strength of the State's economy. The vital reforms in the New South Wales training market—Smart and Skilled, which this bill opposes—are essential for improving training participation rates and outcomes. Smart and Skilled has been carefully designed to support the Government's goal of making New South Wales the number one State, and to increase employment and productivity.

These reforms have been clearly and comprehensively explained to industry and the community, and are well advanced and widely anticipated. Critically, these reforms are being progressively reviewed as they are implemented. They will start on 1 January 2015. The New South Wales Government strongly opposes this bill because, to put it simply, it takes TAFE backwards while Smart and Skilled supports TAFE moving forward. The New South Wales Government supports TAFE moving ahead. We support TAFE continuing to evolve as a

modern organisation with a clear focus on industry, students, the community, flexibility, responsiveness and competitiveness. It is important to understand that Smart and Skilled has been developed in close consultation with industry.

The NSW Skills Board, established last year by the Government, is independently guiding these reforms with its expert advice. The board's membership comprises leading business, education and finance expertise. The board is chaired by Mr Philip Clark, AM, who has extensive knowledge of and experience in business and education policy, including chairing the Commonwealth Government's Higher Education Endowment Fund Advisory Board and the New South Wales Government's International Education and Research Taskforce. The board is responsible for advising the New South Wales Government on how best to meet individual skills and training needs, as well as the broader demands of industry, our regions and the New South Wales economy. Importantly, the board has responsibility to ensure TAFE NSW remains the public provider of training in New South Wales.

This bill, if passed, would reverse a fundamental part of the Smart and Skilled training reform package. Smart and Skilled does not undermine our training system; rather, it provides new flexibility within the system and creates incentives for more private investment and provision. Specifically, Smart and Skilled changes the way we allocate public funding. From 1 January eligible students will be provided with an entitlement for approved training. Students will be able to redeem this entitlement with a broader range of approved quality training providers and training programs—programs that lead to employment. Strict controls will be in place to ensure public funding is not wasted on low-quality training or on training that does not lead to jobs.

Let me talk about TAFE. Last year, the TAFE NSW Board undertook a statewide consultation about its "Let's Talk about TAFE" to find out what people thought about TAFE and what they expected of it. The survey conducted by Newspoll found that 97 per cent of people recognise TAFE and 94 per cent of people say that TAFE NSW makes a valuable contribution to training people for business and industry. But the survey found also that TAFE needs to change to stay relevant and responsive in an ever-changing world and in the international market of education and training of which New South Wales is part. That is exactly what the Smart and Skilled reforms underpin: the changing needs of individuals and the economy, and the need for our public provider to keep pace.

We are giving TAFE institutes more autonomy to manage their finances, assets and workforces, and to respond to business opportunities so they can strengthen their commercial capability and be less dependent on government funding. These reforms will allow every institute to be more nimble and meet the challenges of the changing economy and contemporary workplaces by tailoring their training delivery to meet the needs of students, industry and the community. This flexibility has been embraced by students with around 42 per cent of TAFE training now being delivered outside the traditional classroom setting. If passed, this bill would reduce the ability of TAFE to achieve business and governance reforms, locking it in the past and preventing it from evolving to remain relevant and successful. The Government's Statement of Owner Expectations for TAFE NSW clearly and simply sets out the role of TAFE NSW and its key reform directions and accountabilities. TAFE NSW will continue to be the backbone of the training system in this State.

This Government intends to empower TAFE institutes to operate more autonomously and be more flexible and responsive to local employees and communities so that the vital part it plays in our economic and social strategies will continue to make New South Wales number one. Two practical examples reflect the kind of innovation and entrepreneurship that we have come to expect of TAFE NSW. Now that Smart and Skilled is in place, the people of New South Wales want to see more of those initiatives.

Western Sydney Institute is the largest online education provider in the world through its Open Training and Education Network [OTEN]. In April this year it introduced mix+match, which is a flexible course offering that makes learning easy across 12 study areas. Students can attend the same class at different campuses as well as online. Course selection and enrolment are available through an online shopping-style website that gives students a choice of how, when and where they will complete their study units within a qualification. How much more responsive will this be for families and individuals in New South Wales? This initiative follows a survey of Western Sydney Institute students, which found that approximately 80 per cent want more flexibility, including the flexibility to combine classroom teaching with online teaching. This is the flexibility that people need in their lives, which The Greens would wish to deny them. In the future the institute will extend mix+match to include workplace-based delivery.

Last year, TAFE's Western Institute won a New South Wales Premier's Award for revitalising regional New South Wales. The institute's Western Connect program increases access to high-quality training for

students, irrespective of where they live in the vast west of this State, using flexible learning methods including online, connected classrooms and specialised mobile units as well as workplace training. More than 3,200 students gained access to training in 2012 through Western Connect; 28 per cent of those students were Aboriginal and 10 per cent had a disability. This is a major achievement that ought to be applauded and encouraged. In 2013 Aboriginal students who enrolled in certificate III qualifications as part of the Western Connect initiative had the best completion ratio at Western Institute. Congratulations to all those students.

I encourage all members to learn about Western Connect and its innovative use of mobile training units in specially equipped trailers and trucks that take the equipment to remote communities to enable training. The pop-up workshops provide training in childcare, nursing and health, coffee-making, shearing, confined spaces, conservation earthworks, welding and many other areas for students who may otherwise have missed out or had to travel significant distances. Western Connect's mobile welding unit travels an 800-kilometre circuit for two weeks at a time and visits Wilcannia and correctional centres in Broken Hill and Ivanhoe. Likewise, the mobile library is the only library service that many of these communities have had the opportunity to access. Combined, these technology-based and mobile learning strategies have allowed Western Institute to add around 80 new study choices for its students. This bill, if passed, would stifle innovations such as Western Connect and mix+match.

*[Interruption]*

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I remind people in the gallery that they are here to observe. If more noise comes from the gallery it will be cleared. I caution people in the gallery not to make any further noise.

**The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK:** This bill would limit access to training, particularly in the regions, and would undermine this innovation, taking TAFE NSW backwards. The Government will not support this bill. The New South Wales Government has closely observed the effects of interstate reforms on TAFE systems, which have had mixed success, to ensure that it avoids unintended consequences. One critical point of difference between our arrangements and interstate arrangements is our clear recognition of the critical role of TAFE NSW as the public provider of vocational education and training.

The Government strongly supports the new directions led by the TAFE NSW Board and this includes adapting its governance and services to meet the challenges of operating effectively in a more competitive environment. New members have recently been appointed to the board to strengthen its leadership in meeting the Government's priorities set out in a Statement of Owner Expectations and to assist its readiness for reforms under Smart and Skilled. The Government also supports the excellent leadership of the managing director, Ms Pam Christie, the 10 institute directors and the other TAFE executives. TAFE is working closely with TAFE staff to develop new approaches to deliver training as well as business reforms.

This bill puts at risk important reforms already well advanced within TAFE NSW. Last year, following extensive consultation with staff and unions, TAFE NSW successfully negotiated a new enterprise agreement for teachers. This agreement includes a trial of new flexible education support roles, which complements the existing teaching roles as well as a new head teacher leadership role. This role opens up new possibilities in the way TAFE delivers its services. TAFE NSW has also restructured its head office. This restructure devolves more responsibilities to institutes while still supporting front-line staff. It is critical that TAFE NSW completes its transition into a more modern and responsive organisation that delivers value to individuals as well as to the public. TAFE NSW has to operate efficiently and to suggest otherwise simply does not make sense to the taxpayers of New South Wales.

We have moved beyond the time when budgets were simply broad targets. No government body can waste taxpayers' funds. Along with all government agencies, TAFE NSW has met and continues to meet its efficiency targets. TAFE NSW has to deliver a quality service, otherwise it cannot be competitive, which is why TAFE NSW sees the students and employers to whom it provides services as its customers. These customers have a choice and a high expectation. During this reform period and into the future this Government has set clear targets and priorities for TAFE NSW as its public provider, which supports NSW 2021: a plan to make NSW number one. That is why the Minister and the Government wish to reiterate to members opposite, as well as to staff in New South Wales TAFE institutes, The Greens and the unions, that changes are being made to TAFE and they will support TAFE's future success operating in a more contestable environment.

TAFE NSW is meeting the challenge and is actively preparing for the next step in competition. Competition is not new to TAFE. Daily, institutes compete aggressively to enrol students and win business

based on the excellence and professionalism they continuously demonstrate. New South Wales is proud of its TAFE system. It will continue to shine under Smart and Skilled. If The Greens are worried about public education, including TAFE as the public provider of vocational education and training, they would not be putting in jeopardy hundreds of millions of dollars for training. This bill puts at risk significant Commonwealth reward payments.

**Dr John Kaye:** How much?

**The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK:** More than \$400 million over the next three years. These Commonwealth payments flow from the national partnership on skills reform that this State signed, which unequivocally requires the introduction of a student entitlement. I remind members that this Government is committed to the national competition policy, which requires governments to promote competition. In New South Wales the level of public funding available to private providers through the training market is currently low compared to the national average.

This bill, if passed, would reduce student fees in New South Wales below the fee levels of other States and Territories that have recently been recommended by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. This bill would lead to the loss of millions in TAFE fee income over the forward estimates. It would reverse the direction of reforms, lock in a dependence on State Government revenue and undermine the development of a competitive training market and, of course, reduce the number of additional places that would be able to be offered to students. This bill, if passed, represents a roadblock to government services that are efficient and more innovative. The bill inhibits growth of essential skills in New South Wales.

It risks undermining changes that ensure TAFE NSW remains responsive and accessible to the people of this State regardless of postcode. These changes are well progressed. It also reverses changes that support innovation in TAFE NSW, changes that will enhance quality and are essential for it to continue to set the standard for quality training in this State. I recommend that the bill be opposed strongly.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE** [10.30 a.m.]: I speak in debate on the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014 on behalf of the Opposition and indicate that Labor will support the bill. We are now at a crossroads for TAFE in New South Wales. The public policy success story of TAFE is being threatened to the point that TAFE as we know it may simply cease to exist. TAFE has delivered so much for so many over decades. It has trained our childcare workers, bookkeepers, horticulturalists, scaffolders, builders and website developers. It has trained our hairdressers, mechanics, electricians and our plumbers. It has also trained our painters, sculptors, writers, ceramicists, fashion designers and our artists. That is just the tip of the iceberg.

TAFE has embedded itself in our communities, large and small, across the State. It has worked with business and community to develop courses that build the skills that lead to jobs. TAFE has led many to first-time educational success, a job and the ability to look after themselves and their families. It has provided pathways into university to students for whom school was not an option. It has reached into our communities and provided courses that have meant that migrants and refugees have become part of our multicultural society. They have found a place of welcome, support and practical help that has made their move to Australia just that little bit easier.

It is disastrous that we have come to this point. It is even more disastrous for the people of New South Wales that this Liberal-Nationals Government is bringing TAFE to the brink. Reshaping a public system that works into a private hybrid that will no longer be able to deliver to the community and businesses it seeks to serve is not good reform. For decades Labor has championed TAFE as an accessible form of high-quality vocational education. TAFE as we know it today was the product of the Whitlam Government's reforms to technical education in 1975. Gough Whitlam set out to establish an institution to develop skills that would lead to higher employment levels on the back of the Kangan Committee recommendations. This was to be an institution that was accessible to all and did not discriminate on the basis of age, gender or prior levels of educational wealth.

By the end of the 1970s the system had more than 50,000 enrolments. More remarkably, by the end of the 1970s women constituted 47 per cent of the enrolments—nearly double the number since the Whitlam reforms. Today TAFE has more than 500,000 enrolments and a gender split of around 50:50. Of the hundreds of

programs I will highlight just two that have worked for women in this State. These two programs were featured in an excellent document released by TAFE in 2012 entitled "Women's access ... making history". I recommend the document to all members. The first program is the Bush Babies Program. The document states:

The Bush Babies Program, offered by Western Institute, is a salient example of a community-focused approach. The Program engaged mothers from the local Aboriginal playgroup to provide training in four competencies from Certificate III in Children's Services. The units were adapted to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander views on caring for children following consultation with community Elders and Aboriginal health workers. More than half the participants went on to complete their Certificate III with some women going on to complete their Diploma in Children's Services. The Bush Babies Program highlights the importance of active involvement of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in determining appropriate outcomes for training. It demonstrates the importance of community-based education that is locally relevant, and quality teaching that is culturally aware and responsive.

When you cut TAFE to the bone it will simply not be able to provide this degree of flexibility and community responsiveness. The second program is the Retrenched Workers Pathways Program. The document says:

Another successful example of customised programs being developed locally is the Illawarra Institute's Retrenched Workers Pathways Program. Designed for women working in the textiles and clothing sector, the Program's success was built on Illawarra Institute's partnerships with local employers, job service agencies, unions and community organisations. Significant components of the program were delivered in the workplace, resulting in over 200 women accessing language, literacy and numeracy programs on-the-job. It involved learning plans being developed to meet individual learners' needs, interests, and aspirations, as well as local and regional industry skill needs. In this way, women working in a declining industry were actively provided with support while they were still employed so as to maximise their opportunities for a successful transition to other industries and occupations.

TAFE provides vital education and training for our young apprentices to ensure that they have the skills and qualifications required to keep this State running. Since the Liberal-Nationals Government came to office in 2011 it has done nothing except slash and burn this system, which provides so many people with training that leads to employment they would otherwise have no way to gain. There is no point announcing thousands of new apprenticeships for government projects when you are just going to price people out of the system or send them into decades of debt. For example, I have been contacted by a young woman whom I have had the pleasure of knowing since she was a teenager. She has had a pretty tough time in her life. Last week, at age 29, she started a hairdressing apprenticeship. That apprenticeship is her ticket to a much better life. She is very concerned about how she is going to pay for the materials she will need to complete the course and how she will ever pay off the debt. She is very concerned that this tenuous and first-step link into long-term employment and looking after herself and her family is basically at risk because she cannot afford the course.

Coupled with the Abbott Government's cruel "earn or learn" proposals for people under 30, we are not just sending them into debt; we are sending them into poverty. TAFE missed out in the State budget delivered last Tuesday. Not only did it miss out, but it was hit harder than it has ever been before. On Tuesday we were told that another 375 teachers are set to lose their jobs this year. That is on top of the 800 teachers who were told the same bad news last year. One thousand highly trained teachers and other staff are gone from a system that needs them. Tuesday also saw a 29 per cent decrease in TAFE infrastructure funding. That will mean that those who are lucky enough to afford to go to TAFE and get to a classroom with a teacher, will no longer have the much-needed infrastructure required for effective and engaging vocational education and training.

TAFE's capital works budget has now dropped from \$107 million to \$76 million. This will have a real impact on the quality of education that students receive from TAFE, even though they are now paying exorbitant fees. This bill seeks to address the sharp increase in fees in recent years. I foreshadow that Labor will be moving an amendment at the Committee stage. I will obviously go into it in more detail later but the proposed amendment essentially looks at the Minister being committed to having not just a casualised workforce but a permanent workforce for TAFE, and addresses some of the issues to do with that. The bill seeks to freeze TAFE fees at the levels they were in 2010-11 and also maintain TAFE funding at the levels of the aforementioned years. It draws a line in the sand. TAFE is too important to lose. It cannot be cut to the bone and expected to exist in the way it has to date. TAFE has worked, and it will continue to work, but it needs our support and commitment. Labor will support the bill.

**Dr MEHREEN FARUQI** [10.37 a.m.]: I speak in strong support of the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014 introduced by my colleague Dr John Kaye. The bill seeks to stop the damage being done by Smart and Skilled, which will take away millions of dollars from TAFE, and aims to secure the public provision of vocational education and training. It is vital that this bill is passed to ensure some hope of securing a future for TAFE and the excellent

public education provided by this more than 100-year-old institution. Before becoming a member of the New South Wales Parliament I worked for many years as a teacher in the public higher education system, which is facing the same pressures as TAFE to conform to the neoliberal free market mindset.

I have experienced firsthand the indiscriminate cutting of jobs, courses and services in an ill-conceived attempt to adopt the student as customer in a purely business model. I have always stood up and fought for my staff and students, as well as maintaining high standards of teaching courses despite this worrying trend. The Greens will do the same to stop TAFE cuts. With the so-called Smart and Skilled reform of this Government, TAFE is facing outsourcing by competitive tender to private for-profit training companies. In the 2014-15 budget millions of dollars in funding have been taken out, hundreds of employees will lose jobs, and between 2013 and 2015 some 22,433 New South Wales student enrolments are predicted to be lost.

Education and training needs to accommodate and make allowances for the young, the old, the disadvantaged, the marginalised, those with special needs and everyone in between. For many it is a stepping stone to bigger and better things. TAFE is an acknowledgement that we are not all the same. Our educational and training needs will be different. It is this flexibility and recognition of difference that has long made TAFE the go-to option for many people seeking new skills or undertaking new educational experiences, especially women and young people

TAFE does not discriminate. It offers a level playing field to all in our communities to access educational opportunities and practical skills to build confidence and enhance individual learning. It is a lifeline for many young adults and their families, volunteers and carers, women seeking to re-enter the workforce, and those from new and emerging communities, such as refugees. This is why TAFE is, and should always be, without question the backbone of publicly funded vocational education and training. Throughout my 22 years in Australia I have seen many of my colleagues, friends and their children educated and trained through our excellent TAFE system, both in Sydney and in regional New South Wales. They have undertaken an amazingly diverse variety of courses, from sustainability and engineering to fine arts, English language, cookery, catering and hairdressing. From 2008, overall participation by women in TAFE has increased by 20.5 per cent. In 2012 some 293,387 female students were enrolled in TAFE colleges across New South Wales. This figure accounted for 51.5 per cent of total enrolments for that year.

I ask: How will Smart and Skilled, with its increased fees and charges, support these women? In particular, how will Smart and Skilled support Indigenous women, migrant women, women with disabilities and single mothers? The Government is taking a longstanding, supportive and proven vocational education service provider and destroying it. Under the Smart and Skilled program additional loadings for people with disability will be only 15 per cent of the cost of training the average student, even for students with multiple special needs. Details of additional community service obligation funds are yet to be revealed but are unlikely to provide TAFE with the money it needs to serve disadvantaged communities and people with disability. Some courses will now attract fees of up to \$8,490—for example, the Advanced Diploma of Electrical Engineering. Certificate IV course will have fees of up to \$4,920—for example, courses in industrial electronics and in renewable energy. These courses provide skills that are critical to creating an innovative and sustainable future for New South Wales.

The Liberal-Nationals push at the State and Federal levels to decimate public higher education institutions across New South Wales and Australia is not about supporting and growing a quality education system. It certainly is not about access, equality or the public good. It is taking a right and calling it an entitlement. It turns public education into a private commodity. Education is not a commodity. It cannot be neatly packaged or traded back and forth to make a profit. It is a dynamic, creative process of learning to which everyone has a right. It can be messy, challenging and lifelong; but, most of all, TAFE education transforms the lives of students and teachers and our society as a whole. The Smart and Skilled program will deter potential students and financially disadvantage current students. Shamefully, it will be female students who will be less able to meet the rising costs of further education under Smart and Skilled. If we drill down a little further, we realise that opportunities will diminish for migrant women, older women, women with special needs and single mothers.

There are fewer provisions in Smart and Skilled to ensure that the different groups who would normally depend on TAFE for vocational education courses will have the choice of courses they need, or equal access and equal opportunity, because of the financial demands now imposed by the high fees under Smart and Skilled. The Victorian Government tried a similar framework to Smart and Skilled in that State and it is failing dismally and driving the TAFE system to collapse. You would think this would be an ideal opportunity for the New South

Wales Government to learn from the lessons in Victoria; but it chooses instead to let its inexperience and arrogance steer the future of vocational education and training in New South Wales onto the rocks. What this Government fails to recognise is that TAFE is an integral part of education and training in New South Wales and should be funded properly so it is able to continue operating for the benefit of all. If it is not obvious already, I will say it again: A world without TAFE will be neither smart nor skilled. The Greens bill goes some way to defending TAFE and the future of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL** [10.45 a.m.]: I speak against the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014. It is disappointing that The Greens have introduced this bill. The Greens have to stop talking down TAFE and undermining its future. They need to support the flexibility that TAFE already strongly demonstrates and will continue to develop further—

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I have already warned the people in the public gallery to remain silent. If there are any further interruptions I will clear the public gallery.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The Greens should be supporting TAFE's ability to respond and react to changing market needs to get students into jobs. The Greens obviously want New South Wales to stay in the past. But TAFE needs to train people for our current skills needs in contemporary ways. This bill, if passed, would undermine essential reforms to the State's training system that give people choice—including the ongoing choice of the State's public provider, TAFE NSW. This reform package, known as Smart and Skilled, includes measures to specifically secure a critical role for TAFE NSW as the State's public provider. This bill, on the other hand, seeks to turn back the clock. It is designed to reverse these considered reforms—reforms that have been developed after extensive consultation with the public of New South Wales and which are being implemented in stages to reduce unintended consequences.

Smart and Skilled is a carefully constructed package of reforms to improve the effectiveness of the New South Wales training system while preserving the vital and well-regarded role that TAFE NSW plays across the State. Smart and Skilled will ensure that public investment in training improves our State's productivity, increases employment and contributes directly to the Government's goal of returning New South Wales to the position of number one State in Australia. It is also important for members to know that the plans for introducing Smart and Skilled are already well advanced—the reform will be fully implemented on 1 January 2015. Quality is a key focus of the Smart and Skilled reforms. The NSW Quality Framework will ensure that only quality providers will receive government funding. Training providers will be assessed on their organisational capacity and capability as well as their capacity and performance in the delivery of each qualification or accredited course they apply to deliver.

Smart and Skilled will be implemented with regulated fees so that providers compete on quality not price. We have asked the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal for advice on the efficient price for delivery. A skills list of qualifications considered essential for jobs and the New South Wales economy are the qualifications that will be subsidised. Caps on qualifications will be used to ensure that Smart and Skilled is budget neutral. I reiterate the comments of the Minister for Education regarding the establishment of the NSW Skills Board, which is independently advising the Government on this change. In addition to Mr Philip Clark, AM, who has been mentioned previously, the board has members from the Australian Industry Group and from regional New South Wales, and experts from the likes of the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the banking industry. It also has community leaders and, of course, leaders from the education sector. I particularly draw members' attention to the fact that, when the legislation establishing the board was being debated, the Government agreed with changes proposed by the Opposition that ensure TAFE NSW is "the major provider of vocational education and training accessible across New South Wales".

This Government values TAFE NSW, and the Smart and Skilled reforms support TAFE NSW. That is why on 28 August 2013 the Minister issued a Statement of Owner Expectations for TAFE NSW. It makes plain the Government's commitment to TAFE NSW as the public provider, particularly during this period of reform. It clearly sets out that TAFE NSW is, and will continue to be, the backbone of the training system in New South Wales, supporting the Government's strategy to strengthen the skills base of New South Wales, particularly in our regions. I note that in 2013 just over 226,000 students from regional or remote areas enrolled with TAFE NSW. The statement clearly sets out how we will ensure that TAFE NSW services are efficient and aligned to this State's interests and to the needs of individuals and communities. The statement clarifies the role of TAFE and ensures that TAFE's governance and business model are relevant. This is essential so that TAFE NSW can meet its expectations as well as compete in a more contestable environment.



TAFE has an outstanding record as a dynamic and innovative organisation over more than 120 years of working closely with industry to support the economy of this State. TAFE institutes already partner with industry firms such as BlueScope Steel, CISCO, AusGrid and Ramsay Health Care but in the past they have been unduly constrained to work as flexibly as possible with these enterprises and to meet their changing expectations as Australia competes in the global economy. Through the Statement of Owner Expectations this Government is supporting TAFE institutes to be more commercial and provide new services that support students and local employers. For instance, earlier this year Hunter TAFE entered into a new partnership with the Hunter Business Chamber that will see the chamber relocate to the institute's Hamilton campus. TAFE NSW must be supported to expand its delivery of higher education and to partner with other higher education institutions to increase the pathways to degrees.

I note that the Sydney Institute recently entered into a partnership with Open Universities Australia. I also note that the northern Sydney and south-western Sydney institutes have recently formed a partnership with the University of Canberra and TAFEs in both Melbourne and Brisbane to offer students better access to a range of degrees. TAFE institutes do not stand still. They respond positively to all new business opportunities. I am confident that TAFE NSW will thrive into the future. I am equally confident that this bill will lock TAFE in the past. The bill will not protect TAFE; instead, it will undermine reforms critical to its future viability. The level of public confidence in TAFE NSW was recently reconfirmed as part of the Let's Talk About TAFE consultation, which was the largest public consultation ever conducted by the TAFE NSW board and involved independent polling of the public by Newspoll. I congratulate the TAFE NSW board on undertaking this statewide consultation to find out what people think about TAFE and what they expect of it.

TAFE NSW is rightly satisfied that some 97 per cent of people recognise the TAFE brand and that 96 per cent of those people said that TAFE NSW makes a valuable contribution to training in New South Wales. That is a remarkable achievement that few longstanding public entities could either hope for or claim. However, the consultations also found that TAFE needs to change to stay relevant and responsive in an ever-changing world. That is why this Government has set an ambitious reform agenda for TAFE NSW over the next three years. We have already restored the power of TAFE staff to be employed by TAFE NSW and separated the position of managing director from the Secretary of Education and Communities. From 1 July this year the Government will provide funding to TAFE NSW through a separate and distinct budget, which is consistent with its role as the State's public provider. TAFE institutes will continue to be wholly owned and controlled by TAFE NSW but operate as separate financial entities with their own balance sheets and a greater capacity to manage their businesses locally.

We will provide funding for TAFE NSW to ensure that it is able to meet its community service obligations. We are giving TAFE institutes more autonomy to manage their finances, assets and workforces, and to respond to business opportunities so that they can strengthen their commercial capabilities and be less reliant on direct government funding. I have every confidence in the leadership of TAFE NSW, including the TAFE NSW board and our institute directors. They have the ability to meet the challenges, seize the opportunities available and be successful in the Smart and Skilled environment. I note with interest that The Greens wish to freeze funding for private providers at the 2010-11 levels.

As I have mentioned already, Smart and Skilled will create a more responsive training system and support economic and regional growth for New South Wales. Giving students an entitlement to training with a choice of courses and providers will increase participation in training. That can only be good for New South Wales because a more skilled workforce will power a stronger economy. The suggestion of freezing funding for private providers clearly stifles student choice. The Greens are denying students their choice. That is in stark contrast to this Government, which will support its students to make informed choices that will lead to real job outcomes.

If this bill is passed it will conflict with our commitments to the Commonwealth and cost the people of New South Wales around \$400 million over the next three years. I note that the Opposition supports the bill but I find it interesting that in 2011 then Premier Barry O'Farrell signed the Council of Australian Governments agreement on this issue with former Labor Prime Minister Julia Gillard. The Labor Party does not seem worried that the agreement with our former Federal Labor counterparts might be in jeopardy. The loss of funding would have a huge impact on students, local employers and TAFE NSW. This bill will reverse reforms to TAFE NSW that have considerable support and that will secure a future for TAFE NSW as the public provider. I oppose the bill.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN** [10.54 a.m.]: I will make a few brief comments having heard from both sides of the debate on the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational

Education and Training) Bill 2014. The Shooters and Fishers Party will support The Greens bill. We believe that, despite all the rhetoric that has flown back and forth and the histrionics and stage-managed speeches, Dr John Kaye has got the core of the matter at hand right. He has got it right. We will also support the amendment foreshadowed by Labor because we think it adds to the core principles of the bill. The constituency of the Shooters and Fishers Party can be fairly well defined by surveys we have conducted going back to 1992. Our constituents are predominantly male and the age cohort is more at the top end than the lower end. We have a lot of tradespeople and post tradespeople, and a smattering of doctors, lawyers and so forth.

**The Hon. Luke Foley:** Patriots.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Very well said. I accept the interjection. I do not agree with Dr Faruqi's contention that members on the conservative side of the House are necessarily inexperienced and arrogant when speaking about this bill, but I think I have a fair claim on experience from my background in industry. I started my apprenticeship in 1966 as a lowly fitter and turner. Perhaps my view of TAFE courses and training is a little old fashioned and slanted towards the types of vocational training that lend themselves more to the manufacturing and transport industries rather than the fine arts. The TAFE system has done a fine job over the years providing a range of training for people who do not necessarily want to be university dons. It is necessary for industry to be able to source its workers from a pool of people who have been trained properly. We have TAFE teachers amongst our constituents and branch members. Before I came into this place and since then I have heard their continual lament about the gradual reduction in curriculum standards and bleating from industry generally that it is receiving poorly trained workers.

That is not necessarily because TAFE is doing a poor job. More recently it is because private providers cannot, it appears, give the necessary training to provide artisans to industry that one can regard as skilled, competent and safe. This is why the Shooters and Fishers Party will support The Greens on this bill. We do not support them on much but, as I said, Dr John Kaye has got this pretty right. We support the TAFE system. I am particularly suspicious of private service providers about which I have my own sources. Some members may have forgotten the series of closures of private service providers in the Sydney central business district that were offering all sorts of spurious courses, taking the money and running.

In many cases only TAFE has the infrastructure available to conduct training in heavy engineering and similar courses. Some industries can provide that training and so all they need is the intellectual input perhaps from private service providers, but that is abrogating responsibility. What requirement is there for a private service provider to provide the sorts of tools, equipment and infrastructure to safely train trades apprentices, in particular? My suggestion is that the expectation is that they will not have to do that. They will bid on a project and perhaps utilise the equipment standing idle in a local TAFE for a very low rental fee.

Another area of concern is fees. The Hon. Penny Sharpe quoted some fees for various types of courses. It is not just the fees themselves but the structure of the courses that concern me. I was involved in the coal dispute between BHP and Brown and others at Gunnedah. I went to Gunnedah and spoke to representatives of a lot of the industries there. Apart from the issue with coal, their problem was the stripping from agricultural industries skilled trades personnel by the mining industry. It is just a fact of life that when an employer who can pay more than other employers comes into town, the other employers have to find ways to get around that. The way they do that is by converting their workforce primarily to skilled supervisors who supervise apprentices.

The trouble with that is that apprentices cannot do engineering or fabrication courses at Gunnedah because the courses have been centralised in Newcastle. That means a country kid, who is 16 or 17 years old, has to be sent down to Newcastle on block release, has to try to find accommodation and is away from his family. That is not necessarily the best way in which to train people who we will need in the future. We hear the argument that things are changing and we will not need those types of trades and artisans in the future. I guarantee that if Jules Verne were alive today and we asked him to write a book about the future of this State and this country he would say, "Yes, you will need them." When the world becomes so populous that suddenly price is not an issue in relation to the provision of what the world needs—and the world needs food—this country will go backwards in time.

The cities will not be providing the economic drivers; agricultural production—provided we can get water to agricultural crops—and agricultural manufacturing industries will be providing the economic drivers. We will need process engineers, food technicians and agricultural students. We will need all of those skilled personnel, and they all have to be trained. If we deconstruct the TAFE system and rely entirely on the marketplace, I will not be around to bemoan it, but my grandchildren will be. I ask all members of this House to

think carefully about this legislation. It may seem to be an ideological issue and a bit of grandstanding for The Greens in the lead-up to an election, but what Dr John Kaye proposes is sound—and that is coming from a conservative. I commend the bill to the House.

**The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ** [11.02 a.m.]: I support the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014 that was introduced by Dr John Kaye. The objects of the bill are to freeze fees for TAFE courses and funding to private providers of vocational education and training at 2010 levels, and to maintain funding to the TAFE Commission at no less than its 2010-11 level. As the shadow Minister has indicated, the Labor Party will move an amendment to ensure that a three-year staffing agreement for TAFE staff, based on the 2007 TAFE staffing agreement, will be entered into as soon as is practicable.

The reality is that TAFE is fundamentally important. It provides alternative pathways to higher tertiary education, provides practical and viable skills, and maintains an employable and strong workforce, particularly in relation to trades. It provides important life experience, social engagement and participation, and is inclusive of multiculturalism as well as pathways and support, vital trades and skilled jobs. I was interested to hear comments made by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell on "Let's talk about TAFE" and how TAFE had undertaken community consultation. However, what we do not hear from Government members is how many people were asked, "Should TAFE funding be cut?", nor are we given any indication of what the responses are likely to have been if that question had been asked. The reality is that people in the community regard TAFE as vitally important and they do not want to see TAFE funding cut. This bill will ensure that TAFE funding remains at its current level.

Since this Government came to power it has been systematically setting out to reduce TAFE courses. I inform the House of some of the reports I have heard relating to TAFE. At the Richmond campus 43 full-time jobs have been cut, the agriculture class was cut, the language, literacy and numeracy course was cut, floristry was relocated to Nepean, and the greenkeeping course was cut. At the Illawarra TAFE, deaf students no longer will have note takers. At the Armidale TAFE, funding for the fine arts course ceased. There are reduced opening times in Tenterfield, Boggabilla and Quirindi, which are important places in respect of the development of skills among young people.

Gosford TAFE has lost three permanent teachers. Wyong TAFE has had several courses cut, including the Higher School Certificate [HSC]. I know of one young girl who was attending Wyong TAFE to do her HSC. She was only 15 years old and she could not cut it at her school, so the HSC at TAFE is where such young people go. Because she was required to go to Newcastle and there was no way her mother wanted her to be travelling so far on a train, instead of gaining an education at TAFE—which is part of government policy for such young people—she is doing unskilled labour. Unskilled labour positions will probably be what she will be subjected to for the rest of her life because she will not be able to return to the education system in which she was formerly a participant.

At the North Coast TAFE, 15 campus managers are reported to be about to lose their jobs as part of an ongoing restructure and there are fears that the restructuring could spell the end of the Trenayr campus. Aquaculture and equine studies are no longer delivered there. TAFE in the Hunter has lost 60 full-time staff and hospitality, tourism, metal fabrication and welding courses have been cut. A major employer of apprentice electricians has withdrawn up to 20 students from the Illawarra TAFE campuses after the institute cut back the classroom time of its electrical trade courses. Intellectually disabled students in northern Sydney have been asked to pay \$825 for courses to learn cooking, food handling, numeracy and computer literacy that previously were free.

Plumbing classes that formerly were held at Miller TAFE can now only be taken at Granville. A recent restructuring of the Western Institute of TAFE has resulted in 13 people losing their jobs. The Hornsby TAFE fine arts class was closed a week before classes were due to start. Students had signed up for the course and were attending the campus, but a week before the course was due to start, it was cut. Tourism and hospitality courses have ceased at Cessnock and Glendale. I have personal knowledge of that because one of my cousins was taking the hospitality course at Cessnock. The HSC will no longer be taught at the Ultimo TAFE. Three positions have been axed from TAFE Warren. Griffith TAFE will lose \$265,000 and its commercial cooking course has been closed, resulting in students having to go to Wagga Wagga. Wagga Wagga is a mere 190 kilometres from Griffith. When the Liberals refer to informed choices, I assume that an informed choice someone can make is to travel 190 kilometres to attend their course in a different location.

One full-time teaching position has been lost and two staff have had their hours reduced at the Deniliquin and Finley TAFE campuses. There will be 12 teaching and 11 support positions cut from the entire Riverina Institute of TAFE. The Gympie TAFE no longer will offer the HSC and hairdressing. Commercial cookery teachers at Loftus TAFE have lost their jobs. Maitland TAFE will lose its hospitality and tourism courses as a result of full-time teachers having been made redundant. There is little doubt that the automotive mechanics course at Padstow and Granville will close. Anyone who has seen the consultant's report on those TAFE campuses will know that there will be significant problems with staff being able to maintain those courses in view of the consultant's findings.

This is the reality of what is happening to TAFE. There was never an intention that the guts would be ripped out of TAFE. Yesterday a TAFE teacher told me that he had been provided \$5,000 to undertake the course that he teaches, but in the last week he has been told to deliver that course with \$2,000. How can this Government think that people can suddenly deliver a \$5,000 course with \$2,000? Maybe that is one of the informed choices people will make. Those on the other side of the House talk about market forces and they look to their god, Adam Smith, and *The Wealth of Nations*—the free market will always provide and deliver—but the reality is that even Adam Smith argued that the public has an absolute role in the provision of education. Adam Smith said in *The Wealth of Nations*:

Ought the public, therefore, to give no attention, it may be asked, to the education of the people? Or if it ought to give any, what are the different parts of education which it ought to attend to in the different orders of the people? And in what manner ought it to attend to them?

... But though the common people cannot, in any civilised society, be so well instructed as people of some rank and fortune, the most essential parts of education, however, to read, write, and account, can be acquired at so early a period of life that the greater part even of those who are to be bred to the lowest occupations have time to acquire them before they can be employed in those occupations. For a very small expense the public can facilitate, can encourage, and can even impose upon almost the whole body of the people the necessity of acquiring those most essential parts of education.

Even their god, Adam Smith, says that it is the role of the public to deliver education to the common people. I will not go at length through Adam Smith's views on why teachers should not rely on the fees of students as I assume those on the other side of the Chamber are well versed in *The Wealth of Nations*. But that is the reality at every level: that education is ultimately the role of government, and this Government has set about ripping out the guts of TAFE.

**The Hon. NIAL BLAIR** [11.11 a.m.]: I oppose the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014. I have a prepared speech but I do not think I will even refer to it. I want to look at this issue as someone who has had some experience on both sides of the fence. For those that may not know, I was a TAFE teacher in garden design, which is certainly not something that is on the skills list. It was an evening course that most people did for a hobby; some were looking to make a career change. I also subcontracted to TAFE as a provider of safety training and supplemented the TAFE teaching staff. Some of the TAFEs in my area felt that someone more versed in the specific subject matter that I delivered training in would be better than the TAFE itself.

I also ran an industry-based registered training organisation [RTO]. With the greatest respect to the Hon. Robert Brown, I have seen good examples of private RTOs delivering quality trade-based training that enhanced and ensured the safety of the apprentices that were coming through. I ran an apprentice training organisation that had more than 100 apprentices indentured to it, supplemented training for other organisations and spent millions of dollars setting up this registered training organisation and purpose-built training school in Western Sydney. Through that position I was a member of an industry training advisory body [ITAB] that looked at the curriculum, the information to be fed into the skills list and regularly attended ITAB conferences to discuss the training needs for that industry sector. I also went on to own an RTO. So I have some insight into the quality assurance standards and requirements of a private RTO. Mine was a business that was in the market of applying for some of this government funding—

[*Interruption*]

Let me finish. I am talking historically about what I was involved in as someone who lived extensively in regional communities. I relied on the local TAFE to train some of my apprentices and for other training that I participated in to change my career direction. I completed a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment at night at a nearby TAFE—not the TAFE of my local community but a nearby one; I did my Certificate IV in Workplace Safety through OTEN, I think it was at the time; and I did a Certificate II in Firefighter Operations, again through OTEN. Those courses, combined with my tertiary qualifications, allowed my career path to change.

I do not take an "All is wrong because it is moved by The Greens" approach. I do not approach this as being just driven by ideology because it has been moved from the conservative side of this Chamber. I approach this from a number of different viewpoints, having seen how this works, particularly in regional communities. I am a supporter of what the Government is doing in this area and allowing greater competition and flexibility in some of these skilled areas where RTOs can come in and, more often than not in my community, probably work with local TAFE providers, but work with local businesses to find a flexible way to deliver training in our communities. Unfortunately, some of our communities have been left with an inflexible and out-of-date approach. I can only speak from my experience, and I have seen numerous examples of TAFE doing things at the cutting edge in their communities, but I have also seen the other side.

I have competed against TAFE in some areas, and if Dr John Kaye was here he would probably say that it was not the Smart and Skilled areas, but I think it is a good example. When competing against TAFE to deliver training for a food processing business, TAFE had instructed that the training had to be done at the TAFE premises between the hours of 9.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. between Monday and Friday. I was able to go in as a private RTO—I would like to think with the same standards or even higher—and offer the training over three different shifts which suited the employer. We went to the employer's premises and did onsite training for the morning shift, the afternoon shift and the night shift, because that is what suited the employer's needs. We should be encouraging approaches like that. I know that some TAFE campuses do that, but I have seen examples where TAFE has not proceeded with a course because it has not had the numbers to deliver the training. That is why we see the examples that some members have read here today where apprentices have to drive a couple of hundred kilometres because there were only four apprentices in town. In those situations, this is the type of direction we should be going in.

The Industry Skills Councils may identify a particular skills shortage area—and they do not make this stuff up. They do not wake up one day and say that the State all of a sudden needs more powerline workers, or more people working in the agricultural sector, or people working in information and technology. They may also say we have enough people doing hairdressing and personal training. This is where the lists come from. We should be encouraging flexibility. That might mean that a private RTO works with one of the local car dealers who has a mechanical workshop full of computers and the up-to-date technology that the TAFE campus is not able to offer. We should be encouraging the RTOs to think outside the box, to look at the recognition of current competencies, to do on-the-job assessments combined with blended learning systems, whether it is a combination of face-to-face or online or e-learning, to get in there and deliver so that apprentices do not have to drive 200 kilometres.

My gut feeling is that more often than not TAFE has the best placed people to do that. People want their certificate from TAFE. TAFE has a unique and well-respected brand within the vocational training market. Most employers want to see the TAFE brand on their apprentice's or prospective employees' certificates. I hope that this will encourage TAFE to be the forerunner for the delivery of this flexible training. The view that the sky will fall and all TAFEs will close is a little disrespectful to the business development unit.

**Dr John Kaye:** I didn't say that.

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR:** No, I did not say that you said it. I did not say that Dr John Kaye said that.

**Dr John Kaye:** You are verballing all of us on that, Niall.

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR:** Okay. I did not say that Dr John Kaye said that; I said "some", okay?

**Dr John Kaye:** I have never heard anybody say that.

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR:** What I am saying is that it is disrespectful to the hardworking people with whom I have worked in the business development units of TAFE for which I have signed memorandum of understandings [MOU] on behalf of an industry-based RTO, or I have signed MOUs as a contractor to deliver specific units of competency in the training sector. I think this can work and TAFE will be one of its beneficiaries. As I have said, when we consider, say, powerline workers, I spent millions of dollars working for one electricity distributor setting up a purpose-built training centre in Western Sydney. We sent some of our apprentices to TAFE for electrical training. But for powerline workers the industry felt it could do things better, safer and in an environment more flexible to our needs by setting up this private RTO. I travelled to Queensland to look at an industry-based RTO in Brisbane.

**The Hon. Robert Brown:** Industry based?

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR:** An industry-based RTO. It is still a private RTO.

**The Hon. Robert Brown:** Different from the white-shoe brigade.

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR:** I acknowledge the interjection. We have seen plenty of examples of private RTO operators falling over in delivery to overseas students. But, again, as a former owner of an RTO I took great pride in delivering training courses, such as safe working at heights, working in confined spaces, emergency management, firefighting operations and those types of courses. We spent a lot of money developing a good curriculum and on equipment, and also spent a lot of time and effort getting the right staff. I do not accept that all private RTOs are part of the white-shoe brigade. I have seen the process done well. I have seen it done collaboratively with TAFE. I have seen where good operators supplement training with TAFE in a strong working relationship.

I acknowledge that there in the past have been problems in some of the sector, but I have faith also in the standards and framework set for private RTOs. I have been through the audits. It is not an easy exercise. I believe that a small RTO operator being audited, as I had, knows the ins and outs of their business. I knew the ins and outs of how my curriculum was developed, and how my assessment pathways were aligned back to the individual elements within the unit of competency. I knew the ins and outs of my business better than some TAFE teachers, with great respect to them, because some of them may never have mapped their assessments back to the units of competency. Some people are brought in and told, "Here's the curriculum, here's the assessment, away you go." Some private operators know how and why that assessment was developed, and why the Industry Training Advisory Bodies [ITAB] came up with those elements to assess.

This debate is difficult and I am trying not to lump everyone into the one category. I acknowledge that plenty of operators would have the knowledge, but I am merely trying to make the point that just because a private operator is involved does not make it wrong. This debate is interesting and is one into which I have put much thought, which I indicated at the start of my contribution, because I believe I have seen this issue from both sides. I truly believe that a good approach is to allow more flexibility within the sector and for the end user in some circumstances to be able to access training not by death by PowerPoint or being flogged to death in a classroom, but by a more sympathetic approach to vocational needs and location to utilise the most up-to-date equipment, learning and training methods. For that reason, I oppose the bill.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN** [11.25 a.m.]: On behalf of the Christian Democratic Party I contribute to the debate on the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014. The goals of this bill are to freeze TAFE courses and funding to private providers of vocational education and training at 2010 levels, to maintain funding the TAFE Commission at no less than its 2010-11 level, and to require the Minister to ensure that the TAFE Commission is the principal provider of technical and further education in New South Wales. We all know that TAFE is an invaluable institution that provides opportunities for a broad range of people in the community, including trades men and women, parents of young children and school leavers.

TAFE provides opportunities for those in the community for whom university training is not an option. TAFE provides a chance to develop hands-on skills into a successful career. Of course, the scandalous news is that TAFE is cutting access to its courses due to the education Minister's decision to reduce funding. This will seriously impact not only the community but also many individuals. A constituent emailed to me the following statement:

The strength of our TAFE system, with local TAFEs in most communities, has provided an accessible way out of poverty and a second chance for many who would otherwise spend their lives on welfare. Many of the students I teach would, without the availability of the local TAFE, be stuck in long term unemployment following redundancies, health issues or unsuccessful school experiences. TAFE has given them computer skills, literacy and communication skills, the chance for re-training and a sense of hope.

This struck a resounding note with me. I am a product of TAFE. I was one of those kids who was a square peg in a round hole and slow to learn. The local TAFE in Taree was about 15 kilometres from Wingham. If you missed the bus, you virtually would waste half the day trying to get to TAFE. Buses were not available every 15 minutes as they are in the city, nor was there available another transport method to get to TAFE. My parents certainly did not have the capacity to get me to TAFE daily. I definitely resound with some of the issues that

have been raised. That is why the Christian Democratic Party is cautious about what the Government is doing with TAFE, particularly in regional and rural areas. An article by Kirsty Needham in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 9 February 2014 noted:

NSW government cuts to TAFE have hit students enrolling in courses for 2014, with plumbing apprenticeships in western Sydney finding repeat classes have been cancelled, threatening their qualifications.

The article further noted:

"Only three kids in his class passed every module last year," said Mr Rossi. "If he can't go back and complete that one subject, he's unable to become a tradesman."

If TAFE courses are cut, apprentices will be affected. The article continues:

The Labor MP for Liverpool, Paul Lynch, has been contacted by many apprentices and employers who are upset at the cuts, which he described as "stupid" amid a skills shortage.

There are skills shortages. Regional areas rely on tourism and hospitality courses to give kids a hand up. Tourism in the Shoalhaven is a \$500 million industry. Many people who have jobs in tourism have achieved their qualifications through TAFE. The article then states:

Education minister Adrian Piccoli has cut \$80 million from TAFE. Mr Chadwick is aware of other institutes cutting trade course attendances from 36 to 30 weeks to save money, which he said could impact on skills and safety.

"Institute directors have to make awful decisions about students they will disadvantage", Mr Chadwick said.

It is a matter of concern to me and to the Christian Democratic Party. As the Hon. Helen Westwood mentioned yesterday, the most disadvantaged people in TAFE, such as deaf people or people with disabilities, need to have assured funding. It is crazy that a pool of funding suddenly runs out and leaves people exposed and vulnerable. We want to ensure that the Government is doing everything it can to fund people with disabilities—whether it be hearing, sight or some other disability—so that they have every chance to succeed in their subject of choice. Ms Needham further stated:

Aine Healy, executive director of the NSW Council for Intellectual Disability, said TAFE training to help people move into employment was "very important", but \$825 was beyond the means of many students. "When courses are being privatised, it's just not accessible," she said.

On 8 March 2014 in an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* Kirsty Needham stated:

Almost 400 TAFE staff lost their jobs last year because of the O'Farrell government's funding cuts, and the Northern Sydney and Sydney institutes were the worst hit, new data shows.

That is one of the worries we have. I understand there is a time to review and refine education and all departments should not be immune from assessment and valuation. There may be times when staff cuts are needed, based on the reality of funding. Kirsty Needham further stated:

In addition to slashing jobs—including those of more than 220 teachers and head teachers—to save costs, institutes have cut face-to-face teaching hours, trimmed the classroom day from eight to seven hours, and reduced course durations from three years to 2½ years, or doubled student to teacher ratios.

I am not against the idea of pulling back TAFE course hours in an attempt to reduce the training of plumbers to 2½ years instead of three years, as long as they are not worse plumbers as a result. There is merit in saying that there is a skills shortage large enough to develop a more compact curriculum.

**Mr David Shoebridge:** You want a plumber who can plumb.

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** We want a plumber who can plumb and a builder who can build. We do not want our houses falling down or our toilets not flushing and we do not want to be electrocuted when turning on a light, but there is a lot of merit in TAFE making some apprenticeship courses more compact. I believe there is an opportunity to do that from the representations that have been made to me, which would help to minimise the massive skills shortages we have in regional and rural areas. The article further noted:

The TAFE Teachers Association and the Australasian College of Medical Sciences and Research have complained to the government that skills training for plumbing and electrical trades, auto repairs, carpentry, health sciences, and fitting and machining have been degraded.

One employer, the National Electrical and Communications Association (NECA), was so alarmed at the impact of teaching quality that it pulled 15 apprentices out of TAFE Illawarra last month, after it shortened its electrical trades course from 36 to 30 weeks.

"I am pretty fussy about training", said Barry Dawson, general manager of group training for NECA, which employs 500 apprentices. "I was concerned about what they were cutting out."

He will discuss the issues with officials at the institute, which has lost 10 teachers.

...

The Northern Sydney Institute lost 102 full-time staff, including 21 head teachers and 30 teachers.

At this point I concur with Dr John Kaye; it is disgraceful that this same institute expects intellectually disabled people to pay \$825 for courses that previously were free. The article continues:

... the Sydney Institute lost 71 staff, including 56 teachers. South-western Sydney lost 27 teachers out of 36 jobs cut, and Western Sydney lost 27 teachers among 51 jobs cut.

NSW TAFE Teachers Association president Phillip Chadwick said there were safety concerns when trades courses were cut back.

"Institutes are making terrible decisions on how to cope with the funding cuts", Mr Chadwick said.

It must be incredibly stressful for teachers whose jobs have been cut and who are trying to pay mortgages, feed their kids and give them an education to ensure that they have every opportunity in life. It is not satisfactory to cut funding unless there is a reasonable valuation tool that suggests it is needed. In the same article Dr John Kaye is quoted as saying:

A similar exercise in Victoria resulted in the public provider's institutes ending up on the verge of bankruptcy and student numbers were plummeting.

That comment referred to this statement:

John Santangelo had taught pathology for seven years at the Sydney Institute, after working in hospitals for 35 years, but lost his job in August 2012. The institute told his department they would cut staff by 40 per cent.

The Christian Democratic Party asks the Minister, first, to reassure members that the Government has no plans to privatise TAFE or transfer it to the private sector. Secondly, will it continue to fund TAFE in its annual budget by at least the rate of inflation? Thirdly, will it continue to ensure adequate funding, especially for TAFE students with disabilities? Fourthly, will it continue to fund TAFE in regional areas to ensure equal opportunities for country TAFE students and to ensure that they receive the same first-class TAFE training as city students? We have not agreed with Dr John Kaye on a number of issues but we commend his approach to this bill which sends a warning to the Government that it should give fair dinkum thought to the implications of privatising this wonderful sector that gives a lot of vulnerable people a hand up.

**The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD** [11.38 a.m.]: I support the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014. The TAFE system is an educational treasure for this State and it disgusts me to see the Government treat it with disrespect. The Government's budget has slashed the TAFE capital works budget and will sack some 370 hardworking educators. The figures do not tell the whole story. Government members sneer, have an elitist view of TAFE and do not understand its value. Let us face it, according to this mob, TAFE is where the Westies go, and they could not care less.

As I am from the western suburbs I understand the value of TAFE. A well-funded TAFE sector is crucial to fighting the crippling skills shortage affecting New South Wales. Indeed, those opposite might like to consider that when they are trying to find a plumber or an electrician in Killara. But TAFE is also important for much simpler reasons. TAFE is the educational pathway to a better life for the underprivileged and for those for whom university is not an option. TAFE provides practical and wideranging skills which change lives every day. This is particularly so for those who have been educationally disadvantaged, had a disrupted education, come from a non-English speaking background or have had to leave school at a very young age and were unable to return. For many, TAFE represents a pathway to dignity and improved self-respect and this role should be valued.

Many of my colleagues will speak today about different aspects of TAFE. I will touch briefly on my own experience with TAFE Outreach, which has been absolutely annihilated. For example, it was through this



program that people from non-English speaking backgrounds developed skills to take up other courses that would lead to a qualification and make them job ready. They could often do that within an environment or group that was safer for them and that maximised their opportunity to gain the skills they needed. TAFE Outreach also assisted women to re-enter the workforce. In my time as a community worker I saw firsthand women who had been out of the workforce for many years—and some of them were from non-English speaking backgrounds—gaining the skills and confidence that enabled them to do courses that led to a qualification. In many instances those women were able to get full-time—and sometimes part-time—employment. When I was mayor of Bankstown City Council I worked with TAFE.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan):** Order! Members who wish to engage in private conversations should do so outside the Chamber. The member will be heard in silence.

**The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD:** That proves my point about the sneering attitude of those opposite to TAFE.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan):** Order! The member will deliver her speech without adding commentary to my ruling.

**The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD:** TAFE has the flexibility to respond to emerging skills and needs. It also has the capacity to respond to the needs and job requirements of unique industries. TAFE is valued by the people of New South Wales and the Government should heed that message. In fact, the Government received that message from the electorate of Miranda last October but chose to ignore it, and I believe the electors of New South Wales will send a similar message in the upcoming 2015 State election.

The future of TAFE is a deeply personal issue for me. TAFE Outreach allowed me to develop the skills I needed to communicate with my deaf daughter. At that time no other course was available from any other educational provider to parents of deaf children to learn sign language skills. Through TAFE Outreach a class was set up where parents such as me who had no sign language skills—often the first deaf person they had met was their own child—could communicate with their children. My daughter also gained from TAFE; she attained a welfare certificate that enabled her to work in that sector. My other daughter also received her qualifications through a TAFE course. Many students in Western Sydney—and my grandchildren will be the same—will not go to university. University is not an option for some. Some students need TAFE to help them obtain skills that make them job ready.

I have benefited from TAFE in so many ways. I am proud of TAFE. I am also proud of the achievements of both my daughters as a result of their TAFE education. That is why I am particularly concerned about the impact of the Government's cuts on TAFE and its ability to assist students with disabilities. The Government has savagely cut the budget for specialist disability support professionals and services from \$2.8 million in 2013-14 to \$500,000 in 2014-15, which will affect all students with disabilities. For example, deaf students will be very hard hit. Sign language interpreters, note takers and specialist teachers are all very necessary if deaf students are to learn. Whilst on first glance it may appear that some students will receive support worth approximately \$800, that is about 12 hours interpreting for the year for deaf students. Currently some students are studying 17 hours per week and those in the second year of their apprenticeship will now be facing a cut to essential support services such as interpreters and note takers.

Some students are facing huge fees that they cannot afford and they might have to abandon their apprenticeships. It is unforgiveable for any government to go down that path. For a student with an intellectual disability that funding equates to eight hours of specialist support over the year. Anyone who understands anything about specialist education or students with disabilities and their needs well knows that eight hours a year is not enough—eight hours a week would not even tip the edge. In doing this the Government is ensuring that these students will not receive an education or a qualification to enable them to develop skills that make them job ready. The Government is setting them up for a lifetime of unemployment. Those opposite should hang their head in shame. Unfortunately, this will mean that these crucial support services will be cut to the bone.

Indeed, there is a real sense of hopelessness about what this will mean for students with disabilities. It is heartbreaking. It is heartbreaking for the students, their families and for the dedicated professionals who bring hope to those they teach every day of their working lives. I say again that the Government's approach reveals the sneering and elitist attitude it has for trades and TAFE. It also shows how short-sighted this Government really is. It does not realise that TAFE saves money and creates jobs. Thanks to TAFE, young people with disabilities

gain the crucial skills they need to find jobs—an investment in our society and economy. Labor understands this which is why it is committed to reversing the Government's TAFE fee hikes and restoring TAFE funding so that teachers can do their jobs and students can flourish. I support the bill.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan):** I draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of student leaders from high schools in New South Wales who are attending the Secondary Schools Leadership program conducted by the Parliamentary Education Unit. We are currently debating a private member's bill introduced by Dr John Kaye: TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014. Welcome to the Parliament.

**Ms JAN BARHAM [11.49 a.m.]:** I support the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014 and acknowledge the work done by Dr John Kaye in introducing this bill, some of the great speeches that have been made in the House recognising the importance of TAFE and the strong community support for TAFE. As someone who is proudly TAFE trained—I hold two diplomas in fashion technology and went on from my TAFE training to work in the industry for some 10 years—I know the importance of TAFE training. I appreciate the training and opportunities that were provided to me by TAFE and being part of a group of people who received skills training through the TAFE system.

I wish to speak of the serious concerns over cuts to TAFE courses in my local area. As people will know, the North Coast of New South Wales is the fastest growing creative industries area outside the capital cities. Our fine arts courses on the North Coast have been cut—hours of teaching have been cut and teachers have been cut. We have seen a loss of full-time equivalent positions as well as the hours of face-to-face training being offered which has hit the region hard. We were in the process of preparing for a future creative industries boom. The area has, as I said, been recognised as the fastest growing creative industries area outside the capital cities. But the creative industries area is one that requires a lot of investment and long-term thinking.

Training was recognised in our North Coast creative industries strategy as the most important area of investment and commitment to ensure a long-term future for that industry. It was recognised that TAFE is the main training provider for people working in the wide range of creative industries. So this bill is very much welcomed by the people of the North Coast who have been hard hit by cuts to TAFE courses, particularly in the creative industries area. Again, I commend Dr John Kaye for introducing this bill.

I acknowledge also some of the issues raised by other members relating to special access courses. Those who are vulnerable within the system deserve additional support and the opportunity to be job ready—and to have the training that everyone deserves. The fact is that some of these special access courses will no longer be free. By taking away free access to those courses we are depriving people of the right to contribute to society and to have the opportunities they so rightly deserve. This bill goes a long way towards addressing a great need in the community, particularly at a time when we are hearing about skills shortages. There has obviously not been enough long-term strategic thinking about how to prepare for the future.

Like the Hon. Paul Green, I grew up in an area where apprenticeships and TAFE training was the most common way of preparing for future employment. Skills training was recognised as one of the most important things one could do—whether it was training to be a plumber or a sparky or training in any of those other areas, in particular, the important area of community services. We must support teachers, institutions and students who are embarking on their life's work and give them the skills they need to care for us, to work for us and to make sure that our lives are safe. This bill is welcome. I acknowledge the great speeches made by people who recognise the importance of TAFE, the training opportunities it provides and the need to continue to provide them free of charge and to make them readily available, particularly in the regions.

**The Hon. STEVE WHAN [11.54 a.m.]:** I support the comments my colleagues have made in debate on the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014 which was introduced by The Greens. I bring to the table some concerns about TAFE in my local area, particularly about the increased charges that the Government is putting in place. In his budget reply speech in the other place just a few minutes ago, John Robertson, the Leader of the Opposition, indicated that Labor has made a commitment to abolish the Baird Government's massive fee hikes for TAFE courses and to ensure that fee rises in the future will not go up by more than the education CPI. That is an important commitment because, as all speakers have said, TAFE is an important part of vocational and other training, particularly in regional New South Wales.

One thing I have heard consistently over many years from regional communities about education and skills in their area is that TAFE is important. This Government's philosophy puts that under threat. Its philosophy is to make educational providers commercially competitive and to make them operate on a level playing field with the private sector. Everybody in regional and rural New South Wales knows that that is a recipe for city-based providers to take over courses that were previously provided by TAFE. They will offer what seems upfront to be a cheaper price. But when one looks at the provision and location of courses one sees that it is a lesser qualification and more expensive in the long-term because one is not getting locally based education. It will put TAFE campuses around regional New South Wales under threat, and that is something we should all be concerned about.

This Government's policies hit in several ways. First, there is the competition policy, which is such a threat to regional services. We have seen that not just in the area of TAFE but also across a range of areas. Competitive neutrality has been put in place as a principle and it has impacted on the provision of services on the ground by local providers—and, importantly, the consistency of the provision of those services. I know there are members of The Nationals who agree with me on that. Unfortunately, they will not be able to tell us about their issues with that today because the Liberal Party tells them what they can and cannot say.

I want to look particularly at the fees for TAFE courses at Cooma and Queanbeyan. Recently this Government announced under its Smart and Skilled model a series of new fees for courses which it says are on the skills list. I will refer to courses that are not on the skills list shortly. For the courses on the skills list there are some real concerns about the fee increases. At times it is hard to compare like with like because the Government has moved to charging for the accreditation rather than charging per semester. I am not necessarily opposed to that aspect of it but I am opposed to the massive increases to some course fees. Let us look at the courses available at Cooma TAFE in critical areas such as hospitality and commercial cookery. Commercial cookery is a certificate III single-year course. Fees will go from \$838 to \$2,110 under the model being put forward by the Government. The hospitality certificate III course is a six-month course at the Cooma TAFE. Currently fees are \$419 but they will increase to \$1,440 under the Government's new model.

When I saw these fee hikes I not surprisingly put out a press release. I was a bit disgusted by the response of the local Legislative Assembly member and his office. They emailed the local radio station and told it that I had got this all wrong. They pointed out that one of the courses to which I had referred was conducted over two years, which I had to acknowledge. Unfortunately that was not clear on the TAFE website but there was still an increase in the fees for that course. They went on in that email with their usual rude comments and said that I did not know what I was talking about because these courses were not even offered at Cooma TAFE.

They claimed that hospitality and commercial cookery courses were not offered at Cooma TAFE. If that were the case, it would be an absolute disgrace—we are talking about a key tourism area of New South Wales—and it should be something about which we should all be ashamed. The truth is that those courses are offered at Cooma TAFE. This semester not enough students were enrolled to take up those courses and they were not delivered but they are being offered. If the Government has its way the fees that it is putting in place will probably ensure that nobody takes up those courses in future years.

I was interested in a statistic that the Leader of the Opposition cited in the other place. Tucked away in the budget papers he found that the Government apparently is budgeting on there being 23,000 fewer TAFE students next year. Is it any wonder when we see what it is doing to TAFE? We know the Government has cut TAFE funding by a significant amount and that 700 staff have been lost so far. That is a disgrace for education in New South Wales.

**Dr John Kaye:** More than 1,000.

**The Hon. STEVE WHAN:** Dr John Kaye is absolutely right. More than 1,000 staff will go when we count what the Government has announced in this budget.

**Dr John Kaye:** It is 755 up to this budget.

**The Hon. STEVE WHAN:** Some 755 staff positions have been lost up to now and that number will rise to more than 1,000 when the budget is taken into account. On Saturday I spoke to a TAFE teacher from Cooma who is extremely worried about the tertiary preparation courses she delivers. Those courses are vital to people who for one reason or another do not get the tertiary entrance score they want in year 12 and who wish to attend TAFE. I will now discuss courses that do not appear on the Government's skilled list, such as arts

courses. Yesterday I was astounded to see the Treasurer respond to a question in the other place by demeaning people who take ceramics courses. He implied that they were not particularly economically important. I acknowledge that it is not unreasonable to expect someone who is taking a course for a second or third time as a hobby to pay the full fee. But to ask someone doing a course for the first time to pay the full commercial fee is ignoring the fact that many arts courses have an important economic benefit.

To return again to the Snowy Mountains, one of its biggest tourist attractions each year is the Lake Light Sculpture Festival on the shores of Lake Jindabyne. The former Government provided several years of major events funding to get the event underway and it is now a successful tourist attraction. Where did the people who make the sculptures get their skills? They went to TAFE to do welding courses. Artists at other exhibitions in the local area also gained their skills at TAFE. It is a shame to see the Government demeaning the importance of courses that play vital roles in arts businesses in many regional communities. Because they are not among what the Government views as the economic drivers of the State it does not mean they should be dropped off the list for government support.

The fundamental principle the Government is operating under is that it will give a private provider and a TAFE the same amount of money to deliver the same course. The problem with that for regional New South Wales is that local TAFE campuses will disappear as private providers based in the city undercut TAFE but do not offer the same standard of education. Such action by this Government is a disgrace.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES** [12.02 p.m.]: I oppose the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014 and support the new business model that will make TAFE NSW more efficient and more competitive. The changes give people a better chance to gain the skills they need to get a job and advance their careers in a flexible environment that meets the needs of industry. Fundamentally, the Government is making changes to ensure that the training system supports the State's economic and social goals as set out in "NSW 2021: Making NSW Number One". However, in doing so, the Government is not privatising TAFE. It is not abandoning the public provider or disadvantaged individuals and communities. Instead, it is deliberately and progressively encouraging and supporting TAFE NSW to be more efficient and more responsive to the needs of the students, enterprises and communities it serves. It is also supporting TAFE by updating its governance and business arrangements to suit the new environment just as any modern organisation needs to do in our rapidly changing economy.

The New South Wales Government and the Minister back the new TAFE model. I reiterate the comments of my colleagues regarding the Statement of Owner Expectations. It makes plain that TAFE NSW continues to be the public provider. That will provide stability during a period of reform and set the benchmark for quality training in this State. As previously mentioned, the ongoing commitment of this Government to disadvantaged students and communities is explicit in the statement. As such, the Government is providing funding to TAFE NSW to ensure that quality training is accessible across the State. Part 2.1 of the statement clearly states:

TAFE NSW is required to manage an effective and sustainable network of Institutes in order to provide access to essential training services across NSW regions.

That includes both campus-based delivery and more flexible delivery to suit the full range of learners, including those who expect online and blended delivery as well as classroom education. Any suggestion that TAFE is in a state of collapse just because it is making changes to the courses it offers is pure scaremongering by Labor and The Greens. For example, in preparation for Smart and Skilled TAFE institutes are making adjustments to ensure that the qualifications they offer align with the new skills list. The list specifies which qualifications will be eligible for government subsidies because they build skills that are in demand and aligned with jobs growth.

Preliminary 2014 data indicates that TAFE institutes have increased their enrolments in skills list qualifications significantly. This is ideal preparation and shows that TAFEs can succeed in the new environment. They are operating like a business, as they should. It is clear that the Government expects TAFE NSW to operate efficiently and to compete more effectively. As previous speakers have noted, TAFE institutes are already responding to this challenge and that should be commended. Through enterprise agreement negotiations TAFE has agreed to trial new flexible teaching roles that will support more flexible delivery. Additionally, savings have been made by rationalising some back-office functions and shifting resources to the front line. New members have been appointed to strengthen the TAFE board at this critical time and TAFE has been separated from the Department of Education and Communities. Institutes will have more authority to manage their finances, assets and workforces. They will also be able to retain surpluses and reinvest earnings in capability building and grow as financially resilient businesses.

TAFE institutes will have increased ability to respond to business opportunities so they can strengthen their commercial capability and be less dependent on government funding. These reforms will allow every institute to be more nimble and meet the challenges of a changing economy and contemporary workplace by tailoring its training delivery to meet the needs of students, industry and the community. In combination, these reforms will ensure that TAFE NSW remains relevant and can compete effectively in a more competitive environment. TAFE NSW plays a vital role in providing vocational education and training, which is why the New South Wales Government has invested \$1.9 billion in TAFE in the 2014-15 budget. Furthermore, the TAFE NSW capital budget for the next financial year is \$77 million, which will fund new and existing building and information technology projects. TAFE NSW provides high-quality teaching and learning across our 10 networks and delivers a world-class training system to equip local communities with critical skills.

TAFE NSW is transforming its operations and stepping up to the challenges of meeting dynamic industry and students needs in a more competitive training market under the Smart and Skilled reforms. As I mentioned, the Smart and Skilled reforms to the vocational education and training system will give people the chance to gain the skills they need to get a job and advance their careers. People aged 15 years and over who have left school and do not have a certificate IV or higher-level qualification and who live or work in New South Wales will be able to access training under the entitlement. A skills list will define what courses will be subsidised by the New South Wales Government. It is based on industry consultation and labour market research. The New South Wales Government will continue to subsidise pre-vocational training, skill sets and qualifications from certificate IV to advanced diploma through TAFE NSW and the training market. The skills list will define which courses are subsidised.

Furthermore, student loans similar to those offered to university students will be available for approved government subsidised diploma and advanced diploma qualifications. Individuals will be able to make informed choices about their training. They will select courses from the skills list knowing that these courses have good job prospects. Under the entitlement, individuals can choose to go to TAFE NSW or to an approved private or community training organisation that best meets their needs. Details of approved training organisations and courses will be available before implementation.

High-quality training is central to Smart and Skilled and will be based on strong regulation, which means working closely with the national regulator to improve regulation and monitoring of quality and outcomes; effective contracting, which involves strict criteria for training organisations to deliver government-subsidised training, including sanctions for non-performance; performance monitoring, which involves regular monitoring of performance and processes; validation of assessment, which is independent validation of training organisations' assessment practices that will involve industry; consumer protection, which will include clear avenues for complaints; opportunities for teaching and leadership, which will require that staff undertake training to build their capacity as well; and evaluation, which will enable both students and employers to examine the training outcome of the courses.

TAFE NSW will continue to be the backbone of the training system in New South Wales. As I have said, it plays a critical role in meeting not only the needs of the community but also the economic priorities of the Government. A number of changes will transform TAFE NSW and its institutes so that they become more flexible and autonomous in meeting local needs. The new governance model will see a greater separation and transparency between TAFE NSW and the Department of Education and Communities. TAFE NSW will be given a separate and distinct budget to meet training needs across the State and will be accountable to meet the expectations of the Government. Across the 10 TAFE NSW institutes there will be more authority to make local decisions to manage their business needs and to tailor training to areas of skills growth. TAFE NSW will consult widely with employers and will continue to forge strong partnerships, including commercial ventures with enterprises and other stakeholders.

The New South Wales skills base will be strengthened by improved participation and outcomes in higher-level qualifications at TAFE NSW by disadvantaged groups, including Aboriginal people, people from language backgrounds other than English, people with disability and people who are unemployed. Our Government is committed to increasing the skill of students in the community and to meeting the needs of industries. The New South Wales Government has purchased over \$119 million in training from registered training organisations for more than 31,000 learners under the Strategic Skills Program and will also provide over \$46 million under the Apprenticeship and Trainee Training Program to train more than 43,000 apprentices and trainees. This Government has carefully developed a package of reforms that suit the State's needs and has consulted thoroughly with stakeholders. We have watched what has happened in other States and we have learned from it. For example, only training providers that meet the strictest of quality tests will be allowed to deliver government-subsidised training.

We are ensuring that the delivery of training will not be a race to the bottom by making sure that quality training is provided by quality providers. A comprehensive assessment process will be undertaken to determine which training providers meet the test. We will ensure that students and employers have confidence in the quality of training. In addition, the department will carefully develop a skills list, as I mentioned previously, that specifies which qualifications will be eligible for government subsidies. That also ensures we will not have students undertaking subsidised training that is not linked to jobs. We want to ensure that students who are obtaining qualifications are able to find employment. Both measures—the process of ensuring that only high-quality providers are approved to deliver subsidised training and that training is linked to job outcomes—avoid some of the problems that have occurred in other States.

The Government sought independent advice on student fees and on the level of public subsidies that should be provided for different types and levels of training. Advice has been provided by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal and reviewed by the NSW Skills Board. The New South Wales Department of Education and Communities has already released information about student fees and the rates it will pay for qualifications on the skills list. This considered, independent approach has been followed to ensure that the signals we send to students and the incentives for providers, both public and private, encourage training on demand, not just training for the sake of training. This approach is another example of how the Government has learned from other States, avoiding students taking the shortest or cheapest programs and instead completing quality programs that lead to obtaining employment. These prudent measures will give the public confidence that government funding is being invested wisely and supports quality training.

I should also note that not all training that currently attracts a government subsidy will continue in the future because some training was not well aligned with the job market. There has also been a lot of criticism of the decision made by the Government not to fund, for example, TAFE fine arts programs. Courses in fine arts, including sculpture, visual arts and ceramics, while valued by the community, are areas of low employment growth. As such, since 2013 those courses have been available on a commercial basis, which makes good business sense. Government subsidies should be targeting areas where there is jobs growth and a skills shortage—for example, in health, community services, property and business services. Having said that, I make the point that there are still fine arts programs that attract government subsidies in areas where there is predicted jobs growth as determined by independent labour market forecasts, such as photo imaging.

Because of TAFE NSW's community service obligations and legislative responsibilities, it is still providing Aboriginal cultural arts courses, and Aboriginal students continue to be exempt from fees. This is a balanced approach and one that aligns public funding with skills in demand and also meets social obligations. If this bill is passed, it will result in less efficient and innovative provision of government services. The bill limits the growth of essential skills in New South Wales and limits the capacity of TAFE NSW as the public provider to transform services. It is premised on some misunderstandings of Smart and Skilled and places at risk significant Commonwealth funding rewards. Smart and Skilled is a reform that is suited to the needs of New South Wales as well as our commitment to high-quality training and the role of TAFE NSW as the public provider. It is informed by lessons elsewhere and avoids unintended consequences. The New South Wales Government has struck a prudent balance between encouraging competition and ensuring that there is no race to the bottom. If this bill is passed it will undermine changes and essential reforms that already are in place within TAFE NSW.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan):** I welcome to the public gallery The Old Blokes of Lake Macquarie.

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE** [12.17 p.m.]: I support and endorse the terrific work of my Greens colleague Dr John Kaye in bringing forward the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014 to protect TAFE and to ensure that we continue to have a world-class public provider of vocational training in this State. I have heard a number of Government members suggest that the bill will place a limitation on TAFE. The only limitation will be an obligation on TAFE NSW to continue to exist and to be the primary vocational education and training provider in this State. That is a limitation that everyone involved in the TAFE system will be hoping this Parliament embraces.

The bill will secure the public provision of vocational education and training by reducing TAFE fees and charges, guaranteeing levels of TAFE staffing and resources, and imposing a moratorium on the Government's damaging Smart and Skilled competitive vocational training market. If the bill is not passed, we will see TAFE not die the death of 1,000 cuts but over the next two years die the death of two gross and appalling cuts inflicted by this Government upon TAFE. The specific provisions in the bill to which I draw the

attention of the House are to return TAFE NSW's per student hour funding by the Government to a minimum of the 2010 levels, adjusted for inflation. What will that cost the State? Protecting TAFE will cost the State an estimated budget impact of \$119 million. The bill will also, crucially, remove the ability of the Baird Government to go ahead with its plans to cut approximately \$800 million out of the forward estimates for TAFE—\$800 million out of the world's finest public vocational education provider. If those cuts are allowed to go ahead it will be the death of TAFE. In fact, TAFE stands and falls on whether this legislation succeeds in its path through Parliament.

The bill will also freeze funds to private providers of vocational education and training at 2010-11 levels, adjusted for inflation. That will have a positive benefit on the budget, which will more than make up the increase in funding for TAFE proposed in this bill. The estimated positive impact on the budget of freezing the funds to private providers will be about \$131 million—\$131 million will be saved—and, instead of being spent on an array of private providers without the history, the structure and the obligation to provide services across the State that TAFE has, the money will go back to the public provider and ensure that TAFE has a secure future in New South Wales. The bill will also require the Government to maintain TAFE as the principal provider of technical and further education in New South Wales. It has such a fine history and reputation that providers and governments from around the world have traditionally come to New South Wales to see how good TAFE is; to see how it is that the New South Wales Government has such a fine world-class provider of vocational education.

Tragically, unless this bill succeeds, that reputation will be ripped to shreds. Requiring the Government to maintain TAFE as a principal provider of technical and further education in New South Wales is essential for the future of TAFE and it would consequently impose a block on any government policy that would increase competition with TAFE for the provision of vocational education and training. In particular, it would stop Smart and Skilled. Smart and Skilled would have to be the world's worst euphemism for such a vicious attack on TAFE. Smart and Skilled is neither smart nor skilled. Smart and Skilled, which the Government has been pumping this year, proposes substantially increasing fees to students. Students will, under Smart and Skilled, contribute between 25 per cent and 45 per cent of the cost of their skills education. That will see 20 per cent of students having fee increases of more than \$1,000 and approximately one in eight students having fee increases of more than \$1,500.

Some courses under Smart and Skilled will attract fees of up to \$8,490, which is the cost of an Advanced Diploma of Electrical Engineering, while certificate IV courses will have fees of up to \$4,920 for things such as industrial electronics and control, and renewable energy. These fees cannot be covered by the Higher Education Contribution Scheme. This is money that students will have to pay up front before they can even enrol at TAFE. Smart and Skilled is a dangerous proposal for New South Wales and is disturbingly similar to the Victorian training market that we have seen drive that State's TAFE system literally into the ground. A series of false claims have been made about the impact of this bill, including that it will put at risk hundreds of millions of dollars in Commonwealth funding. The fact is that it will not.

The Northern Territory in its negotiations with the Federal Government managed to retain a clause that provided that every dollar of Commonwealth funding under vocational education and training went to its public provider, and New South Wales can do the same. It allows the responsible Ministers at State and Federal levels to come together and negotiate to protect the public provider. This bill is an essential measure to protect States. My colleague Dr John Kaye has visited more than 20 TAFEs around the State in the past 12 months. He is a fabulous advocate for public education and a wonderful advocate for TAFE. I commend his work and I commend the bill.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE** [12.23 p.m.]: I will say a few words about the TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014. It certainly concerned me before and upon coming to government that the TAFE system, which we had been very proud of, after 16 years of Labor and its misguided policies had become quite a basket case—perhaps even a basket-weaving case. The problems we saw in TAFE were such that it was critical for the Government to address some of those issues as quickly as possible. We faced a situation where the Government's contribution to public education through the TAFE system was at risk. The problems that we continue to see with these sorts of bills from The Greens and the Opposition is that they simply do not take account of modern reality, modern conditions, and the fundamental limitation that we all face: We cannot go on living beyond our means. It is all very well for members of The Greens who will never be in government—except for their one experience in Tasmania, which almost wove Tasmania into a basket case—

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** It worked so well for Labor.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** It worked so well for Labor in Tasmania. It is all very well to put forward these sorts of idealistic and perhaps nonsensical proposals, but if you do not address the problems you are doing completely the reverse of what you intend. Instead of growing a great institution like TAFE, you continue to put at risk both TAFE and the contribution by New South Wales to public education. We had to deal with issues such as absolutely gross work practices in some TAFE institutions, which contributed to a continual blowout in costs.

**Dr John Kaye:** Blowout in costs?

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** Yes, blowout in costs.

**Dr John Kaye:** What is this nonsense?

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** I think he knows more about the State's finances than you do.

**Dr John Kaye:** Under Labor.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** The system had no accountability and no contribution to outcomes.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! I remind Dr John Kaye that interjections are disorderly at all times.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** Very concerning to me was the fact that the TAFE system was succumbing to competition from the private sector. Instead of being a lean, modern competitive organisation, it was a fat, unaccountable organisation that was not able to compete with the private sector. Of course, its product was more often designed to suit the teachers and special interest groups than to develop skills to meet the needs of students. Our economy is under increasing competition, particularly from neighbours to our north. There is a major problem with our costs base and an increasing problem in terms of appropriate skills—those talents that the Hon. Robert Brown spoke about in his contribution to the debate; the sorts of skills that are needed to contribute to productivity, innovation and economic growth in this State. The Government has introduced some very difficult reforms. This is an area where we have been prepared to make hard decisions rather than take the easy way out, which was the hallmark of State Labor governments for 16 years.

I will talk about the budget and its treatment of the TAFE system. The impact of the separation of TAFE NSW from the Department of Education and Communities changes the comparisons between the department's 2014-15 budget and those of prior years. Effective 1 July 2014, the TAFE Commission will become a separate entity within the Education and Communities cluster, which members know. For the 2014-15 State budget, financial information for the TAFE Commission is presented separately from the Department of Education and Communities. As a result of the separation of TAFE—

**Dr John Kaye:** Point of order: The member is anticipating a matter that is before the House, which is the budget. He is out of order.

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** To the point of order: If the member understood the standing orders, he would realise that anticipation cannot be used in relation to budget estimates.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! I do not uphold the point of order.

**Dr John Kaye:** To the point of order—

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! I have ruled on the member's point of order. I did not uphold his point of order. There is no point of order.

**Dr John Kaye:** You're wrong.

**The Hon. Catherine Cusack:** Point of order: Dr John Kaye just said, "You're wrong." He is completely contemptuous of your ruling. I ask that he be asked to withdraw the remark.



**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! I did not hear him say that. The microphone must have been off at the time.

*[Interruption]*

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! If Mr Jeremy Buckingham wants to contribute to this debate, I suggest that he seek the call and not heckle across the Chamber. The Hon. Greg Pearce has the call.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** As I was saying, as a result of the separation of TAFE from the department, certain factors need to be taken into consideration when comparing the Department of Education and Communities expenses budget for 2014-15 against previous years. For example, prior to separation all of TAFE's financial transactions were recorded as part of the department for the purposes of presenting consolidated financial statements in the State budget papers for the Department of Education and Communities. When preparing consolidated statements now, accounting conventions require that transactions that occur within the department are eliminated, in order to ensure that these transactions are not double counted. Also as a result of the separation the TAFE Commission will receive some of its operational funding in the form of a grant that is provided from Treasury through the Department of Education and Communities under the Cluster Grant Funding Service group.

The pass-through funding from the Cluster Grant Funding Service group also should be taken into consideration when comparing the department's expenses to prior years. After adjusting for the impact of these factors on the department's 2014-15 expenses budget, the total 2014-15 expenses allocation for education, training and early childhood education is \$14.44 billion—a \$612 million increase on last year's revised expenditure. Questions were asked during the debate. The Hon. Paul Green was concerned about whether the Government had any plans to privatise TAFE. I can certainly say that so far as I am aware the Government is making changes to ensure the training system supports the State's economic and social goals, as set out in "NSW 2021: making NSW number one". Is the New South Wales Government privatising TAFE? The answer is no. The Government is not abandoning the public provider or disadvantaging individuals or communities.

Instead, the Government is deliberately and progressively encouraging and supporting TAFE NSW to be more efficient and more responsive to the needs of students, enterprises and the communities it serves. I reiterate the comments of my colleagues regarding the Statement of Owner Expectations. This makes plain that TAFE NSW continues to be the public provider. This will provide stability during a period of reform and set the benchmark for quality training in this State. Another question was whether the Government will continue to fund TAFE, at least at the inflation rate. The framing of that question is a misconception. Budgets always have limits. I certainly have had to work very hard on that in the past few years. Those budget limits include education, which includes TAFE. This Government has had to make a number of tough decisions about its budget. We have had to live within our means—something foreign to the Labor Party and certainly unknown to The Greens.

The New South Wales Government is committed to TAFE. One has only to look at the Statement of Owner Expectations to verify that commitment. The intention of this Government is to continue to fund TAFE and to empower TAFE institutions to operate more autonomously. The New South Wales Government wants TAFE to be more flexible and responsive. I shall say more about students with a disability shortly, but TAFE NSW is committed to continuing to support people from disadvantaged groups, including Aboriginal groups, young people and people with disabilities, and provide them with the training they need to secure a job. TAFE NSW will continue to offer fee concessions and exemptions for disadvantaged students under Smart and Skilled. The Government's commitment to continued funding for students with disabilities and to strong outcomes cannot be disputed or doubted.

The trend for students with disabilities has been shifting to longer and higher level courses. These students are being supported to achieve higher quality outcomes. For Certificate III and above courses there were 21,842 students with disabilities, or a 6 per cent increase between 2012 and 2013. From 2009 to 2013 there was a 49 per cent increase in students with disabilities enrolled in Certificate III level and above courses. In 2013, 4,215 students with disabilities were enrolled in diploma level and above courses, an increase of 10 per cent from 2012. From 2009 to 2013 there has been a 56 per cent increase in students with disabilities studying at diploma level and above.

Correspondingly, between 2012 and 2013 there has been a decrease in the number of students with disabilities enrolled in courses without qualification outcomes: a 9.1 per cent decrease in statements of

attainment, a 14.4 per cent decrease in short courses and a 4.2 per cent decrease in other TAFE statements. The figures reflect the positive outcomes of TAFE NSW's strategy for all students, including students with disabilities, to move into higher qualifications. The Government remains committed to these outcomes and this provision. As mentioned previously, the ongoing commitment of this Government to disadvantaged students and communities is explicit in the Statement of Owner Expectations. As such, the Government is providing funding to TAFE NSW to ensure that quality training is accessible across the State. Part 2.1 of the statement states clearly:

TAFE NSW is required to manage an effective and sustainable network of Institutes in order to provide access to essential training services across NSW regions.

This includes both campus-based delivery and more flexible delivery to suit the full range of learners, including those who expect online and blended delivery as well as in classrooms. Any suggestion that TAFE is in a state of collapse just because it is making changes to its courses is pure scaremongering by Labor and The Greens. For example, in preparation for Smart and Skilled, TAFE institutes are making adjustments to ensure the qualifications they offer align to the new Skills List, which specifies the qualifications eligible for government subsidies because they build skills that are in demand and aligned to jobs growth.

Preliminary 2014 data indicates that TAFE institutes have increased their involvement in Skills List qualifications significantly. This is an ideal preparation and shows that TAFE can succeed in this new environment. It is operating like a business, as it should. It is clear that this Government expects TAFE NSW to operate efficiently and to compete more effectively. As previous speakers have noted, TAFE institutes already are responding to this challenge, which should be commended. Through enterprise agreement negotiations, TAFE has agreed to trial new flexible teaching roles that will support more flexible delivery.

In relation to the range of skill in the regional areas that this Government is supporting through TAFE, I need only point to some of the capital works programs that are currently on course and included in the budget papers. For example, at Cooma TAFE a commitment of nearly \$6 million is allocated to a project that involves a carpentry and joinery workshop and a student support facility. At Kurri Kurri TAFE there is a plant and heavy vehicle training centre. At Maitland TAFE there is a centre for dry wall plastering and associated trades.

**Dr John Kaye:** You are reading the budget documents.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** I am giving examples to back up what I have just said. They are the types of courses that the Government is supporting.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! Dr John Kaye will cease interjecting and allow the member with the call to continue his speech.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** Work is being undertaken at Mudgee TAFE. At the Nepean College at Kingswood TAFE the project includes health and support services facilities and other work. Refurbishment works at the Nirimba TAFE total nearly \$10 million. At Tamworth TAFE work is being undertaken on community services, health, plumbing and disability facilities. Taree TAFE is undergoing a facilities upgrade. Several other projects are already underway and we should be proud because we are working around the State. I can take members through the metropolitan projects as well.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! I remind Dr John Kaye that he will have an opportunity to respond to the debate. I call Dr John Kaye to order for the first time.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** In relation to some of the new projects, it is fantastic that this Government is redirecting services that TAFE can deliver but is also ensuring that expenditure is distributed to regional areas in the State. For example, at Newcastle, the Hunter Institute has a refurbishment project for one of its buildings. The New England Institute has a country New South Wales connected learning project. The Government is working on major new works to assist with web-based service delivery. Indeed, an external system redevelopment is underway, which is a \$4 million project.

*[Interruption]*

I thought this was an important point. I have not been speaking a lot in debate lately, but this is an important bill.

**Mr Jeremy Buckingham:** You are utterly disingenuous in everything you say.

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** No, I feel very strongly about it.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order!

**The Hon. GREG PEARCE:** It is interesting that Dr John Kaye is happy to take up all the time he wants—he once spoke for six hours on a bill. But when someone else wants to make a contribution he takes offence and is offensive about it. I thought Dr John Kaye was better than that.

**Dr JOHN KAYE** [12.44 p.m.], in reply: I would have liked the opportunity to respond to some of the outrageous suggestions made by the opponents to TAFE Changes Moratorium (Secure Future for Public Provision of Vocational Education and Training) Bill 2014, but I do not have time to do that now, thanks to the previous speaker's filibustering. I thank the members who spoke in favour of the bill and those who spoke against it—including, it appears, one in favour of the bill, Adam Smith, our "newest" member of Parliament, which is good news! It is not true that the State would supposedly lose \$400 million of revenue. The National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform is clear. There are matters that can be excluded from the entitlements trading at the discretion of the State. The State could choose to implement clause 28 of the agreement without the damage that the Smart and Skilled initiative will do. I commend the bill to the House.

**DEPUTY-PRESIDENT (The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones):** Order! Dr John Kaye mentioned that he does not have time for his reply. I advise him that he still has 18 minutes remaining.

**Dr JOHN KAYE:** I am aware that I have 18 minutes remaining to complete my speech, but I am also aware that we the House will adjourn for lunch at 1.00 p.m. We need to go in Committee. I am more concerned about the future of TAFE than I am about speaking longer in reply.

**Question—That this bill be now read a second time—put.**

**Division called for.**

**Call for a division, by leave, withdrawn.**

**Question—That this bill be now read a second time—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

#### **Suspension of Standing Orders: Instruction to Committee of the Whole**

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE** [12.46 p.m.]: I move:

That standing orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that it be an instruction to the Committee of the Whole that it has the power to consider an amendment relating to a staffing agreement to establish and maintain qualified permanent educational staff.

I thank members for their willingness to deal with this matter. I do not intend to speak very long on this matter as it is based on the recommendation from the Clerks. This is an important issue to be considered in the Committee of the Whole. I would seek the support of members to allow this amendment to be considered.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### **Instruction to Committee of the Whole**

**Motion by the Hon. Penny Sharpe agreed to:**

That it be an instruction to the Committee of the Whole that it has the power to consider an amendment relating to a staffing agreement to establish and maintain qualified permanent educational staff.

**In Committee****Clauses 1 to 7 agreed to.**

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE** [12.50 p.m.]: I move Opposition amendment No. 1 on sheet C2014-026:

No. 1 Page 2. Insert after line 31:

**8 Staffing agreement to establish and maintain qualified permanent educational staff**

- (1) The Minister must ensure that a three-year staffing agreement for TAFE staff, based on the 2007 TAFE staffing agreement, is entered into as soon as practicable after the commencement of this Act.
- (2) It is the intention of Parliament that, in setting permanency ratios under the staffing agreement, the level is set at no lower than the permanency ratios for the first semester of 2006.
- (3) During the term of the staffing agreement the Minister is to work towards ensuring a minimum permanency ratio for educational employees below the level of Head Teacher of 2 permanent employees to every one casual employee.

This is a straightforward amendment. TAFE training and education is different to that provided by private organisations. Part of the reason for that is the training and permanency of staff who have delivered that training for a very long time. Qualified, permanent educational staff in the TAFE sector is important. When Labor was last in government it worked closely with TAFE to look at staffing agreements which did not move too far in respect of casualisation. Casuals have a role to play within the TAFE system, but that does not replace a permanent staffing arrangement. This amendment proposes that the Minister ensures that a three-year staffing agreement for TAFE staff looks at how we can get a reasonable ratio of permanent staff to casual staff—namely, a ratio of 2:1.

**The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK** [12.51 p.m.]: The Government does not support the amendment. Casual staff were a feature of the TAFE workforce well before we came to office. In fact, Labor was responsible for introducing casual staff to TAFE. It did that because casual staff are an integral part of TAFE's workforce and give TAFE the ability to respond to industry needs. This is about the service TAFE provides; it is not about providing a closed workforce. TAFE relies on having a large proportion of casual staff to ensure that its teaching is relevant and current to industry needs.

A staffing agreement in the terms contained in the amendment would be inflexible, would not meet the business and operational interests of TAFE NSW, and would not allow TAFE to respond to industry and student needs. Such an agreement would ensure that TAFE would fail and not be competitive in today's dynamic training market. Any agreement that would return staffing to the arrangements that applied prior to 2006 would not be relevant in the current policy context. In fact, it is doubtful that the amendment would work. TAFE staff are now covered by Julia Gillard's Fair Work Australia, so it is doubtful it is even within the power of this Parliament to be making these sorts of legislative arrangements.

**Dr JOHN KAYE** [12.52 p.m.]: The Greens support the amendment. This sensible amendment will stop TAFE becoming entirely casualised. It puts a bottom line on the casualisation of TAFE. I congratulate Labor on this amendment. It is a statement of commitment to a TAFE that has permanent full-time teachers at its core. I disagree entirely with the argument of the Parliamentary Secretary. This is an instruction to the Minister to ensure matters and the Minister can do so by way of policy and direction to the TAFE Commission. I commend the amendment to the Committee.

**Question—That Opposition amendment No. 1 [C2014-026] be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Opposition amendment No. 1 [C2014-026] agreed to.**

**New clause 8 agreed to.**

**Title agreed to.**

**Bill reported from Committee with amendment.**

**Adoption of Report****Motion by Dr John Kaye agreed to:**

That the report be adopted.

**Report adopted.**

**Third reading set down as an order of the day for a later hour.**

**APPROPRIATION BILL 2014****APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL 2014****APPROPRIATION (BUDGET VARIATIONS) BILL 2014****STATE REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2014**

**Bills received, and read a first time and ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox.**

**Question—That these bills be considered urgent bills—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Declaration of urgency agreed to.**

**Second reading set down as an order of the day for a later hour.**

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

**The Hon. LUKE FOLEY** (Leader of the Opposition) [12.58 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that Private Members' Business item No. 1795 outside the Order of Precedence, relating to an inquiry by General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 into the performance of the NSW Environment Protection Authority, be called on forthwith.

**Division called for.**

**Call for a division, by leave, withdrawn.**

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Order of Business**

**Motion by the Hon. Luke Foley agreed to:**

That Private Members' Business item No. 1795 outside the Order of Precedence be called on forthwith.

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 5****Reference: Inquiry into the Performance of the NSW Environment Protection Authority**

**The Hon. LUKE FOLEY** (Leader of the Opposition) [1.02 p.m.]: I move:

- (1) That General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 inquire and report on the performance of the NSW Environment Protection Authority [EPA], and in particular:
  - (a) measure the EPA's recent performance against its objectives pursuant to section 6 of the Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991,

- (b) that the following cases be considered:
- (i) land contamination issues at Botany and Hillsdale,
  - (ii) EPA investigations and public statements about the effects of coal dust pollution in the Hunter,
  - (iii) EPA investigation into ground water contamination in the Pilliga by Santos' coal seam gas exploration,
  - (iv) the prosecution of Du Pont (Australia) Ltd for the alleged offence of land pollution in the western Sydney suburb of Girraween,
  - (v) the regulation of cruise passenger ships at the White Bay Cruise Terminal at Balmain, and
- (c) any other related matters.

(2) That the committee report by 6 November 2014.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN** [1.03 p.m.]: I move:

That the question be amended by omitting in paragraph 2 "6 November 2014" and inserting instead "14 February 2015".

**Dr MEHREEN FARUQI** [1.03 p.m.]: I move:

That the question be amended by inserting after paragraph 1(b) (v):

"(vi) EPA responses to waste accumulation and the stockpile fire at the Chester Hill recycling facility".

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE** [1.03 p.m.]: I move:

That the question be amended by inserting after paragraph 1 (b) (v):

"(vi) The regulation of forestry practices in Royal Camp State Forest".

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

**Amendment of the Hon. Robert Brown agreed to.**

**Question—That the amendment of Mr David Shoebridge be agreed to—put.**

**The House divided.**

#### **Ayes, 19**

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

#### **Noes, 18**

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

#### **Pairs**

Ms Voltz	Mr Gay
Mr Wong	Mr Harwin

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Amendment of Mr David Shoebridge agreed to.**

**Question—That the amendment of Dr Mehreen Faruqi be agreed to—put and resolved in the negative.**

**Amendment of Dr Mehreen Faruqi negatived.**

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

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

*[The Deputy-President (The Hon. Jennifer Gardiner) left the chair at 1.16 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**

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#### **WHITE BAY CRUISE SHIP TERMINAL**

**The Hon. LUKE FOLEY:** My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Freight. In the light of complaints from Balmain residents who live near the White Bay cruise terminal, will he require ships berthing at White Bay to switch to fuel with a sulphur content of 0.1 per cent or less, as required in the European Union and in the United States of America, to protect local residents?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his valid question in relation to a matter of concern to the local community. I am aware of undertakings given by shipping companies in Europe in relation to fuel. Fuel content and the parts of the cruise ship industry to which he refers are not part of my portfolio to regulate but are the responsibility of the Environment Protection Authority [EPA]. I have had discussions with cruise ship companies and indicated that they should be considering putting forward a plan for the future, as is happening in other countries. I will continue to have that dialogue. I do not think anything can be changed overnight, but it is certainly important to be aspirational, particularly when it comes to issues like smells in the community and when there are world standards that appear to be different from the practice in Australia.

The cruise ship industry is important to the State. It brings in a lot of money and provides a lot of enjoyment to our people. The people who set off from White Bay comprise mostly the domestic market. They are mostly Australians who are taking cruises in the Pacific whereas the larger ships that berth at Circular Quay are more round-the-world ships. However, neither berth is exclusive on the basis of which ship is visiting Sydney and what is happening. The point is that the cruise ship industry generates a lot of money in the State and a lot of people are employed in that industry. Of course, that does not mean that things should not be done properly. I understand the concerns of the Leader of the Opposition and the community's concerns in relation to smells and noise. Those matters are currently the responsibility of Sydney Ports, which will later become the New South Wales Port Authority, and we are working with the community to overcome the problems.

#### **QUEANBEYAN BYPASS AND KINGS HIGHWAY UPGRADE**

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR:** My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Freight. Will he update the House in relation to the Government's announcement to begin the construction of the Queanbeyan Bypass and upgrades to the Kings Highway?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I have been waiting for this question for some time.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** "It doesn't matter who they vote for, they'll get it." That's what I've seen.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** We have just heard from the man that Queanbeyan bypassed. If he and his former Federal colleague had still been the members representing Queanbeyan, the people of Queanbeyan

would not be getting the bypass. The people of Queanbeyan understand that and they remember that. The Hon. Steve Whan said it was in Labor's plan. We went back and looked at Labor's plan. It had a plan, but the bypass was never in there.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** I have never said that. Stop telling lies, Duncan. Stop telling lies. I never put it in there; I'll admit that. I built a hospital instead.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** He did not have it in the plan. As part of the budget's historic \$5.5 billion allocation to Roads, Maritime and Freight, \$2.2 million was allocated to finalise planning and preconstruction activities for the Queanbeyan bypass, which is also called the Ellerton Drive extension—or the "We Love John Barilaro" bypass. The allocation is in addition to the historic announcement in Queanbeyan last week by both the Deputy Prime Minister of Australia, Warren Truss, and the Deputy Premier, Andrew Stoner, to jointly fund the \$50 million construction of the bypass. Country Labor had long promised the people and businesses of Queanbeyan a bypass.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** No, we didn't.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** He says no.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** We did not have Country Labor then.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** The record will show that after a Community Cabinet meeting in February 2009 the former member for Monaro promised to get back to them with a route location. That is doubletalk that means, "I hear. I am sort of promising I'm going to do it but I'm not really going to do it. I don't give a damn about you. I don't care about you." That is "polispeak". We heard him. We watched him. He came from the "Walt school of deportment" in that regard. That is why he is sitting on the loser's lounge and that is why Walt is having problems with his preselection. The Federal and New South Wales governments have committed \$25 million each, including \$12.5 million from Restart NSW.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** But you've cut funding for the Kings Highway.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** We have not cut funding.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** You have cut funding for the Kings Highway.

**The Hon. Walt Secord:** You slashed it.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** Mr President, that is the most outrageous lie I have heard from an outrageous liar in this place.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The Minister will resume his seat. Both the Hon. Steve Whan and the Minister have accused each other of lying during the course of this answer. Both were being unparliamentary. The Minister was on his feet when he was called a liar. Both members will cease calling each other liars as it is unparliamentary. The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** Mr President, I accept your ruling. The facts will speak for themselves. The Federal and State Coalition governments have committed \$25 million each, including \$12.5 million from Restart NSW to construct a 4.6 kilometre two-lane carriageway linking the end of Ellerton Drive to the new Edwin Land Parkway intersection at Old Cooma Road. [*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR:** I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer on the Queanbeyan bypass and the Kings Highway?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** A bridge also will be built over the Queanbeyan River. The extension of Ellerton Drive not only will ease congestion in Queanbeyan's busy central business district [CBD] but also will provide better access for new housing estates in the area and maintain a connection between east and west Queanbeyan during a one-in-100-year flood. Both governments will work closely with the Queanbeyan City Council to deliver this vital piece of regional road infrastructure, with construction to start in mid-2015 and completion of the project expected in 2017.



The communities of both the Monaro and Bega regions also will enjoy record levels of funding towards safety upgrades on the Kings Highway. In 2013-14, \$4 million was allocated to safety works, with another \$10 million committed in yesterday's budget, including \$6 million for sections of the highway in the Monaro and \$4 million for sections in the Bega region. This is part of an overall \$20 million three-year funding package to be completed by the end of 2016.

**The Hon. Trevor Khan:** How much?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** It is \$20 million. In addition to these safety works, yesterday's budget also includes funding for pavement resurfacing at numerous locations along the Kings Highway.

**The Hon. Greg Donnelly:** The budget was on Tuesday, Duncan. Wake up!

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** Tuesday. I have been waiting for those opposite to ask a question about this, but they are obviously not interested. With the successful leasing of recent assets, the Government has also reserved funding for a \$200 million Regional Freight Pinch Point and Safety Program, including proposed improvements to the Kings Highway, amongst others— *[Time expired.]*

### TAFE NSW AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** My question is directed to the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra. Further to the Minister's answer yesterday about employment opportunities for people with disabilities and in light of the budget papers showing that TAFE may not reach enrolment and completion targets due to funding cuts, what action is he taking to ensure that people with disabilities are able to access vocational training?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** Any suggestion that students with a disability—any disability—will lose support services is just another mistruth from those opposite. The changes happening across the State and in the Illawarra are simply a change in administration, not a loss of services. Basically, the way the money is administered will not be in bulk as an estimate to TAFE but, rather, through a loading via each disability student enrolled. It is individualised funding. The scaremongering from those opposite is baseless and there is not one ounce of truth in it.

The New South Wales Government supports the educational needs of people with disability to get into paid employment, which is largely supported by TAFE. Maintaining and improving disability supports in TAFE will continue and those opposite need to stop trying to twist the reality of this situation. The truth is that this Government provides significant levels of education and training for people with disabilities. In 2013 around 10 per cent of all enrolments in TAFE NSW were by people with a disability. The outcomes for students with a disability are impressive. In 2013 more than 16,400 students with a disability graduated from TAFE NSW.

The trend for students with a disability has been a shift to longer and higher-level courses. These students are being supported to achieve higher-quality outcomes. For certificate III and above courses, there were 21,842 students with disabilities, or a 6 per cent increase, between 2012 and 2013. From 2009 to 2013, there was a 49 per cent increase in students with disabilities enrolled in certificate III and above level qualifications. In 2013 there were 4,215 students with disabilities enrolled in diploma and above level qualifications—an increase of 10 per cent from 2012. From 2009 to 2013, there has been a 56 per cent increase in the number of students with disabilities studying at diploma level and above. The figures reflect the positive outcomes of TAFE NSW's strategy for all students, including students with disabilities, to move into higher qualifications.

TAFE Smart and Skilled reforms, or the new administration of disability supports, will be introduced in New South Wales from 1 January next year to give people the chance to gain the skills they need to get a job and advance their careers. The special support that TAFE NSW provides for these students plays a large part in their success. When students enrol in TAFE NSW they are asked to indicate whether they have a disability, impairment or long-term condition. They are also asked whether they require assistance with their studies. In 2013 almost 27,000 students with a disability said they required support. That means more than 47 per cent of students with a disability said they required support. Under Smart and Skilled, students with a disability will be supported through price loadings, TAFE community service obligation funding, and fee exemptions and concessions. TAFE NSW will receive community service obligation funding that recognises the Government's expectations that TAFE will provide additional support to meet the needs of disadvantaged learners.

**NEEDLES GAP DAM PROPOSAL**

**Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM:** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Roads and Freight, representing the Deputy Premier. Given the Federal Leader of the National Party, Warren Truss, has said of the proposed Needles Gap Dam, "There's no point in building a dam and filling it with water unless there are really people who are committed to actually using it", and the Deputy Premier of New South Wales could not tell the *Sydney Morning Herald* what the water from the dam will be used for, will the Minister inform the House of one user—just one user—who will use water from this \$150 million dam?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I thank the honourable member for his question. Part of the question was to name one user. As I do regularly, after I have read *The Land* I sit down and read that great periodical the *Central Western Daily*. The *Central Western Daily* is well read through the Central West, and in fact it contained an article headed, "Greens MP Slams Needles Gap Dam". As I had a couple of moments on my side, I read through it. There was some discussion from someone called "Leafman"—

**Mr Jeremy Buckingham:** Point of order—

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I cannot hear Mr Jeremy Buckingham.

**Mr Jeremy Buckingham:** The point of order relates to relevance. The question asked the Minister to identify just one user of the proposed dam—one user.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I thank the member for the point of order. The answer was generally relevant.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I assure members that Leafman is a supporter and a potential user. Leafman said:

I used to be a greens supporter, but now the party is run by essentially uneducated, politically driven whingers.

**Mr Jeremy Buckingham:** Point of order: I raise again a point of order regarding relevance. I do not understand how the Minister's contribution relates to the issue of who will use the water.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** You will not let me finish.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! There is a kernel of substance in the member's point of order. I can only assume that Leafman is a person. However, I ask the Minister to get to the substance of his answer as quickly as he can. The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** Leafman said:

I used to be a greens supporter, but now the party is run by essentially uneducated, politically driven whingers. We just cannot go back to running around the bush with spears and boomerangs. We have to have water security and the greens complain about every idea that isn't theirs no matter how functional their ideas turn out to be.

The member asked me for someone who will use the dam and support it. It is Leafman—hero of the Central West.

**Mr Jeremy Buckingham:** Point of order—

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** It is in the *Central Western Daily*—his home paper.

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

**Mr Jeremy Buckingham:** This is the third time I have raised a point of order on relevance. The Minister is nearing the end of his time for answering the question and he still has not identified one user of this proposed dam—other than a troll, and racial slurs.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! There is most certainly no point of order. The Minister has the call, unless he has concluded his answer.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** It is interesting that those who do not understand the needs of the State's Central West— *[Time expired.]*

**Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM:** I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer by identifying users of the proposed dam with whom the Government has been in contact?

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The supplementary question is a new question.

**Mr Jeremy Buckingham:** Again running interference for them.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Mr Jeremy Buckingham will resume his seat. Were the member's comments directed towards me then?

**Mr Jeremy Buckingham:** Yes, they were, Mr President.

**The PRESIDENT:** Would the member mind repeating the words?

**Mr Jeremy Buckingham:** Again running interference for them.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I thought that is what the member said, because he made similar comments in his adjournment speech last night. His comments are totally and utterly inappropriate. As far as I am concerned, they are also grossly disorderly. In accordance with Standing Order 192 and given that the member has conducted himself in a grossly disorderly manner, I direct the Usher of the Black Rod to remove Mr Jeremy Buckingham from the Chamber. The member is excluded from the Chamber until the termination of the sittings.

*[Pursuant to standing order Mr Jeremy Buckingham left the Chamber, accompanied by the Usher of the Black Rod.]*

#### NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

**The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services. Will the Minister update the House on the progress of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in New South Wales?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I thank the member for her question. On 6 June 2014 the Federal Assistant Minister for Social Services, Senator the Hon. Mitch Fifield, and I joined the State member for Newcastle, Tim Owen, to announce that 2,000 people had signed up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] in the Hunter region. I had the pleasure of meeting and watching Jason, the 2000th participant, sign his Individual Support Plan. Jason is a Special Olympics athlete who will compete in basketball at the National Games in Melbourne in October. Jason spoke about his goals and aspirations and how the NDIS is helping him to be more involved in his local community through volunteering opportunities. On that morning, Senator Fifield and I had the privilege also of meeting with a number of local NDIS clients from Newcastle. They told me how the NDIS is changing their lives for the better and providing them with opportunities they had never had.

It is great that people are making their own decisions about their support needs, including what support is provided, how they want to receive that support and who they want to provide it. The Commonwealth and New South Wales governments are working hard to transition people with disability to the NDIS so that they receive the support they need to live the life they want. We are investing in a new era of disability support so that people with disability can live their lives their way. Signing up 2,000 people is a great achievement and this milestone is testament to the hard work being carried out by both governments and, of course, their responsible departments. We have come a long way in almost a year, and we continue to learn from the trial to make the NDIS the best in New South Wales and, of course, across the country.

I am pleased that the NDIS in New South Wales is running on time and within budget parameters. This is good news for those waiting to have the scheme rolled out in their areas. By the end of the Hunter region trial, approximately 10,000 people with disability in New South Wales will have access to the NDIS. This includes people with disability in the Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Maitland local government areas. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government will continue to work closely with people with disability in the Hunter region and across the State to help them transition to the NDIS as it rolls out progressively.

This scheme is all about giving people with disability the power to choose the supports they need to achieve their goals and aspirations. We should not forget why the NDIS is a revolutionary change for people with disability across the nation. The number of people receiving disability support in New South Wales is expected to grow from 90,000 to 140,000 by 2018—an increase of 64 per cent. Funding for disability services in New South Wales will increase from \$2.7 billion to \$6.4 billion. Next month the trial expands to the Lake Macquarie area. I look forward to continuing the positive work that has been achieved already. As I indicated earlier, I am pleased that the budget again in 2014-15 increases funding for people with a disability.

### STATE TRANSIT AUTHORITY PERFORMANCE REPORTS

**Dr MEHREEN FARUQI:** My question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Freight, representing the Minister for Transport. Why has the Government not updated the State Transit Authority quarterly performance reports on its website since September 2013? When will the website be updated with the latest report? What is the Government hiding?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I thank the member for her question. I will answer the last part first. What are we hiding? Nothing. I suspect that if the report is not on the website, it should be. I will check its status with my colleague, that great Minister, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian. I am sure that what will appear will be great. We are not about hiding anything. This is one Government that is open and transparent. Those opposite hate it. Whether it is transport or the fact that we have nearly 50 per cent fewer speed cameras than there were under those opposite, we are open and transparent and we talk about it.

**The Hon. Walt Secord:** That is provocation.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I am not one to provoke anyone.

### MAIN ROAD 54 UPGRADE

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Roads and Freight. Yesterday the Minister told the House that amongst the projects within the budget was "\$2.5 million to start the initial sealing work on Main Road 54, which is the Blayney to Crookwell road." Extensive property title searches at NSW Lands show that the Minister has major property holdings in Crookwell. Did the Minister disclose to Roads and Maritime Services and the Department of Premier and Cabinet that he holds those properties before approval was given to reseal Main Road 54? On what day was the decision to begin resealing made? Was that decision made at arm's length from the Minister?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I inform the House that I live at Crookwell. I do not think there is anyone in the State who does not know I live at Crookwell. There are some people, who are incapable of doing anything sensible and decent, who want to besmirch other people's names. I do not live on that road and do not live close to that road.

**The Hon. Walt Secord:** You have six properties there, scattered throughout Crookwell.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I wish I had properties scattered around there. The Gay family is big. We are original settlers in the area and have been there for a long time. My entire holdings are on Main Road 248, which is the road between Crookwell and Boorowa that goes in the other direction. It is a sealed road except for the dirt section that goes past my property, which is an indication that, even though my father was on the council, he was not a very good councillor. Either I am not a good roads Minister or I am a scrupulously honest roads Minister—which the Hon. Walt Secord would not understand.

This road has been supported by the Regional Organisations of Councils, comprising councils from all over the State. If the Hon. Walt Secord wants to have a smidgeon of decency he should speak to the fellow sitting beside him, who will tell him how important this road is to communities across the State. No matter what sort of sleazy innuendo the Hon. Walt Secord—who is desperately trying to get through a preselection battle—wants to put up, there is nothing that can be spread about something that is totally honourable. If there were something sleazy about it, we would have done it Labor's way. I would not have announced it during question time in the Parliament if there was something dodgy.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** I ask a supplementary question.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Government members will come to order.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD:** Will the Minister elucidate his answer in relation to whether he will now release all correspondence, emails and briefing notes relating to the decision to reseal Main Road 54?

**The Hon. Rick Colless:** Point of order: I submit that that is a new question.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I will permit the supplementary question.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** All the details are open and transparent. If the member has any concerns the usual means are available for him to find out more. It is all there. If he wants to do a freedom of information [FOI]—

**The Hon. Walt Secord:** It is called GIPA, Duncan.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** The member can do whatever he wishes—provided of course he is still here.

### STATE BUDGET

**The Hon. DAVID CLARKE:** Mr President—

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! There has been enough excitement in question time today. Members will listen to the Hon. David Clarke in silence.

**The Hon. DAVID CLARKE:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Fair Trading, representing the Treasurer. Will the Minister update the House on the fiscal rectitude on display in the Government's budget?

**The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX:** I thank the Hon. David Clarke for his excellent question. What a magnificent term "fiscal rectitude" is. Let me reflect for a moment on who coined that term just yesterday. It was Ross Gittins from the *Sydney Morning Herald*. It is a long time since we have seen articles in the *Sydney Morning Herald* praising a conservative government about its budget. Ross Gittins stated:

This budget is a model of fiscal rectitude.

He went on to state:

If voters are looking for good managers of the state's finances, this lot is the best we have seen in a long time.

This budget is about fiscal rectitude. Ross Gittins also stated:

After a long period of below-average growth, the NSW economy is already growing faster than the national average ...

Members opposite may not be aware of that. It is worth reiterating and it is worth re-educating those opposite after their 16 long years of slumber. In that regard, I reflect upon the fiscal strategy in the budget. It is disappointing to see that those opposite do not have any budgets or budget papers—or money boxes—in the House. They have nothing whatsoever with which to bless themselves, so the reality is that I will have to point them to the budget. Fiscal rectitude is defined by this Government's fiscal strategy. I refer members to page 1.7 in Budget Paper No. 2, where it is stated:

... the Government's fiscal strategy is to deliver strong budget results and manageable debt levels that support a strong financial position and the maintenance of the State's triple-A credit rating. This leads to the lowest possible cost of borrowing and secures future investment in infrastructure and frontline services.

It is that simple, and this Government is delivering fiscal rectitude in spades in this budget. Members opposite find it perplexing that they do not have a line of attack for this budget because it has been well received in the press and by men and women on the streets.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

**The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX:** It has been as well received amongst the financial press as the Blues' win last night.

**The Hon. Amanda Fazio:** Point of order: I am trying to listen to the answer being given by the Minister for Fair Trading but there is so much conversation from members on the Government backbench that I cannot hear him. I ask that they be called to order.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The Hon. Amanda Fazio is correct. I cannot hear the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox because of the chatter on the Government backbench. The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX:** I can speak about fiscal rectitude.

**The Hon. Greg Donnelly:** They don't care what you are saying, Matt.

**The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX:** I will speak to the Hon. Greg Donnelly about it because the reality is that Labor members understand fiscal ineptitude, but not fiscal rectitude. We can continue in that vein. As I mentioned yesterday, I am working my way through the budget papers for those opposite. I now refer them to chapter one, page 10 of Budget Paper No. 2. There is an excellent graph, Chart 1.6, which Opposition members should spend some time reflecting upon. It shows the budget result with and without the savings measures that have been implemented by this Government. If those opposite care to take a look, I will explain this in more detail later. [*Time expired.*]

### SANCTUARY POINT POLICE STATION

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Disability Services, representing the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. On 6 March 2011 an article in the *South Coast Register* reported continual antisocial behaviour in the region of Sanctuary Point. In that same article the member for South Coast made a commitment to establish a police station in the area. Will the Government honour its 2011 election commitment to establish a police station in Sanctuary Point or its vicinity before the 2015 election?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I thank the member for his question. It will refer it to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Stuart Ayres, to obtain an answer and then report back to the House.

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Roads and Freight, representing the Minister for Local Government. Will the Government provide a detailed report to the House regarding the ongoing issues and departmental investigation of Sutherland Shire Council, the monitoring of North Sydney Council and Mid Western Regional Council, and the administration of Central Darling Shire Council?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I thank the shadow Minister for Local Government for her question. I had not noticed that.

**The Hon. Sophie Cotsis:** You should have checked Tuesday's *Sydney Morning Herald*.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** It just has not been drawn to my attention.

**The Hon. Sophie Cotsis:** Well you don't read—

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The member will listen to the Minister's answer in silence.

**The Hon. Peter Primrose:** Is the paper delivered to Redfern?

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Opposition members are sailing close to the wind.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** There was not anything in the *South Sydney Herald*. I thank the honourable member for her question on Sutherland, North Sydney, Mid Western and Central Darling councils. I am not aware of the situation. I will take the question on notice and refer it to the Minister for a detailed answer. I would be more than happy to add Sydney City Council if there is a shopping list.

## FREIGHT INFRASTRUCTURE

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS:** I address my question to the Minister for Roads and Freight. Will the Minister inform the House about Government investments in infrastructure, including the Cobb Highway, to improve freight productivity in New South Wales?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** The Government is spending a large amount of money on roads and the freight network in New South Wales, including Main Road 52, which Country Labor supports.

**The Hon. Walt Secord:** It is 54.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** Sorry. We are spending \$50 million on the Cobb and Silver City highways. The Labor Party does not care about that but we are doing it. The Government would welcome the Labor Party putting a press release out in southern New South Wales criticising the fact that we are putting major links in across this State. An efficient and effective freight network is the cornerstone of our State's economic growth and productivity, generating almost \$60 million each year and employing 500,000 people.

For 16 years under those opposite freight was considered a dirty word, shamefully locked away in the corner of a darkened dingy room with Walt's etchings. Today freight is at the forefront of our economy. Indeed, we are fast becoming the "State of freight". Pleasingly, the budget places a particular focus on improving road and rail freight infrastructure in rural and regional New South Wales. For example, \$283 million has been allocated in 2014-15, including \$99.4 million from New South Wales, to continue work on the Northern Sydney Freight Corridor to improve rail freight access through the Sydney to Newcastle rail corridor between Strathfield and Broadmeadow. This work will result in significant efficiency gains for rail freight flowing between north-west New South Wales and Port Botany, including cotton, wool and containerised grains.

Other key initiatives for freight infrastructure and services in the 2014-15 budget include \$77 million, with \$46 million from New South Wales, to support productivity and safety for road freight in country New South Wales. It includes measures such as extending the Bridges for the Bush program to upgrade or replace higher mass limit deficient bridges, and building and upgrading truck rest areas. In addition, a further \$44 million in funding has been allocated to continue the maintenance and upgrade of grain rail lines in country New South Wales as part of the \$277 million five-year works program that started in 2012-13. Some \$6 million has been allocated to commence a program of rail infrastructure upgrades at key sites on the Country Regional Network, which will help improve loading times for trains moving grain to our ports. As I indicated in the House yesterday, this work will include lengthening sidings to reduce or eliminate delays caused by having to shunt trains that will not fit into shorter sidings.

Funding of \$5 million has been allocated to continue upgrades to Gocup Road—isn't it time that money was there? We could not get it out of Albo or his mates or Country Labor. We have had to do it ourselves. Gocup Road links the Hume and Snowy Mountains highways between Gundagai and Tumut. These upgrades will cater for the increased number of heavy vehicles that carry timber and other cargo to forestry mills in the Tumut Valley. A further \$3 million has been allocated for the Port Botany Landside Improvement Strategy—a program to maximise the amount of trade through the port by making the landside supply chain more efficient. *[Time expired.]*

## COUNTERTERRORISM MEASURES

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** I address my question without notice to the Leader of the Government, representing the Premier. What action is the Attorney General and the NSW Police Force taking to investigate and apprehend young Australian Muslims who are joining the bloody Islamist terrorist organisation the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Syria and Iraq? Have arrest warrants been issued for people such as New South Wales residents Khaled Sharrouf and Mohamed Elomar? Will steps be taken to cancel their Australian citizenship in cooperation with the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I thank the honourable member for his question. I understand his concerns about this issue. My colleague the Minister for Ageing has just advised me that the member's question is very similar to another question he has asked recently. I understand that an answer to the member's earlier question will be provided at the end of question time today. I undertake to take his new question to the Premier if there is a slight difference in the two questions and today's question is not fully answered by the answer that will be provided later today.

**STATE BUDGET AND RURAL AND REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES**

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** My question without notice is directed to the Leader of the Government, representing the Premier. What is the Government's response to criticisms levelled at the State budget by the President of the NSW Farmers Association, Fiona Simson, who said that the funding to rural, regional and coastal New South Wales was "a paltry sum when compared to the money being lavished on Sydney" and that it was "very Sydney-centric"?

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** I am disappointed to hear those comments. I can only imagine that they were made before she read the budget. One only has to look at our great \$5.5 billion Roads budget. How much of that money is to be spent in regional New South Wales?

**The Hon. Walt Secord:** How much is Federal money?

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** The Hon. Walt Secord tries to talk over me.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I have dealt with the matter. The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** Those opposite do not like the fact that of the \$5.5 billion some \$4 billion is going into regional New South Wales. It upsets Walt Secord more than anything to see regional New South Wales getting a fair share of the pie.

**The Hon. Walt Secord:** That is absolutely untrue. You are misrepresenting me.

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

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** There is more to New South Wales than holiday destinations on the North Coast. People who have never been to inland New South Wales or to Packsaddle, people who have never travelled on the Cobb and Silver City highways, people who have never been on Main Road 54 or Truck Road 39, and people who do not know how people exist in rural New South Wales should not pass comment. All I can say in answer to the question, as I indicated before, is that I am disappointed in those comments. They must have been made before the budget was delivered, because anyone reading the budget—and adding up the investment in water, roads, hospitals and education in regional New South Wales—would realise that it is an absolute cracker. The "Leader of the Opposition" in this place is Dr John Kaye. He is the only one who is prosecuting a case, albeit that it is a weird case. I called him the "Leader of the Opposition" because he is the only one who is out there prosecuting a coherent case. We have not seen John Robertson hit any mark on this. Not even Dr John Kaye was critical of the amount of money that went to regional New South Wales.

**ILLAWARRA INFRASTRUCTURE**

**The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY:** My question is addressed to the Minister for the Illawarra. Will the Minister update the House on the Government's infrastructure investments in New South Wales and the Illawarra?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** How sad it is to see those opposite make incorrect claims about this Government's infrastructure spending in the Illawarra.

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

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I will not be lectured by those opposite about infrastructure spending in the Illawarra. Those opposite took the Illawarra for granted during their 16 years in government. They failed to deliver in the Illawarra, yet they indulged famously in extravagant expenditure and economic vandalism elsewhere. The people of the Illawarra would have benefited from an investment of \$500 million for infrastructure, which is the amount those opposite wasted on the Rozelle metro. This was the metro to nowhere—where not a single metre of track was laid. That is a \$500 million example of expenditure under Labor which did not go to hospitals, schools, roads and transport infrastructure in the Illawarra. We must remember that, during this period, there were five Labor members of Parliament for the Illawarra. Yet they were nowhere to be seen when it came to the lack of infrastructure spending in the Illawarra. Why were they not advocating that the money wasted instead be spent in the Illawarra region?



**The Hon. Amanda Fazio:** Point of order: The question asked the Minister to explain the Government's infrastructure expenditure in the Illawarra—not to talk about what happened in the past. I ask that the Minister be directed to answer the question that was asked of him.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! There is no point of order. The Minister is being generally relevant.

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** Why were those members not advocating that the money wasted instead be spent in the Illawarra? A number of Labor members of Parliament purport to represent the Illawarra region.

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

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** The \$500 million could have been spent on 4,335 teachers in the Illawarra, 1,000 new classrooms in the Illawarra, 4,675 nurses in the Illawarra; 110 new air-conditioned carriages for the Illawarra-South Coast line, 3,900 additional police officers or 50 easy access upgrades for stations in the Illawarra. If the former Government had not wasted this \$500 million then maybe we would have seen the upgrading of the Unanderra train station during their 16 years in government.

Let us look in a bit more detail at total infrastructure expenditure in the Illawarra electorates of Heathcote, Keira, Kiama, Shellharbour and Wollongong. In the 2009-10 budget the former Labor Government spent \$400 million on infrastructure in the Illawarra. In 2010-11 the infrastructure spend went down to \$397 million. Let us compare that to the budgets delivered by this Government. The 2014-15 budget allocated \$514 million to infrastructure spending for the Illawarra. Where were the Labor Party members from the Illawarra during those years when money was not being invested in infrastructure? When one looks at a graph of infrastructure spending, one notes the massive dip in spending during the years of the Labor Government. What a shame. And yet those opposite get up and talk about infrastructure spending in the Illawarra. I know that those opposite really struggle to explain the lack of infrastructure spending during their time in government. [*Time expired.*]

### HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

**Ms JAN BARHAM:** My question is directed to the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, representing the Minister for Family and Community Services. Noting that the one-year extension to the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness [NPAH] expires on 30 June, that the Commonwealth Government's extension has committed \$44 million less for homelessness services and that there has been no commitment from the New South Wales Government to extend NPAH-funded homelessness services, will the Minister advise what arrangements and funding commitments have been put in place to ensure homelessness services that were funded under NPAH and that were not covered by the recent Going Home Staying Home packages will continue to operate?

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I thank Ms Jan Barham for the question. The New South Wales Government is strongly committed to preventing and addressing homelessness in our State. The New South Wales Government has embarked on the Going Home Staying Home reform of the specialist homelessness service system to strengthen the way services are provided and to move away from a mainly crisis response to a more well-rounded system that brings together early intervention, outreach and support, as well as crisis services.

Over the last five years of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness [NPAH], New South Wales has been able to trial services that demonstrated new evidence-based approaches to reducing homelessness, including those with a stronger preventative focus. The learnings from these new models have been built into the new service design under the Going Home Staying Home [GHSH] reforms. It was always intended that NPAH funded non-government organisation [NGO] projects would be integrated into the new GHSH reform process. NPAH providers, along with existing Specialist Homelessness Services program providers, were invited to apply for the new service packages through the tendering process. The recent Federal budget has confirmed the Commonwealth Government's proposal for a one-year extension of the NPAH for 2014-15 to continue to support services which reduce and prevent homelessness.

The New South Wales Government is keen to change the Commonwealth Government's stop-start funding arrangements for homelessness and to work with it to achieve greater certainty for NGOs. For this reason, we want to participate in the review of housing and homelessness that was flagged in the recent Commonwealth budget by the Federal Minister. This will enable New South Wales and the Commonwealth to continue to support the most vulnerable members of our community, and to reduce and prevent homelessness.

### SOUTHERN REGION DISABILITY SERVICES

**The Hon. STEVE WHAN:** My question is directed to the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services. In May 2013 I first questioned the Minister's predecessor about the decision by the Government to terminate the local disability support coordinator positions in Queanbeyan. In October 2013 I asked the current Minister the same question. The Minister told us at that time that those coordinators were being replaced by Ability Links coordinators, known as "Linkers". The Minister has now finally announced that Ability Links coordinators will commence work in the southern region from 1 July 2014. How much money has the Government saved by denying Queanbeyan families in need this service for two years?

**The Hon. Duncan Gay:** What a disgraceful slur.

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** Yes, what a disgraceful slur by the Hon. Steve Whan. He knows full well that the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] is being trialled in the Hunter region and will be extended across the Hunter region and then throughout the rest of the State from July 2016. The Hon. Steve Whan is well aware of that. He is also well aware that our Government is taking all necessary actions to transition people into the NDIS at the relevant times. That is what is currently being worked on, and that will continue.

The Hon. Steve Whan is well aware of the numerous programs that our Government has implemented and continues to implement in relation to providing assistance to people with disabilities, initially under Stronger Together and now under Ready Together. I do not accept for one moment that there has been a single savings in relation to funding for people with disabilities. In fact, funding has increased over the period that we have been in Government. It continues to increase in the 2014-15 budget.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance. I asked the Minister a specific question about staff in Queanbeyan who were sacked two years ago and not replaced.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The Hon. Steve Whan has taken his point of order. He is now making a speech. The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** We have increased funding for people with disabilities from \$2.7 billion to \$2.9 billion in the 2014-15 budget. What upsets members opposite is that they have known from day one that my view is that the issue of people with disabilities deserves a bipartisan approach.

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

**The House continued to sit.**

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** This is shameful of members opposite when there has always been a bipartisan approach. Now they suddenly want to use people with disabilities for political point-scoring and to make misleading statements. Shame on them.

**The Hon. Steve Whan:** Point of order: I resent the reflection the Minister is making on me. I ask you to stop him from reflecting on my motivation.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The member will resume his seat. The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** I have finished my answer.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** The time for questions has expired. If members have further questions they may place them on notice.

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

### FEDERAL BUDGET AND RURAL AND REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** On 15 May 2014 I was asked a question by the Hon. Mick Veitch about regional employment. I provide the following answer:

The New South Wales Government has launched a number of initiatives aimed at increasing investment and creating jobs across regional New South Wales, which can assist in providing employment for recently displaced workers. Most directly relevant is the recently announced Fresh Start Support initiative that provides a \$6,000 payroll tax rebate to employers when they hire a worker made redundant from a designated business through large scale restructures after 1 January 2014.

More broadly, the Government has also been promoting the Jobs Action Plan that targets the creation of 40,000 new jobs in regional areas and gives business the incentive to expand their enterprises and employ new workers.

Other initiatives include Innovate NSW, the Supply Chain Accelerator Program, and the Export Accelerator Program. Also, the Regional Industries Investment Fund provides assistance to eligible new projects that deliver significant investment and jobs outcomes in regional areas.

To address those who are facing job loss in the Central West, the Government has launched the Central West Jobs Action Plan that has been developed to address recent closure and downsizing announcements in that region and will focus on business investment and infrastructure projects that have strong job creation potential for the region. NSW Trade & Investment is already working closely with local businesses to build industry capacity and open new market opportunities.

The expanded Regional Relocation Grant Scheme and the new Skilled Regional Relocation Incentive will enable more home buyers and renters to move to regional New South Wales for full-time employment and business opportunities, which improve the economic sustainability of regional communities.

The Government is also creating job opportunities by delivering priority infrastructure to regional New South Wales under Restart NSW, for example the Resources for Regions program, which provides infrastructure funding to mining-affected communities across the State.

In addition The Small Biz Connect program is providing a face-to-face adviser service to assist established small businesses as well as those who are now choosing to start their own business.

To highlight just one example of some of the good news for new job creation, the opening of Midal Cables' new \$50 million aluminium production facility near Tomago in the Hunter Region, will generate up to 100 new jobs and is a vote of confidence in regional New South Wales and its manufacturing capabilities. NSW Trade and Investment worked closely with the company throughout this project from initial site feasibility through to the planning and development stages.

## INTERCITY TRAINS DISABILITY ACCESS

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY:** On 15 May 2014 I was asked a question by Ms Jan Barham about intercity train access for people with disabilities. I provide the following answer:

I am advised:

The new intercity fleet will comply with all relevant legislation, regulations and standards. Each train will include dedicated wheelchair spaces.

## HOME SCHOOLING

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** On 15 May 2014 in my capacity representing the Minister for Education I was asked a question by the Hon. Paul Green relating to home schooling. I provide the following answer:

Authorised Persons from the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards [BOSTES] are responsible for assessing applications for home schooling registration and for making recommendations relating to registration.

Typically, Authorised Persons make recommendations for home schooling registration based on a range of reasons. The process for making recommendations is based on the professional discernment and on-balance judgement of the Authorised Person.

Whilst each application is considered on its individual merits, the BOSTES provides guidelines for Authorised Persons to assist them in making recommendations. The guidelines are published in the BOSTES' Authorised Persons Handbook (the Handbook) which is available on the BOSTES website <[http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/manuals/pdf\\_doc/auth-person-handbook.pdf](http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/manuals/pdf_doc/auth-person-handbook.pdf)>. Specifically, Appendix B of the Handbook explains how, based on the evidence available, an Authorised Person considers the recommendation to be made.

In addition to the reasons identified in the Handbook, other reasons for recommending a three or six-month period of home schooling registration include:

- aligning a period of registration with the registration period of siblings
- registering a child until the child turns 17 years of age
- registering a child for a period prior to enrolling or re-enrolling in a school
- registering a child for a period prior to moving interstate or overseas

As information about the reasons for recommending a particular period of registration may be helpful for parents, the BOSTES has drawn particular attention to this issue on its website as part of the Frequently Asked Questions about home schooling registration <<http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/parents/home-schooling.html>>.

The BOSTES requires all Authorised Persons to explain to applicants the reasons for the recommendation being made with regard to registration.

These actions are consistent with the recommendations made by the NSW Ombudsman and accepted by the BOSTES.

**COUNTERTERRORISM MEASURES**

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** On 15 May 2014 in my capacity representing the Minister for Police and Emergency Services I was asked a question by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile relating to counterterrorism measures. I provide the following response:

I am advised:

Australians travelling to fight in Syria, and the possibility of fighters returning to Australia from this conflict, are of serious concern to the New South Wales Government. The NSW Police Force works in partnership with Commonwealth law enforcement agencies through the Joint Counter Terrorism Team. The NSW Police Force is aware of a number of passport cancellations on security grounds as a result of team investigations.

Information on this issue is shared through a range of intelligence cooperation agreements and there are ongoing investigations into activity related to the Syrian conflict.

The New South Wales Government works closely with communities through the NSW Police Force's Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command and the NSW Community Relations Commission. New South Wales agencies also work closely with all Australian jurisdictions on a number of initiatives countering violent extremism, which aim to deter Australian citizens travelling to fight in Syria.

**Questions without notice concluded.**

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

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****Postponement of Business**

**Government Business Notice of Motion No. 1 postponed on motion by the Hon. Duncan Gay and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

**APPROPRIATION BILL 2014****APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL 2014****APPROPRIATION (BUDGET VARIATIONS) BILL 2014****STATE REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2014****Second Reading**

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY** (Minister for Roads and Freight, and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [3.33 p.m.], on behalf of the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox: I move:

That these bills be now read a second time.

I refer members to the Budget Speech, which appears on page 29513 of *Hansard* for Tuesday 17 June 2014.

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY** (Minister for Roads and Freight, and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [3.34 p.m.], on behalf of the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox, in reply: I thank members for their support and commend the bills to the House.

**Question—That these bills be now read a second time—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**Bills read a second time.**

**Leave granted to proceed to the third reading of the bills forthwith.**

**Third Reading**

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

That these bills be now read a third time.

**Bills read a third time and returned to the Legislative Assembly without amendment.**

## 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.

#### 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

#### Third Reading

Dr JOHN KAYE [3.37 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

#### Question put.

The House divided.

#### Ayes, 19

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

#### Noes, 17

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Assembly with a message seeking its concurrence in the bill.

## SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

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

That this House at its rising today do adjourn until Wednesday 2 July 2014 at 10.30 a.m.

## ADJOURNMENT

**The Hon. DUNCAN GAY** (Minister for Roads and Freight, and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [3.48 p.m.]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

## ANIMAL WELFARE

**Dr MEHREEN FARUQI** [3.48 p.m.]: Earlier today the Government objected to a motion I was hoping to move in this House that called on the Government not to misuse biosecurity to justify ag-gag laws and reject the introduction of any such reforms in our State. Over the course of history, leaps and bounds have been made in social and environmental protection through the public exposure of injustice in the world around us. Brave activists and whistleblowers have taken incredible risks to reveal things that the wider public simply does not know about. Their purpose has been to draw attention to what is really going on behind closed doors. The hostility and fear with which Federal and State governments view environmental activists and whistleblowers is indicative only of the success of those activists and whistleblowers. The major party politicians know that enforcing transparency and accountability is an effective tool; that ordinary people change their behaviours and opinions based on what they see; and that they change their minds and position, once exposed to the reality. They know that unethical behaviour thrives in the dark.

It is widely acknowledged that a turning point in the historic campaign to save the Franklin River from damming in the early 1980s was due to Peter Dombrovskis' widely distributed photography of the natural beauty of the area that would be destroyed by the dam—something that was indeed too precious to lose. I am proud to be part of a movement—the green movement in Australia—that had some of its first political roots in the campaign to expose what would have been lost with the destruction of the Franklin River. I am equally proud to be part of a party that stands up for and supports the courageous and powerful work of animal rights activists today. The recent victories have been notable. The pressure works. For example, as more consumers around the world are made aware—often through undercover footage—of the conditions to which caged hens are subjected, demand for free-range eggs is soaring. In Australia last year Woolworths announced it was phasing out the sale of all eggs from caged hens by 2018. Between 2009 and 2013 the percentage of eggs sold in Woolworths from caged hens fell from 70 per cent to 50 per cent.

Famously, two years ago Animal Liberation NSW revealed severe acts of cruelty at the Hawkesbury Valley Meat Processors through secretly recorded footage. In response, the NSW Food Authority conducted a full review of domestic slaughterhouses across our State and the meat processors in question eventually elected voluntarily to install surveillance cameras to improve transparency. Some policy progress has been made since then, but we need stronger regulation that is enforced and surveillance where appropriate and possible.

Earlier this year I hosted Will Potter, an American award-winning journalist who spoke of the impact of ag-gag laws in the United States and the shameful and desperate "eco-terrorist" label. The laws are having disturbing impacts on freedom of speech, animal welfare and the reputation of the agricultural industry. We must reject them from the outset. Sadly, the Government uses scare tactics. Last year, the New South Wales Minister for Primary Industries referred to the activities of animal activists as being "akin to terrorism". Now the Government seeks directly to target and criminalise the actions of people who seek to investigate and expose the cruel and often unlawful activities that happen in secret.

The Greens believe in a sustainable agricultural industry for our State. We firmly believe that we can do this humanely. Covering up animal abuse can never be justified. The Government should be in the business of helping to improve animal welfare outcomes by working with industry to introduce enhanced standards, not trying to avoid scrutiny and criminalising those that expose animal mistreatment. I call on my colleagues in this Parliament to oppose any efforts to halt and undermine the good and necessary work of our front-line animal welfare advocates and investigators.

## PENSIONER EXCURSION TICKETS

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE** [3.52 p.m.]: From 1 June this year the Government changed the way in which pensioners were able to access State Transit Authority [STA] buses. In the past, pensioners were able to get on a bus, pay the driver \$2.50 and travel wherever they needed to. The changes that have been made by this Government have not been well thought out and have resulted in a significant number of issues arising for pensioners and others trying to use buses, in particular, at weekends. The Government is asking people to go to

secondary outlets and to buy a ticket before using a bus. Many people have contacted my office to give me examples of the difficulties that they are experiencing. I would like to share with the House a letter I have received from a pensioner whom I will not name but I am happy to share her name with others if they are interested. The letter states:

I am 81 years old and want to express my concern about how transforming public transport ticketing is impacting on a lot of senior and disabled users of State Transit buses.

Pensioner excursion tickets have to be purchased now from designated local ticket sellers. I take issue with "local" because, ironically, living at Bardwell Park, I would need to travel by bus, or train, to the relevant ticket sellers.

Now, the only way I can get a ticket is to walk to Bardwell Park railway station. Then, having purchased a ticket, I have to climb up the steps to the bus stop. I suffer from health issues and recently had a stent inserted in a heart artery.

I was sent a list of the locations of ticket sellers. Three are at Earlwood, two bus stops away, two at Bexley North, which is the next railway station from here, one at Clemton Park and one at Bexley. The latter two are only accessible by car for me, and I no longer drive.

Obviously no thought has been given to people who are totally dependent on government buses and are left stranded. A case in point—an elderly woman at Minto was not allowed to board a bus because she had no ticket. As the station was too far away she could only go home. The Opal seniors-pensioners card will not be available until the end of 2014 so this problem needs to be addressed ...

That is just one example of the impact that this is having on pensioners. People have contacted my office and have told me humiliating stories. I refer in particular to the stories relating to two elderly women for whom English was not their first language. They did not understand the changes to the buses and were unceremoniously thrown off the bus. They were not allowed to get on the bus, they were not allowed to go where they needed to go and no-one was able to explain to them why these changes had happened.

When I raised this issue in the media on 30 May, the Minister promised that some leniency would be shown to people as the changes happen, but that is not the case. Instead, people are genuinely confused, they are not able to get onto these buses and they are left stranded. It is not reasonable to tell pensioners that they have to walk half a kilometre or two kilometres to buy a ticket to get on a bus if they have limited mobility. There is no reason why the Government should be implementing these changes at this time. The reality is that the Opal card will not be available to pensioners until at least the end of this year. There is no reason why the Government could not simply allow pensioners to continue to pay the \$2.50 as they have always done on the bus. This is not putting customers first; it is putting people last.

I also raise an issue that I witnessed at my local bus stop at the weekend. I live near a train station, which is not necessarily staffed on the weekends and one cannot buy a bus ticket at the station. I witnessed two elderly people trying to get a bus on a Sunday but they could not do so because the ticket sellers—the local newsagent—was not open on Sunday afternoon. These people were literally stranded and were not able to travel to their destination. This is not the way we should be treating pensioners in our community; it is not necessary and it is heartless of the Government to be doing it this way. The pleas of these pensioners have fallen on deaf ears. This week I asked the Minister in this place whether the Government would reconsider these changes. The answer that I received was that it was tough that pensioners would no longer be able to get on these buses. The Minister needs to stop and listen and she needs to act on the things that she cares about, which is putting customers first.

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** She is a great listener and a great carer.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** She is not a great Minister. Every day in this city pensioners are literally being thrown off these buses which is unreasonable and unnecessary. It is something that could be stopped if the Minister just listened to what people were saying. I am not making up these stories; I witnessed this firsthand. People throughout this State are raising this issue with me. Everybody has a story to tell about the confusion and the unfairness of people being left at the side of the road because bus drivers are not prepared to take their \$2.50 fares. These pensioners are not fare evading; they are simply trying to use public transport in the most convenient way and the Minister says it is tough which is unfortunate. The Minister should reverse the current practice relating to pensioner excursion tickets.

### BRUMBY AIRCRAFT AUSTRALIA

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS** [3.56 p.m.]: This Government is committed to assisting business to establish their headquarters in regional New South Wales. It is always pleasing to acknowledge the success of

small businesses relocating from metropolitan areas to regional areas and then successfully expanding and developing. As Chair of the Standing Committee on State Development, I am always on the lookout for businesses that have made a success of relocation and expansion in regional centres. Last week, as part of the committee's inquiry into regional aviation, we inspected a small aviation company—PG Aviation—that has relocated from Bankstown Airport to Cowra Airport in the Central West of New South Wales.

PG Aviation, which originally operated at Bankstown, made the decision five years ago to relocate to Cowra as the general aviation industry was under significant cost pressures and the recreational aviation industry was gaining momentum. At around the same time, specifications were released for a new category of aircraft to be known as the light sport aircraft [LSA] with a maximum take-off weight of 600 kilograms. PG Aviation, through its principals Phillip and Paul Goard, started Brumby Aircraft Australia Pty Limited and decided to move into designing and building a light sport aircraft using construction techniques that have been used over the past 50 years on many other small general aviation aircraft, such as Cessna, Piper and Beechcraft. It elected to go down this path to produce an LSA aircraft with great strength, a good payload and excellent aeronautical characteristics, and the Brumby 600 LSA was born—a low-wing, bubble canopy two-seater aircraft that could cruise at 110 knots while using just 18 litres of fuel per hour.

I inform members that 110 knots is equivalent to 203 kilometres per hour, and using 18 litres of fuel per hour is equivalent to 8.9 litres per 100 kilometres travelled—a fuel economy of which many small fuel-efficient cars would be proud. Given the direct flight rather than following the curves in the road network, the cost of travelling in this aircraft is more than competitive with ground transport. For example, to drive from Nowra to Cowra is approximately 340 kilometres, and a car with a fuel economy of 8.91 litres per 100 kilometres would use 30 litres of fuel and take four hours, while flying a Brumby LSA, allowing an hour and a half flying and taxiing time, would use just 27 litres of fuel.

The Brumby 600 LSA was followed a short time later by the Brumby High Wing 610 LSA, which boasts more cabin room than a Cessna 172, plenty of baggage space and a generous payload. Brumby Aircraft Australia has embraced the latest technology in its construction methods. The backbone of any aircraft is the spar, being the principal support for the wings and the main fuselage. The spar on Brumby aircraft is heavy duty six millimetre aluminium sections riveted together by heavy duty solid rivets, and the aircraft are clad in aviation standard aluminium cladding, again riveted together with solid rivets. This construction also is commonly used on general aviation aerobatic aircraft and as such has excellent built-in strength characteristics, making these aircraft some of the most robust in the recreational aircraft market. Brumby Aircraft Australia utilises the latest computer-aided design technology coupled to its own computer numerical control machine that ensures each part is cut to absolute precision so that every part is produced very quickly and very accurately as it is needed.

Brumby Aircraft Australia currently employs 12 staff in its Cowra factory, including four apprentices. Its future plans are to at least double the floor area of the workshop, gain additional aircraft and do business internationally. As those plans are implemented future staff numbers will exceed 20. Developments such as those Brumby is doing in Cowra would not be possible without the support of local government authorities and the wider community. The Cowra Shire Council has supported Brumby Aircraft Australia actively in its developments by making land available to the company at Cowra Airport and encouraging it with its initial development and then future expansion plans. It was an honour and a privilege to inspect the Brumby workshop at Cowra and to see regional development at work in a country centre that has faced challenges over the years, particularly with regular aerial passenger services.

I congratulate also Mayor Bill West and all members and staff of the Cowra Shire Council on their initiative in facilitating the move by Brumby Aircraft Australia from Bankstown to Cowra. Of course, major congratulations must go to the Brumby people and their principals, Phillip and Paul Goard, on their initiative in making the move in the first place and then initiating the design and construction of the Brumby Light Sport Aircraft range.

### CHILDREN WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

**The Hon. ERNEST WONG** [4.01 p.m.]: Diagnosing a child with an intellectual disability can be not only rather complex, but also mistaken. Inadequate diagnosis and treatment only compounds the ability to treat correctly. For parents and families raising a child with a disability can be demanding physically, emotionally and financially and can affect many aspects of the overall family function. Disabilities that impact upon a child's health, communication, movement or learning can have profound effects on the child's social engagement and education. Early detection and basic primary care intervention have proven to reduce long-term dependency on



the costly tertiary sector of hospital and emergency care further down the track. Researchers have found that older children are more likely than younger children to have an intellectual disability, and that it is more prevalent in boys than girls. This may be due in part to the lack of formal testing currently conducted in very young children.

A number of initiatives that aim to advance the rights and social inclusion of children with a disability remain in their infancy and are quite difficult to access and navigate. Research shows that early intervention has improved outcomes for children with disabilities, particularly when that support is offered in the child's natural environments. Significant evidence into the effectiveness of early childhood intervention has prompted the introduction of services aimed at assessing and addressing the child's needs. That being said, we still have a long way to go in establishing long-term health reforms for these children. To do this, there needs to be less buck passing and blame shifting between governmental disability services and health departments, and more active cooperation between them. We must recognise also that the mainstream health system needs backup from specialised intellectual disability health services and ongoing research.

We need to invest significantly into the mainstream health workforce, which currently is underskilled in communicating and working with people with intellectual disabilities. In order to provide a well-qualified and sustainable health workforce into the future we need enhanced training for undergraduates and practising health professionals and training programs and career paths for specialised intellectual disability health professionals. As a result of the lack of such training, there is widespread non-diagnosis, misdiagnosis and mistreatment of health conditions in children with intellectual disabilities. The poor health status of people with intellectual disabilities arises from many factors.

Some of these include: communication issues between professionals and patients—their capacity to communicate and train professionals in communication techniques; high rates and often complex ranges of health problems; health professionals need more time with people with intellectual disabilities, however, the health system often does not allow for this; diagnostic overlay—mistakenly assuming symptoms are related to the disability; poverty and inadequate supply of free and subsidised health services; few health professionals having a special interest or specialised skills in intellectual disabilities; limited carer skills in recognising and acting on health problems; and inadequate cooperative action within and between government departments.

My first-hand experience when I established the Special Children's Service Centre six years ago providing early intervention programs via art and music, particularly for ethnic children, told me that all levels of government need to work together on strategies aimed at improving the general health and wellbeing of children and their carers in all community settings. This will require working with communities, local councils and local health service providers to promote involvement, social inclusion and raise awareness. Our primary focus needs to be on early intervention and early detection. We need to focus on improving the skills of workers in the primary health and community care sector as well as increasing the retention rate. By doing so, we can provide integrated and adequate health care and support for these children and their carers.

Historically, the diagnosis of an intellectual disability was seen as a health condition and services for people with intellectual disabilities were provided by health departments and managed by doctors. In recent decades, it has become well accepted that intellectual disability is not an illness, and services and staffing have moved away from a medical model. Whilst this move has overall been very positive it has led to a lack of clear responsibility in relation to health care. The responsibility is on us all. We need to ensure that appropriate services and assistance are readily available, so that these children and their families can function equally within mainstream society.

## EGYPTIAN ELECTION

**The Hon. DAVID CLARKE** (Parliamentary Secretary) [4.06 p.m.]: The election last month of General Abdel el-Sisi as President of Egypt has been overwhelmingly welcomed by the Egyptian people, including the Egyptian diaspora and particularly the Egyptian-Australian community. It follows a catastrophic two-year period starting in 2011 when Egypt was governed by Mohamed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, which came to power as a beneficiary of a widespread peaceful uprising against the 29-year regime of Hosni Mubarek. Ditching its promise to introduce religious tolerance, democracy and economic reform, the Muslim Brotherhood moved instead to turn Egypt into an Islamist theocratic dictatorship, wrecking the economy in the process. Arrogantly overplaying his hand, Morsi declared that he and the Muslim Brotherhood were immune to any judicial oversight. His program, he said, was "the sharia, then the sharia and finally the sharia". The brotherhood's official website proclaimed:

If democracy means that people decide who leads them then we accept it; if it means that people can change the laws of Allah and follow what they wish to follow then it is not acceptable.

Following an escalation of violence and lawlessness in which hundreds of police, soldiers, Christians and moderate Muslims were murdered by brotherhood thugs in June 2013, millions of Egyptians again took to the streets, but this time calling for the removal of the Morsi Muslim Brotherhood dictatorship and the introduction of genuine democracy. The Armed Forces led by General Sisi responded to that popular call by removing Morsi from office, banning the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organisation and announcing a road map to democracy, which included a new Constitution to be approved by referendum followed by new elections.

General Sisi has kept his promise to the Egyptian people. A new Constitution drafted by a panel of eminent jurists and internationally praised by constitutional experts was approved by referendum in January 2014 by 98.1 per cent of the 38.6 per cent of the electorate that voted. This compares favourably to the vote received in 2012 for Morsi's Constitution, which was approved by only 63.8 per cent of the reduced 32.9 per cent of the electorate that voted. In May 2014 an election for a new president was held. In that election, which was monitored by observers from the European Union, League of Arab States and Democracy International, amongst others, General Sisi gained 96.9 per cent of the votes to his opponent's 3 per cent with 47.5 per cent of the electorate voting.

Some critics, particularly those from the Muslim Brotherhood supporting the Al Jazeera Television Network, asserted that 80 per cent to 85 per cent of the electorate, not just 47.5 per cent, should have voted for General Sisi to gain genuine legitimacy. However, they fail to point out that Morsi was elected only with a paper-thin 51.3 per cent of the votes from the 52 per cent of the electorate vote. They ignore also the fact that a voter turnout of 45 per cent to 55 per cent in the Middle East is within the normal range. For example, in 2012 in Algeria voter turnout for party elections was 43.14 per cent and Lebanon has averaged 43.78 per cent over the past five parliamentary elections. Moving further afield, we find that in the 2014 European Union elections, in which 28 member nations participated, voter turnout was 43.09 per cent.

Muslim Brotherhood apologists argue that General Sisi got a high proportion of the votes, which were cast only because of a poll boycott by supporters. However, the evidence is to the contrary. Most certainly its supporters did not comprise the more than 50 per cent of those not voting. It is more likely that the true number was substantially less than 20 per cent. Support for this assertion can be found in a pre-election poll survey of the electorate, which found that 72 per cent of the electorate would vote for General Sisi and two per cent would vote for his opponent, leaving only 22 per cent. The conclusion is that a significant proportion of General Sisi's supporters were amongst those who did not bother to vote. Under President Sisi, Egypt is now on a road to peace, democracy and economic reconstruction. Parliamentary elections will be held in the near future and the campaign of violence by the Muslim Brotherhood has been effectively curtailed.

Under the Morsi regime incidents of sexual harassment, abuse and violence against women soared to levels that were unheard of, which is an indication of the Brotherhood's attitude to women. Since the removal of the Morsi regime, sexual harassment and violence against women has been made a crime punishable by up to five years imprisonment, which is a sign of the new Government's commitment to human rights. Egypt, under President Sisi, is successfully combating Muslim Brotherhood terrorism and following a pathway to democracy, human rights and economic renewal. We need to stand by the Egyptian people at this time of their nation's renewal from the destructiveness of the Muslim Brotherhood.

### ASSYRIAN CHRISTIANS IN IRAQ

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE** [4.11 p.m.]: I speak on the subject of the murderous attacks on Assyrian Christians in Iraq. As members know, the unrest in Iraq is escalating due to the recent seizure of many cities, including the city of Mosul and its surroundings, by the Islam State of Iraq and the Levant organisation, which has been labelled as "an extremist Sunni Muslim group". It has brought a humanitarian disaster to the Christian Assyrians who still live in the city and nearby towns and villages. Even Al Qaeda, their founder, has disowned them. The Iraqi Christian Assyrians are culturally and linguistically distinct from other Iraqi communities. Ethnically they are non-Arab, non-Kurdish peoples who trace their heritage to the ancient Assyrian empire. They speak a dialect of Aramaic, which is the language that was spoken by our saviour Jesus Christ.

Iraqi Assyrians were persecuted extensively under the previous Baathist regime because of their ethnicity, and the war and its aftermath has exposed them to the horrors of violence and criminality that was unleashed by Islamic groups who subjected Christians to an extensive campaign of kidnapping, ransom and murder. As Iraq descended into civil war the Christians, who had no militias or security forces of their own and, sadly, were unprotected by a national security apparatus that is heavily tied to the sectarian gangs involved in

the conflict, were cleansed from their neighbourhoods and were killed or intimidated with threats of murder. The most extreme culmination of the campaign came on 31 October 2010 when an Al Qaeda affiliate, calling itself the Islamic State of Iraq, stormed Our Lady of Salvation Church in Baghdad during evening mass, killing almost 60 people and injuring 80 more in the worst single attack on Iraqi Christians since 2003. Church bombings have become an habitual occurrence in Iraq and since 2004 more than 100 have been attacked.

Thousands of internally displaced Christians fled from urban centres to stay with relatives or attempted to establish themselves among Christian communities elsewhere in Iraq. The Kurdish region north of Iraq has been a prominent destination. The autonomous region has been spared the upheaval that the rest of the country has endured since 2003. The reason is that the Kurds have their own armed militia defence force. Assyrians suffered greatly after the 2003 invasion of Iraq and their situation has deteriorated each year over the past 11 years. Iraqi Christians in general have faced kidnappings, threats and even death due to ethnicity and religious beliefs. They have little faith in their government to provide security, and justifiably so having regard to the turmoil this week. If Nineveh Plain is subject to military attacks it would have devastating consequences for the indigenous Assyrians and other ethnic groups in the region. That is why the United States is hesitant to use armed forces immediately in Iraq. The Assyrian Universal Alliance is seeking the Australian Government's political support for the Iraqi Assyrian demands for the creation of a new province in the Nineveh Plain, the heart of the Assyrian ancestral homeland, and for the said territory to be administered and protected by the Assyrians.

This regional autonomy would develop a lasting solution to the Assyrian refugee problem. There are many other minority groups, such as the Mandaeans, who would also benefit under this protected region. Self-administration and allocation of appropriate revenues that are protected by legislation will ensure and maintain the capacity of Assyrians to sustain themselves. The Nineveh Plain Province Solution is consistent with the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which has been endorsed by Australia. Pragmatically, it would be advantageous for Western countries to reduce Assyrian refugee and humanitarian migration. This region would be a Middle Eastern success story of freedom, democracy, the rule of law, economic prosperity and an example not only to the region but to the world. Obviously that autonomous region must have the ability to defend itself with a military force. I draw the attention of members to the motion that I moved today, which encapsulates some of the matters I have raised in this adjournment speech.

#### **VINNIES CEO SLEEPOUT**

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS** [4.16 p.m.]: Tonight will be my second Vinnies CEO Sleepout. I will join hundreds of chief executive officers and representatives from unions, the community and media to sleep out to raise funds to help support the thousands of people who are homeless. Tonight 28,000 people in New South Wales will sleep on the streets. Fifty-eight per cent of people experiencing homelessness are under 35 years old; 44 per cent are women; and 12 per cent are under 12 years of age. Children in homeless families are more at risk of experiencing disadvantage and homelessness in their lifetime. People experiencing homelessness should not be denied the right to appropriate housing. They are vulnerable to illness and violence, and experience insecurity and the feeling of not being seen.

New South Wales is a wealthy State and has much to do. Government leadership is critical. I have been calling on the Government for three years to increase the number of social housing properties. I ask that it release its social housing plan, as recommended by the Auditor-General. We need a social housing building program for the future. I commend Vinnies and all participants. I congratulate the partners and sponsors, including the *Australian*, Sky News Business, Nudie, Best and Less, and Brumby's, to name a few.

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** Nudie? It's going to be cold if you're nudie.

**The Hon. SOPHIE COTSIS:** It is going to be very cold.

*[Time for debate expired.]*

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**The House adjourned at 4.18 p.m. until Wednesday 2 July 2014 at 10.30 a.m.**

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