

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Tuesday 12 May 2009

The President (The Hon. Peter Thomas Primrose) took the chair at 2.30 p.m.

The President read the Prayers.

The PRESIDENT: I acknowledge the Gadigal clan of the Eora nation and its elders and thank them for their custodianship of this land.

SCHIZOPHRENIA AWARENESS WEEK

Motion by the Hon. Greg Donnelly, on behalf of the Hon. Amanda Fazio, agreed to:

That this House:

- (a) notes that Schizophrenia Awareness Week was held from 18 to 24 May 2008,
- (b) congratulates the Schizophrenia Fellowship for their work in improving the lives of people with mental illness and their vision of a society in which people with mental illness are valued and treated as equals, and
- (c) congratulates the Schizophrenia Research Institute for their ongoing world-class research, which aims for a better outcome for those currently living with schizophrenia and hope for the prevention of this devastating disease in the future.

INDEPENDENT TRANSPORT SAFETY AND RELIABILITY REGULATOR

Report: Implementation of the NSW Government's Response to the Final Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Waterfall Accident—Reporting Period: January-March 2009

The Hon. John Robertson tabled the report of the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator entitled "Implementation of the NSW Government's Response to the Final Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Waterfall Accident—Reporting Period: January-March 2009", dated April 2009.

Ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. John Robertson.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report

The Hon. Robyn Parker tabled a report entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 6 of 2009", dated 12 May 2009.

Ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Robyn Parker.

PETITIONS

Marine Parks, Sanctuaries and Habitat Protection Zones

Petition requesting a moratorium on the creation of all new proposed marine parks, sanctuaries and habitat protection zones and rejecting extensions to existing parks, sanctuaries and zones that further restrict fishing activities and removal of the National Parks Association report the Torn Blue Fringe for consideration by the Parliament, received from the **Hon. Duncan Gay**.

Victorian Trade Barriers and Water Resource Policies

Petition praying that the Government urge the Victorian Government to amend its restrictive water resource policies to ensure a fair and just parity between New South Wales and Victoria, received from the **Hon. Lynda Voltz**.

Livestock Health and Pest Authorities Rate Increases

Petition requesting that the Government place an immediate moratorium on current livestock health and pest authority rates, received from the **Hon. Duncan Gay**.

Repco Rally

Petition requesting that the House reject the proposed Repco World Championship Rally, which will pose a significant threat to the natural environment of both Tweed and Kyogle shires, and replace it with an environmentally friendly event that will promote long-term ecotourism, received from **Mr Ian Cohen**.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Postponement of Business

Business of the House Notices of Motions Nos 1 to 4 postponed on motion by the Hon. Tony Kelly.

Government Business Orders of the Day Nos 1 to 5 postponed on motion by the Hon. Tony Kelly.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

Motion by the Hon. Don Harwin agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow a motion to be moved forthwith that Private Members' Business item No. 199 outside the Order of Precedence, relating to an order for papers regarding the Inner West Busway, be called on forthwith.

Order of Business

Motion by the Hon. Don Harwin agreed to:

That Private Members' Business item No. 199 outside the Order of Precedence be called on forthwith.

INNER WEST BUSWAY BRIDGE

The Hon. DON HARWIN [2.48 p.m.]: I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 14 days of the date of the passing of this resolution all documents created since July 2007, and not previously provided to the House, in the possession, custody or control of the Premier, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Minister for Roads, the Roads and Traffic Authority, the Minister for Planning, or the Department of Planning relating to the proposed new bridge for the Inner West Busway (formerly known as the Iron Cove Bridge duplication project), and any document which records or refers to the production of documents as a result of this order of the House.

This call for papers follows the call for papers made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition on 6 June 2007 with regard to what was then known as the Iron Cove Bridge duplication but has recently been rebranded as the Inner West Busway. At that stage the project was costed at \$100 million, the consultation stage had yet to begin, and the Government had not yet informed residents and local businesses of its plans but it had announced that a duplication of the bridge was planned as part of an upgrade and widening of Victoria Road.

In the nearly two years that have elapsed since the previous call for papers, the Roads and Traffic Authority has undertaken numerous studies and produced several reports, and they are certainly on the public record. These include the proposal for bus lane upgrades and bridge options in December 2007, the assessment of strategic alternatives in July 2008, the assessment of options for a new bridge in July 2008, and the environmental assessment in October 2008. With construction work due to commence in 2009 it is in the public interest—and it is most certainly urgent—that the recent stages of the planning process are subject to appropriate scrutiny, including those relating to the assessment of alternative designs, the formulation of costings, and the accumulation and analysis of the environmental impact data.

In addition to undertaking assessments on its own proposals and options, the Roads and Traffic Authority has received an alternative design by architect Michael Morrissey. Both the New South Wales chapter

of the Australian Institute of Architects and engineers from the leading consultant firm Arup have endorsed the Morrisey design, finding it would be cheaper and faster to construct and have less impact on the area in terms of both the environment and its heritage. The Roads and Traffic Authority has claimed that the Morrisey option would cost many millions more, take an extra year to build, and would have a great impact on the environment and heritage aspects of the existing bridge. A detailed Roads and Traffic Authority assessment of the Morrisey plan, however, has not been made public.

The validity of the Roads and Traffic Authority's claim about the Morrisey design, and the extent to which the Roads and Traffic Authority gave the alternative fair consideration, are matters in which the public has a direct and genuine interest. Transparency is especially necessary in this case since it was alleged in an article on 7 May 2009 in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the Roads and Traffic Authority signed a contract with a company for the construction of the duplicate Iron Cove Bridge before the project had been designed, costed or approved by the Government or had been the subject of a consultation process with local residents.

This call for papers is a follow-up on an earlier call for papers on the same subject. It concerns documents created since the previous call for papers and it comes after planning approval processes have been completed, and therefore cannot be construed as interrupting or compromising the process itself but, importantly, it is one final opportunity for scrutiny before construction commences and it represents an appropriate oversight of the Government's handling of a significant infrastructure project. Since the last call for papers was dealt with the lead agency has changed so reference to the Minister for Transport and his agency need to be included in the motion. My colleague the Hon. Jennifer Gardiner will move an amendment to include the two agencies that were inadvertently omitted.

The Hon. JENNIFER GARDINER [2.52 p.m.]: I move:

That the question be amended by inserting "the Minister for Transport, the Department of Transport" after "the Department of Premier and Cabinet".

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD [2.52 p.m.]: The Government opposes the motion, which would create a monumental amount of work and a colossal waste of time for the Roads and Traffic Authority, the Department of Planning and the Government. This project has been extraordinarily transparent. In the past two years there have been eight comprehensive questions on notice, numerous questions without notice, eight freedom of information applications, nearly 100 articles written in major metropolitan newspapers, and well over 150 articles written in local papers on this project, and the Roads and Traffic Authority has endeavoured to include all related documents to this project on its website—that includes more than 48 documents in full that are online right now, some of which run to several volumes. More than 700 submissions have been received by the Department of Planning in relation to this project and the Liberal Party has previously moved a call for papers.

This project is possibly the most transparent in the history of the Government. When I say "the history of the Government" I am talking as far back as the ancient Greeks! Every possible effort has been made to debate the merits of the project in the public arena but the debate has been resolved and the project has been approved. The bus commuters of the inner west and as far away as Parramatta are looking forward to faster and more reliable journeys to work each morning—that is what the people from the west want. But while the Government is happy to provide transparency, it needs to focus on improving the lives of the residents of New South Wales and not the endless navel gazing that the Liberal Party would have it indulge in. Members of the Liberal Party could spend a little more time looking at the information that is publicly available before they ask the Government to do their research for them in what is simply a fishing expedition.

The Government is in the midst of preparing a budget that will be delivered in the worst world economic climate since the Great Depression. The Government is spending record amounts on infrastructure in an attempt to buck the world trend and the New South Wales Liberal Party wants the Government to spend the next fortnight scratching around for a bunch of documents, the vast majority of which are already available. The Government opposes the motion.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ [2.54 p.m.]: This is, as usual from the Opposition, a gross abuse of the processes of this House. There has never been a more open and transparent road project than this one, yet the Roads and Traffic Authority and various other government departments are being asked to spend weeks trawling through their records on this ridiculous fishing expedition. Maybe we should extend marine park status to Standing Order 52 because there is so much fishing going on here. This is simply a desperate attempt by members of the Opposition to have the Government do research for them.

We need to be clear about what this project is about. It is about very specific improvements for our bus commuters. It is about a \$175 million public transport initiative for the 45 per cent of commuters who travel along Victoria Road each day and, when the project is completed, the lives of up to 35,000 commuters on the 1,480 buses that travel on Victoria Road each day will be significantly improved. This investment in public transport is for everyone who uses buses from as far away as Parramatta. I hope my colleagues in the Liberal Party are listening because this project is also designed to help residents in the electorates of Ryde and Lane Cove—two areas that will get maximum benefit out of the project. I am advised that the project has the potential to reduce bus travel times by 18 minutes at the busiest time of the morning peak—from 28 minutes down to 10 minutes—along this very busy part of Victoria Road between the Gladesville and Anzac bridges.

The Hon. Marie Ficarra: We will hold you to that.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: That is fine, you can hold me to that. The environmental assessment for the Inner West Busway project also states that bus travel times could be reduced by up to 25 minutes on days when travel on Victoria Road is very heavily congested. Of course at 7.00 a.m., when there is less traffic on Victoria Road, bus travel times are shorter so the savings are smaller but when the road is at its busiest, and there are the greatest number of commuters on the road, this project will deliver its greatest benefits. But do not take my word for it; every piece of this information is already publicly available. Volumes and volumes of it have been produced and available for anyone to see on the Internet. Every alternative proposal was checked and rechecked and the best possible proposal won out. That too is on the Internet for all to see.

The Government has been through an extensive consultation process and has listened to the community to refine the project to minimise impacts, and also to provide the public transport and cycling improvements the community called for. The project includes more than \$5 million on cycleway improvements, helping to provide alternative options to driving to work each day. The project provides a 3.5 kilometre city-bound bus lane through Drummoyne and Rozelle during the morning peak; a city-bound bus lane through Drummoyne to Terry Street in Rozelle in the afternoon peak; a 24-hour city-bound bus lane across Iron Cove Bridge. This is all to help the residents of Parramatta, Ryde and Lane Cove but the Hon. Charlie Lynn is not interested in that. He is more interested in the eastern suburbs—

[*Interruption*]

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Charlie Lynn is in fine voice today and I ask him to tone down his interjections.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Further, the project provides an outbound bus lane across Iron Cove in the morning; cycling and pedestrian connections from the Bay Run to the bridge; a tidal flow traffic scheme and clearway through Drummoyne so the general traffic is not slowed down; and a new three-lane bridge on the western side of Iron Cove Bridge. An upgrade of the cycling route between Gladesville and Anzac bridges is also part of the project. But what does the New South Wales Liberal Party propose? Its solution is to add another lane to the eastern side of the existing bridge. Too bad if you are one of the homeowners who would lose their house under the Coalition's proposal; too bad if you are a taxpayer and you do not want to spend an additional 20 per cent building this lane proposed by the Coalition; and too bad if you are opposed to a new bridge, because Barry O'Farrell's plan requires a new pedestrian bridge to be built anyway.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN [2.59 p.m.]: The Shooters Party considers that a project that results in the decongestion of Victoria Road is a great idea. However, when a motion for the production of documents was last before the House we supported it on the basis of transparency. We support this motion on the same basis.

Ms LEE RHIANNON [2.59 p.m.]: The Greens support the motion for the production of documents. The release of this information is necessary. We have had constant problems with the Government's openness and honesty in relation to inner-city motorways. Clearly, the duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge is a part of that project. Local people are greatly concerned about the enormous impact on their areas. The Premier has tried to badge his leadership as one of commitment to openness and accountability. On that basis, he should send a word to his troops in this place to release the information. The Greens support the motion.

The Hon. DON HARWIN [3.00 p.m.], in reply: I will be brief. The Government speakers focused on the merits of the project as they see them, as they are entitled to do. The principal claim about this project is the amount of time that will be saved at the busiest point of the morning peak. That strikes me as a ridiculous statistic, because it is such a narrow window. When we look at the whole morning peak, not just the busiest

point, the Government's figures show that only four minutes and 11 seconds will be saved. Leaving that aside, the most important issues the Government had to address were the two issues I raised. As to the first issue about Mr Morrissey's proposal, the Government had no answer. The second issue related to the very serious allegation raised in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the contract was signed before consultation and other procedures took place. For those two reasons alone, the motion for an order for the production of documents under Standing Order 52 should proceed.

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

Amendment of the Hon. Jennifer Gardiner agreed to.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 21

Mr Ajaka	Ms Hale	Mr Pearce
Mr Brown	Dr Kaye	Ms Rhiannon
Mr Clarke	Mr Khan	Mr Smith
Mr Cohen	Mr Lynn	
Ms Cusack	Reverend Dr Moyes	
Ms Ficarra	Reverend Nile	<i>Tellers,</i>
Miss Gardiner	Ms Parker	Mr Colless
Mr Gay	Mrs Pavey	Mr Harwin

Noes, 16

Mr Della Bosca	Mr Robertson	Mr West
Ms Griffin	Ms Robertson	Ms Westwood
Mr Hatzistergos	Mr Roozendaal	
Mr Kelly	Ms Sharpe	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Macdonald	Mr Tsang	Mr Donnelly
Mr Obeid	Ms Voltz	Mr Veitch

Pairs

Mr Gallacher	Mr Catanzariti
Mr Mason-Cox	Ms Fazio

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion as amended agreed to.

GREYHOUND RACING BILL 2009

HARNESS RACING BILL 2009

RACING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2009

Second Reading

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Parliamentary Secretary) [3.10 p.m.], on behalf of the Hon. Ian Macdonald: I move:

That these bills be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

I can report that these bills passed through the lower house with some amendments.

The amendments relate to the transfer arrangements for former Authority staff wishing to take up employment with either Greyhound Racing NSW or Harness Racing New South Wales.

The purpose of these Government amendments was to acknowledge additional consultation and the recommendations made in the Industrial Relations Commission on 30 April, 2009 regarding these bills.

These amendments provide for the following in respect of those staff who elect to transfer across to either of the industry bodies: a guarantee of employment with the relevant body for a period of 24 months; and an entitlement to a 4 per cent increase in the employees salary for those transferred staff employed at both 1 July 2009 and 1 July 2010.

The main purpose of the three bills before the House is to:

- Reform and update the statutory arrangements that underpin the governance arrangements for the greyhound and harness racing industries;
- Repeal the Greyhound and Harness Racing Administration Act 2004, and dissolve the Greyhound and Harness Racing Regulatory Authority;
- Repeal the Greyhound Racing Act 2002 and Harness Racing Act 2002, and by way of the proposed legislation transfer the functions and responsibilities of the dissolved Authority to a single controlling body for each of the greyhound and harness racing codes; Provide for an independent Board structure for Greyhound Racing NSW and Harness Racing NSW based on the recently introduced Racing New South Wales model;
- Provide for an independent Integrity Auditor function across all three codes to receive and consider complaints about the conduct of racing officials; and
- Provide for necessary savings and transitional arrangements.

Before going into the detail of the proposed amendments, it would be appropriate to mention a number of important matters.

First, I acknowledge the contribution of the Board and the staff of the Greyhound and Harness Racing Regulatory Authority over the past four years.

I acknowledge once again in this place the contribution made by Peter Baldwin to the greyhound and harness racing industries, and offer my sincerest condolences to family, friends and work colleagues upon his sudden and tragic death.

There is a need to acknowledge the strategic thinking and leadership of the Boards—and in particular—the Chairs of Greyhound Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales. They have accepted the challenge of driving change for the overall benefit of their industries, and ultimately for the many people in New South Wales that enjoy the spectacle of racing.

Throughout the racing industry and Government there is an acceptance that change based on a foundation of appropriate and modern governance arrangements is necessary if future viability is to be ensured.

I now turn to the detail of the respective bills.

The lead bill is the Greyhound Racing bill 2009. The Harness Racing Bill 2009 and the Racing Legislation Amendment bill 2009 are cognate bills.

The Greyhound Racing Bill 2009 formally dissolves the Greyhound and Harness Racing Regulatory Authority.

The Greyhound Racing Bill 2009 and Harness Racing Bill 2009 also provide for the following matters in respect of their individual codes of racing:

- To re-enact the Greyhound Racing Act 2002 and Harness Racing Act 2002 to provide for the new arrangements;
- To reconstitute Greyhound Racing NSW and Harness Racing NSW including with a board structure which provides for members to be appointed on merit, and in accordance with skills based criteria;
- The transfer of the functions and responsibilities of the former Authority to Greyhound Racing NSW or Harness Racing New South Wales, as appropriate;
- To create the office of Integrity Auditor to receive and investigate complaints in relation to the conduct of racing officials;
- To establish a Greyhound Racing Industry Consultation Group and a Harness Racing Industry Consultation Group and other related formal requirements aimed at facilitating robust and productive consultation between the controlling body and industry stakeholders.

All three codes of the racing industry throughout Australia accept that change is necessary to meet the challenges of the present economic climate, evolving laws and the new ways of transacting cross border business including novel technologies.

The Government has responded to that call and has already made several changes, and undertaken comprehensive reviews from which informed policy has been developed.

The Government supports and is committed to a healthy and sustainable racing industry. Its approach includes enacting the race fields laws, and also seeking independent input from the Alan Cameron Wagering Review.

The proposals are based on amendments made last year to the Thoroughbred Racing Act 1996 which provides for the arrangements under which Racing New South Wales operates.

The proposals are also based on the recommendations made in the Malcolm Scott Review and the statutory Five Year Review of the greyhound and harness racing legislation.

All of these have involved substantial consultation and consideration of what is the best way forward.

The Government acknowledges that all three codes of racing consider self management of their respective industries—free of Government intervention—as a fundamental aspect of their governance arrangements.

The racing industry is traditionally self funding and provides a significant contribution to the economy of this State. A billion dollars annually and up to 50,000 full time and part time jobs represents a place in the top three industries.

The governance arrangements to be implemented are based on the Racing New South Wales model introduced last year.

This features a single board for each of the three codes that are responsible for all aspects of the control and regulation of the relevant sector. That is, both regulatory and commercial responsibilities.

The model for the controlling bodies is that they are a body corporate created by statute which does not represent the Crown, and which is not subject to Government direction.

In principle, the five member Board of each controlling body is to be 'independent', and appointments are on merit in accordance with skills-based criteria.

The bills prescribe the following 'skills' criteria:

- Experience in a senior administrative role; or
- Experience at a senior level in one or more of the fields of business, finance, law, marketing, technology, commerce, regulatory administration or regulatory enforcement.

The Chairperson of the five member Board will be elected by a simple majority of the members of the Board, and will serve as Chairperson subject to holding that majority.

It is essential in the 21st century to recognise the need to recruit persons with high level business and management skills. The independent Board model is recognised as best practice for these purposes.

The bills also carry forward the existing duty of members of Greyhound Racing NSW and Harness Racing NSW to act in the public interest and in the interests of the industry as a whole.

A maximum eight year term for future members of the Board is also important to ensure that there is a regular reinvigoration of talent.

As with the Racing New South Wales Board there is provision for a review of the appointment process to apply to the racing controlling bodies and I will deal with that later in this speech.

The disbandment of the Authority and the transfer of its regulatory functions to Greyhound Racing NSW and to Harness Racing NSW have been in the public domain since the tabling in Parliament on 26 June 2008 of the Malcolm Scott Review and the Five Year Review of the Greyhound and Harness Legislation.

A return to a single industry Board for each of the greyhound and harness racing codes reflects the Racing New South Wales model, and is the norm nationally.

The functions of each single Board will be as follows:

- To control, supervise and regulate greyhound or harness racing (as appropriate) in the State;
- The licensing and registration functions in relation to racing clubs, trial tracks, racing animals and prescribed participants such as trainers, drivers, bookmakers;
- To initiate, develop and implement policies considered conducive to the promotion, strategic development and welfare of the greyhound or harness racing code in the State;
- To distribute money received as a result of the commercial arrangements required by the Totalizator Act 1997;
- To allocate dates on which races may be conducted; and
- To develop and review policy in relation to the breeding and grading of greyhounds, and in relation to the breeding and handicapping of harness horses.

The single Board model for each code has overwhelming industry support, and it makes sense from the perspective of meeting industry needs.

I am aware of uninformed comments that a single industry Board will result in the diminution of integrity as a core industry value.

I do not share that view. It is not evident in the manner in which Racing New South Wales conducts itself, nor is it the experience of any other racing body in Australia.

I am satisfied that each code of racing understands that public confidence in the integrity of the conduct of racing is an absolute essential requirement, and that the consequences of ignoring that requirement would have adverse commercial consequences.

The transfer process is complex and it is being oversighted by a Transition Working Party chaired by Michael Foggo—the Commissioner of the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing—and consisting of the Chairpersons and Chief Executives of Greyhound Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales—Professor Percy Allan AM, Graeme Campbell, Brent Hogan and Max Pool.

The Chairperson of the Authority—Stephen Price is also a member of the working party—and assisting him as acting Director of the Authority is Darrell Loewenthal—a former Director, Racing and Deputy Director-General of the Department of Gaming and Racing.

The task is, as I said earlier, complex but the team is well credentialed and capable.

The Integrity Auditor is a new and important role.

The Integrity Auditor will be a person with legal qualifications and be responsible for receiving and investigating complaints about the conduct of racing officials in relation to responsibilities and obligations under statute, and also the code of conduct of the relevant controlling body.

The Integrity Auditor may decide that a complaint is frivolous, vexatious, trivial or not in good faith. Also that it does not relate to the exercise of functions by the racing official in a corrupt, improper or unethical manner.

The purpose of these limits is to ensure that the right to make a complaint is not abused.

The bills provide for the Integrity Auditor to exercise his or her function independently of the controlling body.

Each controlling body may request advice from the Integrity Auditor on specific matters, for example, settling the code of conduct.

A racing official may be a member of the Board, or a staff member.

Under the proposed legislation Greyhound Racing NSW and Harness Racing NSW may appoint—with the Minister's approval one person to be the Integrity Auditor for both codes, or a different person for each code.

The Thoroughbred Racing Act 1996 makes provision for the Integrity Assurance Committee.

That Committee has existed since 1996 and with some minor changes to bring it into line with the Integrity Auditor concept, it will serve the same purpose for the thoroughbred racing code.

The bills also provide for:

- an Industry Consultation Group in each of the greyhound and harness codes; and
- other requirements aimed at facilitating formal and robust consultation between Greyhound Racing NSW and Harness Racing NSW stakeholders.

The five members of the Industry Consultation Group will consist of the following:

- one person nominated by either the New South Wales Harness Racing Club, or the New South Wales Greyhound, Breeders, Owners and Trainers Association—as appropriate;
- one person nominated by TAB Clubs;
- one person nominated by Country Clubs (or Non-TAB Clubs in the case of the harness racing industry); and
- no more than 3 persons, each to be nominated by an eligible industry body.

The Minister in consultation with Greyhound Racing NSW and Harness Racing NSW will determine an eligible industry body which is basically an organised stakeholder group.

Joint meetings between the Industry Consultation Group and the relevant controlling body are provided for on at least 6 times each year unless otherwise agreed.

The controlling body must respond formally to any recommendation made by the Industry Consultation Group, including the provision of formal reasons when it does not agree to a recommendation put by the Industry Consultation Group.

The bills also require Greyhound Racing NSW and Harness Racing New South Wales, in consultation with the relevant Industry Consultation Group and industry stakeholders, to:

- Prepare an industry strategic plan within twelve months of the commencement of the amending legislation; and
- Regularly undertake formal consultation in relation to the initiation, development and implementation of policies for the promotion, strategic development and welfare of the industry.

The bills also mirror the provisions in the Thoroughbred Racing Act 1996 which provide for the controlling body to set minimum standards in respect of the conduct of races and race meetings.

These provisions place beyond doubt that a controlling body can set standards in relation to such matters as the design and construction of racecourses, and also the level of prize money to be paid in connection with races.

Greyhound Racing NSW and Harness Racing NSW will also be able to give directions to a race club to ensure compliance with the standards.

The usual provisions have been included in the bills to provide for continuity of decisions and operational arrangements.

There are also some special provisions in relation to transferring greyhound or harness assets, rights and liabilities and the like from the Authority to the new industry Boards.

In addition to these matters, there are also some unique savings provisions applicable to the present circumstances.

The current Boards of Greyhound Racing NSW and Harness Racing NSW were appointed in the normal way in February 2009 for three year terms.

The appointments were made in accordance with existing provisions and arrangements on a 'nominee' basis.

The reason for this is twofold.

With the disbanding of the Authority and the transfer of its functions to the new Boards, it would be unwise to diminish the capacity of the receiving Board to manage the transfer by depriving it of continuity of operation and the associated corporate knowledge.

Also, and this is the case for all three codes, it is necessary to undertake a review of the appointment process that should apply in relation to an 'independent' racing controlling body Board.

A special review provision has been included in the bills that the review must report before February 2012. This corresponds roughly with the Racing New South Wales requirement in the 2008 amendments that such a review must be completed within three years of the commencement of that legislation.

Of particular interest to myself are the transitional arrangements for Authority staff.

One of my key priorities is to ensure that the Authority staff are given every assistance throughout this process.

The proposal is in the nature of a transfer of regulatory function.

In principle, therefore, the staff transfer arrangements are based on compensation for loss of public service conditions.

I am advised that the great majority of staff have a position with the receiving body.

I am also advised that the transfer arrangements are essentially the equivalent of the 2002 restructure arrangements.

Greyhound Racing NSW and Harness Racing NSW have undertaken detailed consideration of their future needs.

I am advised by the Working Party that there are a very significant number of comparable positions in either Greyhound Racing NSW or Harness Racing New South Wales.

A comparable position in a receiving body is one which has substantially the same duties as a former position in the Authority.

- Staff in that situation have the right to apply to transfer to the new body.
- If they elect to do so they enjoy the following arrangements:
- Their application will receive preference.
- A compensation payment for relinquishing public sector conditions on a scale which includes up to a maximum of 20 weeks pay for those over 45 years of age with six or more years of service.
- A starting salary with the new body which matches their existing base salary.
- Payment or transfer of their accrued recreation and long service leave entitlements.

Staff that do not fall into that category, and staff in that category that do not elect to transfer, will be subject to the public sector arrangements for excess staff—that is, a voluntary redundancy or redeployment.

The exact detail of these costs depends on the options that staff choose to make, and the individual service details of those staff.

Greyhound Racing NSW and Harness Racing NSW have made provision for the transfer costs and will recoup such costs over time from future operational savings.

Stewards are appointed by the relevant controlling body to exercise certain functions in accordance with the relevant rules of racing.

Those appointments and the number of Stewards currently available are to be maintained under the new arrangements.

The employment of the Stewards will be subject to the same transitional arrangements as apply to other Authority staff.

They may elect to transfer across to either Greyhound Racing NSW or Harness Racing NSW into a position which is substantially the same as their current position.

Otherwise they will be subject to the public sector arrangements for excess staff—that is, a voluntary redundancy or redeployment.

One important issue in relation to stewards which must be clarified is that they will be transferred across as a greyhound panel to Greyhound Racing NSW, and as a harness panel to Harness Racing New South Wales.

The bills provide for the three codes to enter into a stewards' tricode arrangement if they wish to do so—subject to the agreement of the Minister.

There are many good reasons to consider such an approach. They include shared training opportunities, succession planning and providing a career path. Malcolm Scott identified these in his review.

There has been some speculation that a multi-skilling approach would result in a steward officiating in a code with no relevant experience.

I cannot see that the codes of racing would permit that to occur under any future arrangement. The reality is that a panel of stewards might consist of lead stewards that specialise in that code and a steward from another code—or a trainee steward being trained across codes.

The advantages of such an approach are obvious in terms of training, multi-skilling, succession planning and also ensuring that one code's panel of stewards does not become insular.

In any event, if the controlling bodies cannot agree on an approach it is unlikely that a proposal will be put to the Minister for approval.

The third bill in the reform package essentially deals with four matters.

This bill provides for the repeal of the Greyhound Racing Act 2002, Harness Racing Act 2002 and Greyhound and Harness Racing Administration Act 2004 which is the statute that establishes the Greyhound and Harness Racing Regulatory Authority.

Earlier I dealt with the consequences of the repeal of the 2004 Act, and the transfer of the functions of the Authority.

The third bill also provides for the Greyhound and Harness Racing Appeals Tribunal to be dissolved and its functions to be amalgamated and accommodated under a single statute under the Racing Appeals Tribunal.

In the future the amalgamated appeal body will be known as the Racing Appeals Tribunal and will operate under the Racing Appeals Tribunal Act 1983.

Nevertheless, the subject of the appeal will continue unchanged in that it will be essentially a right to appeal against a disciplinary decision made in accordance with the separate Rules of Racing that are applicable in the three codes of racing.

The procedure applicable in relation to appeals will in the main be carried forward, except that in the case of the greyhound and harness arrangements appeals from a decision of stewards will fall directly to the Racing Appeals Tribunal. There will be no avenue of appeal to Greyhound Racing NSW and Harness Racing NSW.

The judicial officers that are now appointed as the Racing Appeals Tribunal and the Greyhound and Harness Racing Appeals Tribunal will continue their terms under the amalgamated body with exactly the same responsibilities.

I acknowledge the contribution of the serving members: the Hon Justice Wayne Haylen QC, and Judge John McGuire.

I wish to especially acknowledge the contribution of His Honour Mr Barrie Thorley AM who retired from the Tribunal last year after 14 years of distinguished service.

For some time there has been concern about the dangers of persons jumping the fence and disrupting a race meeting.

The danger is not only to themselves but also to the jockey, driver, clerk of the course and the handlers of the racing animal. There is the danger that might result to the racing animal itself. There is also the possibility of disruption of the race and the adverse impact that might have if the race is abandoned and prize money and bets were not paid.

For several years there has been legislation to address inappropriate behaviour at sporting venues.

The bill proposes an amendment to the Sporting Venues (Pitch Invasions) Act 2003 to include invasions at racecourses.

The proposed offence is that a person must not enter or remain on a restricted area of a racecourse during a race meeting or trial meeting unless that person has appropriate authorisation.

A police officer is an authorised person for these purposes.

A jockey or driver, or another person authorised by the relevant controlling body or engaged in the control and management of the race meeting, are in the same category.

The ambit of the restricted area would include any racecourse, parade ring, stable, kennel or swabbing area and includes pathways connecting those places.

Penalties range from expulsion, a penalty notice of \$500, a 12-month ban, a life ban and a maximum penalty of \$5500.

For convenience, I have mentioned earlier the arrangements to bring into line with the Integrity Auditor, the Integrity Assurance Committee constituted under the Thoroughbred Racing Act 1996.

Those provisions are formally in the third bill.

The third bill also deals with savings and transitional matters, as appropriate to the circumstances.

I commend the bills to the House.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS [3.10 p.m.]: I offer the Coalition's support for the cognate bills, the Greyhound Racing Bill 2009, the Harness Racing Bill 2009 and the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. These three bills introduce a number of important structural changes to the way both greyhound racing and harness racing operate in New South Wales. As part of the five-year review process built into the current legislation governing these two racing codes, both the greyhound and harness racing fraternities have been afforded the opportunity to review the efficiency of their operation and to push their case for change where needed.

While we recognise that the review process into the governance of both the greyhound racing and the harness racing administration bodies in New South Wales was an important feature of the legislation, and we duly recognise the need to finetune the operation of both codes of racing, it must be recognised equally that this is the fourth restructure the greyhound racing and harness racing industries have undergone in the 15-year life of this Government. Each of these restructures has been both costly and disruptive to the operation of greyhound and harness racing in this State, and, indeed, through the many restructures, we have effectively seen some administrative bodies and regulatory functions formed, then dismantled, only to be reformed, as is the case with the two separate governing entities for greyhound and harness racing.

The Government must recognise the unsettling effect this process is having on greyhound and harness racing in New South Wales. In saying this, however, the legislative changes detailed in these cognate bills appear to present a positive step in the right direction for greyhound and harness racing, and I am confident it will resolve many of the issues that were identified as concerns in the Scott review. This legislation commendably accommodates the key recommendations of the Scott review and should see both racing bodies able to conduct their affairs in a more effective manner.

This legislation, in superseding the Greyhound and Harness Racing Act 2004, will effectively dismantle the existing administrative structure of the two racing codes, the Greyhound and Harness Racing Regulatory Authority, and pave the way for separate governing bodies to be established for each code. This is due recognition of the fact that the legislation which unified the governance of both codes provided for a pairing, which, while it was not entirely inharmonious or unsuccessful, was not exactly ideal. While once again dividing the governance of the racing codes and handing the administration back to Greyhound Racing NSW and Harness Racing NSW was not a feature of the report issued at the completion of the Scott review, we can expect only that it will be welcomed by those associated with both forms of racing.

It is also a commendable and logical step that the regulatory and commercial functions of both the greyhound and harness racing authorities have been separated. Under the previous legislation, the audits process was conducted within the same commercial confines as the rest of the governance of greyhound and harness racing. While my own involvement in the harness racing industry and the greyhound racing industry—in fact, the racing industry in general—does not extend much further than the odd flutter on the Melbourne Cup, I have the benefit of wise counsel of my colleague the member for Upper Hunter, George Souris, in the other place, who, as the shadow Minister for Racing for 14 years and even briefly as the Minister for Racing in the previous Coalition Government, has an unrivalled knowledge of all codes of racing, which has already been mentioned

by many members in the other place. It is on his recommendation and in recognition of the widespread support that the legislative changes have received from within the greyhound and harness racing industries that I commend the bill to the House.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE [3.15 p.m.]: The Christian Democratic Party supports the cognate bills, the Greyhound Racing Bill 2009, the Harness Racing Bill 2009 and the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. These bills are administrative bills and in no way increase or reduce the amount of gambling that is carried out in those three areas of activity. The bills simply reform and update the statutory arrangements that underpin the governance arrangements for the greyhound and harness racing industries. These bills will repeal the Greyhound and Harness Racing Administration Act 2004 and consequently disband the Greyhound and Harness Racing Regulatory Authority. The bills also will repeal the Greyhound Racing Act 2002 and the Harness Racing Act 2002. The new independent board structure then will operate for both Greyhound Racing NSW and Harness Racing NSW based on the recently introduced Racing NSW model.

I have watched harness racing often out at Bankstown Trotting Club because, as some members will know, my brother is a director and treasurer of the club and is also an owner and a driver, even though he is only two years younger than me. He is very much involved with the sport and I hope that from a sporting point of view the club will continue. I know there are pressures on Bankstown Trotting Club because of the increased airport activities at Bankstown, but I hope that they will not affect in any way the future operation of the club.

I note that currently in New South Wales there are 201 licensed racecourses, which includes 120 for thoroughbred racing, 40 for harness racing and 41 for greyhound racing. In my more wicked days I spent a lot of time as a boy betting on greyhounds, following my father's example. In the year ended 30 June 2007, 2,618 race meetings were held—757 thoroughbred race meetings, 510 harness race meetings and 1,351 greyhound race meetings. A problem we have, though, is that although the races are a form of sport, obviously the gambling involvement has dramatically increased, particularly with TAB operations, which now amount to a \$4.6 billion turnover in respect of on-course and off-course totalisators, and a \$453 million turnover from fixed odds racing and sports betting. In addition, currently, for sports betting there are nine authorised full-time and 37 authorised casual bookmakers, with a turnover of \$130 million. For racing there are 267 bookmakers, who, for the year ended 30 June 2007, held debts totalling \$597 million.

I know governments are keen to promote gambling because of the tax revenue, but no-one can deny the social cost to our society, and I urge the Government not to let the dollar blind it to the social consequences for the people and families of New South Wales.

Ms LEE RHIANNON [3.20 p.m.]: The Greens do not oppose these bills, which are the result of extensive consultation and multiple reviews of the appropriate structure of the greyhound and harness racing industries in New South Wales, but I wish to place some concerns on the record. First, the Greens are concerned about any measure that reduces effective oversight of an industry that involves so much cash, so many colourful characters—with all the meaning that term has these days—and such a history of criminal activity and corruption. These bills provide a greater level of industry self-regulation, which is a concern given its history.

The bills also break down the division between regulatory and commercial roles with Greyhound Racing New South Wales to cover both areas. The appointment of an integrity auditor goes some way to relieving those concerns, although it is a pity that the auditor is to be appointed by Greyhound Racing New South Wales rather than being completely independent of the body whose actions he or she will be auditing. The Greens also believe that the reports of the integrity auditor should be made public unless there is good reason not to do so.

Another issue of concern is that, despite the fact that this is an industry which involves billions of dollars and which is based upon the racing of animals, the only mention of welfare anywhere in the bills or, indeed, in the speeches of the Minister or the shadow Minister is in relation to the welfare of the industry. No mention is made of the welfare of the animals that are the basis of this industry. While the Greens recognise that other legislation provides a framework for animal welfare and protection, it is our view that any legislation seeking to regulate an industry that is based on the wagering of large amounts of cash on the racing of animals should make the welfare of the animals a matter of primary importance.

Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes: Hear! Hear!

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I acknowledge that interjection. Yet animal welfare fails to rate a mention in these bills. The issue of animal welfare in the racing industry was again brought to public attention with the

recent death of horses involved in steeplechase racing in Victoria. While I am pleased to say that racing over jumps has been banned in New South Wales for many years, there is no doubt that significant animal welfare issues exist in the New South Wales racing industry. Of particular concern in the context of these bills is the treatment of greyhounds, including excessive surplus breeding practices, the often cruel methods by which unwanted dogs are destroyed, and the conditions in which many dogs are forced to live.

The Greens are not opposed to the greyhound and harness racing industries, provided the animals involved are not the subject of cruel or inhumane treatment and the industry is not characterised by corruption and maladministration. While we believe that these bills are deficient in failing to focus more intensely on these issues, the Greens recognise that there has been extensive stakeholder consultation in the lead-up to the introduction of these bills and we will not oppose them. However, we will be watching closely to see if the deficiencies we have identified lead to increased problems with the administration of racing or the welfare of the animals involved in this industry. If that happens, we will be calling on the Government to come back to the Parliament to address those deficiencies in detail.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Parliamentary Secretary) [3.25 p.m.], in reply: I thank members for their contributions to this debate and note that the bills have broad support. The proposed amendments reform and update the statutory arrangements that underpin the governance of the greyhound and harness racing industries. A couple of amendments were moved in the lower House relating to the transfer arrangements for former authority staff wishing to take up employment with either Greyhound Racing New South Wales or Harness Racing New South Wales. The purpose of those Government amendments was to acknowledge additional consultation and the recommendations made in the Industrial Relations Commission on 30 April 2009 regarding these bills. These amendments provide for the following in respect of staff who elect to transfer across to either of the industry bodies. The first is a guarantee of employment with the relevant body for a period of 24 months and the second is an entitlement to a 4 per cent increase in the employee's salary for transferred staff employed at both 1 July 2009 and 1 July 2010.

The amendments also provide for an independent board structure for Greyhound Racing New South Wales and Harness Racing New South Wales based on the recently introduced Racing New South Wales model. The appeals tribunals of all three codes will be dissolved and their functions will be amalgamated and accommodated under a single panel and statute. The new legislation also provides for an independent integrity auditor function across all three codes to receive and consider any complaints about the conduct of racing officials. In addition, the amendments establish an offence of racecourse invasion similar to the pitch invasion legislation already in place. Other major reforms in the bills relate to the transfer of the regulatory functions and responsibilities of the Greyhound and Harness Racing Regulatory Authority to Greyhound Racing New South Wales and Harness Racing New South Wales.

In response to Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, the Government has this week launched Responsible Gambling Awareness Week. The Government fully embraces and takes that issue very seriously. I would also like the House to note that the Government has allocated many millions of dollars to supporting non-government organisations that provide counselling services and financial research to deal with problem gambling. I again thank members for their support of this legislation. It is minor legislation that will result in the establishment of a single controlling body for the greyhound and harness racing codes and the disbandment of the authority. I thank all members for their contributions to the debate 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. Penny Sharpe agreed to:

That these bills be now read a third time.

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

GAS SUPPLY AMENDMENT (OMBUDSMAN SCHEME) BILL 2009**Second Reading**

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Parliamentary Secretary) [3.28 p.m.], on behalf of the Hon. Ian Macdonald: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The Government is committed to ensuring that households and small businesses in New South Wales have the best deal possible when it comes to getting their supply of energy.

The Government already has a robust and effective framework for protecting energy customers. This includes retaining regulated energy prices, very strong rules that govern when and how suppliers can disconnect a customer and an Energy Marketing Code of Conduct.

The Government will retain all these protections as part of its strategy to reform the New South Wales electricity industry and secure the State's future energy supplies.

In addition, the Government has announced a new customer protection package that will further boost the already strong programs that assist New South Wales households who have difficulty paying energy bills for financial reasons.

The Government has also appointed an industry ombudsman scheme—the Energy and Water Ombudsman New South Wales (EWON). EWON provides households and small businesses with an independent and free service to help resolve complaints against energy providers.

This bill will build on these achievements to further increase the assistance that EWON can give to New South Wales energy customers.

OVERVIEW OF THE BILL

The Government already requires electricity retailers and gas retailers who supply small customers to join EWON. This means that EWON has jurisdiction to assist in complaints from households and small businesses in New South Wales.

In addition, electricity distributors are required to join EWON since they provide services to small customers and can sometimes be involved in complaints from those customers.

However, to date natural gas networks, which are also known as reticulators, have not been required to join EWON.

The objective of this bill, is to remedy this situation by introducing a requirement that natural gas networks be required to join EWON as well.

The bill will create an obligation on any natural gas network that supplies gas to small customers to join the EWON scheme, if they wish to be authorised under the Gas Supply Act.

This will mean that EWON will be given jurisdiction over complaints from small customers that concern the actions of gas networks. New South Wales households and small businesses who have complaints that involve the actions of a gas network will then be able to have the assistance of an independent body.

In order to ensure that the bill has no unfair impacts on businesses the Government has decided to ensure that only those natural gas networks actually supplying small customers will be required to meet this obligation. The bill does this by giving the Minister for Energy the power to exempt a natural gas network that is not actually supplying small customers from the requirement to join EWON.

BENEFITS OF THE BILL

Natural gas networks have not been required to join EWON before now for historical reasons. These are related to the different structure of the gas industry compared with electricity.

Small energy customers are directly served by electricity networks. They have contracts with these networks and they are supplied services directly by the networks.

On the other hand, gas networks are involved in supplying gas only to the natural gas retailers. The retailers supply the gas and other services to households and small businesses that use gas. The networks do not have contracts with these end customers and so have not been required to join EWON.

However, sometimes the actions of the natural gas networks do directly affect customers such as households and small businesses.

The Energy and Water Ombudsman, Ms Clare Petre, has brought to the attention of the Government a number of instances where small gas customers have had complaints concerning the actions of the different networks.

In order to help customers to resolve these complaints, EWON has had to rely on roundabout methods. In particular, EWON has had to rely on the goodwill and co-operation of the respective gas retailers to address complaints about gas networks.

This is far from an efficient method. It also imposes extra costs on gas retailers and it creates uncertainty for customers.

It is this situation, that this bill seeks to remedy by extending the requirement to join EWON to include the natural gas networks.

By doing so the Government will increase protections for small gas customers. It will also ensure that a strong, independent body, EWON, is given approval to assist both customers and the networks in the case of future disputes.

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

EWON has provided a number of examples of the kinds of complaints that the bill will allow households or small businesses to make about gas networks.

One case involved a natural gas network looking for a connection point between its main distribution pipe and the service line that carries gas to that customer's premises. In the course of that search the network excavated a large hole in the customer's driveway and then failed to repair the hole.

In another case, a customer had sought a new connection to the nearby gas main and was quoted \$1,000 by the gas network for 'traffic management' to assist with this work being done. The customer later observed that the only 'traffic management' that was done involved the placing of three witches hats on their driveway for the duration of the work, for which they were charged \$1,250.

There was another case, where the customer had requested a gas connection to her renovated property. The customer was planning to move into the property soon and needed to have the gas connected before then. The new connection was delayed, reportedly because there was a problem with the old meter for those premises having gone missing. This delay caused significant inconvenience to the customer who then had to make a number of unsuccessful attempts to resolve this matter with both their gas retailer and their gas network.

Unfortunately, in these and other similar cases, it was a long and difficult process for EWON to assist these customers and reduce the inconvenience suffered by them.

CONSISTENCY FOR CUSTOMERS

In cases such as these the Government is committed to ensuring that New South Wales households and small business that use gas have access to the service of EWON to assist in resolving these disputes.

The gas industry has a different structure to electricity. However, this is not a reason to deny these customers the same opportunity to have their complaints addressed as they do with respect to electricity.

For households and small businesses, gas can be an essential service just as electricity is. These customers want to be treated exactly the same whether or not they are using electricity or gas.

This bill will ensure that this is exactly what happens by giving customers the opportunity to use EWON's services no matter whether they have a complaint about an energy retailer, an electricity network or a gas network.

I am very pleased to say that the two largest natural gas networks in New South Wales have already joined EWON. Both Country Energy and Jemena have joined EWON as gas networks and done so voluntarily and I commend them for taking this positive step to assist small gas customers in New South Wales.

This bill will also have the effect of creating consistency throughout the gas industry by ensuring that all natural gas networks do the right thing by their customers.

I also note that gas networks in other States such as Victoria, Queensland and South Australia already require natural gas networks to join the respective ombudsman schemes in those States.

Indeed, it is expected that this requirement will become national within the next one to two years as a result of other reforms being undertaken in the energy industry at a national level.

So there should be no surprises about the Government extending this important protection to all small gas customers in New South Wales.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this bill seeks to continue the Government's commitment to provide strong protections to small energy customers in this State.

By ensuring a free, efficient and effective means of resolving complaints with natural gas reticulators, this bill will help to ensure that all New South Wales households and small businesses can get on with their lives and with their businesses whenever they need to use gas.

I commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.28 p.m.]: It is a pleasure to be able to indicate that the Government is actually doing something good. It does not happen very often but it has on this occasion. This measure is a sensible move and we wonder why it has not been done before. The legislation extends the Ombudsman's role in relation to electricity and water to include gas. The Energy and Water Ombudsman, Clare Petrie, does a fabulous job. People in the industry and those who have had problems in this area have great respect for her and her department. In the past she has had to be very innovative to be able to help people given that quite a few utilities offer both gas and electricity supply. This is a sensible move and the Opposition supports it. However, the Legislation Review Committee has raised a concern—although it does not relate to the extension of power. The committee report on the legislation states:

The Committee notes that the proposed Act is to commence on a day or days to be appointed by proclamation. This may delegate to the government the power to commence the Act on whatever day it chooses or not at all.

We have seen that happen in the past. The report continues:

While there may be good reason why such discretion is required—

I cannot see any reason why such discretion is needed in this bill, given the universal support it had in the lower House and, I presume, it will receive in this House—

the Committee considers that in some circumstances, this may give rise to an inappropriate delegation of legislative power.

Although there may be good reasons why such discretion is required such as allowing time for appropriate administrative arrangements to be made, the Committee has concerns about commencement by proclamation and asks Parliament to consider whether the Bill commencing by proclamation rather than on assent, is an inappropriate delegation of legislative power.

I put that question on record for the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister in this House to answer. Perhaps we will be honoured to have the Minister—who, after all, is a member of this House—attend the House and answer the question. The Opposition supports the bill.

Dr JOHN KAYE [3.30 p.m.]: On behalf of the Greens I express our support for the Gas Supply Amendment (Ombudsman Scheme) Bill 2009. To some extent I echo the comments of the shadow Minister for Energy, Duncan Gay. The provisions of the bill extend the coverage by the Energy and Water Ombudsman New South Wales [EWON] over gas reticulators other than those gas reticulators who do not supply small consumers. It is only relevant to reticulators. Distributors and retailers are already covered by the scheme. It is only reticulators, being the operators of the gas pipe system, that carry gas around predominantly urban areas.

The importance of gas to the economy of New South Wales will only grow over the next 10 years. Gas is not only inherently lower greenhouse gas producing fuel but it offers opportunities for local generation that coal, the other major fossil fuel in New South Wales, simply does not. If one looks at the example of working in the United Kingdom, where trigeneration has been used extensively, this offers the opportunity for extremely low greenhouse energy production. About an 80 per cent to 85 per cent energy efficiency can be achieved by local combustion of gas. Take about the first 50 per cent off in electricity generation, and the remaining 40 per cent is in both heating and cooling water, which is then reticulated in separate pipes to local consumers, thereby extracting every last drop out of each molecule of fossil fuel that is combusted.

This sort of parsimonious attitude to fossil fuels is an essential ingredient in reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with combustion of fossil fuels. Therefore, it is sensible that we look carefully at the gas reticulation network and ensure it is operating in a way that respects the opportunities for customers. This bill does that. It extends the coverage of the Ombudsman scheme, which has been successful with respect to both electricity and water, to gas reticulation in a way that ought to reduce the extraordinarily high number of complaints that have been received in respect of actions of gas reticulators.

It is important that we understand that when one has private monopoly operators, which is effectively what gas reticulators are, there are huge consequences not only for pricing but also for the standard of service to consumers. The Government would do well to take a close look at what has happened in an almost exclusively privately owned gas system before it charges ahead with privatising gas retailers, understanding that private ownership and the introduction of a purely profit motive into the provision of essential services like energy, electricity and gas have consequences for consumers. That being said, the Greens support the legislation.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE [3.34 p.m.]: The Christian Democratic Party supports the Gas Supply Amendment (Ombudsman Scheme) Bill 2009. This is an administrative bill that seeks to address the

problems that were faced by the Energy and Water Ombudsman New South Wales in trying to resolve disputes involving gas networks by requiring natural gas reticulators to join that organisation. This bill will bring New South Wales in line with other jurisdictions where gas reticulators are required to be members of the Ombudsman's scheme. Ombudsmen now operate in many areas—finance, housing, banking—and now in the area of energy and water. They provide a very important safeguard for consumers, by providing somewhere for them to go, hopefully, to get justice for the problems they are experiencing. We are pleased to support this progressive legislation.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD [3.35 p.m.]: I support the Gas Supply Amendment (Ombudsman Scheme) Bill 2009. I am particularly pleased to support this bill because it aims to ensure that all small energy users in New South Wales have the same rights. It aims to ensure that small customers will be treated in a consistent manner when they have a complaint about their gas network. Just like the poles and wires that carry electricity to the small customer, gas relies on a network operator to supply gas through a system of pipes that connects the end customer. This bill will ensure that small customers have the same right to complain to the Ombudsman about those pipes as they do to complain about the poles and wires for electricity. Currently, there is no effective and low-cost means for resolving disputes about gas networks. I am pleased to say that the Government is removing this inconsistency. It does not matter whether small customers are using electricity or gas for heating, cooking or hot water. Energy is energy and these customers expect to have their complaints treated in the same way regardless of whether they involve electricity or gas.

I also note that this will ensure consistency for small customers in New South Wales with their counterparts in other jurisdictions. Small customers in Victoria and Queensland have the right to make a complaint about gas networks to the industry Ombudsman in those States. With this bill the Government is ensuring that small energy customers in New South Wales continue to enjoy a robust and effective set of protections. For these reasons, I commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Parliamentary Secretary) [3.37 p.m.], in reply: The Government already has a robust and effective framework for protecting energy customers. For example, we have regulated electricity prices, we have very strong rules that govern when and how suppliers can disconnect the customer and we have the government-approved industry Ombudsman scheme, the Energy and Water Ombudsman New South Wales [EWON]. Currently, the Energy and Water Ombudsman has the power to assist households and small businesses in New South Wales with complaints relating to electricity distributors, and gas and electricity retailers. However, to date, the Energy and Water Ombudsman has not been able to assist 100 per cent of people with complaints about natural gas networks, or reticulators. This is because they have not been required to join the Energy and Water Ombudsman scheme.

The objective of the bill is to require natural gas networks to join the Energy and Water Ombudsman scheme. The bill does this by creating an obligation on any natural gas network that supplies gas to small companies to join the Energy and Water Ombudsman scheme if they wish to be authorised under the Gas Supply Act. The Energy and Water Ombudsman, Ms Clare Petre, has brought to the attention of the Government a number of instances in which small gas customers have made complaints concerning the actions of the different networks. The bill will allow the Energy and Water Ombudsman to resolve disputes between customers and gas networks whenever they arise. Customers will be treated exactly the same whether they are using electricity or gas. The bill will ensure that this is exactly what happens.

Currently, the two largest natural gas networks in New South Wales have already joined the Energy and Water Ombudsman scheme. This is a commendable forward-looking move on the part of both Country Energy and Jemena, and I commend them for taking this positive step to assist small gas customers in New South Wales. The bill will ensure that the remaining 10 per cent of gas customers also have access to the services offered by the Energy and Water Ombudsman.

However, the bill requires only those natural gas networks that actually supply small customers to join the scheme. This will ensure that there are no unfair impacts on business. I also note that it is expected that this requirement will become national within the next one or two years as a result of other reforms being undertaken in the energy industry at the national level. This means that the bill puts New South Wales in good shape to transition to these new national arrangements when they are introduced.

In summary, this bill extends existing protections available to most New South Wales gas and electricity consumers to a section of the market not currently covered. This will ensure that these customers have access to a free, efficient and effective means of resolving complaints for natural gas reticulators. This will

help New South Wales households and small businesses to resolve their concerns quickly when a dispute arises with the gas network provider. In response to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition about the commencement of the Act, it is the Government's intention to commence the legislation as soon as possible. We are consulting with all relevant parties to get an agreed date. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Leave granted to proceed to the third reading of the bill forthwith.

Third Reading

Motion by the Hon. Penny Sharpe agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

EDUCATION AMENDMENT BILL 2009

Second Reading

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Parliamentary Secretary) [3.41 p.m.], on behalf of the Hon. John Hatzistergos: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

In introducing the Education Amendment Bill 2009 the Government is delivering the most comprehensive change to education and learning in New South Wales of any State in Australia. This is the culmination of an extensive consultation period and, importantly, the implementation of research-based policy development. From 2010 all students in New South Wales will, as a minimum, complete year 10 and, until they are 17 years old, continue to be engaged in some form of education, training or employment. I seek leave to incorporate the remainder of the second reading speech in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

This reform provides additional educational opportunities for every school student in New South Wales that will ultimately enhance their employment capacity, enhance their earning potential over the course of their employment, and set New South Wales up for the long term as a clever State. It is a reform that is overdue.

Compulsory attendance until 15 years of age was set in 1943 and today remains in place. Of the 30 OECD nations only students in Greece, Korea and Portugal leave earlier.

The Government wants to put in place a system that enables every student to maximise his or her learning potential and this is a vital part of the structure that our schools, TAFEs and universities need to deliver to those students.

In New South Wales we can be rightly proud of the education system that we have built.

The results of national and international tests demonstrate that our students are doing well.

But this bill sets a new standard for what our young people can achieve. We know that many young people are missing out on the opportunities that educational attainment can bring.

Young people who leave school before completing year 10 are particularly at risk of being left behind at time when more and more jobs require higher skill levels and further qualifications.

This is a fundamental shift that sets New South Wales students and our State up for the future.

All Australian States, except Victoria and the Northern Territory, have adopted a policy of engagement in school, training or work until 17 years of age.

I want to emphasise the compelling weight of the body of research in this area. National and international evidence indicates that young people who complete 12 years of education have greater opportunities for further education and sustainable employment.

In 2006 the Productivity Commission found that early leavers tend to be less likely to work and to earn less when they are employed. The Australian Bureau of Statistics had this to say about unemployment rates:

Early school-leavers are 2½ times more likely to be unemployed.

Access Economics conducted research that showed that, on average, early school-leavers would earn lower wages over a lifetime and would be more likely to be unemployed for periods of their lives.

Those who complete school are more likely to pursue further study or training and will have higher completion rates in later vocational education or skills training—a study by Karmel and Woods, Australian academics who write in the field of vocational education.

Karmel and Nguyen said that women who complete year 12 are 14 per cent more likely to be employed than those who do not and earn, on average, 8 per cent more.

There is also evidence of health benefits and behaviours that place a person's health at risk are reduced.

The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research suggests a lower likelihood of criminal conviction or imprisonment the longer an individual is in school.

In Britain we are told that 16-year-olds to 18-year-olds not in school, or work, or training are more likely to experience depression or ill health by the age of 22.

The Australian National University Centre for Economic Policy Research estimated the benefit to be 10 per cent a year in increased income for every additional year of education. In short, it stacks up. The advantages of staying on at school also compound with early school-leavers 2½ times more likely to be unemployed.

I will talk briefly about the benefits to our economy. Applied Economics estimated a gain of between \$1.5 billion and \$2.7 billion to the New South Wales economy if early school-leaver numbers were halved by the year 2050.

The OECD asserted that an additional year of education is estimated to raise the level of productivity by between 3 per cent and 6 per cent for a country with Australia's current average educational level.

Our stability now and our prosperity into the future depend on this State developing a highly skilled workforce—a workforce that allows our business sectors to be innovative and competitive. And we are strongly placed to promote and support higher retention rates in our schools.

For the students we will deliver a thoroughly modern curriculum, a balance of academics and vocational training in our schools. We will deliver a variety of secondary schools, senior colleges and specialist schools. We will deliver university links and we will deliver a massive capital works programs at schools and TAFEs.

We will also deliver 25 new trade schools and our Learn or Earn skills package that guarantees a place in TAFE for anyone under 18 who is not at school and is unemployed.

We will also guarantee programs for job preparation in schools and TAFE, funding for schools that are serving disadvantaged students and families, partnerships with industries, and an expanded New South Wales Government apprenticeships and cadetships program.

Our approach has strong community support. Our reform is strongly supported by detailed submissions from the Business Council of Australia, the New South Wales Parents and Citizens Federation, and from the New South Wales Catholic Parents Association.

We expect that numbers will increase gradually in our schools to about 8,900 additional students per year, either still at school or in vocational education and training.

This includes students who currently leave before the end of year 10 and students who leave before turning 17 years old and do not go on to employment. Providing for these students at school and TAFE will cost around an extra \$98 million per year.

I turn now to the specific provisions of the bill. It creates a new section 21B in the Act. This section defines the minimum school leaving age as the age at which a student completes year 10 of secondary education, or the age of 17 years, whichever occurs first.

Year 10 can be completed in a number of ways: it can be completed while attending a New South Wales government school or non-government school, or by being registered for home schooling where such registration covers the completion of year 10.

The Education Act 1990 currently provides that the registration for home schooling is subject to the condition that the child receives instruction to meet the minimum curriculum requirements for schools. These minimum curriculum requirements already apply until the end of year 10.

A child will have completed year 10 through home schooling when he or she is registered to do so under the Education Act and has met the conditions upon which his or her registration is granted.

Recognition will also be given to the achievements of children who have completed the equivalent of year 10 outside New South Wales.

The Director General of Education and Training, or a prescribed officer, will be given the authority to decide that the education a child has received is equivalent to the completion of year 10.

The system will have the flexibility to allow for the special circumstances affecting particular students. The Minister will have the power to approve the completion of education in such special circumstances so that it would amount to the completion of year 10.

Section 21B also introduces a new concept for education in New South Wales, which is that every young person must participate in some form of education or training or be in employment from the time he or she completes year 10 until he or she reaches 17 years of age.

For the majority of students this will simply mean that they stay at school and study for the New South Wales Higher School Certificate, and go on to further education or employment, as is currently the case.

For others the options for this participation phase include a vocational course or an apprenticeship, or traineeship. A small number of gifted students may take advantage of the accelerated learning pathways that lead to early entry to higher education.

Where individual circumstances arise that require a more flexible solution, this can be done at the discretion of the Minister.

This bill is about a better future for every young person in New South Wales. We acknowledge that for some young people this will require us to work with them to develop a unique solution that meets their needs.

I wish to emphasise that the Rees Government has listened to the community in allowing students to take up employment as part of the range of options in the participation phase.

The Government recognises that for a small number of students continuing in educational training past year 10 may do little to improve their future.

We acknowledge that there needs to be some flexibility for young people whose interest and talents are best developed in whole or in part in the workplace.

Section 21B (3) contains that flexibility. It allows young people to undertake paid work or a combination of paid work and education and training.

As this bill is essentially about encouraging greater participation in education or training, the paid work options are generally only available to young people who have already reached the age of 15. In general, we would not want a child of, say, 12 accelerating through year 10 and then directly joining the full-time workforce.

If there are exceptional circumstances that warrant a younger child participating in paid work, the option exists to seek an exemption from the Minister. The bill also provides flexibility for young people for whom life does not necessarily operate according to plan. Section 21B (4) allows a young person to cease participation for a period of three months in any 12-month period. We understand that a young person may decide that the option he or she has chosen does not suit him or her.

The Rees Government recognises, particularly in this economic climate, that employment may cease or a student may face suspension.

The bill provides the breathing space that these young people need to get themselves re-established in a suitable form of participation.

However, if a period of unemployment extends beyond three months, we believe it is in the young person's best interests either to return to school or to take up a training place—alternatives that we can guarantee will be available.

The Education Act makes parents primarily responsible for the participation of their children in compulsory education in New South Wales. Parents face prosecution if their children do not participate in compulsory education.

This bill is a watershed in New South Wales education. It marks a renewal of our commitment to our young people and it means a redoubling of all our efforts to make a better future for them. I commend the bill to the House.

The Hon. ROBYN PARKER [3.42 p.m.]: On behalf of the Liberal-Nationals Coalition I speak to the Education Amendment Bill 2009, which, from 2010, seeks to change the school-leaving age. The Coalition does not oppose the bill, which requires, as a minimum, that students complete year 10 and/or that they continue to be engaged in some form of education, training or employment until they are 17 years of age. The current school-leaving age of 15 was set in 1943—an examination of this matter at this time is valid. Society has moved on somewhat since 1943 and it is reasonable to assume that conditions are quite different now. In 1943 only a small number of students stayed at school beyond year 10 or its equivalent. Most jobs did not require a higher qualification and it was not the norm for students to continue with their schooling. Many honourable members would be in the position of my brother and me: we were the first generation in our family to undertake tertiary education as part of the generational shift.

However, the Coalition has some concerns with the bill. If sufficient resources, teachers, counsellors and safeguards are not in place by 2010 the legislation could backfire and be detrimental to students. Indeed, the measure should not be regarded as a baby-sitting arrangement or be used in any way to fiddle the unemployment

statistics. The Coalition is also concerned about some of the punitive measures in the bill, particularly those relating to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Nevertheless, there is a groundswell of support for a change to the school-leaving age. Evidence shows that the longer students remain at school in a learning environment or in gainful employment productivity increases. For example, the OECD states that for every additional year of education up to year 12, productivity is raised by 3 per cent to 6 per cent. Therefore, the Coalition welcomes the bill, with the proviso that appropriate funding be provided.

I note that the Premier has committed approximately \$98 million worth of funding—and we will look to the budget to see how that is rolled out. The Coalition does not oppose the bill provided funding and resources are available to schools, and that additional vocational education providers are employed to cope with increased enrolment numbers. The second reading speech noted that an estimated additional 8,900 students per year will stay at school or in vocational education and training. That will place considerable pressure on the system, particularly as baby boomers are now reaching retirement age and already we have an insufficient number of teachers and counsellors. In addition, the Government has run down the TAFE system. However, the Coalition supports the notion of giving students more opportunities.

Providing for these additional students at school and TAFE will cost around \$25 million in extra classrooms and other infrastructure, plus another \$98 million a year in staffing. The staffing increase will include at least 700 new teachers and 150 support staff. The Government must make a greater commitment to school counsellors because the ratio of school counsellors to students is appalling: 1:1,500 for primary schools and 1:1,00 for high schools. Students need the support offered by counsellors. It is an indictment of this Government that the ratio of counsellors to students is not higher. Additional counsellors must be rolled out. I do not know where the extra counsellors will come from, but the Government must address this matter as a high priority.

The Department of Education and Training has committed to extra vocational education options for students. I know that the Rudd Government is propping up the maintenance backlog to the tune of \$50 million and providing additional resources for classrooms, but I am not sure the mathematics have been done on the financial pressures that will be placed on the school system by the increased number of students staying at school beyond year 10. From 2010 every student will need to complete year 10 as a minimum or be engaged in some form of training and employment until they are 17 years of age. If they are not, fines of \$1,000 may be imposed. Those sorts of fines are of great concern. I will deal with that aspect of the bill later in my speech.

It is important to acknowledge that school is not for every child, and that forcing students to stay at school who do not want to be there, and who are constantly reminded of their deficiencies in terms of numeracy, literacy and other educational skills, can create more frustration for them and will not necessarily assist with their development, and emotional and social wellbeing. Therefore we must make sure that options are in place for those students. Research conducted by the Centre for Independent Studies shows that increasing the minimum school-leaving age could have a detrimental effect on some students, particularly those who have not performed well at school. The centre concluded that:

Students with low numeracy and literacy scores who nevertheless stay at school to Year 12 end up doing worse than their contemporaries who leave early. Their risk of unemployment is 3% points higher and their weekly full-time earnings are more than 2% points lower, for every additional year they spend at school.

The Rudd Government recently announced an earn or learn policy, or the Jobs Compact. The Council of Australian Governments committed to increasing the year 12 school retention level to 90 per cent and agreed that those under the age of 20 who do not have the Higher School Certificate must be in either education or training before they can receive the youth allowance. That is all well and good for students who are competent and capable. However, as Captain Paul Moulds from the Salvation Army Oasis Youth Network commented recently, that is a very difficult objective for some of the young people the Salvation Army deals with. Captain Moulds recently told the media, "It's simply not possible to attend training courses or obtain employment when you don't know where you will be sleeping each night."

There are more than 32,000 homeless young people. The Salvos say they are concerned that this Rudd Government policy could further disadvantage those trying to address their personal circumstances who would still require income assistance. They could turn to crime, prostitution, or other means to find money if that level of support is withdrawn. While the Rudd Government says the policy is aimed at addressing unemployment and the current economic downturn, it is important to note that the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry says that while youth training initiatives are welcome, the Council of Australian Governments has not mentioned anything about supporting small businesses through cuts to payroll tax.

It is important that we get the balance right. If students stay at school longer they must be offered diverse opportunities in their education and a relevant curriculum—not just the traditional academic syllabus. Students need a curriculum that is focused, flexible, and geared to meet the demands of those who are not high academic achievers. We must acknowledge that success in the world does not necessarily require a high educational attainment, and that staying at school beyond a certain point may be a disadvantage for some students. I know that many successful people in the world left school at an early age. Relevancy is our first point and flexibility is our second point. Our third point is that we must provide support to those students to make sure that this is not just a baby-sitting arrangement or some way of rejigging the unemployment statistics. We must make sure that we do not penalise parents and students who are from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.

I note that Australia has one of the lowest completion records for secondary school students among the OECD countries. The workforce and the needs of employers have changed. I have visited a number of secondary schools and have noted the financial pressures faced by parents these days. A number of initiatives are in place to support students who undertake TAFE vocational education courses. However, I hear from parents of students who attend independent schools that charge low fees about the financial pressures they are under. Many of those students will fit into the basket of needing to stay at school because of the educational opportunity it provides, simply because their parents cannot afford to pay the TAFE fees. These students are disadvantaged simply because their parents do not meet the safety net that the Government provides for other low-income parents. As a result, many of the students who attend schools that charge low fees often have to change schools to attract the sort of support for vocational education and TAFE that is offered at a public high school. This simply puts pressure on the public secondary school by virtue of extra enrolments. Equity and affordability is something that the Government must address when looking at all students in this category, if it is to require all students to stay in a learning environment.

I have referred to the Council of Australian Governments agreement. The legislation brings New South Wales into line with other States, which have school-leaving ages of at least 16, some States having a leaving age of 17. Under the bill several options are available to students to complete year 10, including home schooling. A young person will be allowed to cease participation in training or employment for a period of three months in a 12-month period after they turn 15, after which time they are required to return to school or training. The bill provides for changes to penalties. I am not sure why the Government wants to go down this aggressive path of financially punishing parents. Indeed, the Government received bad press about that today. Unless it provides support to parents, they will be disadvantaged even more.

If the young person is not in training or paid employment, parents will be prosecuted if their children under the age of 17 do not participate in compulsory education. Fines of \$1,000 may be imposed. This is similar to current legislation, under which it is an offence to fail to send a child of school. If we had a greater number of school counsellors we would understand the sorts of pressures that parents are under. Penalising parents further, without providing that sort of support, will often make a situation worse. Parents will be exempt from prosecution if the child is aged 16 or older, the child no longer lives with the parent, and their absence from school was not due to any fault of the parent. However, the onus is on the parent to prove that. We believe that all efforts should be made to address those issues before the Government chases after parents with prosecutions and seeks to fine them \$1,000. If a student is not at school, there must be a reason for it.

The leaving age bill expands the defences to a prosecution to include circumstances where a 16-year-old child has left home. As I said, I hope that the Government does not commence prosecution without, in the first instance, assisting parents to comply with their legal obligation to educate their children. Support for increasing the minimum leaving age for students can be found with the Productivity Commission, which, in 2006, found that early school leavers tend to be less likely to work and to earn less when they are employed. The Australian Bureau of Statistics found that early school leavers are 2.5 times more likely to be unemployed. Research conducted by Access Economics showed that, on average, early school leavers would earn lower wages over a lifetime and would be more likely to be unemployed for periods of their lives. Access Economics also found that early school leavers are 2.5 times more likely to be unemployed. Further, it found that those who complete school are more likely to pursue further study or training, and will have higher completion rates than later vocational education or skills training.

Research by Australian academics Karmel and Nguyen in the field of vocational education showed that women who complete year 12 are 14 per cent more likely to be employed than those who do not complete year 12 and that they earn, on average, 8 per cent more. The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research suggests that the longer an individual is at school, the lower the likelihood of criminal conviction or imprisonment. The Australian National University Centre for Economic Policy Research estimated the benefit to be 10 per cent a year in increased income for every additional year of education.

Applied Economics estimated a gain of between \$1.5 billion and \$2.7 billion to the New South Wales economy if early school leaver numbers are halved by the year 2050. That is an objective for the Government or for the Liberal-National Coalition when it takes office in March 2011. The OECD reports that an additional year of education is estimated to raise the level of productivity by between 3 per cent and 6 per cent for a country with Australia's current average educational level. The Australian industry group estimates that \$2.7 billion could be added to the New South Wales economy if the number of early school leavers was halved by 2050.

While the Opposition supports the bill it does not want to see the Government using a rise in school leaving age as a way of massaging unemployment figures to hide the Government's failure to manage the New South Wales economy. Schools are not babysitters. Since Nathan Rees has been Premier at least 200 people daily have lost their jobs—and that is rising. The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that the New South Wales unemployment rate has risen to 5.8 per cent and remains the highest rate in Australia. New South Wales Labor Governments over the past fourteen years have not resulted in a vibrant state economy but, rather, mistake after mistake, project cost blowouts and job losses. If the New South Wales Government is serious about helping young people it will provide a greater slice of funding to education and schools, to TAFE colleges and to vocational education and training.

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

POLICE AWARD NEGOTIATIONS

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER: I direct my question to the Minister for Police. Why does the Minister continue to abrogate his responsibility over mooted cuts to police services in the wake of the Government's wage offer to police officers in New South Wales? Has the Minister agreed to support proposed cuts to injury protection, night shift allowances, relocation allowances and local area command numbers, suggestions that the New South Wales Police Association has labelled as disappointing, disgraceful and a disincentive for communities to attract police? Does the Minister maintain that the proposed cost-cutting measures are not his idea and are solely the responsibility of the Commissioner of Police?

The Hon. TONY KELLY: The Rees Government is committed to supporting the hard-working men and women of the New South Wales Police Force so they can get on with the job of ensuring the safety and security of our community. Negotiations for a new award between the Commissioner of Police and the New South Wales Police Association have commenced. While it is important that police are paid what they deserve, it is also important that negotiations are fiscally responsible. A range of items is being discussed in the award negotiations. I do not intend to comment on the day-to-day negotiations between the commissioner and the New South Wales Police Association, which only recently commenced and are ongoing. Since 1995 the Labor Government in New South Wales has delivered record pay increases to the police force of 91.4 per cent.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: How much?

The Hon. TONY KELLY: Since 1995, this Labor Government has delivered 91.4 per cent in pay increases to the police force. It is interesting to look back a moment at the Opposition's complete lack of position on this subject. When talking to Steve Price on radio station 2UE last Thursday 7 May, the Hon. Michael Gallacher had great difficulty answering a question about Opposition policy on police wages. The radio interview came about after the Opposition rushed out a media release criticising the Government's approach to the current pay negotiations, so it should have been an easy question for the Leader of the Opposition to answer—far from it. He could not give a straight answer when he was asked during that interview whether the Opposition would give police a pay rise if it managed to be elected in 2011. Not even once but eight times the question was asked, "Will you give police a pay rise?" He was asked eight separate times whether the Opposition would give police a pay rise and he could not give one straight answer.

The Hon. Melinda Pavey: He was being responsible.

The Hon. TONY KELLY: A pay rise. A one-cent pay rise—anything. He would not give a straight answer to a very simple question. Steve Price asked:

So that's a yes? Police will get a pay rise under [an] Opposition [Government] in 2011?

But the answer was something out of *Yes Minister*. The Hon. Michael Gallacher replied:

Ah ... well ... you ... I can only ... they haven't even made a claim to me yet.

And that was one of the more sensible answers he gave during that interview. No wonder the presenter concluded the interview with this observation:

If the State Opposition ... the quality of their frontbench is like Mick Gallacher in that interview ... then God help us all.

CARING TOGETHER: THE HEALTH ACTION PLAN FOR NEW SOUTH WALES

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: I direct my question to the Minister for Health. Will the Minister advise the House about the new bodies to support and monitor the implementation of Caring Together: The Health Action Plan for New South Wales?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I thank the honourable member for her question and ongoing interest in public health in New South Wales. Last week I announced two high-level teams that will support and monitor the implementation of the Caring Together: The Health Action Plan for New South Wales. Caring Together is the most comprehensive reform in the recent history of the public hospital system of New South Wales and is backed by an additional \$485 million in funding.

To provide a transparent monitoring process for the rollout of Caring Together, I have established an independent panel to regularly audit progress. Mr John Walsh will chair the panel. John is a partner in the risk and value practice of PricewaterhouseCoopers. He has extensive experience as a consulting actuary in general insurance, accident compensation and the health industry. The panel includes clinicians, as well as people with expertise in culture change, systems information, trend analysis, governance and administration. Importantly, the panel has its own independent secretariat. The panel will report on the progress of Caring Together each six months over the next three years.

I have also established an independent Community and Clinicians Expert Advisory Council to support the implementation of Caring Together. The council will provide advice directly to me and to the Director General of Health on initiatives underway and the work of implementation teams at the local level. Dr Michael Keating will chair the council. Dr Keating is a former head of the Australian Public Service and other senior Commonwealth departments, including secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The focus of Caring Together is to build on the great tradition of the health system of New South Wales where the care and treatment of the patient is the centre of all the activities of the hospital system.

The Hon. John Robertson: Not billing the bureaucracy.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: That is right—I acknowledge the interjection of my colleague—not billing the bureaucracy. And the role of the 40,000 plus nurses that work in the public hospital system is a vital part of the patient care and safety dynamic. This morning I had the opportunity to visit Royal Prince Alfred Hospital to highlight International Nurses Day and to discuss improvements to patient care with key changes for nurses and midwives through the Caring Together action plan. On International Nurses Day it is fitting to pay tribute to the enormous contribution that nurses and midwives make in helping to save lives and improve people's health on a daily basis. A key plank in Caring Together: The Health Action Plan for New South Wales is to strengthen the leadership and communication role of nurses and midwives in hospital wards.

The new role for the nurse and midwife unit managers is critical to the success of Caring Together as they are the central contact point for patients and their families. They are the identifiable clinical leaders in the ward and they need to be empowered to act decisively in the interests of the patient and their health care. The nurse or midwife unit manager will ensure safe, competent and compassionate care. Nurses or midwives in charge are only the beginning of important changes to deliver a widespread culture change across the health system to refocus patient care and safety across the State now and into the future.

While the New South Wales Government has a comprehensive plan to improve patient care, the Opposition has come up with a flimsy six-point position, which will divert \$300 million away from frontline services. Barry O'Farrell and his shadowy deputy, Mrs Jillian Skinner, want to increase the number of area health services from 8 to 20. Their plan will result in more red tape, more managers, more bureaucrats, more offices and more rent for office space, fewer resources to doctors, fewer nurses to patients and more paperwork for clinicians. Yes, the Skinner plan is a joke.

RIVER RED GUM LOGGING

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries. Does the Minister recall telling Parliament in May 2007 in relation to river red gum logging that the Government "operates with approvals and every department agrees with our practices, which are certified"? If that is the case and Forests New South Wales was conducting lawful logging operations, why did he require Forests New South Wales to enter a legal agreement in October 2007 in which the National Parks Association was handed authority to approve logging operations in several river red gum State forests? Is it not true that the failure to conduct an environmental impact study opened the door to this draconian agreement and Federal intervention? Given the timber industry in the central Murray wetlands has only four weeks resources ahead of its mills, what is the current basis for supply to the timber industry now and in the near future?

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: That is an interesting question. It would take some time to answer each and every facet. I will start by going back a few years to the operation prior to the court order in October 2007, which was instrumented in November 2007. Under the previous agreement, which was based on the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, Forests New South Wales was required to provide a statement about the conduct of its forestry operations. Following discussions on the Australian timber selection process, the form of timber cutting agreed on for the area was roughly a 50 metres diameter circle. That standard was embedded in the work procedures manual and the manual was put on public display. As I recall, at the time there was virtually no opposition and it became the manual of operation.

The National Parks Association then took action in the Supreme Court. The complicated action related to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, as it stands, and the section of the Act that Forests New South Wales operated under—we believe appropriately. Forests New South Wales had acted under that section for some time. The action would have taken a considerable time and could have cost a great deal of money. On legal advice, we entered into an agreement that was discussed over several negotiations. The agreement was that an environmental impact statement would be conducted under the relevant New South Wales Act and publicly released by 1 June this year. That document will be released for public display on that date. The agreement was entered into to avoid a long, litigious scenario and was designed to cover the future operations of our forestry activity.

In relation to the cutting program, it was agreed that the National Parks Association would look at the various coops proposed to be cut pending the production of the environmental impact statement. As part of that process New South Wales Forests would place before the National Parks Association for negotiation and discussion the proposed coops. It is not dissimilar to the type of operations that occurred at Brigalow. We are in a position to release by 1 June the comprehensive environmental impact statement, which deals in great detail with the superb parrot.

The Hon. Christine Robertson: You mean you are doing it properly?

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: We are doing it properly, according to the court order. There is discussion about the coops. We are keeping up supply in the area to the timber companies.

The Hon. Catherine Cusack: If you had done it properly in the first place this would not be happening.

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: The Hon. Catherine Cusack does not understand the law. We did it properly. We took the view that we were complying with the cutting process at that stage and with all regulations. We will produce on 1 June a comprehensive environmental impact statement. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY: I ask a supplementary question. In light of the Minister's answer, is Peter Garrett wrong or is the Minister wrong, because they both cannot be right?

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: That is a very interesting question from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in this Chamber because he clearly has not read the statement of his leader, Mr Andrew Stoner, who yesterday said that Mr Macdonald is right. The Leader of The Nationals supports me. What is the line being taken by The Nationals in the upper House? The Leader of The Nationals was on the radio yesterday supporting me on this matter. I wonder what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is trying to say in this House. He does not know that his party supports us. His remarks show that he obviously does not read the statements of the Leader of The Nationals in this Parliament. That does not surprise me, given the disarray that The Nationals are

in across the State. Even such an eminent member as the Hon. Charlie Lynn has been going around taking photographs of The Nationals. He is not doing that to prove that there is a National party. He is doing it to prove that they have no members left.

RIVER RED GUM LOGGING

Mr IAN COHEN: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries, who is in full flight over parrots. Will the Minister advise the House whether the superb parrot will cost 1,000 jobs in south-western New South Wales river red gum forests? Will the Minister advise whether Forests New South Wales were looking at ways to circumvent the part 3A application process and become the determining authority evaluating its own \$2 million environmental impact statement? Considering the Prime Minister is already embarrassed by the performance of New South Wales Labor, can we assume that the Federal environment Minister has issued a stop-work order not only to protect the superb parrot but also to end the embarrassing management of the high conservation value river red gums by New South Wales Labor?

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: An absolute nonsensical question of the highest order. I had discussions with the Federal environment Minister, Mr Garrett, yesterday, and with other Federal ministers this morning. I will meet with the Federal environment Minister early next week. If the Hon. Ian Cohen read the statements of Mr Tony Burke, the Federal agriculture Minister, who has made public announcements on this matter, he would be aware that we will reach a more amiable solution on this matter than that put in a letter sent by a Federal junior departmental officer to the regional director of Forests New South Wales.

Mr IAN COHEN: I ask a supplementary question. Did the Minister or his staff have anything to do with leaking information to the *Daily Telegraph* for yesterday's article?

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: A totally irrelevant question.

ROAD SAFETY

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Police. What is the latest information on police action to combat the number of deaths and serious crashes on New South Wales roads?

The Hon. TONY KELLY: Too many people are dying on our roads. Already this year there have been 174 deaths on New South Wales roads, and every one of those deaths is a tragedy. I am deeply concerned that we are seeing a spike in road deaths, after a number of years of a decreasing road toll. The 174 fatalities recorded so far this year is 44 more than for the same period last year. Sadly the trend in New South Wales is consistent with that of the national experience. To the end of March there were 378 road deaths across Australia. In the national context, with the exception of the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales has the lowest rate of deaths per 100,000 of the population. In the past 12 months New South Wales has recorded 6.1 deaths per 100,000 of the population—considerably lower than the national rate of 7.4 per 100,000.

The Hon. Catherine Cusack: Please don't try to spin this; it's not appropriate.

The Hon. TONY KELLY: I wish you would stop interrupting me. But that is cold comfort for those who have lost loved ones on our roads. The rise in road deaths was highlighted over the Easter period with six people killed compared with zero the previous year, and the Anzac weekend when there were nine deaths compared with two in 2008. Claims that this increase in deaths is the result of complacency on the part of police or lack of police on our roads are not only wrong but are a slap in the face for the dedicated police who are working hard to keep our roads safe.

Police conducted Operation Go Slow over the Anzac weekend. During that operation police conducted 113,000 random breath tests and laid 285 charges for drink driving; they issued more than 4,000 speeding tickets; and they issued 5,600 other traffic infringement notices. Despite what the Opposition would have us think, this sort of high-visibility, proactive policing is having an impact on dangerous driving on our roads. Over the Easter and Anzac periods this year there were 138 fewer major crashes than the previous year—that is a 20 per cent reduction, and it means that fewer people are being seriously injured on our roads.

Police will continue to crack down on dangerous driving on our roads, because we know that many of the fatal crashes on our roads could have been avoided. I am advised that over the past 12 months excessive

speed was a factor in 37 per cent of fatal crashes; alcohol was a factor in 19 per cent; fatigue was a factor in 17 per cent; and seatbelts were not worn by 35 drivers and 18 passengers involved in fatal crashes. This week I am meeting with Deputy Commissioner Dave Owens and Assistant Commissioner John Hartley, in charge of the Traffic Services Command, to discuss the latest strategies to address the rising road toll. I can assure the House that all our police across the State, within the Highway Patrol, general duties and specialist units, are working hard every day to make our roads safer.

STRIP SEARCHES OF CHILDREN IN POLICE CUSTODY

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I address my question to the Minister for Police. I refer to the New South Wales Ombudsman's review of certain functions under the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002, which reported that police had undertaken 884 strip searches involving children, only 6 per cent of which noted that a support person was present, as required under the Act. Given that the extraordinary number of such searches raises very serious concerns about the protection of children in police custody, what action has the Minister taken to ensure that children are properly protected from being strip-searched by the police without sufficient reason and in the absence of a support person?

The Hon. TONY KELLY: On 5 May the New South Wales Ombudsman's final report into certain powers contained in the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2005 was tabled in Parliament. This report is in accordance with section 242 of the Act, which requires the Ombudsman to keep under scrutiny the exercise of police powers relating to personal searches, crime scenes and notices to produce. Overall, the Ombudsman's report found general support for the consolidation and codification of personal search powers. Nonetheless, areas for improvement have been identified, with 75 recommendations made for the consideration of Parliament and relevant agencies.

The Ombudsman has raised some issues regarding the current crime scene warrant regime, indicating the need for reform. As an independent assessment of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2005, the Ombudsman's recommendations present an opportunity for the police portfolio to enhance and improve upon its existing procedures. The New South Wales Police Force is now considering the recommendations contained in the final report. I thank the Ombudsman for his contribution. I assure the House that this Government will continue to ensure that the New South Wales Police Force has the powers it needs.

AMBULANCE CALL CENTRE TRIPLE-0 RESPONSE

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Who is being held accountable for the systemic breakdown in communication that occurred over the course of the seven triple-zero calls made by David Iredale, given that David Iredale spoke to three different ambulance operators, yet the calls failed to be recognised as coming from a repeat caller; that even though the caller indicated he was in the bush and he did not know where exactly, the ambulance operator asked for the caller's whereabouts four times and then proceeded to ask what street he was coming off or what track a total of six times; and that eight years ago the same operator terminated an emergency call and failed to ring back the number. The search for Mr Iredale began on 11 December 2006, but the ambulance service did not provide the record of the third call to police until four days later, which delayed an accurate assessment of Mr Iredale's location. The ambulance service did not examine the incident until early 2009, three years later, in preparation for the coronial inquest and no internal inquiry was launched straight after the appalling incident. When will somebody be held to account?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Firstly, I repeat my sincere condolences to David Iredale's family and friends. Members will be aware of the matters referred to in the member's question in relation to the coronial inquest into the tragic death of David Iredale and the background circumstances, which have been well canvassed in the public media. The Coroner released his findings last week and made recommendations in relation to the case. On the day of the Coroner's report the Government accepted the recommendations of the Coroner and agreed to establish immediately a working party of emergency services and Telstra in respect to triple-0 call centres, as recommended.

The Office of Emergency Services and Ambulance Services will convene this working party and obviously all the agencies involved will play an active role to implement immediately the key recommendations of the Coroner's report. An external expert will be approached to conduct a root cause analysis of the gaps in practice at the ambulance operations centre and to determine what additional systemic changes might help prevent a recurrence of the problem. I assure Mr and Mrs Iredale, their extended family, and the House, that David's legacy will be an improved and enhanced system for the operations, management and training of staff in our emergency call centres.

DEFENCE INDUSTRY CONTRACTS AND JOBS

The Hon. MICHAEL VEITCH: My question is directed to the Minister for State Development. Would the Minister inform the House what action the Government is taking to secure major defence industry contracts for New South Wales?

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: I thank the honourable member for the question—it is timely. I am pleased to report that Newcastle-based shipbuilder Forgacs Engineering has won a major defence shipbuilding contract. The Federal Minister for Defence, Joel Fitzgibbon, recently announced that Forgacs Engineering of Tomago was selected as one of the two preferred tenderers for the construction of hull modules for the navy's three new Air Warfare Destroyers. This contract is great news for the Hunter, creating up to 200 jobs and injecting more than \$10 million into the region.

The New South Wales Department of State and Regional Development worked closely with Forgacs to develop its winning submission. Firstly, I congratulate the company's managing director, Stephen Forgacs, and his team on this win. It has been a long and complex process to get this work, but one well worth pursuing. I point out that companies in five Australian States were competing to build these hulls. Forgacs will be constructing up to one-third of the blocks that fit together to make the hulls of the Air Warfare Destroyers. The hull blocks for these ships will be huge. The average size is about 15 metres by 12 metres by 9 metres, and each block weighs approximately 200 tonnes. Each large and complex ship block will be completed to an advanced level. Each block will be fitted with electrical wiring, piping and other components. Securing this contract means people in the Hunter will have new opportunities to secure good jobs and improve their skills for the future. Forgacs and Newcastle have a long history of excellence in shipbuilding, providing the company and the region with the depth of skills and experience required for this sort of project.

The New South Wales Government is committed to helping local industry benefit from the significant defence industry spend which will flow from the white paper. We were heavily involved in the Forgacs bid with appropriate packages. I should point out that BlueScope Steel and Illawarra have also won a contract to supply \$20 million in steel over six years for the Air Warfare Destroyers. The contract to supply the steel will be worth up to \$20 million over six years and will see BlueScope Steel produce around 3,000 tonnes of steel per ship—obviously great news for the people of the Illawarra.

Winning defence contracts will create jobs in our State and build on our manufacturing expertise and defence capabilities. Currently, there are 82 Department of Defence sites in New South Wales, including 20 establishments with more than 200 personnel. About one-third of Australia's permanent defence force personnel and 38 per cent of Australia's air force personnel are located in New South Wales. Additional people are employed in subcontracting roles and in small to medium-size businesses that do not rely solely on defence. In total there are 10,000 people employed in defence and defence-related industries in New South Wales.

The Government is committed to supporting and growing this important job generating industry with a range of initiatives, including defence tender training workshops for small and medium-size businesses. These workshops are currently being delivered in Newcastle, Nowra and Sydney and will provide New South Wales businesses with an edge when tendering for defence work. The Government is also supporting three small and medium-size businesses to participate in the 2009 Defence and Industry Study Course and is promoting New South Wales industry capability through a new aerospace directory and web portal.

The New South Wales Government is also targeting aerospace and defence business and investment at key industry events in Australia and abroad. For example, the Department of State and Regional Development helped 16 organisations to exhibit in a New South Wales pavilion at the Australian International Airshow and Aerospace and Defence Exhibition at Avalon in March, with New South Wales exhibitors now predicting \$8 million in business outcomes over the next two years. The Department of State and Regional Development also worked closely with the Department of Defence on a trade mission to the Aero India Trade Mission in February. The Government looks forward to further promoting Australia's premier business and investment location at the Defence+Industry Conference and Trade Exhibition next month.

PESTICIDE RESIDUES IN FOOD

Dr JOHN KAYE: My question is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries. Is the Minister aware of research conducted by Jerusalem's Hadassah University Hospital at Mount Scopus that reveals that the quality of sperm donated by Israeli men has declined by 40 per cent over the past decade and the number of

cases of testicular cancer has doubled, and that the researchers have connected these events to the presence of phthalates and various insecticides in the environment? What steps are taken to ensure that similar chemical exposures do not occur in the New South Wales food supply? In particular, what testing is conducted for chemical residues from pesticides in New South Wales food, apart from the national residue surveys undertaken on export food produce?

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: I am not aware of the study undertaken at the hospital at Mount Scopus. However, I draw the member's attention to the fact that the use of chemicals and pesticides on crops across Australia is heavily regulated by a national body. That body administers a set of regulations that provide when a product can enter the food chain after it has been sprayed. There are limitations on such products entering the market. I firmly believe that these guidelines lead to New South Wales and Australia having amongst the healthiest food in the world. We are really up there—

The Hon. Charlie Lynn: Particularly Big Macs.

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: Big Macs are fine—once a year.

The Hon. Rick Colless: Don't you like Macs more often than that?

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: I am a very healthy eater. I think even Mr Stoner would have to agree with that. I will look at the study if the member gives me the reference and I will have it analysed in consultation with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority [APVMA]. The Food Authority regularly undertakes testing for residues, for example, at the Sydney Markets.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I have a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate the testing done at the Sydney Markets, explain when the last testing was done and how comprehensive it was?

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: We always do good testing regardless of whether it is at Sydney Markets or anywhere else in the State. In fact, we regularly test a number of vegetables for residues. I understand that in a high percentage of cases the vegies are found to be fine for consumption.

STATE ECONOMY

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: My question without notice is directed to the Treasurer. Does the Treasurer stand by his statement to the House on 4 December 2008 that "the Government has aligned expenditure and revenue through the mini-budget process, which of course is the appropriate strategy for New South Wales to meet the challenges of the future"? Have the savings identified in the mini-budget been fully realised and will the Treasurer reassure the House that his commitment to fiscal discipline is unshakeable?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: Another Gigantor-style question from the remotely operated Matthew Mason-Cox. Obviously the state of world economic markets and the global recession have had a dramatic impact since November last year. The member should be well aware that every reporting agency in the world, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Reserve Bank and the Federal Government have all substantially revised economic growth forecasts and dramatically increased their assessment of the impact of the world recession on the world economy and the Australian economy. Tonight we will see in the Federal budget the full implications of the global recession for Australia. Of course, New South Wales will not be immune from those implications—that is unavoidable. Clearly, there has been a major reduction in revenues collected by the Federal Government, and this will impact on the GST pie as the economy contracts. In addition, there will unfortunately be an increase in unemployment. That is one of the tragedies of the impact of the global recession.

Maintaining a strong balance sheet is a very important part of this Government's commitment to fiscal responsibility. Now is not the time to discard fiscal prudence. It is the job of any responsible government to provide the community with stability and certainty in the areas that it controls. That means maintaining certainty and continuing to provide stability in frontline services. The New South Wales Government is about maintaining front-line services provided by nurses, doctors, police officers and teachers. The Government will continue to maintain those front-line services because that is what it is about. Let us contrast that with Mike Baird's and the Coalition's position. Mike Baird has explicitly said that he will ensure that any budget that he is ever involved in will have balanced expenses and revenue.

The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 65 and relevance. Mr President, will you please bring the Treasurer back to the question?

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Treasurer will continue to be generally relevant.

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: The Coalition's plan is always to increase taxes or to cut services. Every time members opposite have been in government that is what they have done. Do members know what the rate of payroll tax was under the former Coalition Government? It was 7 per cent. And members opposite have the hide to question this Government's fiscal responsibility and prudence! This is the same party that opposed the Federal stimulus package and the \$3,000 boost to the first homeowner grant. Members of the Opposition are fiscal incompetents.

DRUG ABUSE AND CRIME

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: My question is addressed to the Attorney General. What is the Government doing to break the drug-crime cycle?

The Hon. JOHN HATZISTERGOS: It is no secret that a large proportion of persons who come into contact with the criminal justice system have problems with drug abuse. Indeed, studies undertaken by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research have estimated that close to 70 per cent of persons detained in police custody test positive for at least one type of illicit drug and that each 10 per cent increase in the annual number of dependent heroin users leads to a corresponding increase of approximately 6 per cent in the robbery rate.

It is interesting that issues in relation to rehabilitation have been more prominent in recent times. They have even been embraced by the shadow Attorney General, Greg Smith. Indeed, over many years, we have been at the forefront of introducing a number of innovative court programs designed to break the drug-crime cycle. These include the Drug Court program, with proven results in reducing rates of reoffending; the Youth Drug and Alcohol Court; and the brand new court referral of eligible defendants into treatment, or CREDIT program, which will steer defendants at a high risk of reoffending into treatment programs and social services. Our commitment does not end there. Since its inception at Lismore Local Court in 2000, the New South Wales and Commonwealth governments have jointly funded a rapid expansion of the magistrates early referral into treatment, or MERIT, program. The program, which allows magistrates to refer offenders with drug problems into treatment prior to sentencing, now operates in 61 Local Courts across New South Wales, providing access for more than 80 per cent of offenders coming before magistrates.

An independent evaluation of the program by the Northern Rivers University Department of Rural Health, which is a joint initiative between the University of Sydney and Southern Cross University, found that after a year, offenders who complete MERIT are comparatively less likely to be charged with fresh offences. As part of our ongoing commitment to improving court programs, my department recently commissioned the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre based at the University of New South Wales to undertake two statistical studies: women in MERIT and Aboriginal participation in MERIT. These studies have made some interesting findings, providing some indications as to how we can further improve the program. These findings include that while women are just as likely as men to be accepted into MERIT they are 5 per cent less likely to complete the program. Aboriginal defendants are also less likely than non-Aboriginal defendants to successfully complete MERIT, but the female and Aboriginal participants who do complete MERIT show significant improvements with drug dependence issues, psychological distress and general and mental health.

It would seem that in order to better and more broadly realise the significant benefits of MERIT more work needs to be done to lift completion rates among female and Aboriginal defendants. That is why the statewide MERIT steering group, which includes representatives from a range of key government agencies, will be asked to review the findings of the studies and advise the Government as to how we can improve MERIT when it comes to female and Aboriginal defendants. The Government has a longstanding commitment to using the criminal justice system to assist offenders to get off drugs. Over many years, we have put in place a range of innovative programs, including MERIT, to help break the drug-crime cycle. But there is always room for improvement. These two studies recently undertaken by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre indicate that MERIT needs to work better when it comes to female and Aboriginal defendants. I am looking forward to receiving advice from the statewide MERIT steering group as to how we can best achieve this.

ALCOHOL ADVERTISING AND SPORT

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: My question without notice is directed to the Hon. Ian Macdonald, representing the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Is the Minister aware that rugby league has an

entrenched culture of sexual violence against women and that this problem is exacerbated by rampant alcohol abuse that is supported by lucrative sponsorship and advertising deals with major alcohol brands such as Foster's and Bundaberg? Is the Minister aware that of the \$106 million spent by the alcohol industry in 2008, around a quarter was linked to sport, and that alcohol and poker machine revenue is the lifeblood of the coffers of National Rugby League clubs? In particular, is the Minister aware of a study by the University of Newcastle, which found that players from teams sponsored by alcohol companies drank heavily as a result of free or subsidised alcohol? Given that alcohol sponsors thus encourage binge drinking, what strict policies and measures will be established to ban alcohol advertising and sponsorship in all football codes?

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: Fortunately, I am a supporter of the Australian Football League. I am keen on another code and I do not read much about the National Rugby League. I will hand the matter over to the relevant Minister, who is far more capable than I am of answering this question.

LEAFS GULLY POWER STATION PROPOSAL

The Hon. CHARLIE LYNN: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Energy. I refer to the proposal by AGL Energy to build a 300-megawatt gas-fired power station at Leafs Gully in the electorate of Wollondilly. Is the Minister aware that Campbelltown, Wollondilly and Camden councils are all opposed to the construction of a gas-fired power station at Leafs Gully? Is the Minister aware that Campbelltown already has one of the highest rates of asthma and air pollution in the country? Is the Minister aware also that the proposed power station has the capacity for the installation of four gas turbine generators? Will the Minister give an assurance that the proposed power station at Leafs Gully will not double or even quadruple in size if approved by his State Government?

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: I am aware of this issue. I have received representations from the proponents and many of the people from the council areas mentioned. The proponents have the right to seek to put their proposal before the Government. I am not aware that any decision has been made. It is a planning matter and will be properly dealt with in due course under proper arrangements in this State.

The Hon. Charlie Lynn: Can the Minister give an assurance?

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: I can only give the honourable member an assurance that it will be dealt with properly.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS AND JOBS

The Hon. HENRY TSANG: My question without notice is addressed to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer provide the House with the latest information regarding the Government's job-creating infrastructure investment?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: I thank the member for his interest in this important matter. The Government is investing \$56.9 billion worth of job-creating infrastructure over the current four-year program. These are the building blocks to strengthen the New South Wales economy. This investment is the largest infrastructure program of any government in Australia over the next four years, over and above the money provided by the Federal Government in its nation building and jobs package. Our infrastructure program will generate more than 150,000 jobs each year. This year alone the Government is investing \$13.9 billion in infrastructure, investing in hospitals, schools and roads. The Government is well underway with some significant capital projects, including the \$950 million reconstruction of Royal North Shore Hospital; the \$381 million redevelopment of Liverpool hospital; the \$757 million Port Botany expansion; the \$175 million Victoria Road upgrade, including the duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge; and the \$96 million Port Kembla inner harbour development. That is just to name a few.

The New South Wales Government has already taken significant steps to stimulate the State's economy by reducing development levies, increasing the first homeowner grants—something members on that side of the House opposed—and substantially dropping payroll tax. But the most important stimulus a government can provide is to maintain its public infrastructure program at a level that underpins long-term economic growth and drive business productivity and competitiveness into the future. Boosting the economy through the New South Wales Government's \$56.9 billion four-year infrastructure investment is imperative to achieving this goal.

It is important to understand the effects of this program on the ground. Later this year around 260 locally derived jobs will be created in Newcastle and Taree to build the next tranche of the State's outer

suburban train carriages. There are 2,000 direct construction jobs associated with the major Port Botany expansion, underpinning 9,000 new jobs at projects end, injecting a \$16 billion stimulus into the New South Wales economy over the next 20 years. Then there is the upcoming CBD Metro, the most complex engineering and construction project in Sydney since the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The transport Minister advises the project will generate 2,000 jobs every year for five years of construction.

The Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox: How many is that?

The Hon. ERIC ROOZENDAAL: You have enough fingers; you add it up. I am advised construction will begin next year and the CBD Metro will be operating for commuters in 2015. In the past four years New South Wales capital expenditure has doubled. The State's forward program will be the highest level of capital spending of any Australian State. On top of our own record program, New South Wales is standing alongside the Federal Government in delivering its massive \$42 billion nation building and jobs plan. Infrastructure investment is one of the best ways we can ensure the provision of an ongoing stimulus, to support economic activity and employment, and boost business confidence through these troubled economic times and beyond.

KINGS CROSS INJECTING ROOM

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I ask the Minister for Health, representing the Premier, a question without notice. Is the Minister aware that the Kings Cross shooting gallery—the so-called injecting room—approved by the Government in 1999, 10 years ago, has been operating in breach of United Nations conventions to which Australia is a signatory? Is the Minister aware that article 7 of the United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances 1971 states:

Parties shall prohibit all use (of psychotropic drugs) except for scientific and very limited (therapeutic) medical purposes.

Is the Minister aware that article 3 of the United Nations Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances 1988 states:

Each party shall adopt measures as may be necessary to establish as criminal offences under its domestic law, the production, preparation, offering, distribution, delivery on any terms whatsoever, of any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance contrary to the provisions of the 1971 convention.

Is the Minister aware that article 14 of this convention states:

Parties shall adopt appropriate measures (directly) aimed at eliminating or reducing illicit demand for narcotic drugs ...

Will the Government honour its responsibilities and close the Kings Cross shooting gallery? [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: The member is anticipating the general tenor of my answer to this question. I am aware of the articles and conventions he speaks about. His first point related to article 7, which states that the use of psychotropic substances will be prohibited by the signatories except for scientific and limited therapeutic purposes. All conventions evolve, and I am sure the member is aware that since the introduction of the trial of the medically supervised injecting room in New South Wales, a number of other parties to the various conventions he speaks about have subsequently put trials in place, many of them similar to the one we put in place at Kings Cross.

There is a very good argument—I am not an international lawyer so I will not try to make the argument because it would be outside the standing orders—that it is generally accepted by many signatories to the convention that the kind of trial in place in our service at Kings Cross fits within the definition of the requirements of the various conventions, that is, it is for scientific purposes, it is ongoing—

The Hon. Marie Ficarra: Where is the published data?

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: There is plenty of published data. There is international peer review research that would fill the anteroom next to this Chamber. The member is demonstrating the extent of her ignorance if she pretends there is no peer review and scientific data on the operation of the medically supervised injecting room trial. There is so much data I am sure she would have difficulty reading it any time short of six months. There is a large amount of data. It is being treated as a trial, and that is appropriate. There is debate about whether or not we, as a jurisdiction, should consider the duration of that trial, but that is a subject for another question.

There is no doubt that the way in which the medically supervised injecting room has operated has had therapeutic value. It is almost universally accepted now—even by critics of the trial—that it has saved lives. The scientific literature supporting the trial demonstrates that a significant number of people who have gone through the service have ended up using it as a gateway to treatment. They happen to be psychotropic drug users, who, generally speaking, represent the most alienated, isolated and deprived people, and who otherwise would have very little likelihood of coming into contact with health or community services.

There are a significant number of signatories to the various conventions, and New South Wales is subject to that convention as part of a national obligation. This was always a point of tension between the former Federal Government and this jurisdiction, which is why the issue remained under debate for some length of time. I am not aware that the Rudd Government has highlighted anything. It is a signatory to the convention, not the New South Wales Government. My Federal colleague Nicola Roxon, whom I have met on a number of occasions since she became Minister and I became the Minister for Health, has never raised this matter with me. If she did, I expect she would be more interested in the science and therapeutic value of the trial.

The Hon. Marie Ficarra: Show us the data.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: There is plenty of data. I am happy to email it to the member; it would block her computer. There is so much scientific and medical data to support the medically supervised injecting room trial that her computer could not handle it if we emailed it all to her. I have generally answered the member's question. The evidence is that other signatories to the convention are now putting in place similar measures.

TAMWORTH POLICE CELLS

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Police. Is it the case that the cells at Tamworth police station are under the control of Corrective Services officers only during the day shifts and that outside those hours prisoners remaining in the cells fall under the custody and control of the police? Is it the case that the State average for the holding of persons in police custody is five hours but in the case of persons held at Tamworth police station the average time in custody is 40 hours? Can the Minister confirm a recent incident when a person in custody remained in the cells at Tamworth police station for 22 days? Given that police officers who are required to supervise and monitor prisoners held in custody are not able to be out on the streets protecting our local communities, what steps is the Minister taking to ensure that persons remanded in custody at Tamworth police station are held for no longer than the State average?

The Hon. TONY KELLY: I thank the member for his question, although he did take me aback. I thought he was going to ask me a question about Tamworth Hospital, but he would probably wish to ask that question of the Minister for Health. I was in Tamworth the other day with the local member, Peter Draper, inspecting the new Tamworth police cells. As I was leaving Tamworth, members of The Nationals, who had turned up in their bus, walked across the road. I think they had been listening to DVDs.

The Hon. Trevor Khan: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. I ask that you bring the Minister back to the question.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I ask the Minister to be generally relevant.

The Hon. TONY KELLY: I made that very interesting observation that day because there was a dispute between Jillian Skinner and the local member about whether or not they would have a new hospital in Tamworth. On that occasion Andrew Stoner did not confirm what Jillian Skinner had previously said, that there would be a new hospital for Tamworth. He announced that they would appoint a committee, headed by the Hon. Trevor Khan, to look into what services they need—not to look into whether or not they needed a new hospital. As I said earlier, I inspected about \$375,000 worth of work undertaken at Tamworth, including some new cells. There is an arrangement between the New South Wales Police Force and Corrective Services for the retention of prisoners in various cells, and there is a jail at Tamworth as well.

SOUTH COAST CORRECTIONAL CENTRE PROJECT

The Hon. IAN WEST: My question is addressed to the Minister for Corrective Services. Can the Minister update the House on the progress of the new South Coast Correctional Centre and its importance to the local economy, especially in regard to Australian businesses involved in the construction?

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: I am pleased to report to the House on the significant progress being made on the construction of the new \$157 million South Coast Correctional Centre at Nowra.

The Hon. Michael Gallacher: Is any work being done by overseas companies?

The Hon. JOHN ROBERTSON: I will get to that. The construction of the centre remains ahead of schedule and is on track for completion in December 2010. Two buildings, the stores and kitchen building and the offices and amenities building, are due for completion as early as next month. A five-metre high concrete perimeter wall is also well underway. The construction of the South Coast Correctional Centre is another example of how the Rees Government is further supporting jobs and investment across the State. As the project continues, so does the demand for construction jobs. Since February, construction has generated an increase of around 120 jobs. There is currently an average of 270 workers on the site each day. The number of jobs on the site is expected to peak at around 350 workers in the coming months.

I understand that since February the proportion of workers from the local region has increased. I am advised that nearly two-thirds of the workers on the site are drawn from south of Minnamurra and north of Batemans Bay. To add to that, 14 per cent of the workforce is from the local Aboriginal community, including 10 Aboriginal apprentices. Further, it is worth reminding the House that when the correctional centre begins operating in 2010 it will create up to 200 Corrections jobs, pumping around \$10 million a year into the local economy.

I am further advised that more than 70 subcontractors and suppliers from the South Coast region are currently working on the site. This represents millions of dollars worth of contracts awarded to local businesses, employing local people—businesses such as Select Civil, a civil engineering company based in Unanderra, Nowra Cranes from Nowra, Barnic Timbers from Worrigea, Hansons Construction Materials from South Nowra, and South Coast Refrigerators and Air Conditioning from St Georges Basin, to name just a few.

Last week the New South Wales Opposition claimed in the other place that Mass Steel, the major steel supplier for the correctional centre, was a Vietnamese company. The Opposition accused Mass Steel of using materials from Vietnam, being owned by Vietnamese interests, and sending profits off shore. There is a major problem with the Opposition's attack on this company, and, by extension, the Government on this important project. The problem is that Mass Steel is 100 per cent Australian owned. And it uses Australian steel for the fabrication work it undertakes at its factory in western Sydney. Not only that, but the Director of Mass Steel, Damian McKeown, the "M" in Mass, is a member of the Liberal Party of Australia. The Leader of the Opposition, through his laziness and incompetence, has defamed an Australian company in western Sydney doing the right thing in these tough economic times. The Opposition owes Mass Steel an apology. However, we all know that that apology will not be forthcoming from the Opposition leader.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I suggest that if members have further questions, they place them on notice.

Questions without notice concluded.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT BILL 2009

Second Reading

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES [5.01 p.m.]: The object of the Education Amendment Bill 2009 is to change the school leaving age from 15 years by requiring children to complete year 10 of secondary education unless they have already reached the age of 17 years. If they have completed year 10 and are under 17 years, they will continue with school or participate on a full-time basis in approved education or training or paid work until they are 17. Such approved education or training includes apprenticeships, a TAFE or other vocational course, or a university course. Dr John Kaye will move an amendment concerning TAFE schooling for those struggling and unlikely to pass year 10, an amendment which I will support.

The changes would come into effect from the start of the next school year, 2010, and will apply to government schools, non-government schools, and home schooling. It is important to note the theoretical framework of children's right to education. On an international level, literacy is recognised as every girl's and

boy's right. Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that States "shall promote and encourage international co-operation with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world, and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods". This "right to literacy" is also emphasised by UNICEF with its Education for All and Millennium Development Goals.

We note the low literacy rates in Australia. A report published in 2003 by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] titled "Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society" reported the disturbing statistic that more than 40 per cent of all Australians did not have the necessary literacy skills to effectively participate in daily life. And the International Adult Literacy Survey found that 6.2 million Australians were functionally illiterate. Those figures reflect upon the past inability of our State educational systems to fully prepare young people for life in a modern economy. Will simply adding another year or two of the same really help matters very much? Yes, I think so. Literacy means more than knowing how to read, write or calculate; it means grasping information effectively, then in turn using or communicating it, in order to function effectively.

Every day people face a variety of written information that requires them to perform different tasks and make decisions based upon their prose literacy, document literacy and quantitative literacy. According to education experts, prose literacy is the knowledge and skills that are needed to understand and make sense of texts, including newspapers, editorials, poetry and fiction. Document literacy is the knowledge and skills that are needed to locate and use information contained in various formats such as payroll forms, transport timetables, appliance instructions, job application forms, maps, tables and graphics. Quantitative literacy is the knowledge and skills that are required to apply arithmetical operations to numbers embedded in printed materials in order to perform functions such as balancing a chequebook, completing an order form, or determining the amount of interest on a loan.

The reading and writing skills obtained at school need to be at a level that will allow every young person to be prepared to meet the challenge of living and working in today's complex, technological, information-based and knowledge-intensive society. There is a movement in the developed nations worldwide for governments to raise the compulsory minimum school leaving age because of the perceived need to better prepare their young people for full functioning in society as citizens and employees. Our technologically advanced societies need to develop people who are able to master the complex tasks of modern life, and not inadvertently create a population of under-equipped people who will be dependent upon public charity or end up in correctional facilities because they cannot cope.

The European Union school leaving age is generally 16, but many of the countries within the European Union set their preferred school leaving age at 18 for most of the population. The United States of America's school leaving age varies from State to State between age 16 and 18. England currently has 16 as the school leaving age, with attempts over the decades to raise it to 18 scuttled, mainly due to cuts in public spending after both World Wars. England's increase in the school leaving age to 18 may finally pass by the year 2013, as is proposed. It is likely, however, that Ireland, Scotland and Wales will keep their school leaving age at 16.

In Australia, the States and territories have currently set their school leaving age at 15 for New South Wales, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, 16 for Victoria, and 17 for Tasmania, Western Australia and Queensland. New South Wales is the only State that allows 15-year-olds to leave school. That law, permitting students to drop out at age 15, was enacted in 1943 when the country was at war, with its workforce depleted to meet the needs of Australia's armed services. It was enacted in an Australia with a smaller population, without computers, with no sense of the global village or the need for international cross-cultural networking, and without all the complex technology used in our societies today. It was probably fine in a setting where the school leaver could find work on a farm or in a factory in one of the major towns, or driving a truck. But is it really appropriate now? It has led to New South Wales having the highest school-leaving rate in the country, and people who only finished year 9 are the most likely in the State to end up on unemployment benefits.

Employer groups have been pushing for changes to the school leaving age for some time, because they are frustrated with the serious skill shortages, poor literacy, numeracy and computer skills in the pool of people from which they hire. An Australian Industry Group report estimated that \$2.7 billion of value would be added to the New South Wales economy if the number of school leavers were halved by 2050, which demonstrates how costly it is for us to waste the human resources that we are not properly developing. The OECD estimates

that for each additional year of education the level of our productivity would increase by between 3 per cent and 6 per cent. It is a disservice to the economy, as well as to society and the children themselves, not to have them fully prepared to be functional adults with something to offer.

Research shows that in general the more education students get the more they will earn throughout their lives, the more opportunities they will have to choose from, and the better informed and more responsible they will be as citizens in a democracy. For each additional year of schooling it has been estimated income increases by 10 per cent. The lack of a sufficient education has many repercussions. One study found that 16- to 18-year-olds who were not in school, training or employment were far more likely to experience depression and ill health by the age of 22. They are also more likely to end up involved in criminal activity or in jail or to abuse alcohol and drugs. Geoffrey Chaucer wrote in his 14th century *Canterbury Tales*, "Idleness is the root of mischief." Other people have translated that as "The devil finds mischief for idle hands to do." The bill may especially be of benefit to indigenous young people, in particular where trades and vocational skills can be learned and used by people who have frequently left school even earlier than 15 years.

Parents face prosecution and a hefty fine if their children do not participate. That will encourage parents to be responsible for ensuring they do keep their children on track, although that may be assuming more parental control over the teenagers than often really exists in many households. The plan of the Government for students to complete the year 10 School Certificate and then stay on for further schooling or training is a good one. It will prepare students with the firm foundation of being employable throughout life. Competition is a fact of life and in the new economic climate it has to be faced that Australia is now competing against the rest of the world. We have to have people who are up to the task.

Principals, teachers and parents groups have expressed their concern that unless there is increased funding for additional teachers to handle the expected increase in the number of students staying in the system as of next year—which the Premier has estimated to be about 8,900 additional students per year—it could be a negative experience for all concerned. Overcrowded schoolrooms will lead to pressure on teachers and students alike, leading to less time and resources available for each student and an environment less conducive to learning.

The need to fund extra school counsellors is fundamental because a lot of these students will go through great difficulties extending their school life beyond what they had anticipated. At present there is only one school counsellor for every 1,500 secondary school students. There will also be a need for more resources for the delivery of the vocational training as that will be one of the options available for the students staying on. With the increase in TAFE college costs, as well as the reduced funding and lowered qualifications needed for TAFE teachers, there appears to have been a devaluation of the TAFE option in recent years. Substantial additional funding and infrastructure will need to be in place if vocational training is to be utilised in the way envisaged by this legislation. Financial assistance to disadvantaged students also needs to be made available, if this option is to be a viable one. Fee exemptions may be one way to address that potential barrier to participation.

The teen years are notorious for being full of crises: emotional, psychological, social, and sexual. Sometimes young people imagine that the best way to get away from one's problems is to drop out of school and go away where things are bound to be better. Being required to stay in school under this bill will keep that option less inviting and help them make the right decision to stay, work through their problems and keep learning. It will offer an enforced stability that they would not otherwise have—and that is a good thing. But while they are unhappy about staying, I am concerned about what supports will be in place to keep them from sabotaging or undermining the efforts of their teachers and fellow students who do wish to learn. Will there be course options for them in non-academic subjects? Or perhaps career counselling and referral to appropriate vocational courses, such as the under year 10 course in TAFE colleges, apprenticeships or traineeships?

Disruptive or angry young people can create a misery for everyone else and this aspect needs to be taken into consideration well in advance. There is not much time if this is to start at the beginning of next year. What also comes to mind is the suggestion that perhaps additional attention should be given to the earliest years of schooling in order to prepare people for making the most of their educational opportunities, instead of waiting until the last days of their schooling. More focus on early childhood preparation for literacy and numeracy would likely result in more capable and engaged students 10 years later.

We in this House can support this commendable legislation but to create a literate society will require more than this. It will require real partnerships between schools, employers, workers, governments,

communities and the students themselves. If all of this is going to start in 10 months time we really have to get a wriggle on. Most of all it will require a change in behaviour by society and in what we as a society expect for each other and ourselves. The goal of increased literacy should be addressed across the whole range of policy areas such as early childhood, youth services, employment preparation, human resource development, health, social welfare and crime prevention. But today is a good start and I gladly support the bill.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN [5.16 p.m.]: The Education Amendment Bill 2009 aims to ensure New South Wales students maintain a competitive advantage in today's knowledge economy. New South Wales has always set a high benchmark for our young people and ambitious goals for their education. The New South Wales Government has worked hard to ensure that our students boast the best resources in the nation: our students study a gold-standard curriculum; they are taught by the highest quality teachers supported by strong professional standards; and they have access to the cutting-edge technologies necessary for participation in the digital future. This legislation has been developed as part of the Government's wider agenda to support youth engagement and participation in the 21st century. New South Wales will be the only State or Territory in Australia that requires its students to complete year 10 and it recognises the seismic changes in our society and economy over the last 60 years.

Our current school leaving age of 15 was set in 1943. Australia was a radically different place back then in almost every way. In 1943, over half of all working Australians were employed either in factories, mining or agriculture. By 2008, this figure had dropped to below 15 per cent. The great majority of Australians now work in service industries. Back in 1943, a school leaver was expected to pick one career and stick with it for a lifetime but now it is commonplace for people to have many jobs over the course of their working lives and to move between several different career paths. In fact, not many people starting a job today can or would expect to remain in the same industry, let alone with the same employer, until they retire.

In 1943, only a small minority of young people stayed at school beyond the equivalent of year 10. Now the situation is almost completely reversed—only a minority do not stay on to complete year 12. This is in line with the change in employers' expectations over time, as well as a factor of contemporary Australia's dynamic and globally integrated economy. Very few entry-level positions nowadays do not require prior completion of year 12 or its equivalent. Society is becoming more complex, with employees expected to have higher levels of skill and more competencies than ever before and to have the qualifications that prove it. The evidence is clear that successfully completing year 12 or its equivalent should not be optional anymore.

The advantages to both the individual and to society from more young people completing year 12 or its equivalent have been extensively researched and are well documented. For example, the Australian Bureau of Statistics May 2007 publication "Education and Work" showed that year 12 leavers who go on to further study have an unemployment rate of only 2.7 per cent, whilst year 10 or below leavers have an unemployment rate of 7.8 per cent. That is more than double the risk of unemployment for an early leaver.

Higher attainment also leads to higher average income levels. A 2005 study by the Australian National University's Centre for Economic Policy Research estimated that each year of education increases an individual's income by 10 per cent. These findings were affirmed in early 2008 in a study by the Australian National University, which showed a gross income increase of 13 per cent for every extra year at school. From a productivity perspective, higher educational attainment leads to a higher domestic product. Applied Economics has estimated that if the numbers of early school leavers are halved by 2050, it will result in a \$1.5 billion to \$1.7 billion gain to the New South Wales State economy. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] has said that an additional three years of education would raise the level of productivity by between 3 and 6 per cent for a country with Australia's average education level.

Across Australia and around the world governments are looking to lift the educational sights of their young people. In Victoria the leaving age is now 16, while Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia all have participation ages of 17. The Australian Capital Territory has recently announced that it is in the process of raising its participation age to 16 or 17. Overseas, the United Kingdom has plans to raise the school leaving age to 18 by 2015. In making this change, the New South Wales Government has been very thorough, not only in research but also in consultation. We have consulted widely across the State on this issue—with parents, young people, those who work with and promote the interests of young people, and industry.

During our consultations, the community told us loud and clear what it expects. They told us there needs to be more flexibility in what students can study and how they study. Students and their families want more vocational training opportunities, either in school or through a provider such as TAFE. We were told that

students should not be forced to stay in school and participate when they are not engaged or interested. This is disruptive to other students, places unnecessary burdens on our teachers, and is wasted time for the student. We were told that there needs to be better transition support and better consideration of the individual learning needs of students at an earlier stage, so that no child falls behind the pack.

The New South Wales Government has listened. This legislation has been designed specifically to give young people maximum flexibility in how they stay engaged in education for longer. We will back this up with support and resources to ensure that every young person makes the right choices. The recent months of economic turmoil have taught us that there are no financial certainties in our labour market. An individual's capacity to participate in and take full advantage of future labour market opportunities is, and always will be, as good as the investment they have made in their education. Education and training will always be the smartest investment individuals can make in themselves and their future. This legislation is about creating sustainable pathways to the future for all young people.

Dr JOHN KAYE [5.22 p.m.]: The Greens enthusiastically support the principle of the Education Amendment Bill 2009, that is, that students who remain in education for longer achieve massive benefits not only for themselves but for society as a whole. Having said that, we have two major concerns with the legislation. The first is that any such change must be properly funded. The Government has said that it is providing an additional \$98 million to public education institutions for the additional 8,900 students. Our analysis shows that that is woefully inadequate, to the tune of at least \$31.5 million a year, if not a whole lot more. Our second concern is that we must accept that there are some 15- to 17-year-old students for whom school is completely inappropriate. The constraints of discipline, sitting in a traditional classroom and learning in a traditional way do not work for a set of students. Without seeking to undermine the intent of the bill, we must provide pathways that will enable those students to continue to engage in education. The Greens will move amendments to address this issue by creating pathways for students to engage by way of a certificate in general and vocational education.

Specific provisions of the bill raise the formal leaving age of schoolchildren in New South Wales. Children can leave school after completing year 10 and the School Certificate or reaching the age of 17 years, whichever occurs first. Once students are past year 10, they must remain in education and training until they are 17, or if they are above 15 employment becomes an option. Premier Rees described this in his second reading speech in the lower House as "the single most significant education policy advancement in New South Wales since the Second World War". Clearly, the Premier was very excited, but perhaps in his enthusiasm he forgot about the work of former Director-General of Education Harold Wyndham. Harold Wyndham introduced into New South Wales the concept of comprehensive secondary education. In 1957 he wrote a report that never received the fame it deserved. It laid down the basis for the enormous strides that were made in secondary education in New South Wales in the succeeding 50 years. At page 63 of his famous 1957 report he wrote:

The most significant feature of this changing conception of secondary education has manifestly been the emergence of the view that secondary education is the education not of a select minority, whatever the basis of selection, either social or intellectual, but of all adolescents ... When secondary education was conceived as the education of an elite, almost the only point that should be at issue was the criterion upon which the elite should be selected. Organization, curriculum and method, all followed largely from that determination. To-day—

I remind the House that is 1957—

the issue is not so simple ... to provide suitable education not only for the "average" adolescent, but also, and on the same social and moral grounds, for the adolescent of talent and for the adolescent who is poorly endowed.

With those words Harold Wyndham reformed secondary education in New South Wales, creating a curriculum that aimed at engaging every adolescent in New South Wales in the process of secondary education. He came up with the clever idea of a core curriculum and electives around that core curriculum. He led Australia into a whole new epoch of education in which mass secondary education became the norm rather than the exception. Those important changes laid the basis not only for a successful society but also for this debate this evening. Having slightly mocked the Premier, I say that the Premier has just cause for being excited about the benefits of further years in education not only to society but also to the individual student.

Most of these benefits are outlined in the February 2008 consultation report from the New South Wales State Government, "Raising the School Leaving Age". It is interesting to look at the genesis of that report. It arose out of then Premier Iemma's initial tilt at the issue in January 2008, when he announced that he intended to raise the school leaving age to 17. The matter then went to a consultation report. On 28 January 2009 Premier

Rees took a swipe at the issue, without appearing to have consulted with anyone in particular, and announced a number of changes to the school leaving age. Following public debate over the subsequent two days, it evolved into the bill before us.

As the report outlines, the benefits to students to stay in school are huge: lower unemployment, higher wages, higher completion rates of further study, more likely to undertake further study, lower poverty rates, better physical health by 21, less likely to experience the plague of depression, and higher birth weight in subsequent children. Basically it is a recipe for engagement in the social, political, cultural and economic life of this nation. The benefits go beyond just the individual; they go to society as a whole. An additional one year of schooling has been demonstrated to show a 3 per cent to 6 per cent lift in productivity. Increasing the school leaving age by just half a year would add \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion to the New South Wales economy by 2050.

Society-wide benefits also flow from these individual benefits. They include cohesion, security, cultural progress and economic progress. Many of these benefits cannot be measured in simple dollar terms; they are the glue that makes up a strong society. It is important to note that these are the benefits of additional years of education; they are not the benefits that would flow from entrapping students against their will in meaningless incarceration within a school system. These benefits will be gained only if we can motivate the students and engage them in the fabulous education project. It is therefore important to create systems that motivate students.

I raise with some concern the Plan-It Youth program. Six Plan-It Youth coordinators around New South Wales coordinate voluntary mentors from business and professional communities to work with young people who are at risk of leaving school. The mentors work with the young people to increase their motivation to stay at school. The program has been phenomenally successful. Since 2002 the program has trained 1,780 mentors who have helped 3,500 students from 80 public schools in Sydney, and rural and regional areas. It has had an 85 per cent success rate—85 of the students who participate in the Plan-It Youth program, who have been put in contact with a senior person from local business or from the local professional community, stay at school until years 11 and 12. Sadly, the State Government has neglected this program and funding has been on year-to-year drip-feeding.

Last year there was a major public stoush over funding for the program and in the end the then Minister for Education and Training, John Della Bosca, gave in grudgingly and provided one more year of funding. Rumours always abound about anything to do with education, but the rumour floating around at the moment is that the program will be given declining funding over the next four years, at the end of which it will be phased out. This would be a tragedy. The Plan-It Youth program has created massive motivation in kids who would otherwise be at risk of leaving school. Connection with a senior person who has had a life career, who has been through the education system and who has seen what that education did for them can help to model behaviours for the younger person. It is a key component of motivation and should work alongside, not in competition with, this legislation. The program should be maintained and extended to ensure that all children who are flagging in their motivation, particularly adolescent males, have the opportunity to learn the benefits of education.

I urge the Hon. Henry Tsang, the Parliamentary Secretary, to give the House an assurance that the Rees Government is committed to continuing funding for the Plan-It Youth program, and that it will not suffer the fate of four years of declining funding before being phased out. It is equally as important to maintain Plan-It Youth as it is to ensure that the resources we need to deal with the consequences of raising the school-leaving age are fully funded. I beg the indulgence of the House while I engage in a little bit of light arithmetic. Premier Rees says there will be \$98 million for 8,900 students, which equates to \$11,111 per student. Yet a 2005-06 document on the Department of Education and Training website claims that the department spent \$12,823 per secondary student in New South Wales. If you inflate those 2006 dollars to 2009-10 dollars it is \$14,554 per student.

Although this scheme brings with it \$11,111 per student, the spending claim is \$14,554 per student; that is \$3,500 less per student kept at school than the average high school student. Multiply that shortfall by 8,900 students and the result is a \$31.5 million shortfall. If the scheme were funded properly the amount would be 32 per cent more than \$98 million; it would be about \$130 million a year. As the Opposition spokesperson, Robyn Parker, said, the Rees Government intends to use public schools and TAFE colleges around New South Wales as cheap child-minding services. That is simply not good enough.

The State's unemployment figures are high at the moment, particularly for young people. We can guess that the kids who are going to stay at school are the kids who cannot get jobs. These are kids who otherwise

would be quite difficult to educate. On top of that we are increasing the student to teacher ratios. We are going for larger classes and crowded facilities when we should be going in the other direction. The matter is far worse than the arithmetic I just did. These adolescents, who otherwise would have left school, are the students for whom we need to provide motivation, support, equipment, teachers and school counsellors to ensure that they overcome their aversion to further education. Just chucking them into crowded classrooms in schools because of underfunding will not produce the benefits that Premier Rees and the Government spokespeople have boasted of. Those benefits will come about only if we spend the real money. We need to spend at least at the rate that we spend on the average student. Because we will need more school counsellors, more teachers and new programs, new resources, more library access and more of everything per student I argue that we have understated it by saying that we need \$31.5 million more than the \$98 million the Government has provided.

The situation is even worse than that because the figure of 8,900 is quite rubbery. In fact, the Government has never justified that figure 8,900; it has asserted continuously that there will be 1,900 additional students in schools and TAFE colleges as a result of the scheme. Page 8 of the Raising the School Leaving Age consultation paper of February 2008, published by the New South Wales Government, provides a handy little table that shows how many students leave school at ages 15, 16 and 17—at 15, 5,640 students leave school; at 16, 13,560 leave school; and at 17, 23,130 leave school. The table is quite obscure in its meaning but on one sensible reading of this document that means that currently 42,330 students in New South Wales leave school after the age of 15.

The number of students who are affected by this legislation is probably 42,330. It seems hard to believe that just 21 per cent of those 8,900 students would be the only ones who would stay in school. It seems hard to believe that 79 per cent of those who currently leave school are going to pass quickly through year 10 and are going to nick out and get a job, particularly in the current job market. To the Greens it seems that the figure of 8,900 is incredibly rubbery. I challenge the Parliamentary Secretary to identify in his speech in reply exactly where that number of 8,900 students comes from. I challenge him to table a document showing how it is estimated. I challenge him to be open and honest with the public school teachers, with the parents and with the people of New South Wales to show that the Government is serious about this legislation.

This legislation is not about turning public education into a child-minding service; it is about genuinely engaging those students and achieving those benefits. If the Parliamentary Secretary does not have those documents in his back pocket he could, if he chose to, give a commitment to this House that within 24 hours he will table them so that everyone in New South Wales knows where the 8,900 and the \$98 million figures came from. On any reading of the situation, 8,900 is probably out by a factor of two and \$98 million is probably out by a factor—

The Hon. Henry Tsang: Don't get too excited.

Dr JOHN KAYE: I am choking on how upset I am by the idea that the Government's figures are so rubbery. The \$98 million figure is probably out by at least a factor of 29 per cent, or a whole lot more. The Parliamentary Secretary could clarify the situation by tabling those documents. If the Government chooses not to take the people of New South Wales into its confidence we have a major problem. To that end, the Greens will move amendments to ensure there is complete and utter accountability on this issue. We want to ensure that before this program begins—before the school year starts or as soon as practicable thereafter—there is tabled in this House a document detailing the resources that the Government has provided specifically to engage these students.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: What about sporting facilities?

Dr JOHN KAYE: Including sporting facilities. The Government should provide information about what programs have been developed, what teachers have been appointed, how many additional school counsellors have been provided and what has been done to ensure that this is a genuine educational outcome for these students. It is very important for the people of New South Wales to keep tabs on this. If we do not, we will get duddled. We must avoid this important measure being brought in at the cost of teachers, students and educational outcomes. The Greens will also move amendments to enable the spending on these additional students to be tracked over the first five years of the legislation's operation. Even if the resources provided in the first place are adequate, they must be maintained.

The Greens are also concerned about the provisions in the legislation that keep students in school until they have completed year 10. I direct the attention of the House to the very small number of students—we are

probably talking about hundreds in New South Wales—for whom formal schooling is simply inappropriate. These are the students for whom standard school discipline and sitting in a classroom does not work and who will not be able to complete year 10 because they cannot emotionally or intellectually engage sufficiently with the syllabus to pass.

Although this bill has been introduced with the best of intentions—I am not in any way impugning the Government's motives—those students will be forced to attend school until they are 17 years of age. Teachers I have spoken to are deeply concerned about what that will mean, not only for those students but also for the school in general. There is no way, even with the best will in the world, that one can create lassitude within a school's discipline structure to accommodate those students. They generally will have difficulty wearing a school uniform and with issues like punctuality and the other rules on which schools depend. Under this legislation those students will be held in school until they are 17 years of age.

A number of TAFEs run a certificate II course entitled "Certificate for General and Vocational Education". It is designed specifically for youths at risk and students who fall out of traditional education, and for whom the traditional school system does not work. That course is far more appropriate for the social and intellectual development of those students. Unfortunately, under this legislation students who cannot complete year 10 cannot leave school and go to TAFE to undertake that course. They are trapped in school even though there is an excellent and more appropriate option available to them. Section 21B (5) (c) allows such students to leave school, but only with ministerial approval. These are not the type of kids who will be able to contact Verity Firth and ask for her approval. They are generally at the most traumatic end of the education system. The Greens will move amendments to create smoother pathways for them.

The Greens support the legislation despite those serious concerns. It is important to bring New South Wales into line with world's-best education practice. It is also important that we create a standard in the community that sees young people stay in education until they have fulfilled their potential. However, I repeat that the system needs the funding to follow those students into the classroom, onto the playground and onto the sports fields to ensure they are not there on the cheap. The Greens support the legislation.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE [5.47 p.m.]: The Christian Democratic Party supports the Education Amendment Bill 2009. Premier Rees announced on 20 January 2009 that legislation would be introduced to provide that from 1 January 2010 students in New South Wales would be required to remain at school until the end of year 10 and after completing year 10 remain in some form of education, training or employment until they turn 17 years of age. It does not mean that they are required to stay at school up to the age of 17. They have a choice of undertaking education, training or employment. This is a very important initiative and the Christian Democratic Party fully supports it.

I have an interest in the school-leaving age because when I was at school it was normal to leave at 15, which I did. My wife, Elaine, left school when she was 14. That was not unusual in the 1940s and 1950s. It was a great privilege for both of us to have the opportunity to serve as members of this esteemed and historic House of Parliament with that background. One can overcome leaving school early by studying and reading to improve one's education. Modern industry and the commercial world now require more qualified employees. Not everybody can go to university, but everyone can go on to further education. Respect should be accorded to those who go to university and to those who undertake training at TAFE in apprenticeships and so on. That is very important.

Further education is also a benefit to our economy. Applied Economics estimated a gain of between \$1.5 billion and \$2.7 billion to the New South Wales economy if early school-leaver numbers were halved by 2050. The OECD asserts that an additional year of education is estimated to raise the level of productivity by between 3 per cent and 6 per cent in a country with Australia's average education level. There are many advantages, not only for students but also for Australia and New South Wales. Increasing the school-leaving age must have the support of the community, and particularly of parents. It is vital that parents understand these initiatives and give them their wholehearted support. They must encourage their children to have a positive attitude to these changes and not to be disappointed or to feel they are being trapped in some way. They should point out the advantages of this measure.

The bill requires all children to complete year 10 and then to continue with school, participate in approved education or training or engage in full-time paid work, or a combination of these, until the age of 17 years. Approved education or training means higher education, for example university, vocational education and training, for example at TAFE, or an apprenticeship or traineeship as defined in the legislation. The bill is

about increasing participation in education and training. It will ensure that children opting to engage in either full-time or part-time paid work must be of at least 15 years of age. This is consistent with the provisions of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act, which places certain restrictions on work by children under 15, and which we dealt with just recently. Full-time paid work is defined as an average of 25 hours per week.

Schedule 1 [4] provides parents with a defence to prosecution for failure to send a child of compulsory school age to school if the child is or above the age of 16 years and is no longer living with the parent, provided that the child's absence was not due to any fault of the parent. Schedule 1 [8] allows some flexibility. My interpretation of the Greens' amendment is to change this—not to reduce it but to give greater support to the proposition. Schedule 1 [8] enables the director general or a prescribed officer to provide a certificate in relation to whether a child has completed year 10 secondary education in this State, and whether specified education completed outside the State is equivalent to year 10 secondary education in this State. Such a certificate is admissible in evidence in any proceedings under the Education Act 1994 for an offence under section 23—failing to send a child to school or register a child for home schooling—and is prima facie evidence of the matters stated in the certificate. Those protections in the legislation will make it work and will make it practical to increase the school-leaving age. We are pleased to support the legislation.

We still have to do all we can to see improvements in the schools themselves. A debate is underway about the current Federal plan, which I gather the State is supporting, to provide more information about schools and to publicise the comparison between schools and the ranking of those schools. That is important for two reasons. One, it will show schools that need help—maybe help with better teachers, more finance or more buildings. It may also indicate where teachers need assistance as well. I support being open with all the information we have about how our schools are functioning and how they compare with one another. I support the bill.

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA [5.53 p.m.]: In speaking to the Education Amendment Bill 2009, I note the statement of the Premier in the other place that he is moving to "legislate for the single most significant education policy advancement in New South Wales since the Second World War" when introducing with much fanfare provisions similar to other States that increase the school-leaving age to 15 or the age at which the School Certificate is completed. It has taken a long time to get to this point. It is a significant move and one that should have been made many years ago. That is the position of the Coalition in supporting the bill. I further note that the provisions also include the requirement that students engage in some form of education, training or paid employment until the age of 17.

Since Nathan Rees became Premier, more than 30,000 people have lost their jobs—200 persons per day. It is fair to ask whether the measures proposed in the bill are to divert the community's attention away from the statistics, which indicate the ever-rising unemployment rates, in particular for young persons. The national accounts figures released on 4 March 2009 show that the New South Wales economy contracted most significantly in the December 2008 quarter. New South Wales had the lowest growth of any State in 2008, let alone in 2009. The New South Wales Business Chamber expressed its concern that we are seeing an upward trend in trade vacancies. The chamber states:

Of greatest concern in New South Wales are skills shortages in engineering, vehicle, electrical, construction, food and wood trades. There is also a recruitment difficulty in Information Communication Technology.

Skills shortages in rural, regional and metropolitan areas are well recognised. This is why technical and further education in this State is so important. New South Wales TAFE provides courses and training that facilitate people learning much-needed trades and other skills to actively participate in the State's workforce and thereby benefit the State and national economy. Many Coalition members have expressed concern about what will happen to students who turn 15 and have completed year 10 but who do not comply with the legislation. We know of students in many electorates who struggle academically at school and who are not inclined to participate in the vocational education and training courses offered to them as part of the modern school curriculum.

We are concerned about what will happen to the parents of those students under this legislation. Will parents be fined \$1,000 under this bill? For many New South Wales families those sorts of monetary fines are completely out of their reach and will not be effective in encouraging young persons to acquire skills. I would like to hear what programs or initiatives the Government would put in place to support families with difficulties in dysfunctional environments that have led to their children not participating properly in our education system.

It is imperative that we ensure proper education for young people by providing learning and training opportunities for those who wish to leave school early, as has been said by members previously. I note the Standing Committee on State Development acknowledged the importance of TAFE in responding to the training needs of young people in the climate of a skills shortage. This is why the standard of TAFE education in this State is so important and why we as legislators must make sure that this Labor Government does not further diminish the established standards. Last year we debated the lowering of teaching qualifications for TAFE teachers. I place on record once again the actions of the Government to downgrade the qualifications of TAFE teachers. The lowering of the qualifications for teachers from university qualifications to merely a certificate IV, which can be obtained in just 76 hours of learning, demonstrates how desperate the Labor Government is to cut costs to the detriment of the New South Wales community. Our young people in particular benefit significantly from the excellent teaching skills of TAFE teachers in this State.

While Premier Rees has verbally committed \$98 million in recurrent funding for additional teachers and support staff, many stakeholders, as we have heard in this evening's debate, have expressed concern as to how our education system and the TAFE system will cope with the new provisions of this legislation, considering 14 years of a Labor State Government that has failed to support it adequately. Considering the numerous broken promises by this Government, they have a right to be concerned. Labor closed TAFE colleges, such as Seaforth, and it has generally neglected the TAFE system since it took office in New South Wales in 1995. How will our under-resourced TAFE system cope with the increase of students that this legislation will generate?

Will the Government reopen Seaforth TAFE and look at other regions in New South Wales where there is a need for increased service provision and more institutions to deliver those services? Will Labor finally allocate the required funds to ensure adequate resources and facilities for the education system into the future? Dr John Kaye provided very interesting statistics, and I hope the Parliamentary Secretary in reply will address them and will give us the information we need to check whether our system will be able to cope with this legislation.

As I stated in the House last year, Labor has made access to TAFE cost prohibitive for young people, and indeed others in the community, by last year increasing fees by 9 per cent. Although there are some provisions for exemptions to fees, many people are not entitled to those exemptions and TAFE becomes an expensive option for them. What is the Government doing in this regard and will it now undertake to rescind its fee increase to enable more school leavers to attend TAFE?

If the Government cannot give any assurances by way of substantive funding allocations for the matters outlined in the House tonight, it is clear that this legislation will be yet another spin-media driven announcement by this incompetent Government. However, the Coalition does not oppose the bill, as essentially it will bring New South Wales into line with most other Australian States, which have the school leaving age of at least 16 or 17. The bill will increase the school leaving age in this State to 15, or the age at which the School Certificate is completed. It also introduces measures that the Coalition and educational researchers support, including the requirement that students engage in some other form of education, training or paid employment until the age of 17.

Research undertaken by the Productivity Commission in 2006 and by the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that early school leavers are much more likely to be unemployed. Research undertaken by Access Economics, the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research and the Australian National University Centre for Economic Policy Research provides further evidence of the importance of young people remaining at school or in training for as long as possible to have the greatest chance of living productive lives in employment.

The bill reflects the measures put in place by the Howard-Anderson, Howard-Vaile and Howard-Fischer Coalition governments at the Federal level. Those measures made obtaining unemployment benefits more difficult and stipulated that people could not be on unemployment benefits without undertaking further training. Essentially this bill does the same thing. Although the Opposition does not oppose the bill, we highlight the inadequacy of the Government in matching rhetoric with required resources to achieve the desirable outcome of lifting educational standards in this State. That is where the resemblance of this Government's policies to those of the former Howard Federal Government ends abruptly.

The Hon. HENRY TSANG (Parliamentary Secretary) [6.02 p.m.], in reply: I thank honourable members for their contributions in support of the bill.

Debate adjourned on motion by the Hon. Henry Tsang and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

MOTOR ACCIDENTS COMPENSATION AMENDMENT BILL 2009

Bill received from the Legislative Assembly, and read a first time and ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Tony Kelly, on behalf of the Hon. Eric Roozendaal.

Motion by the Hon. Tony Kelly agreed to:

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

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

The Hon. TONY KELLY (Minister for Police, Minister for Lands, and Minister for Rural Affairs) [6.03 p.m.]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

RETIREMENT OF REVEREND HARTLEY HANSFORD

The Hon. MICHAEL VEITCH [6.03 p.m.]: Friday's attestation at the New South Wales Police College was a truly symbolic day—a changing of the guard. It represented the beginning of careers for 319 probationary constables and the conclusion for one of the force's longest serving and most distinguished chaplains. With more than 10 years of service, Reverend Hartley Hansford retired as the Anglican Senior State Chaplain for the New South Wales Police Force. For those who may not be aware, chaplains to organisations such as the New South Wales Police Force provide pastoral care, including counselling and support services, particularly during times of stress and trauma.

Policing can be a very difficult job. Police officers may be called to scenes involving death, violence, grief, sadness and loss. Although they are trained to deal with such situations, the human suffering can take its toll. This has been brought home to us recently. We have all seen the devastation and suffering that the Victorian bushfires have caused families and communities. We have also seen the effect this has had on emergency workers at the scene—firefighters, ambulance officers, police officers and countless other officials and volunteers. That is why the services and support of people like Reverend Hansford are so valuable.

In 1999 Reverend Hansford started with the New South Wales Police Force as an honorary chaplain in Bega. He was then appointed as chaplain to the Police College in Goulburn. In 2006 Reverend Hansford took over the role of Senior State Chaplain. This involved travelling throughout the State attending critical incidents and acting as chaplain to 12 metropolitan local area commands. During his time with the New South Wales Police Force Reverend Hansford provided support and encouragement to police involved in the Macquarie Fields unrest. He also spent two weeks in Canberra caring for Australian Federal Police personnel during the devastating Canberra bushfires. After the Boxing Day tsunami in Thailand, Reverend Hansford spent several weeks in Phuket with disaster victim identification teams at the request of the Australian Federal Police. Of this time he said:

Spending several weeks in a morgue was difficult ... but the experience was one of the most important times in my 42 years as a Minister.

The work of a police chaplain involves joy as well as sadness. Reverend Hansford has officiated at a number of funerals for both serving and retired police. He has also officiated at many police weddings. Police chaplains may be involved in marriages, baptisms and other religious services. They may also offer prayers, invocations, benedictions and dedications at various police functions, including National Police Remembrance Day. Police chaplains provide services not only to serving police officers; they extend to retired police, police widows and widowers, and their immediate families. In recognition of his 10 years of service Reverend Hansford has received a number of commendations and awards, including the Commissioner's Commendation, the Australian Capital Territory Emergency Services Medal and the Australian Federal Police Operations Medal.

Reverend Hansford will continue in the honorary role of regional chaplain, working from Queanbeyan police station. Reverend Russell Avery will ably replace him as Senior State Chaplain. Reverend Avery has moved from a full-time position with the Royal Australian Air Force, and extra duties as an honorary chaplain at Ku-ring-gai, to his full-time position with the New South Wales Police Force. He will maintain a continuing

connection with the Royal Australian Air Force as a specialist reservist. I welcome Reverend Avery to the New South Wales Police Force. Reverend Hansford has had a long and varied ministry in many areas of Australia. I trust he will continue to find fulfilment in the future. I thank Reverend Hansford for his service to the New South Wales Police Force and I wish him well in his retirement.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The Hon. MARIE FICARRA [6.07 p.m.]: It was with much respect and admiration for the Armenian people that on 19 April 2009 at Lindfield I attended the ninety-fourth anniversary of the Armenian genocide. I wish to acknowledge the keynote speakers at that event, Dr Paul Bartrop from Deakin University in Melbourne, and His Eminence Archbishop Aghan Baliozian, Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Australia and New Zealand. The ceremony was a solemn reminder of the mass killings and torture of Armenians perpetrated by the then Ottoman Government, particularly between the years 1915 and 1922.

I joined with other members of Parliament to honour the memory of the 1.5 million men, women and children who died in the first genocide of the twentieth century. In 1915, on the eve of the Allied invasion of Turkey, the Ottoman Empire set in motion a plan to eradicate the Christian Armenian population living on their ancestral lands of eastern Anatolia, which is today within the borders of the Republic of Turkey. This State-sponsored program resulted in the brutal deprivation and extermination of some 1.5 million Armenian men, women and children. This Parliament recognises 24 April every year as a day of remembrance of the Armenian genocide. We condemn the Armenian genocide and all other acts of genocide as the ultimate acts of racial, religious and cultural intolerance. I am proud that this Parliament has a memorial to the Armenian people in the garden area on level 9.

It was with sadness that many members of Parliament attending this commemorative event expressed their disappointment with our successive Federal governments since 1922. We regret their unwillingness to officially condemn, first, the genocide of the Armenians and, second, any attempt to deny such crimes against humanity. Concerns for diplomatic friction, strategic defence or trading retaliation are simply unjustified based on other international experience. In this age of enlightenment and accountability, all nations need to face up to their history, as did the German Government and people after World War II Nazi atrocities. Let us never forget Adolf Hitler's rhetorical and self-justifying question in 1939, before he embarked on his genocidal deeds against the Jewish people and others: "Who remembers now the destruction of the Armenians?" As political leaders in New South Wales we must always remember such atrocities, and we call upon the Federal Government to exercise moral leadership in this regard.

Our Commonwealth political colleagues should cease avoiding the issue as if it will go away. It will never go away, and we will never let it be forgotten. If we are genuinely mournful about our own national wartime loss, paying homage to their sacrifice each year, we must also be honest lest we forget about the suffering and great human loss that the Armenians experienced throughout history. Armenia was our enduring ally in all wars we confronted in the name of liberty and freedom from oppression. As a great nation valuing democratic principles and the pursuit of truth, we should respect the sacrifices and suffering of our Armenian allies in a real and meaningful manner by condemning at a Federal level—as this Parliament and so many other international parliaments and governments have done—the Armenian genocide. Our Federal Government should also condemn any attempt to deny this factually recorded historical crime. I was very moved with the pledge given by the Hon. Brendan Nelson to have his colleagues address this neglect before he leaves Parliament at the next election. I sincerely hope that his colleagues in both Houses support this expression of truth in a bipartisan fashion.

DISABILITY ACCESS

Mr IAN COHEN [6.11 p.m.]: In February 2008 the New South Wales Parliament was provided with a disability access audit of New South Wales Parliament House. The purpose of the audit was to evaluate compliance with disability access requirements of the Building Code of Australia and the intent of the Disability Discrimination Act. The report highlighted some non-conformance with the code and Act. The recommendations of this report, if endorsed by the Parliament, could form the basis of a registered access plan with the purpose to plan and budget for improving access and equity for people with a disability. On reading the report one starts to appreciate all barriers to access that people with disabilities face, even at the coalface of democracy and politics, triggering a broader consideration of disability access rights.

Planning built and social environments must start to embrace disability as a legitimate state of being, and integrate an appreciation of human diversity. Understanding the needs of people with disabilities and constructing the built environment to provide universal access is a fundamental pathway to social inclusion and

must be undertaken as a reflection on Australia's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability. Governments at all levels must stop cavalierly bandying about this buzzword of social inclusion, and commit to redesigning our planning framework and disability funding priorities to deliver universal access.

Planning for access starts at home. The Department of Disability, Ageing and Home Care operates the Home Maintenance and Modification Program, but the scheme requires serious funding revitalisation. People are being excluded from private and public housing estates because adequate infrastructure is not in place to support people with disabilities living in these estates. The Department of Housing is not working with the Department of Disability, Ageing and Home Care to ensure that people with disabilities can move into social housing facilities. Home modification—which encompasses the widening of doorways, the building of ramps, step wedges and easy steps, and the installation of lever taps, grab rails, handrails and hand-held showers—empowers residents to live more independently. Imagine the satisfaction of enabling a level of self-sufficiency that repatriates basic human rights.

Restriction in universal access extends from the home and into wider society. Legislative and societal reform is essential to ensure universal access to the school and tertiary education curriculum for students with a disability, in whatever setting. I raised this with the Minister for Health last week in the context of communication aids, to which he simply read a ministerial advisor-prepared script congratulating the Government on its reform platform and refused to answer the question. In March this year I asked the Minister for Roads about the Mobility Parking Scheme. While I strongly support the principles of the scheme, I am concerned about access and compliance in relation to disability parking spaces in private parking stations such as those in shopping centres.

Most shopping car parks do not have policing of mobility parking spaces and there is a serious level of non-compliance threatening the ability of people with a disability to do something as simple as shopping. Some councils enter agreements with private shopping centre operators and managers that hand over jurisdiction and policing of accessible parking spaces to council rangers. I am told that Botany Bay council imposes conditions on development applications for new commercial shopping centres that require contractual arrangements facilitating council ranger policing of accessible parking. It would be great if all councils started imposing development conditions to secure disability access.

Staying with the topic of transport, an issue has arisen with wheelchair-accessible taxis and the ability of all wheelchair-accessible taxis to cater for a range of wheelchair sizes. Wheelchair-accessible taxis are modified to provide for the carriage of a person using a wheelchair. In New South Wales the Department of Transport has published standards and specifications for total floor space. In contrast, Queensland transport ensures that all taxis can carry a range of wheelchair sizes by requiring wheelchair-accessible taxis to be designed to accommodate different size wheelchairs and mobility aids. The difference is that in New South Wales not all wheelchair-accessible taxis are modified in a way that allows all wheelchairs to fit, the result being that often when the taxi arrives to pick up the passenger, he or she cannot fit in it.

This has an ongoing negative impact on all stakeholders, including the passenger with a disability, the wheelchair-accessible taxi driver and the wheelchair-accessible taxi booking service. It results in the passenger being late for an important appointment, the wheelchair-accessible taxi driver drives to and from a job with the taxi empty, and the wheelchair-accessible taxi booking service has to recall the job. This is a major issue, particularly for people with a disability whose sole option for accessible transport is the wheelchair-accessible taxi service, which is not living up to its namesake. The concerns I have raised only scratch the surface of access challenges for people with a disability and the broader challenge of social inclusion. I hope the New South Wales Government will start addressing the need for universal access with a progressive legislative agenda and a corresponding financial commitment.

AMBULANCE SERVICE INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON [6.16 p.m.]: Not wanting to be involved in the dubious practice of debating parliamentary committee matters in debate on an adjournment motion, I choose my words carefully tonight in speaking about the New South Wales Ambulance Service. As opposed to some of the disinformation that has come from the Opposition, the Government made a timely and positive response to the inquiry into the Ambulance Service. Of the 45 recommendations in the report, 39 have been adopted. The remainder are subject to new initiatives or have been deemed inapplicable. The Ambulance Service has already made great inroads in relation to the issues raised in the majority of the recommendations in the report. The committee's report deliberately omitted acknowledging health and Ambulance Service action already implemented by the Government.

There was a clear need in the service to improve communication between all staff, and particularly between managers and staff. With this in mind, the service organised for the training of managers to be a priority and senior managers were among the pilot groups. An effective program called the Respectful Workplace Training Program has been implemented and has reinforced the significance of respectful communication; illustrated that everyone needs to communicate respectfully at all levels of the service, including the executive; provided a benchmark for acceptable communication in difficult and challenging situations; and sent a clear message to our stakeholders that respectful communication is a priority in the service. This level of communication training could significantly improve the paltry efforts of the Opposition in providing useful policy.

The Ambulance Service has demonstrated a commitment to addressing issues of bullying and harassment. Front-line and middle managers are most likely to come across instances of inappropriate workplace behaviour, and they are best placed to address it when it occurs. To assist managers, compulsory management training has been introduced, and it will be a prerequisite for staff seeking management positions. The Ambulance Service has been reviewed by various independent bodies in the past, and it is always receptive to criticism and ready to respond. Most recently there has been the Auditor-General's report of 2001, the follow-up report in 2007, and the review by the Department of Premier and Cabinet in 2008. The 2007 Auditor-General's report commended the Ambulance Service for making significant reforms and substantially implementing the wide-ranging recommendations in the earlier report.

In addressing the committee's recommendations, the Ambulance Service took a consistent approach in order to incorporate the issues raised by the Auditor-General in 2001, the performance review of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and the Garling report into acute care services in New South Wales public hospitals. The Ambulance Service has a low attrition rate—much lower than the private sector average. That points to a workforce that is committed to the job. The fact is that in 1995 the service had 2,220 clinical staff. Today this number exceeds 3,500. So far in 2008-09, 321 additional paramedics have been recruited, with a further 25 projected recruits before the end of the financial year. These additional staff are the result of budget enhancements and roster reform, and they also cover natural attrition. It is clear that the service is moving forward. It is enriched by these resources and has a willingness to implement change to provide a healthy workplace for its staff and an improved service to the public.

The Government members on the Committee made it clear that the report did not adequately reflect the significant extent to which the Ambulance Service had undergone change as a result of the 2001 Auditor-General's report. Too much of the report was structured to present a negative view of the valuable Ambulance Service without providing endorsement or ideas to move forward. This is typical of the conduct of Opposition members in this place when it comes to proposing positive and realistic policy reforms. By contrast, the New South Wales Government has taken positive steps this year in health planning. Caring Together: The Health Action Plan for New South Wales, released in March this year, provides the Government's response to the final report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Acute Care Services in New South Wales Public Hospitals.

Caring Together contains direct responses to a number of ambulance issues regarding responsibilities, decision-making, location of ambulance stations and non-emergency transport. Further, the report includes work across NSW Health that will impact on ambulance service operations, and from all the inquiries I have seen into the Ambulance Service it is clear that the work of paramedics and the paramedics themselves are an invaluable part of the health system in this State. Despite the best efforts of the Opposition to damage the reputation of an entire public service, there is no question that the community holds the Ambulance Service in the highest regard. The continued and deliberate attacks on this excellent service for some sort of vague political point system is a nasty, opportunistic action.

BLUE GUM PRESERVATION

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK [6.21 p.m.]: Last night I attended a public meeting convened by the Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment [FOKE] to speak in defence of the iconic tree canopy that has been lovingly sustained by the local community and encloses virtually the entire municipality. Thanks to the politicised planning policies of this Government, which foist unsustainable development on unwilling communities, the loss of the canopy seems inevitable. This is a heartbreaking tragedy not only for Ku-ring-gai but also for Sydney.

Former Minister for Planning Frank Sartor made sweeping changes to zonings that have already resulted in a massive increase in density in Ku-ring-gai, and that has triggered a massive \$1.7 billion

development boom—a rate of construction that is rivalled only by the Sydney and Parramatta central business districts. This single sweeping rezoning policy has left locals fighting for the survival of their built and natural heritage on a block-by-block basis. It amazes me that on top of this the State Government is in the process of again increasing densities. With the single wave of a legislative wand the five-storey multi-unit dwellings currently approved within a 400-metre radius of a railway station will be doubled to 800 metres and complexes of 8 to 15 storeys are to be imposed on village shopping centres.

A planning committee chaired by Elizabeth Crouch, a former employee of the Housing Industry Association, is due to report on these proposals to the Minister for Planning, Kristina Keneally. It concerns the Opposition that the Government carefully makes appointments that it claims are independent, but in reality they are populated by compliant friends. Only yesterday we learnt that three of the most independent and experienced planners within the Minister's department, including former Government Architect Chris Johnston, have lost their jobs due to a so-called restructure—a popular device whereby Ministers install their friends and lackeys into positions of influence and power.

There are many reasons why the Ku-ring-gai canopy is of significant local, State and national heritage value. It connects surrounding national parks and local reserves for native fauna, especially birds. It cools the area by an estimated two degrees. The canopy encompasses the last cohesive fragments of the critically endangered Sydney Blue Gum High Forest. It defines Ku-ring-gai as a garden suburb and it works with the built environment to give a sense of space. Ku-ring-gai's iconic canopy is one of Sydney's great natural assets. The Blue Gum High Forest has been classified by the National Trust, which states in its citation:

The Blue Gum High Forest is a critically endangered ecological community which was originally rare in the Sydney area with only 11,000 hectares (3%) of the Cumberland Plains 374,000 hectares. Massive clearing has now left only 99 hectares of relatively intact plant community (0.9% of what originally occurred—0.03% of the Cumberland Plain vegetation).

The Federal Government gazetted the Blue Gum High Forest of the Sydney Basin Bioregion as critically endangered under the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, effective 26 August 2005. The New South Wales Government gazetted the Sydney Blue Gum High Forest as critically endangered on 20 April 2007.

I have put questions to the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, Carmel Tebbutt, in Parliament. In reply the Minister has said that the New South Wales Scientific Committee has listed the forest as critically endangered, but of the 23 actions in the recovery plan only 17 have been commenced. The Minister will not commit to visiting the area, making the depressing observation that the Minister for Planning is responsible for the final zoning decisions and the Department of Environment and Climate Change can only provide advice. That is not the response of a Minister trying to answer the deep fears and concerns of the community.

What are the solutions to this new looming crisis for Ku-ring-gai, Sydney and the national estate? Failing a fair and reasonable outcome, the Liberals have proposed a new framework for Government that will not be able to fully reverse the damage but will bring hope and relief. The Leader of the Opposition has proposed a new system of governance for New South Wales in a remarkable address to the Sydney Institute, which is available on its website. This includes the reform of political donor laws. We will restore independence and confidence to the public service and non-political decision-making processes. We are committed to the repeal of the hated part 3A of the Planning Act, which robs local communities of their right to make decisions and allows so-called brown-paper-bag politicians to override the wishes of councils without explanation or appeal.

It will be our policy to remove heritage from the planning portfolio and transfer it to the environment portfolio—the protection portfolio of Government. I believe this is one of the most groundbreaking and exciting policies produced by a State Liberal Party. It removes the inherent conflict of interest between conserving heritage and planning for growth that currently exists in the Department of Planning. The canopy would be a wonderful asset for consideration for heritage protection. We will also consider the sorts of apartments the Government encourages in its pattern book under State environment planning policy No. 65—the very sorts that are causing many of the problems in Ku-ring-gai. A pattern book for buildings of a lower height, more in line with the feel of suburbs such as Ku-ring-gai, would mean that the spirit of the suburb would not necessarily be threatened by a degree of development.

The fight to save the iconic tree canopy is a great fight not only for Ku-ring-gai but also for the type of State New South Wales ought to be, and the Liberal Party stands with the local community. I particularly thank Friends of Ku-ring-gai President, Anne Carroll, and the committee members who are leading the fight in a measured and factual but nevertheless relentless effort to save the community they love.

SRI LANKAN CONFLICT

Ms LEE RHIANNON [6.26 p.m.]: A Tamil protester, 27-year-old Sudha Suthaharam, who had been staging a hunger strike in Parramatta, was arrested in early May together with two other men. The Greens call on the authorities to respect the right to protest of the Tamil community. My colleagues Ian Cohen and John Kaye are working closely with the Tamil community.

On 5 May 2009 a *Parramatta Advertiser* reporter was present when that arrest was carried out. Councillor Issa, the Lord Mayor of Parramatta, attended and argued with the protesters. He told the protesters to go back to Sri Lanka. I understand that the Lord Mayor's actions were caught on video. I am disturbed and shocked that Councillor Issa spoke in that way to people who have a legitimate right to protest in this country. The Greens call for the release of the video material. We understand it may also show inappropriate actions of New South Wales police. I have received one report of police violence. The Greens also call on police to drop the charges against the three young men and to provide a permit for these protests to be held. Sudha Suthaharam has lost most of his direct family as the result of the Sri Lankan Army shelling and aerial attacks. This young man should be shown compassion rather than be arrested.

The AusAID budget to Sri Lanka for 2008-09 has a country program estimate of \$10.93 million, while the total overseas development aid estimate for 2008-09 is \$27 million. That sounds good but there is now a cloud over this aid and it needs to be reassessed. I say that because Sri Lanka's dependence on foreign aid means it has more money to spend on war. While we want to give these communities assistance, if heavy dependence on foreign aid means the government of Sri Lanka has more money to divert to war, then clearly there should be a reassessment.

Sri Lanka's military expenditure increased from 0.75 billion Sri Lankan rupees in 1977 to 139.6 billion for the year 2007—an almost 200-fold increase over 30 years. During the same period, foreign aid to Sri Lanka has kept pace with Sri Lanka's increasing military expenditure. It is not simply that Sri Lanka's economy is structurally dependent on foreign aid; it is also that that dependency shows a clear, inbuilt increasing trend. More people are asking: Would it have been possible for Sri Lanka to continue the war against the Tamil people if it did not have this level of foreign aid? It is a troubling question but it highlights the need for reassessment.

Foreign aid has been forthcoming because each aid donor—I am speaking here of the United States of America, the European Union, India and China—is securing its own strategic interests in the Indian Ocean largely by being an aid donor to Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has positioned itself to use the strategic interests of the USA, India and China in the Indian Ocean to advance its own interests and acquire the military capability that is now being used against the Tamil community. This is deeply troubling and highlights the need for reassessment.

In the United Kingdom, the channel 4 news program has televised reports on this issue. I was prompted to make this speech after seeing those reports on television last night from a camp in the northern Sri Lankan city of Vavuniya where Tamil refugees have been taken. There are shocking claims of shortages of food and water, dead bodies left where they have fallen, women separated from their families, and sexual abuse. The program has obtained the first independently filmed pictures from the internment camps set up by the Sri Lankan Government to house Tamils who have fled the country's civil war. It is deeply shocking. I urge members to view it as soon as possible. The *Guardian* newspaper has published commentary from John Holmes, the United Nations Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs. On Wednesday 8 April 2009 he wrote, "a bloodbath on the beaches of northern Sri Lanka seems an increasingly real possibility". That is why the Greens urge a reassessment of the aid budget. We should not draw comfort that because we give millions of dollars to Sri Lanka we are undertaking humanitarian work. In fact, the opposite could be the case.

MATERNITY LEAVE

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ [6.30 p.m.]: In 1919 the general conference of the International Labour Organization, after being convened at Washington by the Government of the United States of America, adopted the Maternity Protection Convention. This 1919 convention states under article 3:

That a woman shall, while she is absent from her work ... be paid benefits sufficient for the full and healthy maintenance of herself and her child, provided either out of public funds or by means of a system of insurance, the exact amount of which shall be determined by the competent authority in each country.

Ninety years after the adoption of this convention, Australia—one of the few Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] countries without a paid maternity scheme—stands on the cusp of the

fulfilment of that convention. It is perhaps ironic that the United States of America, that great country that convened the 1919 conference of the International Labour Organization, now stands alone amongst OECD countries in its lack of a paid maternity leave scheme. Paid maternity leave offers a variety of benefits to both workers and management. It improves productivity, staff morale, return to work rates and retention of staff. In Australia very few workplaces, particularly in the private sector, have paid maternity leave schemes. Women's concentration in part-time and casual work has also limited their access to a paid maternity leave scheme. I was acutely aware of this fact following the birth of my first child, as I had been engaged in casual labour and found myself without income.

I hope that tonight's Federal budget will see the fulfilment of the Rudd Labor's Government commitment to a paid maternity leave scheme, following a review by the Productivity Commission. I am sure I join with many women around Australia who will wait with anticipation for tonight's budget for the fulfilment of the International Labour Organization's convention 90 years ago. I congratulate those women from all walks of life who continue to strive for a fair and equitable outcome for women in the workplace. Whilst it is the Federal Labor Government that, hopefully, will deliver this scheme in tonight's budget, it is the work of those women over many years that has brought us here.

[Time for debate expired.]

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

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 6.33 p.m. until Wednesday 13 May 2009 at 11.00 a.m.
