



New South Wales

Legislative Council

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Sixth Parliament
First Session**

Thursday, 23 February 2017

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday, 23 February 2017

The PRESIDENT (The Hon. John George Ajaka) took the chair at 10:00.

The PRESIDENT read the prayers.

Rulings

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

The PRESIDENT (10:01): During question time yesterday Mr Jeremy Buckingham took a point of order in relation to an interjection that described him as "gibbering Jeremy". Mr Buckingham asked for the member to withdraw the comment. There was some debate about the point of order and I reserved my ruling. Under Standing Order 91 (3) a member may not use offensive words against any member and all personal reflections will be considered disorderly. The selected rulings of the President contain long lists of precedents for expressions ruled to be either offensive or not offensive. As I had indicated, the word "gibbering" has not been considered before.

As ruled by President Johnson in 1999, in determining whether an expression is offensive I am required, in effect, to place myself in the shoes of the member to whom the remark was directed and form a judgement as to whether the remark is personally offensive. In this case I note that the word "gibbering" is a relatively commonly used word. I also note that the member had, immediately prior to the remark being made, made a series of interjections. In the circumstances, therefore, I am not going to rule the term to be offensive and, therefore, will not be requiring the term to be withdrawn. However, I remind all honourable members of the need for proceedings to be conducted with courtesy and civility. As President Primrose ruled in 2008—and it is an excellent ruling, I might add—"Despite a divergence of views, members should respect the traditions of the House and allow debate to proceed in an orderly manner."

[Interruption]

It is good to see that the last words in the ruling of the Hon. Peter Primrose are being completely adhered to right now.

Motions

INAUGURAL GREATER HUNTER MAKERS FESTIVAL

Mr SCOT MacDONALD (10:03): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) the inaugural Greater Hunter Makers Festival was held on Friday 11 November 2016 at the Newcastle Jockey Club;
 - (b) the event showcased the Hunter's manufacturing, innovation and skills to local, national and international markets and was organised by Ai Group Hunter Leaders Council;
 - (c) the Hunter has and continues to have a strong manufacturing base;
 - (d) manufacturing is the seventh largest employer with more than 1,800 businesses employing around 20,000 people in the region;
 - (e) the manufacturing client base for the Hunter is broadening from mining and energy towards advanced manufacturing promoting value-added services, an example being the future arrival of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and the opportunities that will bring to local businesses; and
 - (f) Ms Kate Washington, MP, member for Port Stephens, Ms Jodi Harrison, MP, member for Charlestown, and Ms Yasmin Catley, MP, member for Swansea, were in attendance at the event.
- (2) That this House thanks:
 - (a) all businesses attending the event for showcasing their own and the Hunter's manufacturing capabilities; and
 - (b) Adrian Pike and Ai Group for spearheading and organising the event.

Motion agreed to.

CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mr SCOT MacDONALD (10:05): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) Central Coast Council hosted its Australia Day Awards on Friday, 20 January 2017;
 - (b) the award categories and their recipients were as follows:
 - (i) Youth of the Year—Miss Courtney McDermott;
 - (ii) Community Volunteer of the Year—Mr Peter Hurley;
 - (iii) Community Volunteer of the Year [Highly Commended]—Mr Michael Sharpe;
 - (iv) Community Activity and Service Award—Mrs Meg Champness;
 - (v) Arts, Culture and Entertainment Award—Ms Meredith Gilmore;
 - (vi) Arts, Culture and Entertainment Award [Highly Commended]—Vivien Sale;
 - (vii) Environmental Award—Ms Carol Long;
 - (viii) Environmental Award [Highly Commended]—Mr Ian Carr;
 - (ix) Sportsperson of the Year—Mr Keenan Derry; and
 - (x) Business Connecting Communities Award—Mr George Abourizk.
 - (c) Mr Lester Pearson was awarded Citizen of the Year, presented by Mr Ian Reynolds, for his 30 years of dedicated service to local vulnerable youth; and
 - (d) Mr David Mehan, MP, member for The Entrance attended the awards ceremony.
- (2) That this House congratulates Mr Lester Pearson on his award, and congratulates the other award recipients on their service to their community and the Central Coast region.

Motion agreed to.

ALL SAINTS COLLEGE, ST MARY'S CAMPUS

Mr SCOT MacDONALD (10:05): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) All Saints College, St Mary's Campus Maitland, was established in 1867 by Sisters from St Mary's Dominican Convent, Kensington, Ireland;
 - (b) today St Mary's Campus is a co-educational senior campus [Years 11-12] with 620 enrolled students;
 - (c) the official opening and blessing of the new school hall was held on 28 November 2016 at St Mary's campus;
 - (d) the hall's construction was facilitated with the assistance of the New South Wales Government's Building Grants Assistance Scheme; and
 - (e) Ms Jenny Aitchison, MP, member for Maitland, Peter Blackmore, Mayor of Maitland Council, and Mr Bob Geoghegan, Maitland City Councillor, were in attendance at the ceremony.
- (2) That this House congratulates St Mary's Campus on a memorable ceremony, and trusts that the new school hall will help deliver a better learning environment for the students.

Motion agreed to.

*Documents***GREYHOUND RACING INDUSTRY BAN****Report of Legal Arbiter**

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: I seek leave of the House to amend Private Member's Business item No. 1186 outside the Order of Precedence as follows:

- (1) In paragraph (1), omit "together with submissions received by Mr Mason during his evaluation of the documents and correspondence relating to the dispute".
- (2) In paragraph (2), omit "the report and submissions are" and insert instead "the report is"

Leave granted.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: I move:

- (1) That the report of the Independent Legal Arbiter, the Hon. Keith Mason, AC, QC, dated 14 February 2017, on the disputed claim of privilege on documents relating to a further order for papers regarding greyhound welfare, be laid on the table by the Clerk.

- (2) That, on tabling, the report is authorised to be published.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

MR MICHAEL LEIGH CHAMBERLAIN

Mr SCOT MacDONALD (10:07): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) Mr Michael Leigh Chamberlain passed away on the evening of 9 January 2017;
 - (b) a memorial service was held for Michael Chamberlain on Monday 16 January 2017 at Avondale College Church, at which Mr Greg Piper, MP, member for Lake Macquarie, was in attendance;
 - (c) following decades of legal battles and media scrutiny, the death certificate of his daughter, Azaria Chamberlain, was amended to state "death by dingo" closing a 32-year case; and
 - (d) in his later life Michael Chamberlain pursued higher education, obtaining both a master's and PhD degree, and went on to teach at Gosford Selective School and Newcastle University, and was also a Liberal candidate for the State seat of Lake Macquarie in 2003.
- (2) That this House conveys its condolences to the Chamberlain family during this difficult time.

Motion agreed to.

TOUKLEY RSL SUB BRANCH CENOTAPH

Mr SCOT MacDONALD (10:07): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) the Toukley RSL Sub-Branch Cenotaph was unveiled and dedicated on 17 April 1971;
 - (b) the ashes of 397 deceased sub-branch members are now interred in the Cenotaph gardens including veterans who served in the Australian, British, Polish and Dutch armed forces, and eight Rats of Tobruk;
 - (c) a service was held on 25 November 2016, which comprised the planting of a lone pine, the dedication of a Vietnam Veterans memorial plaque and the dedication of 397 new plaques to replace the existing plaques that had suffered weather damage; and
 - (d) Mr David Harris, MP, member for Wyong, was among those in attendance at the service.
- (2) That this House thanks Bob Wilson, President of Toukley sub-branch, for a poignant service and for his dedication to the sub-branch and its members.

Motion agreed to.

PREMIER'S ANZAC MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Mr SCOT MacDONALD (10:08): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) the Premier's ANZAC Memorial Scholarship, inaugurated in 2009, gives around 20 students each year the opportunity to travel overseas to one or more sites traditionally associated with the Anzac story;
 - (b) 21 schools were drawn for the 2017 ballot on 21 November 2016;
 - (c) each school will manage the selection of a student locally;
 - (d) students wishing to apply will be invited to submit a piece of work which will be judged by a joint school/community panel;
 - (e) St Philips Christian College, Port Stephens, was one of the 21 schools drawn from the ballot; and
 - (f) successful students will be announced by April 2017.
- (2) That this House congratulates Port Stephens Christian School on being drawn and the successful student on his or her selection to be announced.

Motion agreed to.

Documents

TABLING OF PAPERS

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I table the following paper:

Murray-Darling Basin Act 1992—Report of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority for year ended 30 June 2016.

I move:

That the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

AUDITOR-GENERAL

Reports

The CLERK: In accordance with the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, I announce receipt of a performance audit report of the Deputy Auditor-General entitled "Building the readiness of the non-government sector for the NDIS—Department of Family and Community Services", dated February 2017, received out of session and authorised to be printed this day.

Petitions

PETITIONS RECEIVED

Hurstville Baptist Church

Petition calling on the Minister for Local Government to withdraw the proposed acquisition notice for the Hurstville Baptist Church and to fully investigate the acquisition process, received from the **Hon. Paul Green**.

Business of the House

WITHDRAWAL OF BUSINESS

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: I withdraw Private Member's Business item No. 7 inside the Order of Precedence relating to the Drug Legislation Amendment (Cannabis for Medical Purposes) Bill.

POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE: On behalf of the Hon. Adam Searle: I move:

That Business of the House Notice of Motion No. 1 be postponed until Thursday 9 March 2017.

Motion agreed to.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I move:

That Business of the House Notice of Motion No. 2 be postponed until Wednesday 8 March 2017.

Motion agreed to.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I move:

That Business of the House Notice of Motion No. 4 be postponed until the next sitting day.

Motion agreed to.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS: ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow the moving of a motion forthwith relating to the conduct of the business of the House.

Motion agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I move:

That the order of Private Members' Business for today be as follows:

- (1) Private Members' Business item No. 1009 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. Paul Green relating to Shimon Peres.
- (2) Private Members' Business item No. 1167 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. Daniel Mookhey relating to consideration of the Auditor General's performance audit report entitled "CBD and South East Light Rail Project—Transport for NSW".
- (3) Private Members' Business item No. 5 in the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. Gregory Pearson relating to the Roman Catholic Church in Australia.
- (4) Private Members' Business item No. 11 in the Order of Precedence standing in the name of Mr Scot MacDonald relating to the Safer Pathway program.
- (5) Private Members' Business item No. 539 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of Mr Jeremy Buckingham relating to the Mining Amendment (Climate Protection—No New Coal Mines) Bill 2016.

Motion agreed to.*Committees***PROCEDURE COMMITTEE****Reference**

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I move:

- (1) That the Procedure Committee inquire into and report on the merits of introducing e-petitions and the mechanisms by which they could be accepted in the Legislative Council
- (2) That the committee report by the last sitting day in June 2017.

Motion agreed to.*Motions***DEATH OF SHIMON PERES, A FORMER PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL****Debate resumed from 20 October 2016.**

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN (10:21): I speak in debate on this motion about a truly inspirational figure. The late Shimon Peres was a significant leader in Israeli and world politics. I acknowledge his contributions to the modern state of Israel and his passionate commitment as a proclaimer of peace.

The PRESIDENT: Order! There is too much noise in the Chamber. Those who wish to have conversations will do so outside the Chamber.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It has already been acknowledged that Mr Peres served previously as President, Prime Minister, and Foreign Minister of the State of Israel. He used his time in active politics to establish and fight for peace wherever and whenever he could. For this, he will always be remembered. Many saw him as a visionary leader who had a deep passion for his nation. He was always focused on what he believed was best for Israel. His tireless efforts to promote peace for Israel and its surrounds through a two-state solution have helped to provide a road map for a future free from conflict. He is, of course, most remembered for his leadership, passion and advocacy of the Oslo Agreement between the State of Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. In recognition of his determination to secure a lasting peace for his homeland through the Oslo Accords, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize along with Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat. His dream was for Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace and security. He said:

I believe that peace with the Palestinians is most urgent—urgent than ever before. It is necessary. It is crucial. It is possible.

He wanted:

A solution of two national states—a Jewish state, Israel; an Arab state, Palestine. The Palestinians are our closest neighbours. I believe they may become our closest friends.

Mr Peres helped lay the foundation for the nation that Israel is today. It is an inspiring country founded on ancient history and it has grown into a nation of technology, innovation and vision. Shimon Peres was a fierce defender of Israel's security and he had a deep personal commitment to his nation. For many, he will forever remain a role model on the global stage as a defender of and ambassador for peace. Mr Peres had a great impact on the world. Many were touched and inspired by his work and his passion. His funeral reflected the impact he had in world politics, which was highlighted by the attendance of the former President of the United States Barack Obama, former President Bill Clinton, Britain's Prince Charles and Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, Governor-General of Australia Peter Cosgrove, French President Francois Hollande who was accompanied by former President Nicolas Sarkozy and Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, President of Mexico Enrique Peña Nieto, and others. This great man once said:

The duty of leaders is to pursue freedom ceaselessly, even in the face of hostility, in the face of doubt and disappointment. Just imagine what could be.

He meant freedom for the Jewish people of course, but he was also speaking for the Arabs. He said:

... a young Arab generation has opened its eyes and stood up against oppression, poverty and corruption.

Although there continue to be substantial obstacles on the long road to peace, the example of Shimon Peres will forever remain a guiding beacon towards a future filled with hope, harmony and certainty. His passing is a great loss. I am sure I am joined by all members when I extend my sympathy to his children Yoni, Zvia and Chemi, and their families. I acknowledge his wife of 66 years, who passed away a few years ago. I also extend my sympathy to the Prime Minister and President of Israel and to the people of the State of Israel. Shimon Peres will be truly remembered.

I must also acknowledge that as we speak on this motion the current Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, is visiting Australia. It is an exciting time to see the bonds grow between our two great nations, which have a deep history from the Australian Light Horse Brigade in Beersheba 100 years ago to the foundation of the State of Israel. I am sure all members join with me in welcoming him to Australia.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS (10:25): I also support the motion of the Hon. Paul Green. I thank him for moving the motion. It is most appropriate, as the Hon. Ben Franklin mentioned, that this motion will conclude on the day that the current Prime Minister of Israel, Mr Benjamin Netanyahu, is in Australia and New South Wales. I extend a warm welcome to the Israeli Prime Minister. In January 2013, the Hon. Paul Green, the Hon. Matthew Mason Cox, the Hon. David Clarke, Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, the Hon. Luke Foley, the Hon. Walt Secord and Mr John Barilaro, MP, and I travelled to Israel on a delegation that was coordinated by the Israeli Government to look at some of the experiences of that wonderful country.

It was a real eye opener for all of us who went on that trip, which was sponsored by the Jewish Board of Deputies, as we gained an understanding of the political situation in Israel. As the motion states, the work of the former Prime Minister Shimon Peres put many of those successes in place that Israel is now enjoying. I will not take up too much time of the House other than to say that those members who went on the trip to Israel really enjoyed it. It was wonderful to learn of the fantastic religious and political history that exists in that region of the world. I again congratulate the Hon. Paul Green for moving the motion. It is great to know that the motion will come to a conclusion on a day that the current Israeli Prime Minister is in Australia.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE (10:28): On behalf of the Christian Democratic Party, I support the motion moved by my colleague the Hon. Paul Green. The motion highlights the death of Shimon Peres, a former President and Prime Minister of Israel. It is fortuitous that today we will conclude the debate while the current President of Israel is in our city. I understand it is the first time that a Prime Minister of Israel has visited Australia. It is certainly the first time the current Prime Minister has visited. Last night I attended the welcome ceremony with the Hon. Paul Green at the Central Synagogue at Bondi Junction, which was packed with about 2,000 people. Many prominent citizens were there, including the Prime Minister of Australia, who gave the leading speech of welcome. Premier Gladys Berejiklian was there, as well as other senior members of the Federal and State governments. It was a historic occasion and I was very pleased to be one of the invited guests at that event.

Today we are honouring former President and Prime Minister of Israel, Shimon Peres. I will speak briefly on some of his achievements before the Hon. Paul Green speaks in reply to conclude this debate. This motion acknowledges the life and contribution of one of the most prominent men of our time, Shimon Peres, former Israeli Prime Minister, President, Foreign Minister of the State of Israel and the last surviving member of the modern State of Israel's founding generation of leaders. Shimon Peres was born Szymon Perski on 2 August 1923 in Wiszniew, Poland. In 1932 Mr Peres's father emigrated to Mandatory Palestine and settled in Tel Aviv. The family followed him in 1934. All of his relatives who remained in Wiszniew in 1941 were murdered during the Holocaust, many were burned alive in the town's synagogue. It was one of the cruel practices of the Nazi SS to herd Jews in various towns or villages into the town synagogue, which was then set on fire. The Jewish populations of those towns or villages were burned alive.

In the early 1950s Mr Peres was director of the defence ministry's delegation in the United States of America. Whilst in the United States he studied English, economics, and philosophy at The New School and New York University, and advanced management at Harvard University. Shimon Peres spoke Polish, French, English, Russian, Yiddish and Hebrew. In his private life he was a poet and a songwriter. He wrote stanzas during Cabinet meetings, and some of his poems were later recorded as songs in albums. As a result of his deep literary interests, he could quote from Hebrew prophets, French literature and Chinese philosophy with equal ease. Mr Peres was a Nobel Peace Prize winner and a giant in the annals of Israel's history. He won the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize jointly with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat for his role in negotiating the Oslo Accords, which envisioned an independent Palestinian State. I am pleased to support the motion moved by the Hon. Paul Green. I commend the motion to the House. I trust that we can all support it.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN (10:33): In reply: I thank all members who spoke in debate on this motion, including the President, the Hon. John Ajaka, the Hon. Walt Secord, the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps, the Hon. Scott Farlow, the Hon. Ben Franklin and the Hon. Rick Colless. I also thank my colleague Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile who has a great knowledge of, and commitment to, the nation of Israel. Yesterday as we sat, for a brief moment, with the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, I found it amusing when he said that it was a bit of a challenge for people to pronounce our Premier's name correctly. He said that they would probably have more trouble pronouncing her name than his. The Prime Minister's name is difficult to pronounce; perhaps it would be easier if he were to take on my surname. His name would then be Benjamin Green, which just happens to be my son's name. That would be much easier to pronounce.

In his presentation Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu radiated great pride for his nation and its history. Shimon Peres also radiated great pride for his nation. That is why he did the work that he did. We may not agree with some of the things that people from nations across the world do, or their reasons for doing them, but we cannot take away the great pride that leaders have. That is why leaders try to do what they believe is in the best interests of their nations and their people. That is to be applauded, and it is the reason many of us are sitting in this Chamber today. We acknowledge the Israeli Prime Minister being here in Australia. His words about Australia were very kind. In the measure of world players, Australia may not be as big as some but this nation is willing to stand up to the big boys and girls in town at the United Nations, and we are willing to stand with a nation that has to fight every inch of the way for its existence—so that there is somewhere for its people to settle. We applaud the Prime Minister and the current Federal Government for its support of Israel.

It was because my great leader Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile was away that I moved this motion. He has a passion for Israel. Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile would have been the quickest member in this place to move this motion had he been here. I place on the record that, while I would like to take credit for it, I did not write my whole speech. I went through it and put my heart into it, but it was prepared by Judy Russell, a former staffer of Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile. Judy always had a big flag of Israel in her office. She carries an even bigger flag in her heart. She prepared this speech because of her love of and commitment to Israel. My speech is a reflection of our commitment and her commitment. Judy travels to Israel regularly because of her love for that country. While Israel is just a bit of dirt—a very special piece of dirt for people who follow our Christian faith—Judy keeps returning there because of the great love she has for the people. In conclusion, the psalmist exhorts us in psalm 122:6-9 to:

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, may they prosper who love you.

May peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces.

For the sake of my brothers and my friends I now say may peace be within you.

For the sake of the House of the Lord I will seek your good.

I commend the motion to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Documents

GREYHOUND RACING INDUSTRY BAN

Report of Legal Arbitrator

The CLERK: According to resolution of the House this day, I table the report of the Independent Legal Arbitrator, the Hon. Keith Mason, KC, QC, dated 14 February 2017, on the disputed claim of privilege on papers relating to a further order for papers regarded greyhound welfare.

AUDITOR-GENERAL

Report: CBD and South East Light Rail Projects: Transport for NSW

Debate resumed from 21 February 2017.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (10:39): On Tuesday I moved that the House take note of the Auditor-General's performance audit report entitled "CBD and South East Light Rail Projects: Transport for NSW". I did so because the \$549 million of taxpayers' money that is being frittered away by avoidable error, laid out in great detail in this report, ought to obtain the scrutiny of this Parliament and the media writ large. This report also provides an independent evidence base that calls into question the veracity of public statements made by the then Minister for Transport, Ms Gladys Berejiklian, now the Premier. It was then repeated under parliamentary oath by the current Minister for Transport, the Hon. Andrew Constance, and under parliamentary oath by the current Secretary of Transport for NSW, Mr Tim Reardon, at the 2015 budget estimates hearings. Finally, it was reinforced in answer to a question on notice given to this House by the Minister for Transport.

To understand how the report calls the veracity of those statements into question one needs to read the media release of Ms Gladys Berejiklian, the then Minister for Transport, on Wednesday 17 December 2014, announced the awarding of the contract for the CBD and South East Light Rail project. That media release was issued two years after the original strategic plan in 2012. That was the first time the people of this State learnt that the projected cost of this project had increased from \$1.6 billion to \$2.1 billion. With a \$500 million, or 33 per cent, variation in the cost of this project, one would expect questions to be asked. The then Minister for Transport said:

As previously announced, this contract will result in an increased project cost due to customer improvements to the original scope, and customers will enjoy services around one year earlier than previously planned.

She then went on to list the so-called scope changes that she said justified the \$500 million increase in budget. Go forward to the 2015 budget estimates. It was obvious that this would attract some scrutiny in the principal hearings of this Parliament into public expenditure. I asked the current Minister for Transport, Mr Constance, about this \$500 million variation and he said under parliamentary oath, "There have been scope changes since you are now running around with that figure." After a few gratuitous insults to the Labor Party—none of which was particularly biting—he repeated that line about scope changes. In the same context Mr Reardon—to be fair, he was simply following the lead of his Minister—repeated the argument that it was to do with scope changes. I then asked the Minister what the scope changes were.

Now, one would have expected the Minister to know what the scope changes were that had led to the \$500 million increase; he did not. He took it on notice. His reply, on notice on 25 September 2015, was "refer to the former Minister for Transport's media release in December 2014". We have now learnt, because the Auditor-General said so on page 4 of this report, the theory about scope changes leading to the \$500 million blowout is bunkum. I quote from page 4 of the report:

Some of this increase was due to scope changes and planning modifications. However, most—\$517 million—was caused by mispricing and omissions in the business case.

So \$517 million of the \$549 million was explainable by a bungled planning process undertaken by the then Minister for Transport, Ms Gladys Berejiklian, and she sought to mislead the public as to why. We learn later in the report that Ms Berejiklian either knew or should have known that this was the reason for the blowout because it clearly notes at least five clear warnings to the Executive Government that this project was off the rails. The first warning is found on page 11 of the report where it is stated as clear as day that in August 2013 Transport for NSW commissioned a peer review of the capital cost plan, which found it was at the lower end of the estimated range for projects of this type. That is the first example and the very first warning undertaken by the department for which the Minister was then directly responsible. An independent peer review of her department's work said they were being too optimistic. It defies credibility that such a report was not given to the then Minister for Transport. The second warning is found on page 15 of the report:

In September 2014, Transport for NSW addressed the issues from the review, which increased the budget to \$2.0 billion. The Advisory Board [established to provide independent oversight of this project] noted that the business case capital cost estimate had mispriced and omitted several items, and the market condition assumptions had changed.

The advisory board, which had been hand picked by then Minister for Transport Berejiklian, makes note of the fact that the budget was now at \$2 billion. That was three months before the media release. It defies logic that the advisory board, which had concluded that there had been a mispricing and omissions in the business case, did not tell the Minister. The third warning: In October 2014 Transport for NSW discovered that it was using the wrong public sector comparator and as a result was overstating the benefits of the project. That was two months before the Minister's infamous press release, yet she still proceeded. We then come to the stunning finding in this report that Transport for NSW had itself discovered the project was mispriced and it provided advice to that effect. It is not stated in the report as to whom that advice was given, but it defies logic that on a marquee project such as this the only person it would forget to tell about the budget blowing out by 33 per cent would be the Minister responsible for its delivery.

Treasury reappraised the cost well before the Minister made her statement and concluded that the project was off the rails. It again provided advice to Transport for NSW to that effect, yet we are meant to believe that none of this filtered up to the then Minister for Transport. In February 2015—I do not know what was happening around about February or March 2015 but there may have been other reasons why Transport for NSW was reluctant to put its Minister in a position where, if asked whether the project was on track, she might have had reasons not to be forthcoming with accurate information—Transport for NSW found out that the benefit-to-cost ratio was equally out on this project but, in the context of an election, we are meant to believe that the department refused to tell the then Minister for Transport.

In light of these five warnings, what are we to conclude? We have asked the Premier repeatedly in the other place to explain herself, and she has not tendered a solution or an explanation or given any detail of what she knew about this bungle and when she knew it. Therefore we can only examine the record and reach a couple of quick conclusions. The first conclusion is that this project, canned from its inception by Infrastructure NSW, decreed by Nick Greiner, which only went ahead because it was a political choice, resulted in Infrastructure NSW being removed from the assurance process and Transport for NSW undertaking that assurance process. Transport for NSW bungled it and either refused to tell the Minister, for which Transport for NSW should be sacked, or the Minister misled the public, for which she should be sacked.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (10:50): Is it not wonderful to be lectured by those members opposite on—

Mr Scot MacDonald: Building things.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: —building things, firstly, and making sure that projects run to cost. Those opposite have such great experience when it comes to completing infrastructure programs and delivering projects on time and on budget.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: We have heard this before. Please cut to the chase. Do you have anything new to say?

The PRESIDENT: Order! I ask the Parliamentary Secretary to be seated. I have sat here for the entire 10 minutes and noted that the Hon. Daniel Mookhey was given every opportunity to be heard in silence. I congratulate the Hon. Daniel Mookhey on presenting in a very calm and concise way in accordance with the standing orders. I ask that all members, both from the Opposition and the Government, allow the Parliamentary Secretary to be heard in silence.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I also commend the Hon. Daniel Mookhey for his contribution to this debate. He, as a new member of this Chamber, is not personally responsible for a lot of the failures of the previous Labor administration in New South Wales. But there are many on the other side of the Chamber who have the failures in their DNA. When it comes to members of the Labor Party we know that they failed to deliver infrastructure projects. We know that they rip up contracts and never deliver projects on time or on budget. Looking at the history of New South Wales when under a State Labor Government, it becomes obvious that Labor governments are very good at delivering one thing—glossy brochures.

Some members opposite have been responsible for those glossy brochures, and they are very nice brochures. But no track is ever laid, so no trains are running on those unladen tracks. At the end of the day, the people of New South Wales miss out. There is a very long list of Labor failures. Under previous Labor administrations in New South Wales, nothing got done. Press releases were produced, but nothing actually got delivered. One of the jewels in the crown, something Labor was able to deliver, was the Epping to Chatswood rail link—half the distance of the original plan.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Point of order: I respect that the member is providing a history, but he is straying well and truly far from the motion being debated. This is nowhere near relevant to the performance audit report of the Auditor-General.

The PRESIDENT: I note that the motion before me states, "That this House take note of a performance audit report entitled 'CBD and South East Light Rail Project: Transport for NSW'", dated November 2016. I form the view that matters of general relevance to this motion, including matters relating to a comparison of actions taken in the past relating to transport projects, would be generally relevant. The Parliamentary Secretary has the call.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: As I was saying, the Epping to Parramatta rail link, which ended up being the Epping to Chatswood rail link, was a project that was supposed to run all the way to Parramatta but finished at Epping. It is a great project, but when the Labor Party was in charge the original \$1.4 billion budget in the end cost \$2.3 billion. What did we get? Effectively we got half the line for twice the cost. That is how Labor did things when in government, and that is one of the rare projects it delivered. I move on to some of Labor's grand announcements. We had the metro project, which was going to run everywhere. There was going to be a North West Rail Link and there was going to be a north-west metro. Then there was going to be a western metro and an inner-city metro.

What did we end up with? We ended up with absolutely nothing other than a half-billion dollar bill from the Labor Party with absolutely nothing to show for it. Those members opposite want to criticise a project that will transform Sydney. This project is delivering a transport windfall for the city and the eastern suburbs that will change transport in New South Wales. If those members opposite were in charge of the project, we would not have one single track laid. I could go through a list of all the things that those opposite did when in government. There was the Action for Transport Plan in 1998, with a list of projects to be delivered by 2010. Mr President, I am sure you travel on some of these projects.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Were you in high school then?

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Were you born then?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I was in high school then. I will tell members about my time in high school. I went to Sydney Technical High School—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I think the Parliamentary Secretary's time in high school would fall outside the leave of the motion before us, unless he was part of building a transport project.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I will continue to speak about one project in the 1998 plan, the Hurstville to Strathfield link. I grew up in Strathfield and I went to high school in Hurstville. Nothing excited me more than the Hurstville to Strathfield link. Now students in Strathfield who want to go to Sydney Technical High School in Hurstville turn up at the station and look for the train to Hurstville. Where is it? It is nowhere to be found, because Labor did not deliver it. The same is true for the students who would turn up at Chatswood and want to go to Dee Why. Can they use the train? No, because there is no train to Dee Why. That train was not delivered either.

What about students from Epping who want to go to one of the great schools in Castle Hill? Thankfully, because of this Government there will be a North West Rail Link. If it were up to Labor, there would be no train for them, because nothing was delivered under a Labor government. How do all the people in Sydney who want to get to Bondi Beach, one of the greatest beaches in the world, get there? They still have to catch the bus, because Labor never delivered the promised train line. The people of Newcastle and the Central Coast are still waiting for the high-speed rail link that was promised. The Hornsby to Newcastle high-speed rail line was supposed to have started by 2010; no delivery.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Where is yours?

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Where is ours? We never put out a glossy brochure and announced it, saying, "Here is your high-speed rail link." It never happened. Mr President, I am sure you remember from your boyhood days in the Gong the wonderful Sutherland to Wollongong high-speed rail, which was also supposed to be delivered by 2010. Where is it? Nowhere to be seen. Members opposite want to tell us about how we have failed with transport projects, when we are actually delivering transport projects. If those opposite want to look at the North West Rail Link, what will they see? They will see a project that is under construction and that will come online very soon. It is going to be a jewel in Sydney's transport crown.

If those opposite want to see the CBD and South East Light Rail Link, what will they see? They will see a project that will transform the city and transform the eastern suburbs. It will get people moving around this city and take buses off the roads. We in this city will be very proud of this project because it will transform this city. Those members opposite have no plan whatsoever, nothing. If we look at the achievements of those opposite when it comes to transport—

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Point of order: My point of order goes to relevance. I have waited patiently, as we all have. The issue is not just a rounding error; it is a very significant matter brought before the House via a motion. The Parliamentary Secretary has only one minute left to speak, and we have heard nothing substantive, not even tangentially relevant to the motion.

The PRESIDENT: I uphold the member's point of order.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: Mr President I ask you to look at rulings by previous Presidents. When this matter was last debated, the ruling of the previous President was that what was already in the report was what had to be dealt with in the motion.

The PRESIDENT: I uphold the member's point of order. I have already ruled on this. The Hon. Scott Farlow is talking about transport projects. This project does not live in a bubble: It relates to all—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: We are talking about—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Penny Sharpe will not interrupt me while I am speaking. The Hon. Scott Farlow has the call.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Then there was the Tcard. Unfortunately no-one has a Tcard because Labor never delivered that either. After 12 years in office and after spending \$70 million, Labor delivered nothing. All we needed was Gladys Berejiklian, the great Premier of New South Wales and member for Willoughby, to deliver the Opal card in New South Wales so we could travel in this State. She is the Minister who delivered the North West Rail Link and other projects. She has a fine record of delivering for the people of New South Wales.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI (11:00): I am not sure where to start in this CBD and South East Light Rail debacle. When this project was announced it would be fair to say that the people of Sydney and I were excited. We were all looking forward to a modern, well-integrated environmentally sustainable light rail that would take the place of the old tram lines that were ripped up in the 1960s. We had high hopes that this would be an iconic project that set the scene for bigger and better light rail networks across Sydney and other cities around New South Wales.

Sadly, our hopes were shattered soon after the detailed plans of the light rail system started coming to light. As more and more of the project was implemented, we were less and less impressed by it. The project has been plagued by massive cost blowouts, poor community consultation, misjudgement, errors and just pure bad

planning. Unfortunately, the expectation that this Government can deliver any infrastructure project on budget with a justifiable cost-benefit ratio and give taxpayers value for money is now nothing more than a pipe dream. We are left with no grounds to believe that much can come out of this Government's secretive multibillion dollar infrastructure projects.

The CBD and South East Light Rail has caused the completely avoidable destruction of hundreds of trees, some of which were 100 years old. This war on trees continues unabated. Just this week, even more trees were chopped down on Devonshire Street to fulfil what seems like the light rail project's insatiable appetite for environmental destruction. Nowhere else in the world do public transport projects cause such swathes of environmental destruction. I remind members of what New York City Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver said when he was in Sydney last year and saw the destruction of heritage trees. He stated:

Somebody would lose their job if that happened in New York.

But in Sydney the then Minister for Transport, Gladys Berejiklian, under whom this whole disaster began to unfold, has been promoted first to Treasurer and now to Premier. Sadly, we are not in New York; we are in Sydney, where apparently anything goes and the environment and the community do not really matter. Bad decisions and shoddy process have led to seemingly unexplained and unjustifiable route realignments until one takes a deeper look and it is revealed that these changes were in the interest of a hotel development application from the Australian Turf Club. As is always the case with this Government, big money, big business and big developers always win over public interest, environmental protection and indeed even common sense.

Last year I moved a motion to set up an inquiry to answer the many questions our community was asking about cost, transparency, community consultation, the planning process, the public transport benefits and the needless and avoidable destruction of trees. But the Government voted down this inquiry. Now, with the Auditor-General's report, we have some idea of why it did that. The Auditor-General's report, released on 30 November 2016, was damning to say the least. The report stated the Government:

... did not effectively plan and procure the CBD and South East Light Rail [CSELR] project to achieve best value for money.

In November 2013, the light rail project was set to cost \$1.6 billion. In a little more than 12 months, the costs had blown out by more than half a billion dollars. Out of this \$549 million cost blowout, the Government's incorrect estimates in and omissions from the business case cost taxpayers \$517 million. To make things even worse, the project has been marred by government misinformation and concealment. The then Minister for Transport, now Premier Gladys Berejiklian, stated in her 19 December 2014 press release that the cost blowout of more than half a billion dollars was due to customer improvements to the original project. Chief amongst those changes, according to her media release, was the light rail's ability to carry more passengers. This claim was completely rejected in the Auditor-General's report, which stated that 94 per cent of the cost blowout was due to the Government's faulty business case. In fact, just two months prior, in October, the Government's own transport agency reported that the cost blowout was due to incorrect estimates and omissions in the business case.

This is a business case that the Government has repeatedly refused to release in full. I have repeatedly asked the Minister to make public the business case for this project, but we see only fancy, glossy summary documents, never the full business case. This Government has accused the Opposition of producing glossy brochures but it is just as guilty. The falsehoods and secrecy have continued. The current Minister refused to address the cost blowouts that have become the norm in infrastructure projects in New South Wales and instead pointed people back to the December 2014 press release by the former Treasurer—the current Premier. No wonder people lose faith in governments when they treat \$500 million as little more than a rounding error. We need to get to the bottom of this, and Premier Berejiklian and Minister Constance must explain why it took an Auditor-General's report two years later to reveal the truth. Why did they not come clean up front? They have to be up front with the truth and tell us why they misled the community. Why the secrecy and deliberate misinformation?

It seems that the Government—under the previous and current leadership—does not care about receiving technical advice from relevant agencies either, in case it hampers its political agenda. Once this expertise is removed, most of the work is contracted out with the single aim of delivering predetermined outcomes at all costs. This is not just about the money; this poorly planned and executed project detracts from the infrastructure of this beautiful city. Unfortunately for the citizens of New South Wales, this comes at the cost of better, efficient, accessible and environmentally friendly transport projects. In addition to the damning reasons for cost blowouts, the Auditor-General's report also found that the Government's planning and governance arrangements were inadequate for such a major infrastructure project. According to the Auditor-General's report, this inadequacy has led to a project that has become increasingly complex with far higher risks.

The benefit-cost ratio also plummeted by a third, going down from 2.4 to 1.4. When governments worldwide are spending public money they compare alternatives. They do economic evaluations and cost-benefit

analyses on alternative projects before choosing the one that is best value for money and that has the most efficient allocation of money. It seems that this Government is not even thinking about the benefit to cost ratio. It is only when the shovels and axes come out, when the digging of roads and chopping of trees starts, that Government Ministers sit back and scratch their heads over whether there is any benefit to the taxpayer. This is utterly disgraceful for such an important project. With such reduced value for money, I do not know why this Government is going ahead with this disaster of a project in its current form.

Where there should be community consultation there are cover-ups. Where there should be genuine public interest at the heart of the projects for which taxpayers are paying there is a refusal to even release information publicly. This is a complete sham. These half-baked projects have left New South Wales taxpayers with hefty price tags that offer nothing in return. This Government is hell-bent on making a mockery of the citizens of this State. This project would have been one that set the scene for light rail across Sydney, but this Government has shown time and again that it is simply incapable of effectively delivering on infrastructure projects.

The deliberate de-engineering and politicisation of the public service has left us with inadequate and wasteful projects. There is a culture of secrecy and lying, and it is a massive cost burden on the community. The people of New South Wales deserve better than to be ignored by an arrogant and deceptive Government. There is no doubt that this Government's privatisation agenda and utter lack of transparency in transport decisions is a really expensive strategy. I strongly reiterate my calls for this Government to invest in rebuilding community trust, to invest in rebuilding engineering and technical expertise within the public service, and to make public business cases and cost-benefit analyses so that the community can see where their money is being committed on transport projects. I support the motion.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (11:09): I contribute to this take note debate on the New South Wales Auditor-General's performance audit entitled "CBD and South East Light Rail projects: Transport for NSW". This is a performance audit report from the Auditor-General the likes of which we rarely see. I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier and Leader of the House in the Legislative Council, the Hon. Scott Farlow, for contributing to this debate. It is a pity that it had nothing to do with this report. I understand that the Government has no interest in talking about this report. Instead its members just sing from the same song sheet as the now Premier and previous Minister for Transport about how the Labor Party was in government for 16 years. Well, those opposite have been in government for six years now; let us look into what they have been doing.

The Hon. Scott Farlow: We are delivering. We are building stuff.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, the Government is delivering; it is delivering budget blowouts everywhere. This Auditor-General's report about the planning and budgeting of the CBD and South East Light Rail project can best be described as scathing. To date, the CBD and South East Light Rail project has been characterised by waste, incompetence and deceit at every turn from the highest levels of government. Astonishingly, the budget for the construction and running of the 12-kilometre light rail route has blown out by \$549 million—that is, half a billion dollars. It has gone from \$1.6 billion to \$2.2 billion. The planning of this project has seen its benefit-cost ratio plummet, from 2.4 to 1.4. What is worse, this incompetence has been deliberately covered up by members of the Government—not once, not twice but every time. I note that the current Minister for Transport is doubling down on the great big lie.

I thank my colleague the Hon. Daniel Mookhey for referring to many of the failures when it comes to this project and, importantly, forensically going through the lies that continue to be told by both Ministers in this Government and, unfortunately the public servants who have been dragged into this mess. The Hon. Daniel Mookhey outlined the great big lie of the then Minister for Transport and now Premier Gladys Berejiklian when it came to the \$549 million cost increase. This was not about improvements and changes in scope; it was a cover-up for the failure of the Minister to do her homework when it came to this project. Opposition members note that the Government continues to double down on this great big lie exposed in black and white by the Auditor-General.

This debate gives me an opportunity to expose another great big lie that is perpetuated by the Government—that is, the lie that this new system will deliver more capacity to get people from the eastern suburbs into the city. Capacity is mentioned in this report under the heading "some information about the project was inaccurate or delayed". I turn to an investigation of this incredible inaccuracy. When the light rail project was first announced we were told by the Government in the business case summary that it would have the capacity to carry 9,000 passengers per hour in each direction. This figure may have led us to be less concerned when the Government said it would remove 220 buses entering the city due to improvements in the carrying capacity of the light rail as well as other road and traffic changes.

We were told in late 2014 by no less than the current Premier, who was then the Minister for Transport, that the project had been upgraded and capacity had in fact increased. The then Minister for Transport said the project would now "carry over 50 per cent more than the 9,000 passengers per hour in each direction previously

announced by the Government". Some news outlets got excited and reported an increase to 18,000 passengers per hour. If we do our maths correctly we find that the project was allegedly going to have the capacity to carry 13,500 passengers per hour in each direction—a pretty impressive figure. In fact it seemed too good to be true—because it was. The Auditor-General's report states:

Yet some of the information released by TfNSW to the public has not been correct or timely.

In fact this is a serious example of what looks a lot like a deliberate lie. In December 2014, when it was announced that the project cost had blown out by \$549 million to \$2.1 billion, the blowout was sold to the public as being attributed to "huge wins" being offered by the preferred bidder. These "huge wins" apparently included the 50 per cent increase in passenger capacity. The Auditor-General's report savages this assertion, saying:

However, this was not correct. As noted above, 94 per cent of the \$549 million increase was due to incorrect estimates in the business case.

Part of the reason for this would be that there was no increase in passenger capacity per hour—there was no win. In fact the opposite is true. Fast forward to last year's budget estimates hearings, and we were able to get some further answers from the Government about the claims it was making on light rail capacity. Under questioning, the Government confirmed that the actual hourly capacity in each direction was in fact 6,750 passengers—as had been reported in the months leading up to the hearing. So rather than a 50 per cent increase in capacity per hour as claimed by the Minister, we are now presented with a 25 per cent decrease in passenger capacity on the light rail. Already, just by analysing this one metric of capacity, it is plain to see the lack of planning that the Auditor-General's report has found in so many areas of this project.

At the same estimates hearing we were told that the light rail now would not take 220 buses off the roads heading into the city centre during the peak; it would be around 180 buses from the south-east. It was a case of another day, another change in the numbers. But then the numbers became even less clear, as our questioning revealed that the assumed number of passengers on these buses was 50 passengers not the 70 passengers that the signs on the back of the bus indicate. I ask members to stay with me here as there are a lot of figures. Basically the Government is unable to tell us the actual capacity, and it is decreasing at a rapid rate. This is serious. There are serious consequences because if the State is spending more than \$2 billion to supposedly increase capacity into the city by building light rail and removing buses it is important that that capacity is substantially increased.

What is currently happening means that we will need more buses. There will be more congestion, longer travel times and more people standing; and the project is already half a billion dollars over budget. We also need to note that the journey for passengers taking the proposed light rail system will be longer than on buses, and people will have to stand for longer than they currently do. The people of the eastern suburbs have been sold a pup by this Government. Not just the Opposition has been able to do the sums and expose the lies told by the Government on capacity. On Tuesday this week, a Randwick City Council-commissioned report revealed that passenger crowding on the light rail is forecast to easily exceed "crush capacity" rates for buses and heavy rail.

The report says that passenger capacity is historically 2.5 people per square metre for Sydney trains—and I think that is already pretty tight—but it will be 3.3 people per square metre for the light rail. The report states that this figure is "about 25 per cent higher than the average of the previously identified maximum crowding levels". Is the Government planning to employ "light rail stuffers" like the rail staff employed in some countries to push passengers on board trains like sardines into a tin? This report shows that the light rail is going to be at capacity on the day that it opens.

Before the Auditor-General's report I would have found it astonishing that the Government had not done this sort of modelling or planning. Let us not forget that the now Premier and former Minister for Transport used to wax lyrical about doing her homework, underpromising and overdelivering. Let us look at what we have ended up with under this Premier. We have ended up with a cost blowout and reduced value for money for the State of more than \$1 billion. We have a reduced capacity to move people in and out of the city. We have longer journey times for people coming from the eastern suburbs, and most of them will not get a seat on the light rail. We have a loss of access to local bus stops for people, which will impact terribly on the elderly and those with mobility issues.

I would have thought that more of those opposite would be supporting the member for Coogee. He lives in a very hilly place where there are many bus stops, and two-thirds of those bus stops are going to be taken out. I do not know how the elderly are going to access bus stops to even get to the light rail, if they choose to do so. I thought that this would be something those on the other side of the House would be concerned about. The member for Coogee should be concerned, because the locals are not pleased at all.

We need to talk also about the incredible and shameful loss of 1,400 trees, including 871 significant trees and the massacre of 100-year-old heritage fig trees along Anzac Parade. It has been an absolute massacre. Proper planning would have allowed those trees to remain and for the light rail to be built along there without removing

them. But, no, the Government, in its bloody-mindedness, refused to do that. Instead those 100-year-old trees, planted as part of the commemoration of the Anzacs, have been destroyed. There has been an incredible loss of tree canopy. If we are serious about climate change we need to talk about the heat island effect. When it comes to this city, we need to preserve the canopy that we have. We want to be able to deal with days when the temperature reaches 47 degrees. But this Government, at every turn, is ripping out trees and removing the tree canopy which helps our city remain bearable as we deal with increased temperatures due to climate change.

In conclusion, it is embarrassing that the Government has chosen not to deal specifically with the matters that are dealt with in the Auditor-General's report. The Auditor-General is an independent umpire and we thank her for her work and for often delivering news that governments do not want to hear. Clearly this report is scathing about the fact that the Government has completely dropped the ball. The Premier, as the Minister for Transport used to say that she had done her homework but has, frankly, lied in Parliament. She has lied to the people of New South Wales and she needs to come clean about what she knew and what she has done in relation to the cover-up of this blowout.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN (11:19): What an extraordinary contribution we just had from the Hon. Penny Sharpe. First we had mediscare when Labor Party members lied during the Federal election campaign but we now have stuffer scare from the Hon. Penny Sharpe. She is evoking a future in New South Wales where the Government employs light rail stuffers to push passengers on board trains like sardines into a tin, which is farcical and sums up Opposition members. Hypocrisy, thy name is Labor. Those opposites talked about a \$500 million blowout on a project that is being built. Let us talk about the \$500 million that was spent on something that was not built. Let us talk about the CBD to Rozelle metro that was ripped up and the money wasted because those opposites do not love public transport. This Government loves public transport and believes in equality, public transport and social justice, but those opposites do not. I love light rail. When I am in Sydney I live in Rozelle and I walk to the Lilyfield light rail stop to catch light rail into the city. It is wonderful and I love it.

I am excited about the \$2.1 billion project that will transform not only the central business district but also New South Wales. It is good for regional people because they will be able to travel to the city and they will love it. Let us talk about the economy. Central business district congestion costs the New South Wales economy approximately \$5.1 billion per year. By 2021 that figure will rise to \$8.8 billion. By 2031 about 780,000 trips will be made to the city centre each weekday—150,000 more than in 2013. What does that mean? Do we want more and more buses on the city streets? Do we want them pushing out their exhaust fumes and clogging up the streets, or do we want efficient, clean, safe and reliable light rail? We want light rail and we are building it. In fact, it is happening as we speak. It is wonderful. There will be 19 light rail stops along a 12-kilometre route with a 97 per cent reliability rate, which is amazing.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: It will carry 13,500 passengers per hour during peak periods, improve transport access, support urban renewal and revitalise the city centre. Just about every block on George Street is currently being renewed and upgraded. The private sector is investing billions of dollars, which is a clear endorsement of this project. People in Sydney and in New South Wales have spoken. They like what we are doing. They like this Government because it is building things. Construction is underway along 7.1 kilometres of the 12-kilometre route and the project is on schedule, with some flexibility in start dates for certain work zones. However, the project remains on budget and on track for operation in early 2019.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order—

The PRESIDENT: I remind members that it is disorderly to take points of order simply to take up a member's speaking time.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: I am not doing and would never do that. My point of order relates to the fact that the Parliamentary Secretary is misleading the House.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order. The member will resume her seat.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The stuffer scare proponent is interrupting again. The Auditor-General's report states that the CBD and South East Light Rail project will cost \$2.1 billion to build. Separate from that, ALTRAC Light Rail will be paid \$2.2 billion—net present cost in 2014—for capital repayment, operation and maintenance of both CBD and South East Light Rail and Inner West Light Rail. This cost is offset by the Government's receipt of light rail fare revenue, commercial revenue and the State's ownership of the asset. The change in the CBD and South East Light Rail operating cost from 2012 to 2014 occurred once the project was fully scoped and put to competitive tender. The increase in operating cost is the change from the estimate to the tendered public-private partnership [PPP] costs. I am advised that these costs involved a larger fleet and workforce than the original estimates anticipated.

The light rail website has always shown the revised capital cost for the project and the revised benefit-cost ratio [BCR] has been published on the light rail benefits fact sheet, in line with the Auditor-General's recommendation, because this Government believes in transparency. Of course there will be changes from time to time. When we build things sometimes there are changes and when there are changes we will advise the public. We will be transparent and accountable. The CBD and South East Light Rail will deliver significant benefits as evidenced by its positive BCR of 1.4.

Let us contrast this Government's record on project building with the record of the Labor Government. I have talked about the projects that this Government is building, what is happening and what it is doing, but let us consider the many projects that were not built by the Opposition: the Bondi Beach rail link, a high-speed rail link to Newcastle and the Central Coast; a Hurstville to Strathfield rail link; a high-speed rail link from Sutherland to Wollongong; the Parramatta to Chatswood rail link; the north-west heavy rail line; the south-west rail link; a new CBD harbour crossing; the north-west metro; the west metro; the western express and, of course, as I have already mentioned, the CBD to Rozelle metro. These projects were promised by those opposite but not one was delivered. In conclusion, I will refer briefly to what this Government is doing in New South Wales. I acknowledge the Civil Contractors Federation—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. This goes well beyond what is contained in this report, which is about the CBD and South East Light Rail. It has nothing to do with broader projects in New South Wales.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Shayne Mallard): I understand that the President ruled earlier that transport-related matters past, present and future may be referred to in this debate. There is no point of order.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: The Civil Contractors Federation New South Wales today put out a media release saying that it welcomed the continuing pipeline of works. It released its annual forecast of the New South Wales civil infrastructure industry, with the outcome being continued good news for the sector and good news for New South Wales. The chief executive officer of the Civil Contractors Federation, David Castledine—a good, smart and capable man—said, "The entire industry will be buoyed by the continuing good news in the volume of work forecast in New South Wales." The media release states:

The research indicates the NSW civil infrastructure spend, covering both public and private expenditure on civil construction and maintenance but excluding asset costs, will increase by 43% to \$17.7 billion by 2019 and total to \$173 billion over the ten-year forecast.

"That's an amazing forecast and makes NSW the envy of all other States and Territories," said Mr Castledine.

The Hon. Scott Farlow: What do they do in Victoria? They just rip up the projects.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: They rip up the projects in Victoria. NSW Labor does not deliver the projects when it is in government but this Government delivers and it will keep doing so for many years to come.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE (11:28): I speak briefly in support of the motion moved by the Hon. Daniel Mookhey. I congratulate him on moving the motion. The reports of the Auditor-General should be studied carefully. We should learn from those reports, otherwise the work conducted by the Auditor-General does not produce any fruit. I note that there are substantial criticisms of the light rail project in the executive summary of the Auditor-General's report, which are justified. The executive summary states:

The Audit Office found that Transport for NSW's due diligence and probity in the procurement process was detailed and met NSW Government requirements.

The report also states:

... Transport for NSW improved the project's governance and assurance framework.

In other words, the criticism has forced the Government and its departments to be far more efficient and far more aware of cost blowouts than they appeared to be previously. The Auditor-General should be congratulated on bringing the government departments in line with correct business procedures so that there will be no cost blowouts of \$500 million and that projects will be built according to their timetables and budgets.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (11:30): I will continue from where my colleagues left off. The light rail project has had a significant cost blowout of \$549 million. The key question before the House is: What was the reason for the blowout? Two reasons have been given. One is that it could have been the result of huge wins or that it could have been the result of incorrect estimates. I understand that transport costs blow out. I am not one of those members who claims that scopes do not change. All Governments will struggle with these issues. The problem is that this Government breached one of the fundamental rules. When faced with such scope changes, it should have been honest about what was going on. That is the problem that the former transport Minister, now Premier, has. She claimed she was "always up front with what I knew at the time".

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey has gone through the issue forensically, setting out the dates. On 17 December 2014, the media release stated there was a change of scope and huge wins, but a report in October, two months earlier, made it clear that that was not the case and, in fact, it was a case of incorrect estimates. The key issue in this report is that it pins down the number. Who was right and who was wrong? Was this the result of huge wins or incorrect estimates? It puts the figure of \$517 million and the figure of \$549 million capital cost in one column. It is not in the huge wins column and it is not in the change of scope column. It is in the column that states this was an incorrect estimate.

In the face of this report, those questions that were spelled out by my colleagues must be answered. What did the former Minister know? When did she know it? Did she or did she not see those briefings? We do not know the answers to those questions. After this report was released, I was astonished that the Premier continued with the line she had taken on this question at an earlier press conference. Until she answers those questions and either apologises or explains, a question mark will hang over her approach to this issue. I draw attention to two other aspects of the report. First, it is clear that the Government's approach to transport is starting to be a major systematic problem. The report states that this project suffered many of the same problems that were reported for WestConnex, large construction projects and the Albert "Tibby" Cotter Walkway—that is, the bridge to nowhere. Secondly, there is a problem with the Government's process. The report states:

However, these processes departed from the Major Project Assurance Framework and Transport for NSW's own Investment Gating and Investment System by not requiring a preliminary business case and two early independent gateway assurance reviews.

The report further states:

The NSW Government approved these processes because of the project's significance and to meet its preferred timelines.

The Government's processes were set aside to meet the Government's time lines, which is the source of some of its problems. I am grateful to the Auditor-General for drawing attention to that issue. As a result of this report, the Government should not claim any superiority on transport management in this House or in public. That is what this project and this report represents. It is what this decision to deal with this issue by the former transport Minister represents. I understand that the Government will want to draw a contrast between what it has done in transport and what Labor did, but the problem is that this approach represents a lack of honesty and a lack of integrity when it comes to answering the questions about how this blowout occurred.

Members opposite have not understood that this is not only a question about transport; it is also an issue about honesty and integrity with the public. Transport agencies should be honest when they are not on track and not on budget, despite the claims of the Hon. Ben Franklin. Labor intends to be honest and the shadow Minister for Transport has been honest about our plans. We will put them before the public and we will be honest about past transport issues. If there have been failures, we will be up-front about it. The problem for the Premier is that until she answers those questions she will be unable to make the case that Government members have enjoyed making in the House today. There are now questions that hang over her treatment of this issue. Until she answers those questions—what she knew and when knew it, and did she or did she not see those briefings—she will not have as much fun with transport as Government members have had today.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS (11:36): I had not planned to speak on this matter, but the contribution of the Hon. John Graham has prompted me to come to the lectern. While I have a great deal of respect for him, I disagree with almost everything he says, but he says it in such a manner that one cannot help but like him. The Hon. John Graham said that this problem is becoming systematic. I would argue that there has been a systemic problem, which is based on the failures of former governments, particularly the former Labor Government, to invest in infrastructure. If there has been a mistake in respect of calculating the likely cost of a project, that is a result of the fact that for many years the former Labor Government refused to build projects as opposed to merely announce them; there was no practical experience within the State bureaucracy for the accurate assessment of the likely cost of a project. The Hon. John Graham mentioned the North West Rail Link and the Tibby Cotter Bridge. In those instances, we have to remember that no new rail lines and no tram lines were built by the former Labor Government.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: There was—the Inner West Light Rail.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS: I acknowledge the interjection of the Hon. Penny Sharpe. The Inner West Light Rail, as she well knows, was not a project that took place on public roads, other than a small portion of the road around Haymarket. It was essentially a reuse of the existing heavy rail line. The example in that instance is not strictly accurate because it is simply a reuse of an existing piece of infrastructure with minor changes to both ends and the power process that would deliver power to the motor engines of those trams. I ask: Why has there not been a better assessment, in this instance, of the cost of putting light rail on streets?

The simple fact is that previous Labor governments in the 1940s and 1950s set out to rip up Sydney's tram network. In the 1940s and 1950s Labor Governments decided, largely with the endorsement and urging of

the National Roads and Motorists' Association [NRMA] that Sydney's extensive tram network should be removed. As I understand it, Sydney's tram network was second only to London's at its peak, and was able to deal with 400 million passenger movements per year. That is a higher number of passengers than CityRail will move this year, and twice the level of the bus network, which replaced the tram network.

That means members opposite are complaining that, because the Labor Government had a deliberate policy to rip up the tram network in Sydney in the 1950s, it has been difficult to assess costs. We know it was a deliberate policy because the responsibility for trams was moved out of the New South Wales department that handled general railroads into the Department of Main Roads. The responsibility for trams was moved from the Department of Main Roads—guess where the conflict of interest might have been with respect to that—and into a generalised Department of Transport, which also ran buses. Guess where the conflict of interest might have been when that happened. That indicates that there was a deliberate ploy by historical Labor governments to destroy the tram network in this State.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Shayne Mallard): The time allocated for this debate having expired, in accordance with sessional orders I will put the motion.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I seek leave of the House to extend the debate to enable the current speaker to have his full 10 minutes and then to enable an additional five minutes in reply.

Leave granted.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS (11:41): By leave: The protestations from those opposite about how inaccurate our predictions have been are purely a function of the fact that the New South Wales Government has not had the ability to build new light rail networks in this State since 1961—and indeed earlier—because the Labor Government had decided that there would be no new light rail networks from 1940 onwards. Indeed, the Labor Government would have got rid of the light rail networks earlier had not World War II intervened. The simple fact is that we have a new project that will, in some instances, take advantage of easements that have been historically allocated to trams. In some instances these networks will have to be diverted around easements that were sold by Labor governments.

There is a very good example on the road to Coogee of an old S-bend. There, open park land was sold for flats by a Labor government. Labor did the same with the Western Sydney connector—the missing link—when it sold easements that were designed for public transport, presumably to developer mates. This Government now has to work around those easements. If that had not happened this construction would have been much cheaper and more efficient because it could have reused the existing infrastructure that was built for tram networks at the time. I think there was a fairly high degree of cheek in members opposite criticising this visionary project when previous Labor governments did all they could to destroy rail networks and the infrastructure associated with them.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (11:43): In reply: By leave: I thank the House for its generous decision to extend the time of this debate to enable a reply. I thank the Hon. Scott Farlow, the Leader of the House, Dr Mehreen Faruqi, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, the Hon. Ben Franklin, Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, the Hon. John Graham and the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps for their contributions to this debate. Unsurprisingly, Government members were happy to assail us with the records of previous governments, but it was most conspicuous that not one of them was prepared to vouchsafe the credibility of their Leader, the Premier. Not one member on the opposite side of the Chamber was prepared to detail whether the Premier had received any of the five warnings that I mentioned in my substantive address. It is telling, following a report from the Auditor-General that is so damning, that each of the Government speakers was prepared to contrast their party's record with ours, but was not prepared to defend their Leader. That is an understandable impulse. It is motivated by self-preservation—perhaps an honourable motive for a politician—but the problem is that the record remains.

There is evidence in this report of five clear warnings. There are two possibilities for what happened to those warnings. It is possible that those warnings were given to the Premier when she was transport Minister, and that she did not disclose them—in fact that she did quite the opposite by deliberately trying to mislead the public and the Parliament. Her lead was then followed by the Minister for Transport and the Secretary of Transport for NSW. The second possibility—the other extreme—is that, with respect to such a signature program, under her leadership, these five warnings were created and not one of them made its way to her office in her roles as Minister for Transport, Treasurer or Premier. We are told to believe this, despite the fact that this was a program for which she was the original sponsor. She made the decision to oust the oversight of Infrastructure NSW. That defies common sense. The Premier has either lied or is incompetent. It is one of the two.

There were independent peer review reports saying that the cost estimates were wrong. The Government's own advisory board acknowledged, two months before the Premier made a public statement, that the costs had

blown out because of bungled planning processes—not scope changes. The Premier made a statement that the costs related to scope changes when her own board knew differently. It was stated, in black and white in this Auditor General report, that Transport for NSW knew that this cost had blown out because of bad planning but the Premier, in her former role, said that it was because of scope changes. By doing those things she was putting her credibility on the line.

At the conclusion of this debate many questions remain. There are other motions that are before the House that would allow us to continue our scrutiny in our responsibility to provide oversight of public expenditure. It is possible for the House to seek the ministerial briefings. It is possible for the House to obtain the record and the documentary evidence that would allow the Premier's record to be judged fairly and accurately. Perhaps that would give Government members enough confidence to put their credibility on the line in order to defend their leader. I look forward to pursuing the additional powers that we have.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Shayne Mallard): The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Debate resumed from 13 October 2016.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE (11:48): I speak to the motion moved by the Hon. Mark Pearson about the Roman Catholic Church in Australia. I will not read the motion, which is very critical of the Catholic Church. I have one criticism of the motion. I think it is helpful when presenting motions—even when the mover is upset or angry about an issue—to use language that is suitable for this Legislative Council. I found it difficult. We are all very upset about the exposure of child abuse within the Catholic Church, but I think we can use more suitable language in this House than the language used in paragraph 2 "conveys its utter disgust", et cetera. However, I agree with the thrust of the motion. We are all very upset by the revelations that have come out of the royal commission's inquiry into child abuse that was set up by the former Labor Prime Minister, Julia Gillard. I did not agree with a number of things that she did, but I certainly commend her for her courage in initiating that royal commission inquiry.

I have discussed some of these issues with Cardinal George Pell when I have met him at Catholic Church events and put to him my belief, which is hard to prove, that there are men who had paedophile tendencies who deliberately joined the Catholic Church, knowing that they would be in a position of trust and have access to children. But of course, there is no evidence to confirm that. However it does mean that the Catholic Church and all churches, and any organisations responsible for children, whether it is the boy scouts movement and so on, must investigate most thoroughly whether those who volunteer or who want to be employed in such organisations have an ulterior motive. I know that police checks are done, but far more thorough checks must be done by people who know the person as to whether there is some family history or local history and whether there has been the slightest hint that this person could have a problem. If there is then that person should not be put into such a position.

The process within the Catholic Church is being accepted as a candidate for the priesthood, then going through the theological college. One would hope that within that process any strange attitudes that a person may have would be identified and consequently that person would be asked to resign or be removed from the training college for the priesthood. I do not know how thorough the Catholic Church has been in checking its candidates. I believe that a lot would be taken on trust—it is a religious order, it is religion, we trust each other. Obviously, some people take advantage of that trust, and that is what I believe has happened in a number of those cases.

Some of the men who became priests engaged in child abuse for years. They obviously had total knowledge of what they were doing, and were able to conceal that from their parishioners; although there probably would have been some suspicion. I have read many of the stories, even from some of the parents who said, "We had such a lovely priest who was so concerned and caring with our children" and that Father so-and-so "would even spend quite an amount of time up in the bedroom with our child"—I gather the bedroom was on the next floor—"praying with our child." The evidence was that the priest was actually abusing the child and it was covered up by the priest saying, "I want to pray with your child." The parents, being Catholic, would have had total trust in the priest, and not think that the priest had an ulterior motive.

The Catholic Church has to bear some of the blame for these individuals getting into the system. It may argue it was impossible to identify them, but I believe they could have been identified if a more thorough investigation had been done of the personality of the person seeking to become a member of the priesthood,

perhaps through psychiatric assessment, to determine whether there was any evidence of some tendency that the person was trying to conceal. My comments apply equally to members of the clergy of any church, whether it is Anglican, Baptist or Presbyterian, as well as to people involved in youth movements, boy scouts movements, et cetera. We know from the study of paedophilia that the people who are engaged in it are the most skilful and cunning in concealing the evidence. Perhaps my theory that more investigation would have revealed those tendencies may not hold up, but I believe that more investigation should have been done.

I commend Archbishop Anthony Fisher, with whom I have had a lot of contact over the years. I knew him from his earlier role in the church before he became the Archbishop. I was very pleased when he was appointed as the Archbishop. I know other senior church leaders are genuine, but he is most genuine, and the one who fully carries out the role of a priest—in his case an Archbishop—as intended by our Lord Jesus Christ. He is genuine in his belief, his life and his practice. I was pleased that he issued a pastoral message in response to the beginning of the royal commission's hearing on the Catholic Church. At that stage a lot of the evidence had been revealed and the most shocking evidence was the large number of priests who were involved; not two or three priests in some obscure parish, but a huge number of individuals. His message, which is really an apology to the families and to the children, says:

To my shame and sadness it would seem that Australia-wide as many as 384 Catholic diocesan priests, 188 religious priests—and this is a staggering figure—

597 religious brothers and 96 religious sisters have had claims of child sexual abuse made against them since 1950. Claims have also been made against 543 lay church workers and another 72 whose religious status is unknown.

I am sure members would agree that those figures are absolutely staggering; they are huge; they are massive. It is why Archbishop Anthony Fisher was so shocked and issued this pastoral message. His message continues:

I have personally felt shaken and humiliated by this information—that has come out of the royal commission—

as I have by other important revelations in the Royal Commission to date.

He went on to say:

The Church is sorry and I am sorry for the past failures that have left so many so damaged. I know that many of our priests, religious and lay faithful feel the same: as Catholics we hang our heads in shame.

His message continued:

We have already heard many distressing and shameful cases of sexual abuse told to the Royal Commission by courageous survivors. Today we heard these individual stories aggregated in the data presented to the Commission on the proportion of priest and religious with claims of abuse made against them since 1950. Those are the figures I have already quoted. Even though it is a shameful issue in the Catholic Church, the Archbishop's pastoral message was subsequently printed in full on the front page of the *Catholic Weekly*. So there was no attempt to hide the shame. The full document, including a photograph of Archbishop Fisher, is published in the *Catholic Weekly*, which is made available through every parish. If people attend a Catholic Church they will find a pile of *Catholic Weekly* newspapers. Anybody wanting to read a copy is expected to pay for it. The Catholic Church did not attempt a cover-up this issue, and certainly there would be no justification for a cover-up. I commend Archbishop Fisher for his pastoral message, as he calls it. I urge all members to study the message to understand where the Catholic Church is on this issue. There is no arrogance or dismissal of these events. As a non-Catholic I add my sorrow at these events and my personal apology to all the children and families who have suffered such hurt inflicted on them by people they trusted.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE (12:00): I indicate my strong support for the motion on the Roman Catholic Church in Australia moved by the Hon. Mark Pearson. This motion seeks to put on the record squarely, properly and effectively what should be unanimous condemnation by members of this House of the appalling history of child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church. For decades and decades people in positions of authority—within the Catholic Church, within this Parliament, within our police forces, within civic society—knew about child sexual abuse happening in the Catholic Church. They knew about it because survivors had told them. Some of them knew about it because their family members had told them. Others knew about it because in their positions as either a member of Parliament, a police officer or a local councillor they had heard from survivors or the family members of victims who had taken their lives. They may have heard about it from distraught family members of victims who came begging for help.

They were told the stories and the accounts of child abuse happening within the Catholic Church by members of the Catholic Church, yet for decades and decades people in positions of authority shut their ears to the victims and bowed down to what they perceived as the political power and authority of the Catholic Church. That ends now, and it should end now with the unanimous support of this Chamber for an extremely timely motion moved by the Hon. Mark Pearson. It must end now. It is important that we do not just have the stories told in the newspapers about the appalling abuse, recycling the traumatic incidents and terrible statistics recited by the royal

commission—and I commend the royal commission for its courageous and unflagging work to support survivors and hold abusive institutions to account.

I want to make clear that the next steps must be taken by politicians, by parliaments and by the authorities, not just in New South Wales but across Australia. We need to move rapidly to establish a comprehensive and fair compensation scheme for victims. We need to move rapidly to remove the archaic protections that exist for the Catholic Church, so that its assets are not treated as more precious than the children it abused. We need to remove the trust structures that hide the Catholic Church's assets from victims. We need to remove the diplomatic protection that the Catholic Church has used to avoid accountability and avoid producing key documents for the royal commission.

The royal commission, in its opening of the most recent round of hearings against the Catholic Church, made it very clear that the diplomatic protection that the Australian Government has given the Catholic Church must be challenged. As recently as 1973, the Gough Whitlam administration recognised the Vatican as a pretend nation-state and granted all of the diplomatic protections that are normally only afforded to nation-states. It is a recent and offensive development in our public law. We need to rescind that special protection that has only been handed to one religious organisation on the planet. Imagine for one minute a politician suggesting granting diplomatic recognition to the religion of, say, Sunni Islam or Scientology or the Anglican Church. There would be outrage, and quite rightly. But for some reason politicians, political leaders and authority figures in this country think it is perfectly okay for the Catholic Church to be given special protection, which we know it abuses.

The royal commission demanded, or had to politely request, of the Catholic Church through the church's ambassador, who goes by the archaic title of the Apostolic Nuncio in Australia, all of the records from the Catholic Church and the Vatican about the child sexual abuse complaints they had received and the systematic responses they had taken to these claims. What did the Vatican say? There was a little dribble of documents initially and then the Vatican said words to the effect that this was not the way to deal with a nation-state. The Vatican refused to produce the documents because it thought the demands were unreasonable.

I will say what the Australian general public thinks is unreasonable. The general public thinks it is grossly unreasonable, indeed complicit with an abusive institution, to allow the institution to hide behind diplomatic protections to avoid producing the documents that show the extent of its culpability and the manner in which it failed to respond to the claims of thousands and thousands of children and victims of abuse. We need to remove the diplomatic protection, we need to subpoena the documents directly from the office of the Apostolic Nuncio. If the documents are not produced voluntarily, our law must supersede whatever religious niceties the Catholic Church thinks are more important than the victims. If the church will not give the documents voluntarily, we should be able to send in the Australian Federal Police [AFP] and produce the documents by force, if necessary. Children and victims must always come before the organisations and institutions that abused them.

What do we know as a result of the most recent set of figures from the royal commission? We know that a royal commission survey of some 4,444 incidents of abuse between January 1980 and February 2015 found that 60 per cent of survivors who attended those royal commission sessions reported sexual abuse at faith-based organisations. Looking specifically at the Catholic Church, we find that almost two-thirds of those who reported abuse in faith-based institutions reported abuse at Catholic institutions. Of the 1,880 alleged perpetrators within the Catholic Church, 572 were priests. Imagine a line of 572 priests, and that is the extent of the reported abuse just against the Catholic Church. Of course the abusers were not just priests, so I will detail the figures for the orders and the other elements of the church involved and known to be involved in child sexual abuse.

Who were the victims? Sometimes when we talk about child sexual abuse in institutions, we talk about this abuse in abstract terms. Things that come to mind are child sexual abuse, crime, churches, priests. The average age of the victims, the children abused in these institutions, was 10 for the girls who were the subject of child sexual abuse—obviously many were younger and many were older—and 11 for the boys. Who should we be worried about in all of this? Some nicety for the Catholic Church; some alleged infelicity of language in the motion; or should we be standing up for those 10-year-old girls and 11-year-old boys who suffered abuse? Of course we should always stand with the victims, unambiguously, strongly, forthrightly.

When looking at the religious orders, the proportion of non-ordained religious order members who were alleged perpetrators makes it clear that some of these orders should be shut down by the organised crimes squads of our State police forces. We are talking about orders within the Catholic Church that are deeply and clearly systemically criminal. Why is the New South Wales Police Force not using its extended crime powers to shut down the Brothers of St John of God, where 40.4 per cent of the ordained members are accused child abusers? Or the Christian Brothers, with 22 per cent; Salesians of Don Bosco, 21.9 per cent; Marist Brothers, 20.4 per cent; De La Salle Brothers, 13.8 per cent; or the Patrician Brothers, 12.4 per cent? The list goes on. Why are these orders not being shut down as criminal organisations? That is what they are. This is not an abstract discussion about children getting the rough end of the stick; this is about criminal organisations that should be shut down.

There are 1,880 alleged perpetrators from within the Catholic Church. Just think of those figures of primarily men within the Catholic Church who are alleged to have abused children. Let us be clear about this: If we look at the research and the literature on perpetrators of child abuse, we see it is very unusual for them to abuse only one child. Once they get away with it and once they realise that even when the victim speaks out they will not be believed—which is the sad history—they do not abuse only one child but multiple children. They abuse and abuse until they are put in jail. As I said before, 597 were non-ordained religious brothers; 543 were laypeople; 96, or five per cent, were non-ordained religious sisters; and 72 known alleged perpetrators are of unknown religious status.

This motion is not only timely but also essential. If I have to sit here and suffer through a contribution from a government or any member who seeks to make excuses or to suggest that the language is a bit rough and maybe we should make it more polite or who seeks to suggest that we should not be singling out one institution, I will shut my ears to that contribution and remember the victims—and we should all do the same. I commend Mr Pearson for bringing this motion before the House. It should pass unanimously. I move:

That the motion be amended by inserting at the end:

- (3) Calls on the Australian Government to renounce the diplomatic protections afforded to the Royal Commission materials on both the extent of child abuse by members of the church, and the church's systemic handling of child sexual abuse claims.

Debate adjourned.

SAFER PATHWAY PROGRAM

Mr SCOT MacDONALD (12:13): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on 27 July 2016, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, the Hon. Pru Goward, MP, announced that the Government's Safer Pathway program will commence in the Tuggerah Lakes Local Area Command from November 2016;
 - (b) the announcement was made at the Wyong Police Station;
 - (c) Minister Goward was joined by police officers working in domestic violence and members of the Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service;
 - (d) the Safer Pathway program aims to ensure every domestic violence victim across New South Wales receives a consistent and effective response regardless of where they live;
 - (e) Safer Pathway brings together local representatives from various areas of government, including police, health, corrections, family and community services and education, along with local specialist non-government domestic and family violence services, creating a streamlined, integrated referral pathway for victims who are "at threat" or "at serious threat" to their life, health or safety; and
 - (f) the service will be coordinated by the Central Coast Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, which has a long history of providing professional advocacy and support for women who have experienced domestic violence.
- (2) That this House expresses its thanks to the Government and to Minister Goward for their efforts to better assist victims of domestic violence.

This is an important motion. On 27 July last year I visited Tuggerah Lakes Local Area Command [LAC] and I visited Newcastle LAC not long before that. It is good that Minister Goward has retained this portfolio, as she is very experienced and understands exactly what needs to be done in this very complex and difficult area. I also pay credit to the Opposition. This is a portfolio that does not lend itself to partisan politics. It is an area where we all try to address domestic violence. One reason that Tuggerah Lakes was identified after an earlier trial is that, unfortunately, the Central Coast is bedevilled by domestic violence. In the 24 months to March 2015 there was a 20.8 per cent increase in domestic violence assault numbers.

The Central Coast experiences about a 10 per cent increase in domestic violence incidents recorded by police every year. Parts of the Hunter fall within my portfolio and, unfortunately, certain sections of the Hunter are also experiencing a rise in domestic violence despite a general decline in crime incidents. Indicators of crime such as assault and car offences are stable or falling, but domestic violence is going against the trend and rising. There is a lot of speculation about why that is, whether it is because people are now more inclined to report what was in past generations often kept behind closed doors or whether it is because of a better police response. Whatever the reasons for the increasing domestic violence figures, the fact remains that they are increasing, particularly on the Central Coast and in parts of the Hunter.

It is very difficult for the police. I place on record my respect and deep regard for the recently retired commander of the Tuggerah Lakes LAC, David Swilks. David had a proud 44-year-long career with the NSW Police Force, and I think he had been at Tuggerah Lakes since 2008. I have talked to Commander Swilks

about why domestic violence is increasing, how we can help people and what sorts of resources are needed, and I was always struck by his frustration. He had kicked a lot of goals in his career and been part of breakthroughs in murder and missing persons investigations, but he said he really struggled with domestic violence and its impact on the command that he led. It took a toll on his officers. He acknowledged that in years gone by they had not always done well, but now it was a focus of the wider State as well as of his command and he had staff wholly dedicated to responding to domestic violence. His command would often return to the same premises, the same offenders and almost the same incident just days or weeks apart. I can never forget his frustration.

I think the last time I talked to him he was just a few weeks or months away from retirement. The personal price he has paid for his service sticks in my mind. I place on record my very high respect for all our police officers, and in particular Commander David Swilks and his 44 years of service. Down the road at the Brisbane Water Local Area Command, Superintendent Danny Sullivan also grapples with domestic violence. All the people on the front line of domestic violence services, whether they are volunteers or paid professionals, are dealing with one of the toughest issues in our society and communities. In recognition of that fact, the Safer Pathway program goes some way towards pulling together the different threads of all those services, which are doing very good work, so that the person they are trying to help—the victim—is not left shopping around a range of agencies looking for help and wondering where to go next, who to speak to or what their options are.

The Safer Pathway program brings together the police; the departments of Health, Corrections, Family and Community Services and Education, and a range of non-government organisations. A lot of good non-government organisations work on the Central Coast, including Coast Shelter, Compass Housing and Pacific Link Housing. They all do a wonderful job. This program will be led by the Central Coast Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, which has a long history of providing professional advocacy for women who have experienced domestic violence. The aim of the program is to work with the victim as they make those decisions and as they move through the shock of what has triggered their decision to exit a relationship or to seek help from the police or another agency. It will help them through the process of pulling all those threads together.

What has been impressed upon me is that going to the police or picking up the phone to the police, while important, is just the start of the journey. There may be medical issues so they may need to bring in Central Coast area health services. There could be a Department of Corrective Services element to the situation. The offender may or may not be on parole or on a community service order so where do they stand with that? Family and Community Services may need to be called on to see what services they can help with. There may be short-term assistance required in terms of food, a bed for a night or a few days, or something longer term. Education is one the threads. We are talking here about mothers and families. If they leave home, where are they going to go? Will their children be able to continue to attend the same school? It is important to continue their routine and not disrupt their education. When these things happen, the disruption is like throwing a pebble into a pond. Children obviously pick up on conflict and it flows through to how they do at school.

There is also the work of the court system. It is very daunting, as anyone who has had to deal with the court system knows. It starts with registering. What is going to be filed? What are the charges? Who is likely to be a witness and when will they appear? The Central Coast Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service is there to help. In many ways the Safer Pathway program was led by the Minister for Justice and Police at that time, the Hon. Troy Grant. He continues as the Minister for Police and Minister for Emergency Services in the Berejiklian Government. I know this is a focus for him. He has often talked about this. I hope that the Safer Pathway program does roll out. My impression is that the problem we have in many instances in this space is that a decision is made, once an incident has occurred, that it is too difficult or daunting to exit the relationship, to move out and to take the next steps. So they stay in situ, and therefore perhaps that lines them up for another incident. This program gives them the confidence and strength to reach out and talk to whoever they need to talk to.

I cannot talk about the Safer Pathway program without drawing on what the police and other agencies tell me—that is, intrinsic to the domestic violence space are drugs and alcohol. It might be the causation or it might be a consequence. I visited Kamira house on the Central Coast, near Wyong, with Minister Pru Goward. It is a farm and a home for young mothers with young families up to the age of about 10 or 12. It gives them the space to go through their treatment and rehabilitation for a defined period, which could be six months or a bit longer. The Government has just boosted the funding for Kamira house to now take a further nine women and their families. This gives them a safe space to deal with things.

Everything leads back to drugs and alcohol. Figures from the Central Coast show an increase in the use of cocaine, methamphetamines and, most importantly of all, alcohol. We hear a lot about ice and other drugs, but when we talk to the police and the first-responders we hear that alcohol is still the main ingredient in domestic violence. Another confronting thing for me was visiting the 000 call centre—I am not supposed to say where it is—that handles these calls. I urge all members, if they have the time, to visit that call centre. The correlation

between drinking patterns and domestic violence is what statisticians would call a one-to-one ratio. Alcohol is usually consumed after work from about 5 p.m. or 6 p.m., especially on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and that is when the 000 calls start coming in.

I heard from the police at Tuggerah, and from the 000 call centre, that Sunday is a big risk time for women and families. We know that domestic violence is the single greatest cause of death, ill-health and disability for women under the age of 45. The greatest threat a woman faces is not on the streets and not swimming at the beach; it is in her home. On a Sunday afternoon, after a long weekend of drinking, the calls come in thick and fast. All the tension and conflict has built up and it manifests itself in serious violence and assault.

We have a long way to go on this. I very much hope we continue to have this considered policy about drugs and how we help people through the stresses that can lead them to take drugs. Some take drugs on a recreational basis and we need to explain the negative consequences that can lead to. However, alcohol continues to be the leading cause behind most of the problems that we witness in domestic violence. I reiterate, domestic violence remains the greatest threat to women. In Australia there continues to be about one death per week from domestic violence.

The thing that amazes me is that we come up with the resources and the programs—and I commend the Safer Pathway program in Tuggerah and in other areas—but we are not making significant inroads into reducing domestic violence. It bedevils us. We are doing well on many other indicators such as the economy. We have an inclusive and democratic society. We are linked in many ways through media and social media. We do not want for good communities. But behind closed doors brutal assaults are continuing against women. As the police commander has continued to tell me, it is occurring not only in the demographics of which we are aware; it is occurring in all demographics and across all ethnic groups. We should not pretend that this is happening in only one part of our society. A person can be very wealthy—he or she might have a couple of BMWs in the garage—but behind the façade of wealth and happiness there are very sad stories.

I commend the Hon. Pru Goward, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. I commend the Opposition spokesperson on domestic violence, Jenny Aitchison, who takes this issue seriously. She referred to some things on which she would like to focus, which is commendable, but this Parliament would do well if it continued to focus on reducing domestic violence. Safer Pathway is one policy area and one direction, but every year domestic violence results in huge costs to our community, society and our economy. As I said earlier, Commander Swilks did a fine job for 44 years. I wish him well in his retirement and I wish his replacements well. I hope on the Central Coast we can make inroads into reducing domestic violence. I thank the House for its consideration of this motion.

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE (12:31): I speak in debate on the motion moved by Mr Scot MacDonald—the Safer Pathway domestic violence program—and the approach of this Government to the prevention of domestic violence and sexual assault. I acknowledge the good work of the Safer Pathway program in New South Wales and commend it for bringing local representatives together with additional support from specialist non-government domestic and family violence services to deal with this terrible issue and to help victims who are under serious threat of harm to their lives, their health and their safety. We need to be reminded constantly of this problem otherwise it will be swept under the carpet.

In 2016 more than one woman a week died due to domestic violence in Australia. In those circumstances a woman is most likely to be killed by her male partner at home. Intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and ill health in Australian women aged 15 to 44. It is our responsibility to make social changes to end the violence against women. In this vein, I condemn anyone—any individual, secular or religious—who excuses any form of violence against women. Some people cite religious laws or interpretations, but we all know they are archaic, ancient and unsuited to the twenty-first century. I condemn all those laws, whether they are Christian, Judaic or Islamic. There are many verses in holy books that followers of those religions love to ignore.

Some people make statements that must always be condemned. I note the statement of Mr Keysar Trad. Last night he suggested that violence against women is "a last resort"—an appalling suggestion. Whether intended or not, it must not be condoned and it must be condemned. There is no place for it in any circumstances, whether it was said by a member of the Muslim community, the Christian community, the Jewish community or any other religious community in Australia. It must be condemned whenever and wherever it is said. I put on record that Islamic women have worked tirelessly to ensure that women who are subject to domestic violence are cared for—for example, Maha Abdo and her Muslim women's group and others who do a fantastic job. Comments such as those made by Mr Keysar Trad take away from the good work done by many in the community. Those sorts of statements must always be condemned.

It is surprising that the key components of the Safer Pathway program do not cover refuges for victims of domestic and family violence, given that such violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women and

children. Many of the program's planks depend on reporting domestic violence and require victims to remain in their current accommodation, which is problematic for a number of reasons. Domestic violence is chronically underreported as many women do not have anywhere to go and cannot access assistance. Refuges may often be the first point of contact for many women experiencing domestic violence.

I congratulate not only those who work on the Safer Pathway program but also those who work in the domestic violence and general violence areas—for instance, John Brogden and Lifeline, White Ribbon, the police and many others who go to tremendous efforts to ensure that violence is done away with. They provide crucial early intervention for victims and their families, with counselling, case management and assistance with ongoing housing, health and income support programs. I refer to the programs that this Government has left behind—organisations such as the Penrith Women's Health Centre, the Sydney Women's Counselling Service or the Cumberland Women's Health Centre. Unfortunately, their requests for extended funding have fallen on deaf ears.

It is easy for the Government to proclaim loudly that it has taken a bipartisan approach to domestic violence but, sadly, it will not listen to the community or to the Opposition on this issue. It is important that those organisations are always funded. Domestic violence can result in significant ramifications for a victim's immediate family, the community and society. The Government's cuts to early intervention funding and its lack of interest in refuges demonstrate that it does not understand this complex issue. The Opposition has consistently argued for more accommodation, counselling and support services for victims. We must always address their needs, particularly when it comes to funding. I support this important motion and the Safer Pathway program which will assist those women who are subjected to domestic violence. If we are serious about this matter we should put our money where our mouth is and address the problem.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI (12:39): On behalf of The Greens I speak in debate on the motion moved by Mr Scot MacDonald. First, I acknowledge the incredible work of people in the organisations that are involved in supporting domestic and family violence victims, particularly their work in the refuges, shelters and crisis centres that support women and children seeking shelter. They also provide invaluable advice to victims as a result of their domestic and family violence situations. Safer Pathway is a good program. It connects victims of domestic and family violence to single contact points. It also connects the different agencies such as police, justice and housing so they can work in an integrated manner. On the invitation of Minister Goward, I had an opportunity to attend an It Stops Here Safer Pathway meeting in Mascot. I saw firsthand how important it is to have integration and coordination between the various agencies and offices.

The challenge before us is immense. In 2016 New South Wales police reported that there was a 40 per cent rise in domestic violence incidents. I cannot stress enough how much more work still needs to be done. The NSW Police Force attend approximately 145, 000 incidents of domestic violence every year across the State, or about 400 call-outs every day. Domestic and family violence is still the leading cause of death and injury to women under 45 years of age in Australia. We can no longer ignore the fact that this type of violence is reaching epidemic proportions in this country. We are failing Aboriginal women, who are still 34 times more likely to require hospital treatment due to domestic violence.

According to statistics from Destroy the Joint, in 2016 we lost 71 women to violence. I take this opportunity to remember the seven women we have lost to domestic and family violence incidents in Australia this year. According to the national average, a woman is murdered every week by someone known to them. This is happening to women mostly in their homes—in domestic and family situations—where they should feel safe and loved and cared for. Those women cross all age groups, economic levels, ethnic backgrounds and relationships. They were daughters, sisters, mothers, wives, partners, colleagues and members of our community, and they all suffered brutally at the hands of someone they knew. This kind of violence can never be reconciled and it should not be tolerated by anyone.

We cannot ignore the fact that domestic and family violence is an inherently gendered crime. It does not discount that domestic violence happens to men, but an overwhelming majority of victims are women and the overwhelming majority of offenders are men. I am not a fan of the Government patting itself on the back through motions such as this. Those who are deserving of our congratulations are the frontline workers and the incredibly brave women who are suffering domestic and family violence. Let us not pretend that there is not much more to be done. The New South Wales Government now admits that the Going Home, Staying Home program led to unnecessary upheaval, dislocation, anxiety, and staff losses. This was a terribly managed process that tried to force a square peg through a round hole.

We know that we urgently need more capacity in women-only refuges. An analysis of bed numbers shows big shortfalls in some areas. According to figures provided by the Government, Family and Community Services in the south-western region, which has a population of more than 900,000 people, has only 26 permanent bedrooms containing 68 beds. This is despite having the second highest number of domestic violence incidents in the State after the Hunter New England area. The mid North Coast has only 68 beds in 17 bedrooms. Northern

Sydney has only 75 beds in 19 bedrooms. We can all agree that we should be doing much more to increase the capacity and therefore increase safety for women and children.

Research has repeatedly shown us that an unjust, unequal society where the gender gap remains large allows the cycle of violence to continue. Year after year, Australia has performed poorly on the gender gap index. Last year, we came a dismal sixty-fourth out of 144 countries. We must address the root causes of domestic violence, such as gender inequality, power imbalance, sexist attitudes and social isolation. They must be addressed because prevention is the key. We must move up the cycle of violence and invest significantly in preventative strategies and programs to identify and support those at risk. They include free legal aid, workplace initiatives, a supportive justice system and targeted education programs. Meaningful and systemic actions must focus on the prevention of violence as well as providing many more resources and the capacity for specialist support, counselling and accommodation. Unless we address the whole cycle of violence and make sure that no stone is unturned, we cannot pat ourselves on the back.

The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS (12:45): I am pleased to speak in debate on the motion moved by Mr Scot MacDonald. I note that Dr Mehreen Faruqi was good enough to remind us that we are a sexist nation after claiming yesterday on BBC radio that we are also a racist nation. I thank Dr Mehreen Faruqi for pointing out where she stands in her affection for this nation. I am a classical Liberal and one of the fundamental tenets of classical liberalism is a belief in the non-aggression principle. The non-aggression principle is a simple statement of fact that individuals should never initiate the use of force against another person. That is not to say that we are pacifists. In fact, the maintenance of the non-aggression principle is entirely dependent upon the use of violence to defend oneself in the face of violent activity.

That being said, the optimal position remains that people should not initiate force against another person. It is a simple principle and one that has long historical antecedents. It has existed since the time of the Sermon on the Mount and has served as the basis for what is commonly known as the golden rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It makes its appearance in Jewish Mosaic Law where the injunction is do not do anything to anyone that would hurt you. Indeed, there is a wide range of scholarship in early Islamic law based on natural law rights, which follows the comparable principle, namely, that we should not initiate aggression against other people. I say to members that there is a simple way to end domestic violence in this State and indeed in this nation: Stop hitting your partner! I do not care how angry we are. I do not care how upset we are. I do not care how frustrated we are, or how drunk or stoned we are. Stop hitting your partner. We have no right to do so. It does not matter what they say; it does not matter what they have done—do not hit your partner.

In this, I find myself somewhat in agreement with the Hon. Helen Westwood, a former member of the Legislative Council who, like me, took a far more rigid view of the provocation defence. My view, like hers, is that it should be abolished in its entirety. We live in an age where the whole idea that a slight or an insult can be legitimately met with the drawing of a sword and the slicing off of an ear is so utterly repugnant and barbaric that its continued existence in the modern age is un-Australian. That was not the view of this Parliament or the previous Government. I put on the record again that my view is that the non-aggression principle should be a fundamental part of every piece of legislation that goes through this House.

Today Mr Scot MacDonald referred to Wyong police station which I was pleased about because my late father was the local area commander of Wyong police station. I assure Mr Scot MacDonald that the problems that occur in Wyong today are no different from those that occurred 20 years ago. The structural problems that were prevalent at that time have not substantially changed. I thank the Hon. Bronnie Taylor for the initiation of her committee of inquiry into service coordination.

Demographic pockets within New South Wales suffer a cycle of dispossession, disappointment and violence. A child is born into a single-parent family where the parent has multiple partners. The partners beat the parent and there is chronic drug use and limited emphasis placed on schooling and academic achievement, which leads to truancy. That leads to relationships with the police and then incarceration or removal, which leads to drug dependence—and so the cycle continues. I am deeply dubious about the ability of governments alone to change that cycle. While I welcome calls for greater service coordination between agencies, it may well be the case that that does not change the fact that there are some issues that governments cannot change—irrespective of the amount of money spent or the coordination, the goodwill, and the number of people who apply themselves to the problem. There are some issues that people have to take account of themselves. They have to take account of their own behaviour and the behaviour of their neighbours and family members. If that does not happen no amount of government intervention will change the existing situation.

The good thing about this program is that it seeks to broaden the problem beyond the silo mentality—the mentality that this person has a health issue, this person has an employment issue, this person has a criminal issue, and this person has a drug-dependence issue. This Government recognises that there is a significant problem in relation to domestic and family violence. We are now hoping to take a whole-of-government,

whole-of-community approach to addressing domestic and family violence. We want to work closely with the non-government sector—a sector that has a material interest in reducing the level of social disadvantage and domestic and family violence, and to support those organisations and families in a way that meets their needs. In 2014 we started the It Stops Here—Standing Together to end Domestic and Family Violence program. It was a five-year program. One of the recommendations that has been made in a number of recent committee reports is that we move away from the short-term funding cycle of one year or two years to see how it goes, and move towards a system of five-year programs. I am pleased to say that the New South Wales Government has done that, because this problem is not amenable to a quick-fix solution; it is a problem that requires a long-term attitudinal change.

This is about improving the way we prevent and respond to domestic violence, including changing the way victims receive help and are supported to recover. This includes a commitment to improve judicial and court systems in responding to domestic and family violence. To achieve broadscale improvements, we are reforming the system across New South Wales and applying the practices of specialist courts to all New South Wales Local Courts through the Domestic Violence Justice Strategy. This ensures that all victims in New South Wales have consistent access to services and courts that meet their needs, through the widespread adoption of good practice.

A key part of the It Stops Here Safer Pathway launched in Orange and Waverley in September 2014 is a new approach to victim safety assessment, referral and service coordination. Under Safer Pathway, services are now thankfully working together and sharing information to create a coordinated, holistic response to victims and their children. Victims are offered tailored support to meet their safety, health and wellbeing needs. As I said, one of the problems previously has been the siloing of service support to people. Rather than looking at individuals as whole persons, agencies sought to ameliorate one aspect of the disadvantage they faced. In many instances that may have ignored other problems that stem from the violence, or that are root causes of the symptoms.

Safer Pathway puts the safety of the victim and their children at the heart of a service response. Victims have a single contact point—a specialised domestic and family violence worker—who links victims with the services they need, when they need them. Victims no longer have to repeat their stories to multiple service providers, reliving their traumatic experiences on each and every occasion. When police attend a domestic or family violence incident they will assess the level of threat to the victim. This results in a number of actions. First, a victim who is identified to be at threat or serious threat will be referred to a statewide central referral point, which is operated by the Department of Justice. When the information is received, the victim's case will be allocated to a local coordination point.

A domestic and family violence worker then contacts the victims and focuses on establishing their safety. They will provide support to the victims and refer them to any services that they may need. Victims who are identified to be at serious threat are referred to a safety action meeting, where government and non-government organisations discuss the victim's circumstances, share information about the victim and the perpetrator, and develop a plan to keep the victim and his or her children safe. What is great about this is that it deals with a problem that was a common experience for people like my father. The arrival of the police was met with relief by the victim in many instances, but led to nothing beyond that, because the victim refused to press charges. At that point the hands of the police were tied.

Under the new system we do not have to wait for the victim to go to a refuge, a crisis centre or a social worker. The police become the initiators of the response. The victim may not know where to go or what to do but the police will be able to start the process. The process does not rely on the victims taking multiple steps; the State, at that point, comes in to make it easier for the victims to deal with their lives and their circumstances. That is a fundamental change, and a fundamentally important one. It is a significant advancement.

Already 18 sites are operating and nine new sites will be coming into existence, including in my home town of Queanbeyan. I am proud that the Government has done this; I think it is an excellent initiative. Most importantly, this initiative does the sorts of things for which police and social workers have been calling out for many years—coordinated services, action at first instance, and a response that does not depend solely upon victims of domestic violence but that caters to their needs. I commend the motion to the House.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Shayne Mallard): To suit the convenience of members I shall leave the chair and cause the bells to be rung at 2.30 p.m.

The PRESIDENT: According to sessional order, proceedings are interrupted for questions.

*Questions Without Notice***ELECTRICITY SUPPLY**

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE (14:30): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts. Given recent public comments from TransGrid's Managing Director, Paul Italiano, and yesterday's system event report from the Australian Energy Market Operator that revealed power outages at Energy Australia's Tallawarra and Snowy Hydro's Colongra gas plants as well as reduced outputs from a number of thermal generators led to the shortfall of power during extreme weather on 10 February, what concrete steps is the Government now taking to ensure all generating capacity in this State is ready, willing and able to supply energy to the people of New South Wales?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (14:31): As the Hon. Adam Searle said, yesterday the Australian Energy Market Operator [AEMO] released a report into the electricity system and its performance on 10 February 2017. AEMO—and I will use the acronym; I know at least one of my predecessors would have hated me using acronyms, but Michael Egan is no longer here and I will use an acronym—reports that actions and responses of the facility and services were adequate, and operated as expected. This vindicated the New South Wales response in the lead-up to the heatwave. During the peak of the heatwave temperatures were two degrees centigrade higher than AEMO's forecasts on the day. This piqued the interest of energy Ministers around Australia.

On Friday last week there was a meeting of the Council of Australian Governments Energy Council, and I was part of that meeting, which resulted in a decision to embed the Bureau of Meteorology staff in the market operator to improve its forecasts. The electricity demand peaked at 4.30 p.m. at 14,181 megawatts, 200 megawatts lower than forecast, possibly due to customer responses. This highlights the timely action that was taken by this Government. The report highlights the need for AEMO to consider whether plant capabilities during extreme conditions are accurately reflected in bid and availability information in the market. New South Wales is more resilient than South Australia due to its interconnected energy system and with a good mix of generation. The member's question raised Tallawarra—

The Hon. Adam Searle: And Colongra.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: —and Colongra, yes. According to the AEMO report on the event, the forced outage of Tallawarra generators was due to a fault in the gas turbine. The energy regulator will be looking further at those events. I do not want to pre-empt any of those findings, so I look forward to seeing the recommendations the AEMO has on improving availability and the operating performance of generators. Colongra was offline as well. It is a dual-fuel generator on the Central Coast owned by Snowy Hydro. It runs on both gas and diesel. Gas is the primary fuel and diesel is the backup. AEMO has released a system event report on Colongra as well. According to the report, Colongra was unable to start due to low gas pressure in the fuel supply lines. The AER is investigating the events of 10 February, like those at Tallawarra, and additional to—
[Time expired.]

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE (14:35): I ask a supplementary question. Could the Minister elucidate his answer with particular regard to why the Colongra generating units were impeded by low gas pressure, despite the fact that they had received an instruction to start generating at 4.25 p.m. but were unable to do so? What was the cause of the low gas pressure?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (14:35): I thank the Hon. Adam Searle for his supplementary question as I was addressing that point when my speaking time ran out. As I was about to say, in addition to the AEMO report that was received yesterday, the Australian Energy Regulator [AER] is looking at the issue. Rather than giving a more detailed answer on that issue at this stage, I will wait until the regulator finishes his report and review any recommendations that AER may have on improving availability and the operating performance of the generators. In that respect I will take the honourable member's question on notice, and when more information becomes available I will be very happy to get back to him with an answer.

WATER CONSUMPTION

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (14:36): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts. Will the Minister update the House on the demand for water in Sydney over the summer? What can all of us do to improve our water usage?

The Hon. Walt Secord: Turn the thermostat up to 26.

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (14:36): I am not going to talk about the thermostat on air-conditioners in my answer to this

question, but to everybody who did turn down their thermostats—including, as we heard yesterday, the operators of 52 Martin Place—that was a good thing.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: After everyone had left.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: No, that is not true. All of us here today know that it has been a long, hot summer. We have regularly seen Sydney temperatures rise into the high 30s and early 40s, and even as high as 47 degrees earlier this month. The record temperatures have resulted also in record water demand. The average daily demand for the first 12 days of February was 1.809 billion litres of water, which is 16 per cent higher than the average daily water demand for February last year and 24 per cent higher than the 10-year historical average. Sunday 4 February was the single highest water demand day since January 2003, with 2.215 billion litres of water consumed. This is the equivalent of 8.8 billion standard glasses of water.

Naturally, as temperatures rise, so will the demand for water. I encourage everyone to drink plenty of tap water and stay hydrated. This is very important. However, I am advised by Sydney Water that the spikes in water demand are often more closely related to external use, such as watering gardens. I commend Sydneysiders for the way in which they conserve water. Overall our average demand for water has not changed much over several decades, despite Sydney's expanding population. Good demand management has helped to keep water bills down and our dams full.

This is one of the reasons that Warragamba Dam is currently at around 89 per cent capacity. But there are some simple tips that all people can follow to stay waterwise. They include watering gardens in the early mornings and evenings; using a bucket, watering can or hose fitted with a trigger nozzle to wash vehicles; and avoiding hosing paths, driveways and other concrete or paved surfaces. I am not going to tell people to shave their hair off, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has. It suits him, but it certainly would not suit the Hon. Peter Primrose. These tips and others can be found on the Sydney Water website. I encourage the Hon. Peter Primrose to have a look at the website later. We can all do our part to look after our water and look after ourselves as we enjoy the last few weeks of summer, all while keeping our water bills down.

RECYCLED DRINKING WATER

The Hon. WALT SECORD (14:40): It's Don day—

The Hon. Don Harwin: It's Don day every day.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Every day is Don day. My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts. When will New South Wales households be told that the Berejiklian Government is contributing \$10.1 million to develop recycled effluent, wastewater and sewage for human consumption and drinking purposes? Will the Minister guarantee human safety for the almost five million customers in Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Illawarra?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (14:41): My goodness gracious me—

The Hon. Walt Secord: It is Sydney Water, Don. I think you might be Minister for that.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I certainly am the Minister responsible for Sydney Water, as it happens, and I will be very happy to obtain further information in relation to the honourable member's question. I note he has left out several pertinent facts, which would—

The Hon. Walt Secord: To assist the Minister, page 88—

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

The Hon. Walt Secord: He asked for assistance: page 88 of his own report.

The Hon. Niall Blair: Point of order: It is absolutely disorderly for a member to get to his feet and start screaming across the Chamber while the Minister is giving an answer. If the member would like to seek the call, he should get to his feet and take a point of order. It is absolutely disorderly not to do so. The Minister was giving an answer and the member is being disruptive.

The PRESIDENT: First, I uphold the point of order. Secondly, this is day three. The statement that I made was that I was reluctant to call any member to order on day one. But this is day three, so I warn all members that I intend to call members to order if they continue to breach the standing orders. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: The honourable member obviously has something he wants to give me later. I look forward to receiving that, and I will respond appropriately after I have received it.

GORDON WOOD

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE (14:43): My question without notice is directed to Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts, representing the Premier. Is it a fact that Gordon Wood was found guilty in 2008 of murdering Caroline Byrne at The Gap in 1995 and served more than three years in jail? Is it a fact that Mr Wood was acquitted in 2002 after it was found that there was not sufficient evidence to convict him beyond reasonable doubt? Under the double jeopardy law, will the New South Wales Premier and Attorney General reopen this case and the NSW Police Force conduct further investigation to provide additional information and evidence to satisfy the Court of Criminal Appeal of Mr Wood's guilt in the murder of Caroline Byrne in 1995?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (14:44): Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile began his question by stating a number of facts. Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile is generally to be relied upon when he brings facts into this Chamber and makes statements of them in questions, and I am sure he is correct on this occasion. Nevertheless, since he is asking whether they are facts, I will ask the Premier to respond firstly to those questions and secondly to the next question he asked in relation to the case. She will confer with the Attorney General as relates to aspects of the question which referred to him, and we will provide an appropriate answer at an appropriate time.

NORTHERN BASIN COMMUNITIES

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN (14:45): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry. Will the Minister update the House on the New South Wales Government's actions to protect the northern basin communities?

The Hon. NIAL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (14:45): I thank the honourable member for his question, and for raising this issue, which is so important for the businesses, industries and communities in the Murray-Darling Basin. New South Wales is a leader in reforming and improving water management, and I am always impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment of business owners and community leaders across New South Wales to this cause. For more than 10 years we have worked cooperatively across jurisdictions and with our communities to deliver the Murray-Darling Basin Plan [MDBP]. There have been disagreements, and it has not always been smooth sailing, but the recent northern basin review findings by the Murray Darling Basin Authority [MDBA] provide a genuine opportunity to improve on the Basin Plan.

Out of this review the MDBA has proposed a number of amendments to the basin plan, and I will be making a submission on these amendments on behalf of New South Wales. In my submission, I have made it absolutely clear that my top priority is to end the uncertainty and avoid further economic pain for New South Wales basin communities. While I do support the reduced northern basin recovery target proposed by the MDBA, I do not support the dramatic increase to water recovery targets in the Namoi, border rivers and Barwon-Darling valleys. The increased recovery target in those valleys reduces flexibility for New South Wales and spells more economic pain for towns such as Wee Waa, where further water recovery may be required. These economic impacts are easily avoided by simply allowing the basin States to meet the 320-gigalitre recovery target in a more flexible and pragmatic way.

This year is a big year for the New South Wales Government in the delivery of the basin plan. We are firmly focused on maximising water recovery offsets for New South Wales through the sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism. It is vital that we get the most out of the adjustment mechanism because it reduces the need to take water out of our productive regional economies. As I announced last week, to ensure we get this part of the basin plan right, we are putting politics aside and working with the Victorian Government to establish an expert panel to review the adjustment mechanism. The panel will assess the technical foundations of the adjustment mechanism to ensure decisions are better informed, pragmatic and for the good of basin communities.

Although basin States are working diligently to deliver the plan, I do not see the same level of bipartisanship from the Federal Opposition spokesperson for water. I read with concern reports that the Federal Labor Party is drafting a change to the basin plan without consulting basin States. This move by the Federal Opposition spokesperson is an insult to New South Wales and all basin States, as he is fully aware of the threat this poses to New South Wales' ongoing support for the plan. As I have stated publicly many times, New South Wales is committed to the basin plan but not at all costs.

The PRESIDENT: I call the Hon. Lynda Voltz to order for the first time. I have already warned members that I will call them to order for disorderly behaviour. Interjections are disorderly at all times.

The Hon. NIAL BLAIR: We will not be pushed, and we will not adopt any on-the-run policy stunt of the Federal Labor Party. The legislation makes it clear the 450 gigalitre upwater can be delivered only where

it is socio-economically neutral or beneficial for communities, and this is exactly what New South Wales intends to deliver on.

The PRESIDENT: I call Mr Jeremy Buckingham to order for the first time.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: I commend the Deputy Prime Minister for raising this issue and for speaking plainly about it. I will continue to prosecute the case on behalf of New South Wales at the Ministerial Council this year. A deal is a deal. We are standing up for New South Wales communities. Playing politics on the basin plan in Canberra is something we will not stand for, and I hope the Opposition will stand with us to make sure that we put New South Wales first.

RSPCA STAFFING LEVELS

The Hon. MARK PEARSON (14:49): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry. Over the summer period there was animal suffering and deaths caused by heat stress, dehydration and starvation in council pounds and boarding kennels. Unlike the NSW Police, which rostered on additional officers during this busy holiday time, the RSPCA reduced the number of inspectors on duty, resulting in delays and animals being left at risk of harm during this critical time. Given that the statutory obligation to investigate and enforce our animal welfare laws is a year-round responsibility and overseen by the Minister, what steps does the Minister's department take to monitor the availability of RSPCA inspectors to discharge their duties under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act?

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (14:50): I thank the Hon. Mark Pearson for his question. Obviously, as we have heard many times in this House, the member has a particular interest in the RSPCA and its actions—or, in his view, its lack of action at times. I know he has a particular history with the RSPCA. Nonetheless, the member has asked an important question. It is obviously very much an operational matter as to how the RSPCA schedules the number of officers on duty and when it does that.

The Hon. Mark Pearson also referred to the role that my agency plays in relation to liaising with the RSPCA, in particular for the parts of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act that it is responsible for. In the light of the level of operational detail that the member has asked for in his question, I will refer the question back to my department and I will take it on notice. I will seek an answer, and I may need to liaise with the RSPCA as part of that answer, and come back to the member with a detailed response.

ENERGY COMPANIES PAPER BILLS

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (14:52): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts. Given that at least three major energy retailers are now charging customers for paying over the counter and receiving paper bills, what steps has the Minister taken to ensure that the elderly, concession card holders, people with disabilities and remote customers with poor or no internet access are not unfairly slugged? Will the Minister direct the energy companies to provide exemptions for these customers?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (14:52): That is a very good question and I thank the Hon. Greg Donnelly for raising it. During the 24 days that I have been a Minister that has not been one of the things I have been dealing with—there have been lots of other things happening—but it is a matter that is worthy of close consideration. I would be very happy to take a close look at it and get back to the Hon. Greg Donnelly as quickly as I can on some of the concerns he has raised.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (14:53): I ask a supplementary question. In the light of the Minister's answer, will the Minister elucidate his answer, when he does provide his response, by outlining the specific timetable he will follow to raise the charging issues with the major energy retailers?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (14:53): I certainly will take it up with them as a matter of some urgency, probably early next week. I will try to have an answer back to the Hon. Greg Donnelly certainly by the time that Parliament sits again.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR (14:54): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education. On International Women's Day, what will the Minister do to celebrate the contribution that Aboriginal women make to our community?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) (14:54): I thank the Hon. Bronnie Taylor for her question. International Women's Day is celebrated around the world on 8 March each year. It is a day for celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity. Originally called "International Working Women's Day", it has been observed since the early 1900's. In 2017 the theme for International Women's Day is "Empower a woman, empower a nation", aiming to build awareness of the obstacles women face internationally and to highlight how women's empowerment translates into stronger nations, better economies and safer communities.

On 8 March I am honoured to be joining the Governor of New South Wales, the Premier and the Minister for Women for the sixth annual NSW Women of the Year Awards, which recognise and celebrate the outstanding contribution women across New South Wales make to industry, community and society. The awards support this Government's commitment to building an equitable and inclusive society where all women are valued and respected. Aboriginal women have been nominated across all six award categories, which are: the Rex Airlines Regional Woman of the Year, the A.H. Beard Community Hero Award, the Harvey Norman Young Woman of the Year, the Business Woman of the Year, the Aboriginal Woman of the Year and the NSW Premier's Award for Woman of the Year.

I am particularly proud to present the 2017 NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year Award, which recognises Aboriginal women who have excelled in their career, field or passion, and promoted opportunities for Aboriginal people in New South Wales. It is only the second year that this award has been available, and I can assure members that the job of selecting the four finalists and the winner from a strong field is very challenging. Last year the inaugural winner of the Aboriginal Woman of the Year award was Dana Clarke. Dana is a proud Worimi woman who has worked in Aboriginal health, domestic violence, child protection, sexual assault and mental health for more than 25 years. In her role as the chief executive officer for the Burrin Dalai Aboriginal Corporation, Dana successfully expanded that organisation to become the largest rural service provider of accredited Aboriginal out-of-home care and family support services in New South Wales.

The remaining three finalists last year included Kirstie Parker, a Yuwaaluraay woman from north-western New South Wales with more than 25 years of experience in community leadership, management, journalism and communications. Another finalist was Rhonda Radley, a Birrbay woman from Port Macquarie, who is passionate about her connection with the land and promotes reconciliation by sharing her cultural knowledge through dance and language. Another finalist was Nikita Ridgeway, an advocate for women in business, and a successful business woman and entrepreneur both within her community and nationally. The women who have been nominated in 2017 are also a diverse group. Women with decades of commitment and achievement have been nominated, as have young women showing leadership and making a difference in their communities.

There are women with families and full-time jobs who somehow find the time also to be foster parents, students, mentors and leaders—leaders in their chosen fields of endeavour; leaders and role models in their communities. What all of these women have in common is a passion to make a difference for Aboriginal people in New South Wales, and we should all be in awe of their commitment and their achievements. I know that the women who have been nominated for the Aboriginal Woman of the Year Award represent just the tip of the iceberg. I look forward to celebrating the finalists on 8 March, and in my role as the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs I look forward to meeting more Aboriginal women right across New South Wales who make a difference in their everyday roles.

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE (14:58): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries, representing the Minister for Lands. How is it that the Department of Industry has put out a fact sheet about the Government's proposal to abolish all commons in New South Wales with the misleading heading of "Recognising and protecting the values of commons"? Will the Government commit to correcting this misleading fact sheet?

The Hon. NIAL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (14:58): I thank the honourable member for his question. Last year this topic was discussed in some detail in this House. I was the Minister responsible for Crown lands. The area of commons achieved a particular mention and there was considerable debate. As the member knows, the original scope of the Crown Land Management Bill proposed repealing eight Acts, including the Commons Management Act 1989, and making one consolidated Act. In response to concerns from some commons trusts, the Commons Management Act 1989 was not included in the Crown Land Management Act 2016, which we spoke about at that time. This has allowed for further consultation with stakeholders to ensure that a suitable proposal for commons can be included in a second or consequential bill to be introduced by the Minister later in 2017.

A revised proposal has been scoped, based on feedback, which recognises the rich history of commons, protects their important values and broadens access for all the people of New South Wales. Current managers of commons will continue to be responsible for the management of the commons. The revised proposal also recognises that commons are used for multiple purposes and have values that are important to the community of New South Wales. These values need to be protected, whilst recognising the important history of commons. Control of commons will remain with local communities and the expertise of existing commons trusts and trust board members will be retained.

The department has written to all commons trusts and key stakeholders seeking their views on the revised proposal. Submissions on the revised commons proposals closed on 21 February 2017. A summary of submissions will be published and key issues will be taken into account when developing the final proposal for the management of commons in New South Wales. As I said at the start of my answer, this is something that has been raised in this House previously. It was something that was discussed at great length as a result of the important role this House plays during debate and introduction of bills. That part of the bill was not proceeded with. The Minister and his department are going back to the stakeholders, liaising and consulting with them, and he has now put those proposals out for exhibition.

The Government will now be going through those submissions and deciding where to from there. I am sure members will be able to revisit this issue when it comes back to this House, as I also indicated in the answer that was supplied from the Minister's office. This is an important issue. When I worked in local government I was also responsible for looking after commons. It is something that is very important to many of our communities, particularly the commoners who have access to those commons. We are looking to make sure this is an area that we improve on but at the same time respecting the history and the past associated with those commons.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE (15:02): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for that detailed answer but could the Minister please elucidate on the answer that he read from the ministerial briefing as to how a commons trust can manage a commons when the Government's proposal is to abolish all commons and transfer the title from the commons to Crown land?

The Hon. NIAL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (15:03): I refer the member to my previous answer.

ONE NATION PREFERENCES

The Hon. ERNEST WONG (15:03): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts, and the Leader of the Government. What is his response to widespread community concern, particularly amongst the Chinese community, about the Premier's refusal to rule out preferences to One Nation, especially in the light of One Nation leader Pauline Hanson's hurtful comments about Asian ghettos and Sydney suburbs being "swamped by Asians" as reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 4 July 2016?

The Hon. Walt Secord: She is so weak.

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:04): What nonsense. What absolute nonsense.

The Hon. Adam Searle: Point of order: The Minister is being disorderly by responding to interjections.

The PRESIDENT: I will rule on the point of order. First, I would be grateful if the Leader of the Opposition would wait for me to give him the call before he commences a point of order. Secondly, I remind all members that interjections are disorderly at all times—and there are many—and that responding to interjections is also disorderly.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: That is a very wise ruling. No amount of sotto voce sledging from the Hon. Walt Secord will put me off answering the question.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I ask the Minister to proceed with answering the question and to not respond to interjections.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: The Premier has a very strong record on condemning racism, even from before she was a member of the other place. The Premier also understands our voting system. Under our voting system there is absolutely no requirement for any political party to recommend any preferences. That seems to have escaped the attention of the Australian Labor Party. In any case the Premier has been absolutely clear about what her position is.

The Hon. Ernest Wong: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The question asked for the Leader of the Government's response on the Premier's refusal to rule out preferences. It did not ask for a lecture on the voting system.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: The Premier has been quite clear on this and frankly there is nothing more that needs to be added. Her record is very clear in standing up for tolerance and in celebrating the cultural diversity of Australia. She will not be lectured to by the Australian Labor Party on things she holds dear. She has made her position clear in relation to preferencing.

AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM 190TH ANNIVERSARY

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE (15:06): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for the Arts. Will the Minister update the House on events to mark the 190th anniversary of the Australian Museum?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:07): I thank the honourable member for that question. The year 2017 represents a remarkable milestone for the Australian Museum, which is celebrating its 190th anniversary. Indeed, this Government has supported the Australian Museum towards even greater achievement as it embarks on its 190th year. Over the last five years the Government has provided more than \$22 million in capital expenditure to the Australian Museum to make it even stronger. The history goes all the way back to 1827 when the Australian Museum became Australia's first public museum with the objective of procuring rare and curious specimens of natural history, as the foundation documents say.

Since then it has had a number of different names and homes, including the Rum Hospital section of our own building. At one stage it was the home of the Australian Museum and the Clerk of the Parliaments, Edward Dais Thomson, was the curator of the museum. It has had a number of different names and homes while continuing to honour its objectives through the dedicated work of its staff, its trustees and its many volunteers. As part of its anniversary celebrations, the Australian Museum is inviting everyone to spend their birthday at the museum for free simply by registering online at the museum's website: australianmuseum.net.au. Over its 190-year history the Australian Museum has collected more than 18 million scientific specimens and cultural artefacts, including the world's largest Pacific collection and one of the nation's most significant Indigenous collections.

The Australian Museum has welcomed more than 34 million visitors to its William Street site and has helped to educate more than five million school students. It has discovered, described and published research papers on thousands of new species and established the Australian Museum Research Institute to lead the nation in the field of biodiversity research. The museum has undertaken more than 100 scientific expeditions, with this year marking the museum's return to the United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO] World Heritage listed Lord Howe Island for a major exhibition. The Australian Museum has led in the advancement of citizen science through multi award-winning programs such as DigiVol, which is an online community that catalogues the museum's collections. This initiative has been adopted by museums internationally, including the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC.

The museum has commenced a transformation of the museum's historic site, including building the award-winning Crystal Hall entrance on William Street, which opens the museum's first new public gallery space—Wild Planet—in 50 years, and it is starting work on the restoration of Australia's first gallery, the Long Gallery. The museum's reputation as one of stature is not only recognised here in Australia but, as part of the 190th anniversary activities, it also recently welcomed Sir David Attenborough. I had the privilege of meeting him at the museum's event when Sir David Attenborough was made a lifetime patron. This important occasion was an opportunity for the Australian Museum to formally recognise Sir David's lifelong work being at the forefront of science and his significant contribution to inspiring—*[Time expired.]*

NSW POLICE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK (15:11): My question without notice is directed to the Hon. Niall Blair, representing the Minister for Police. Will the Government be releasing the results of the online community engagement survey recently conducted by the NSW Police Force? Was there any feedback provided on the Firearms Registry? If so, what was the feedback?

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (15:11): I thank the member for his question, which has been directed rightly to my colleague in the other place, police Minister Mr Troy Grant. I will take the question on notice and refer it to my colleague for a reply.

HUNTER REGION COAL MINING

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE (15:12): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts, representing the Minister for Planning. Given that the Planning and Assessment Commission now has rejected the proposed Drayton South Mine expansion for the fourth time, will his Government now support Labor's policy of minimum setbacks to protect critical industry clusters such as thoroughbred horse breeding and the viticulture industry in the Hunter Valley, as promised by his party in 2011? Will the Minister now rule out allowing further planning applications in respect of the same project?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:13): Unlike those opposite, this Government supports a strong and transparent mining sector. We expect a mining sector that complies with our high social and environmental expectations. That is why we are implementing a strategic release framework—to front end those valuations on any future areas for potential release. We have also brought rigour back to our independent planning assessment framework for any mining proposals. This has been in conjunction with bringing clarity and consistency to our frameworks. The Government is committed to halving the time taken to assess State significant development applications, including mining projects.

I can inform members that the Independent Planning and Assessment Commission indeed has refused consent for the Drayton South project. In its determination, the commission recognised that the mining industry delivers significant economic benefits in its own right and flow-on benefits to a number of associated industries. However, the commission determined that the project is not unique, nor is it the primary contributor to the wider coal industry in the Hunter Valley. The commission considers that a unique set of circumstances exists due to the proximity between the project and the thoroughbred operations of the Coolmore and Godolphin studs. The commission found there would be key effects relating to air quality, blast noise and reputation on the studs. The commission also found that approval of the project would be contrary to the coexistence and diversification principles found in the Hunter Regional Plan 2036, the Upper Hunter Strategic Land Use Policy and local council strategies.

In response to concerns raised during this and other approval processes for State significant developments, the Minister for Planning asked his department to develop options for consultation that will provide guidance on how many times and how frequently a project that is not substantially different can be submitted to government for approval. We have a strong and robust approach to regulation and planning approvals for the mining sector. It is clear that is required to protect the mining sector, which is not only important for the State but also to ensure communities are protected and that lives are not disrupted. I am satisfied that going forward we have a robust approach to those issues.

RECREATIONAL FISHING

The Hon. RICK COLLESS (15:16): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government is providing funds to recreational fishers?

The Hon. NIAL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (15:16): I thank the member for his question. I declare that I am a recreational fisher and I have a recreational fishing licence, which allows me to join approximately 850,000 fishers across New South Wales. Recreational fishing is an integral part of our lifestyle and is one of the most popular outdoor recreational activities in our State. The sector generates approximately \$3.4 billion to the State's economy each year and accounts for the equivalent of more than 14,000 full-time jobs. The New South Wales Government is committed to investing in infrastructure and programs to support and enhance recreational fishing. One of the main ways we do this is through the NSW Recreational Fishing Trust Grants.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I remind the Hon. Mick Veitch that members will be called to order if they continue to interject.

The Hon. NIAL BLAIR: The sale of the recreational licence fees is invested back into the recreational fishing sector to both freshwater and saltwater projects. I am pleased to inform the House that applications are now open to share in more than \$15 million in funding as part of this year's round of grants. Anyone can apply, including fishing clubs, organisations, universities, councils, community groups, and individuals. Joint applications are also encouraged. This is a great opportunity to improve recreational fishing infrastructure across inland and coastal New South Wales. The grants are available for large projects involving more than \$10,000 of funding and smaller projects involving grants of less than \$10,000.

Some of the projects funded previously through these grants include artificial reefs, fish stocking, fishing workshops, fish care volunteer programs, habitat restoration, and installation of fish aggregating devices. Currently, more than 200 active projects funded by Recreational Fishing Trusts Grants are on the go. Large and small valued projects already completed over the past decade include offshore artificial reefs, estuarine artificial reefs, fish aggregating devices, the primary school project Get Hooked ... It's Fun to Fish, holiday fishing workshops, and inland fish stocking. Members will be interested to learn that the world-class stocking program of the Department of Primary Industries is well underway this season with many stockings of Murray cod, golden perch, silver perch and Australian bass, produced at our four government hatcheries, completed already.

In the 2015-16 season, 5.1 million fin fish were stocked across New South Wales, including Australian bass, Murray cod, golden perch, trout cod, rainbow trout, brown trout, Atlantic salmon and brook trout. Other projects completed include the development of additional fishing facilities. I am pleased to report that 46 fishing platform projects have been completed and more are underway. The President will be interested to know there will be a particular focus on providing platforms for fishers with limited physical ability. This will ensure that platforms can be used by everyone, including families, the elderly and people with limited ability. To clarify, this is a project that the President was actively involved with in his previous role as Minister for Disability Services.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you for clarifying that.

The Hon. NIAL BLAIR: In addition, 135 fish-cleaning tables were provided from trust funding. These projects remain very popular with anglers. In passing, I note that the proper use of cleaning tables by recreational fishers is an important part of maintaining the support of the broader community. Some 31 habitat action grants totalling \$750,000 were provided from the trust. [*Time expired.*]

MENINDEE LAKES SYSTEM

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (15:20): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Regional Water. Why is history repeating itself, with the Murray Darling Basin Authority [MDBA] rapidly draining the Menindee Lakes system, with Lake Menindee down from 90 per cent to 28 per cent capacity, and the system already down to 61 per cent capacity? What representations has the Minister made to the MDBA on the issue of the Menindee system?

The Hon. NIAL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (15:21): I thank the honourable member for his question. I inform the House that the Menindee Lakes system is holding more than 1,000 gigalitres, and is therefore considered a shared resource with Victoria in accordance with the Murray Darling Basin Agreement. This means that the MDBA directs releases to optimise water availability across the southern-connected basin. When Menindee next falls below 480 gigalitres it will return to a local New South Wales-only resource, and will be dedicated to local requirements only.

I am aware of the concerns of some residents in Menindee and Broken Hill, and of the need to carefully manage the Menindee Lakes to make the best use of water that is currently in storage. I have sought the assurance of WaterNSW on this issue. WaterNSW is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Menindee Lakes system on behalf of Victoria and New South Wales, and for liaising with Lower Darling stakeholders and water users. I am advised that the flow releases currently occurring do not threaten water supply for Broken Hill in the short term. This is because most of the flow, at 4,000 megalitres per day at weir 32, is coming from Lake Menindee, with only a small portion coming from Lake Wetherell.

Environmental water releases to the Great Darling Anabranch commenced recently, with around 1,100 megalitres a day being released via the Lake Cawndilla outlet. This release is being directed by New South Wales in association with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, and it is expected to continue over the coming months with the aim of creating connectivity with the River Murray. I am informed that there is sufficient water available to ensure that surface water supply for Broken Hill can be provided through until 2019, when the Murray River to Broken Hill pipeline is expected to be commissioned. Due to the amount of water currently held at Menindee Lakes, and because the Murray River to Broken Hill pipeline project is underway, the temporary emergency Menindee Lakes groundwater project has been put on hold.

I am aware that the planned environmental water release from Menindee Lakes was postponed after the discussions between WaterNSW and the downstream community had highlighted a number of flooding concerns. For WaterNSW, as our river operator, downstream impacts are a key consideration. I am advised that the release was modified to minimise inconvenience to customers. The releases commenced in late November following consultation with the State Emergency Service, Wentworth Shire, Bureau of Meteorology, MDBA, Mallee Catchment Management Authority and the Lower Darling customer representative group. This clearly illustrates

that history is not repeating itself. As I have outlined in my answer, the call on water and the operation of Menindee Lakes at the moment is under the auspices of the MDBA.

Mr Jeremy Buckingham: What representations did you make to them? Or did you just sit on your hands?

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: It is outstanding that members of The Greens may now be coming back to our side of this argument, saying there needs to be more scrutiny about environmental water from these assets. Let me make it very clear. The way that WaterNSW is managing this call for water is something that we have asked them to go back and work hard on. WaterNSW has liaised with those communities to make sure that there is no water trapped in areas, as it has been previously, and left to evaporate. That is one of the reasons we were in the situation previously when we were funding the long-term water supply for that community. Mr Jeremy Buckingham stood in the way of that long-term project when he voted against that funding. WaterNSW is delivering on that call for water. This has been done in consultation with the community and will ensure that we do not go down the path we took previously.

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (15:25): Could the Minister please elucidate his answer by confirming whether or not he has contacted the Murray Darling Basin Authority regarding the releases of water from the Menindee Lakes system?

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (15:25): I can confirm that my agencies are in regular contact with the Murray Darling Basin Authority in relation to a number of matters. I can confirm, as I clearly articulated in the answer that I gave, that when there was a call for water and concerns were raised by the communities further downstream, agencies were in contact with those other authorities and changes were made to the delivery of that water because of those concerns. That is what this is about: the agencies looking at this issue and talking to all of the stakeholders so that we do not get the third-party impacts that we have seen in the past—impacts such as flooding or communities left without a secure and safe water supply. That is how we do it on this side of the Chamber.

Mr Jeremy Buckingham: You just said that they do not need the Menindee water because they have the pipeline.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: I think the member just said that we do not need Menindee.

Mr Jeremy Buckingham: No; that is what you said.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: I think he said that no-one needs Menindee Lakes.

Mr Jeremy Buckingham: They have a pipeline now.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: The member must be confused about why we are doing this project. We are making sure that the communities of Broken Hill and surrounds have a secure water source and do not have to rely upon the variability of the water out at Menindee. This Government is committed to the operation of the pipeline. We are answering the call of the MDBA when it comes to those water releases, but it is being done in a way that includes consultation with those communities. When the Commonwealth calls for this water—as it is at the moment—we are doing everything we can to make sure that that release will not take us back to where we were previously. When the Commonwealth called on that water at that time, there were no subsequent inflows as a result.

SYDNEY WATER CATCHMENT AREAS

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE (15:28): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts. Given that there are strict laws for Sydney's water catchment areas, why is the Minister allowing contractors to use deadly weed and pest control chemicals like Roundup and Brush-Off around a dozen dams, including Warragamba, Woronora, Cataract, Cordeaux, Avon and Nepean and Fitzroy Falls dams?

The Hon. Niall Blair: Point of order: That question contains argument. It also lists products. I am very concerned about the linking of the term "deadly" with those products. The question should be ruled out of order.

The PRESIDENT: May I have the question?

The Hon. Walt Secord: To the point of order: The question relates to those chemicals going into the drinking water supply. Therefore they are deadly, and it is not argumentative.

The Hon. Niall Blair: To the point of order: The use of herbicides in this country is very much regulated, including the registration of those products.

The PRESIDENT: I ask the Hon. Lynda Voltz to resume her seat. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. Niall Blair: The member used an incorrect term relating to those chemicals which is inaccurate. The question contains argument and it should be ruled out of order.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: To the point of order: The member asked a question relating to the drinking water supply and the use of chemicals that go into the land surrounding those water catchment areas. Those chemicals are clearly labelled and indicate that they are dangerous for human consumption. The Minister is making debating points.

The PRESIDENT: Members will remain silent. I cannot hear the point of order of the Hon. Lynda Voltz.

The Hon. Lynda Voltz: The question clearly refers to the consumption of water by the people of this State and is in line with the standing orders of this House.

The Hon. Adam Searle: To the point of order: It has been the practice of past Presidents that if an element of the question is argumentative the balance of the question is allowed to stand. That would be the appropriate course of action even if there were to be some argument about the use of the word "deadly".

The PRESIDENT: That is the first point of order with which I completely agree. I thank the Leader of the Opposition. Past Presidents rulings have been to allow a question to be answered, but omitting any part that may contain argument. The question is, "Why are you allowing contractors to use deadly weed and pest control chemicals?" The operative words are "deadly weed and pest control chemicals" such as Roundup. I will allow the Minister to answer that part of the question that he wishes to answer.

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:32): In fact, there is plenty to say about this matter.

The PRESIDENT: Members will come to order and allow the Minister to answer the question.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: Part of this question comes within my colleague's portfolio as well as my own. I will provide information to begin with and my colleague and I will then collaborate and answer those parts of the question that did not contain argument. WaterNSW has not and will not make compromises when it comes to meeting its legislated obligations to protect the Sydney drinking water catchments and the quality of water supplied from them. Both the Government and WaterNSW remain fully committed to maintaining world-best standards for drinking water and catchment protection in the Sydney drinking water catchment. WaterNSW has water quality protection as one of its core objectives. To enable WaterNSW to discharge this core obligation, the organisation employs about 100 full-time equivalent employees, including 19 scientists from various disciplines, who are all working to manage and protect the greater Sydney drinking water catchment and the quality of water that WaterNSW supplies from it.

In 2016-17 WaterNSW will invest more than \$12.5 million on water monitoring and water quality science in the Sydney drinking water catchment. This expenditure is part of the \$46 million that WaterNSW will devote to catchment protection activities in the Sydney drinking water catchment this financial year alone, ranging from public education to compliance, land management, water monitoring and environmental planning and controls. WaterNSW has a highly regarded science program developed in consultation with Sydney Water and NSW Health, among other important stakeholders. This program will extend WaterNSW water quality science capability by further developing its sophisticated water quality monitoring and alert systems. WaterNSW has set itself the following standards of performance. There are no events—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The question that was asked related to the use of chemicals near waterways. This is not an opportunity for the Minister to list everything that Sydney Water might be doing.

The PRESIDENT: The Minister was being generally relevant.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: In fact, I was about to come to that, but since it is disturbing the Opposition, I will take the rest of that question on notice, consult with my colleague who also has some portfolio responsibility, and provide the rest of the answer on notice.

If members have further questions, I suggest that they place them on notice.

The Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane: I ask a supplementary question—

The Hon. DON HARWIN: You missed your chance—never mind.

The PRESIDENT: I would be grateful if the Leader of the Government would allow me to make the ruling. The Minister had already indicated that the time for questions had expired before the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane sought to ask a supplementary question.

RECYCLED DRINKING WATER

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:35): Earlier today the Hon. Walt Secord asked me a question about recycled water for drinking purposes. Sydney Water has no plans to use recycled water for drinking purposes. Sydney Water is Australia's largest urban water utility and has a responsibility to look at new and emerging technologies that are related to various aspects of its operations. I see that, yet again, the Hon. Walt Secord is brandishing a document.

The Hon. Walt Secord: I am holding proof of it.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: However, the Hon. Walt Secord would not tell me what it was.

The Hon. Walt Secord: It is your own annual report. Maybe you should have read it.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: He says it is the annual report. I thank him for that. The Hon. Walt Secord started talking about a program that allegedly involves billions of dollars of expenditure.

The Hon. Walt Secord: I said \$10 million.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I apologise to the member for saying that.

The PRESIDENT: Members will cease having conversations across the table. The Minister will direct his comments through the Chair.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I thought I heard the Hon. Walt Secord refer to billions of dollars but he assures me that he referred to millions of dollars. But it is not even that. He got that wrong too. Sydney Water's annual report details spending of \$202,094 on research into recycled water. This money has gone towards research that looks at best practice modelling and various uses of recycled water. It is not part of a plan to introduce recycled water for drinking purposes.

ENERGY COMPANIES PAPER BILLS

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:37): Earlier in question time the Hon. Greg Donnelly asked me a question about electricity bills and I undertook to obtain some information and to have discussions on that issue. However, I will now provide him with an interim response. I have been advised that some retailers are now charging customers a small fee to cover the costs of postage, printing and the handling of paper bills. All retailers have developed their own policies regarding their fees and charges. However, I believe that not all retailers are charging such fees. Of course, it is always open to customers to look at changing. For those that do, I understand that most will consider waiving the fee for customers who are eligible for concessions, customers who are experiencing hardship, and customers without access to the internet, including elderly customers. I encourage all concerned customers to contact their retailers regarding possible exemption from such fees. They should push hard and if there is no exemption, other options are available. However, as I said to the Hon. Greg Donnelly, there will be more.

Personal Explanation

RECYCLED DRINKING WATER

The Hon. WALT SECORD (15:38): By leave: When the Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts provided a supplementary answer he misrepresented me. During question time I said it was \$10.14 million. I refer to page 88 of the 2015-2019 annual report where it says that Sydney Water in 2015 provided \$96,547 and, in 2016, \$105,547 to research public barriers to recycled water and it involved information, tools and engagement strategies the water industry can use when considering water recycling for drinking purposes. That is to be found on page 88 of the Minister's annual report.

Documents

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Reports

The PRESIDENT: According to section 78 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, I announce the receipt of the following reports of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, authorised to be made public this day:

- (1) Report entitled "Investigation into the conduct of a former Chief Executive Officer and members of the board of the Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council", dated February 2017.
- (2) Report entitled "Investigation into the conduct of a Casino Boolangle Local Aboriginal Land Council CEO and administrative officer", dated February 2017.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I move:

That the reports be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

SAFER PATHWAY PROGRAM

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) (15:41): I will comment briefly on this important motion moved by Mr Scot MacDonald on the Government's Safer Pathway Program. As I have said often in this House, it is important that we talk about issues that affect many communities and families across New South Wales.

The Hon. Paul Green: Too many.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I note that interjection because, as the Hon. Paul Green said, too many families are affected by this issue. The statistics from 2016 show that 71 women were killed in Australia by their current or former partner. That is a frightening statistic and one that we should take seriously.

Mr Jeremy Buckingham: Point of order: I am finding it difficult to hear the Minister's contribution on this important matter. Mr Deputy President, I ask that you ask members to continue their discussions outside the Chamber.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): I am sure they have heard your observation.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The high-profile cases of domestic and family violence often attract media attention, and many of these cases are shocking. Reading about these cases makes for depressing reading, but as the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs I wish to point out that this is a critical issue in Aboriginal communities across New South Wales. Aboriginal women are six times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be the victims of domestic and family violence. The Government and I, as the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, in conjunction with my colleagues with responsibilities for this area in their portfolios, need to recognise the gaps and deficiencies in the domestic and family violence service system. We are doing this through the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016-2021, which guides the service system overhaul to address the needs of victims for early intervention in communities with high risk of domestic and family violence, holds perpetrators to account, and gives a quality improvement framework.

The blueprint includes an additional \$300 million investment over four years. The blueprint is a pretty clear sign that this Government takes this issue seriously. The member's motion is about the Safer Pathway referral system and refers specifically to the referral system in the Tuggerah Lakes Local Area Command. That referral system is all about giving victims access to the support that they need. It is being implemented in 28 locations across the State, including Walgett, which has a high rate of domestic and family violence. Aboriginal women will have greater confidence to report domestic and family violence because of the availability of support services tailored to meet their needs. That is what Safer Pathway is all about. We want women to feel that they can speak up and ask for help, and that they and their families will be supported.

There is no excuse for violence in families or communities. But I note that violence within Aboriginal families and communities often occurs within the context of loss of culture and identity, intergenerational trauma and ongoing social and economic disadvantage. The point is we need to look at the root causes of violence, particularly in the Aboriginal community where there are issues concerning intergenerational trauma, social disadvantage and economic disadvantage. We need to work in those spaces so that we can improve services. That is what our community focused plan for Aboriginal Affairs is about. The Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility and Empowerment [OCHRE] program seeks to address these issues through education, employment, connection to culture, healing and community empowerment. The intent is to work with Aboriginal leaders to create safer and more secure Aboriginal families and communities.

As the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs with responsibility for OCHRE, it is my hope and desire to see that the work we are doing in the area of education and employment opportunities and dealing with intergenerational trauma will lead to safer and more secure Aboriginal families and communities in New South Wales. We are striving to reduce the statistic that Aboriginal women are six times more likely than are

non-Aboriginal women to be the victims of violence. We are working with the Aboriginal community to lower this statistic so that Aboriginal women feel safe in their homes.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR (15:46): I thank Mr Scot MacDonald for moving this important motion relating to the Safer Pathway program. The first two sites of the Safer Pathway program were rolled out in Orange, in regional New South Wales, and in Waverley, in Sydney. An expansion into other parts of the State is a welcome move by this Government, showing its commitment to not only dealing with perpetrators of domestic violence but also providing support to the victims. The 2016-17 budget doubled the investment in specialist domestic violence services to more than \$300 million over four years, up from \$148.5 million in the 2015-16 budget.

The Safer Pathway program is about using an integrated approach to help victims of domestic violence. Thanks to Safer Pathway sites, victims no longer have to repeat their stories to multiple service providers—a traumatic and extremely frustrating experience for them. Instead now they have a single contact with a specialised domestic and family violence worker. A coordinated response ensures that victims receive the referrals and support that they need, whether that is from police, health, housing, legal or any of the services dealing with myriad issues that contribute to the complexity of these domestic violence situations. Regardless, safety is and should always be at the heart of the response.

Those under the most serious threat benefit from safety action meetings, which bring together multiple agencies to find ways to reduce the threat to women at risk: NSW Police Force, NSW Health, the Department of Family and Community Services, housing and child protection, the Department of Education and Corrective Services. These programs sound simple—coordinating services provided to those in need should not be groundbreaking and really should not be difficult. However, as I have found time and again, these programs can be difficult. It takes a concerted effort to break down walls and get government and non-government agencies to work hand in hand for the benefit of their patients and their clients. Many members feel the same way I do and have been part of an inquiry into service coordination we held two years ago. I continue to advocate for the coordination of services. I thank the Hon. Greg Donnelly for sharing my views. It is not rocket science and we need to get it right. This is a really good example of how we can change services to make a difference to people's lives.

The people on the ground are just as frustrated as the rest of us about privacy concerns and the bureaucracy getting in the way of their ability to help people. These are good people providing good services for people they care about. Protecting women and anyone who has suffered domestic violence is important to our care, our community and our social structure. Safer Pathway allows us to bring everyone to the table, and we have seen some really good outcomes as a result. In its first year in Orange, 1,570 women were referred to Safer Pathway, with one-third of them deemed at risk of being killed. These numbers are far too high but it is critical that these services are available to get victims the best help possible.

A 2015 study found that women in regional, rural and remote areas are more likely than women in metropolitan areas to experience domestic and family violence. This should be a concern to us all. The Government announced \$53 million over four years to expand Safer Pathway throughout New South Wales, with 27 sites to be operational by the end of 2016-17. With 18 sites already operating, nine sites are to be opened, including two in Griffith and Queanbeyan in southern New South Wales. I welcome the establishment of a site in Griffith. The Riverina area is facing terrible issues with domestic violence. There has been a 22 per cent spike in domestic violence in the past year, and that is a shocking statistic. A lot of good work is being done by people on the ground, but we also need to support them with facilities like Safer Pathway. In Queanbeyan, near where I live, the service will be coordinated by the South Eastern Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, which has a long history of providing professional advocacy and support for women who have experienced domestic violence.

Updating the personal development, health and physical education [PDHPE] syllabus for schools to explicitly include domestic violence prevention and arming young people with the knowledge and skills to recognise and respond to these issues is important. I am proud to tell the House that this year my daughter will commence her degree to become a high school PDHPE teacher. I know how strongly she feels about issues like this, and I look forward to her standing up in front of a classroom and educating people about how we must take action.

In 2012 a Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research study found that only half of domestic violence victims are reported to police. That is not okay, and that is not good enough. We have shocking statistics and alarming results but we are trying to do something. It is important that we do not keep doing the same thing while expecting a different outcome. We need to look for better solutions that suit the people we need to help. This very important issue goes to the core of who we are and how we look after our most vulnerable. By providing these services, and as the community comes to know that support exists, we can encourage more people to seek assistance when they

are in situations of domestic violence. Quite honestly, that is really the least we can do. We have to do much better.

The Hon. PAUL GREEN (15:52): I will speak briefly in debate on this motion. While I was upstairs watching this debate, someone wrote to me and asked me to say something about an interview with Keysar Trad on *The Bolt Report* and some comments he made. I state at the outset that there is no excuse for any abuse. There is no excuse to lay a hand on any woman at any time.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: What did he say?

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: The Hon. Greg Donnelly can get the article, but my constituent asked me to put on record the Christian Democrat Party's view and I thought I would do that straightaway. There is no excuse for any abuse; there is no excuse for domestic violence. I thank Mr Scot MacDonald for moving this motion. We have been working with the Government and in particular Minister Goward to address some of the issues of domestic abuse. On most occasions women are the victims. They are not only beaten or assaulted; someone then turns up ready to take away their children because they are in an unsafe environment, so these women are hurt twice. We know that something needs to change and the way we are doing business is not good.

We need to get the perpetrators—the majority of whom are men—out of the house on most if not all occasions. The Government needs to find ways for men to be taken out of those households and put into an area where they can be counselled and educated about the consequences of their actions. Quite often it is abused people who abuse other people. Quite often there is a history of abuse, with abusers having been abused when they were children. We must do something different to allow the mother and children to stay in the home. I realise that also has its challenges, given that on most occasions the perpetrator knows where to find the mother and children again, but we must do something different. I have asked the Government once again to start thinking about putting resources into facilities where we can remove the perpetrator from the house rather than the innocent victims, who quite often are women and vulnerable children.

Recently I was talking to someone from the YWCA who works in the domestic violence area, and they brought to my attention some issues around in-camera evidence, such as that a defendant who is the alleged perpetrator of the violence must agree to evidence being heard in camera. I cannot think of a more crazy idea than going to the lawyer of the perpetrator and asking the perpetrator to agree to allow the victim to give evidence in camera. Surely if there is cause for somebody to be heard in camera they should not need the permission of the defendant's lawyer. I may be wrong about this, and I need to do some further research, but if that is the case something stinks. If a person is a victim of domestic violence and they need to give evidence in camera, they should be able to do so. We should do everything to ensure that that person can give their side of the story in a safe and non-intimidating place. I will look into that and seek some clarification from the Minister.

One very good thing about this motion is that it recognises that more information should flow to all of the agencies to ensure that we are doing our best to keep victims of domestic violence safe and out of harm's way. This morning we were discussing child sexual assault and the tragic circumstances in which many within the church and other organisations took advantage of children. It is similarly shameful that we have statistics and fatalities from domestic violence. I think schools are good places to deal with and learn about domestic violence issues. I am glad that under the former Premier the Liberal-Nationals Government put together an education program for schools. If we are to decrease the incidence of domestic violence, we have to get to the root cause. We can see the tree above the ground—the cases, the fatalities, the lack of services, the lack of money—but its roots are beneath the soil and we cannot see them.

But we can deal with that in our schools. It is as though we need to apply some dynamic lifter in our schools. That is where the seed pods are. That is where it starts. If someone grows up in a situation where they have been hurt then they may hurt people as they get older. Schools are a good place to find out if children and young people are intimidating other students or using power to control others. In a lot of teenage relationships that controlling behaviour is already happening. Someone will be on the phone asking, "Where are you? What are you doing? I didn't say you could go there." Those are indicators that somebody will probably grow up to have maladjusted relationships as they get older and mature.

There are a lot of signs and signals in the lives of our kids that we could deal with a lot earlier. We can change this from a situation where we have the ambulance waiting at the bottom of the cliff to instead have it ready at the top of the cliff before someone falls off. I think education in our schools is a way to do that. It is about not only teaching respectful relationships but also early intervention for the kids who need it. If we see kids trying to control other kids then there is a pretty good chance that that is a warning sign. There are seed pods. We need to deal with these things early. We need to help those kids see that that is not the right way to manage relationships. I commend the motion to the House. It is very helpful. It is part of the solution, but there are many more parts

where I believe we could do a bit better to reduce the number of fatalities. It is absolutely shameful that these fatalities are happening in this day and age. I commend the motion to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Adjournment Debate

ADJOURNMENT

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Hon. PAUL GREEN (16:01): Children and young people are our future and it is important that we care for them, nurture them, provide for them and show them that while life has some rainy days it has a lot more sunny days. Of course this may depend on the individual. They may be exposed to much of this in their local schools. In too many school systems there are too many kids who feel stuck. I will touch on a few issues and challenges that young people face today like at no other time in history. Wellbeing is an important part of a child or young person's life. A good society for children and young people is one where there is strong social and economic activity. In order to build sustainable wellbeing for all children and young people we must ensure that there are no health inequities.

The 2015 Wellbeing Australia report looked at the safety and wellbeing that our schools are providing. It found that 64 per cent of year 5 students believe that their school is committed to building the strengths of each student whereas only 27 per cent of year 12 students believed that same statement. We know that in between those ages a person finds and develops their sense of self. There are mental, social, physical, health, emotional and environmental factors that assist in their growth. The majority of a student's personal growth and development is done at school. Thus we need to make sure that their school is a safe and happy place to be.

As I mentioned earlier, mental health is a big aspect in the life of an adolescent. As we know, they are dealing with body changes, bullying by peers, a new surge for independence, meeting the expectations of their peers and dealing with rejection by their peers. It is these changes that lead to passive-aggressive behaviours—saying things like "I'll do it in a minute"; self-consciousness, saying things like, "What are you staring at?"; self-doubt, saying things like "I'm not good at anything"; overconfidence, saying things like, "Well, I thought I could do that"; and, of course, moodiness, saying things like "Leave me alone".

If we as adults who can understand do not sympathise with and understand the mental pressures the next generation faces then how can we provide the next steps? How can we assure them that everything will be okay? How can we trust that our schools are providing a sustainable and consistent safe area for our children? According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics just over a quarter of children and young people have had a 12-month mental disorder. We need to empower our children and young people, and give them a voice to speak out.

I move now to the social, physical, emotional and environmental factors in growing up. There is one word that cuts across all of these areas—that is, sadly, "abuse". Abuse can be portrayed in four different ways across all facets of development. They are: emotional abuse, neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse. Emotional abuse is an act by a person having responsibility for the care of a child that results in the child suffering any kind of significant emotional deprivation or trauma. Children affected by exposure to family violence would be included in this category. In 2014-15 there were 5,086 cases of emotional abuse throughout New South Wales.

Neglect is a serious act or omission by a person having responsibility for the care of the child that, within the bounds of cultural tradition, constitutes a failure to provide the conditions that are essential for the healthy physical and emotional development of a child. There is also physical abuse and sexual abuse, which we talked a bit about earlier. The statistics are based on reports. However, we must understand that not all children report abuse, so there will be many more cases out there. Exposure to any kind of abuse in this age group is detrimental to children and young people's growth, health and future relationships.

Having identified many issues facing children and young people, special religious education has identified these issues and is working on them. Education can be a lonely place for many children. It is all the more important that our children and young people be in a place where they are made aware of a loving God who cares for them, particularly when they feel no-one else does, and that this God has a plan and purpose for their lives. Why anyone would want to remove this message of hope from our children I find mind-boggling, particularly if they are truly motivated by concern for our kids' welfare and that they have holistic wellbeing.

TRIBUTE TO COMMODORE GRAHAM SLOPER

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (16:06): Today I acknowledge the life of a remarkable man and a pillar of the Northern Beaches community, Commodore Graham Sloper, AM, RAN (retired), who passed away on 4 December 2016. Commodore Sloper's funeral mass was held at the Maria Regina Catholic Church in Avalon on 7 December 2016 and was well attended by family, friends and former naval colleagues. Commodore Sloper joined the Royal Australian Navy [RAN] at the age of 15. This is where his affinity for boats was established as he won single-handed sailing and sculling championships, resulting in the award of boating colours. After graduating from college, he undertook training at the Royal Australian Naval College, HMAS *Swan*, Britannia Royal Naval College, and HMS *Wizard* in the West Indies and South America.

Whilst he specialised in the disciplines of diving, mine warfare and antisubmarine warfare, Commodore Sloper was also a keen sportsman. He won boxing competitions and represented the RAN at rugby, hockey and water polo. Commodore Sloper continued to play rugby union and league until the age of 49. It was at this point that he retired from the sport, as this was a condition of being promoted to commodore. Commodore Sloper spent 28 years at sea as a navigation, diving, direction and anti-submarine warfare officer prior to his postings as executive officer and subsequently in command.

Throughout his illustrious career, Commodore Sloper was in command of HMAS *Ibis*, the First Australian Mine Countermeasures Squadron, guided missile destroyer HMAS *Perth* and replenishment ship HMAS *Success*. It was during his time on HMAS *Success*, which included seven months in the first Gulf war, that his ship was awarded the prestigious Duke of Gloucester Cup for being the most efficient ship in the RAN. On shore his postings included: three postings in the United Kingdom; one posting in Hawaii; the Director General of Australian Defence Force [ADF] recruiting; and the command of the RAN Air Station, HMAS *Albatross*. After 40 years of service, Commodore Sloper transferred to the reserve list, where he served a further 10 years. In 1991, Commodore Sloper's contribution was recognised with his award as a Member of the Order of Australia.

His eminent career in the Royal Australian Navy is eclipsed only by his extensive volunteer work following his retirement from the Navy Reserve. For 10 years, he served on the Anzac House Trust and the Australian Forces Overseas Fund trust. He was heavily involved in the RSL, Legacy, cadets, local schools, the community and other organisations. Commodore Sloper was the president of the Avalon Beach RSL Sub-Branch from 2003 to 2012 and president of the Northern Beaches RSL District Council from 2011 to 2014. At the time of his passing, he was vice-president of the district council and the RSL cadet liaison officer for the area.

One annual event Commodore Sloper thoroughly enjoyed was the Avalon Tattoo, of which he was the director. The tattoo is a community event that is based on the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. He was also chairman of the Warringah and Mackellar Federal electorates Anzac Centenary Commemoration Ceremonial Committee and responsible for the major centenary events on the Northern Beaches. In 2013 Commodore Sloper was made a life member of the RSL of Australia and in 2015 was a recipient of the Premier's Award for Community Service for Pittwater.

On the Northern Beaches, Commodore Sloper leaves a legacy in the form of the Veterans Centre Sydney Northern Beaches, of which he was the chairman. Now based at the Dee Why RSL Club, the centre aims to provide services for former and current service men and women, and their families. Commodore Sloper was once asked, "What is your motto in life?" to which he responded, "Loyalty, integrity, support for family, friends and compatriots while planning for the future—and, of course, enjoying sport." Undoubtedly he lived up to his motto in all aspects of his life. Graham is survived by his wife of 50 years, Dannie, his three children, Morgan, Martine and Tamar, and his six grandchildren. I commend Commodore Graham Sloper for being an extraordinary man.

MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ (16:11): Recently with the change of Premier there has also been a reshuffle and expansion of ministerial portfolios. As a shadow Minister I feel obliged to make note of these changes. Indeed one of the Ministers in the Chamber that I shadow is that great factotum, David Elliott, the member for Baulkham Hills. Indeed he has been handed the previously unknown portfolio of Counter Terrorism. There are some, particularly on the other side of the Chamber, who have alluded to this portfolio expansion as some type of factional deal—an almighty barney between the forces of the urban grouping of The Nationals and dark side of the Liberal Party.

I will not hear of it. No! Our member for Baulkham Hills is a man of action. The Premier has obviously run her eye over his speeches and said knowingly to herself, "The member for Baulkham Hills is just the man I need to whip the State into shape." If only more people had read his speeches, things may have already changed. Take, for instance, his speech on antisocial behaviour in the Hills. I know members are keen to know more so I will give them a précis. According to the member for Baulkham Hills, whilst he was driving home one night:

At approximately 8.30 p.m. near the corner of Wrights Road and Green Road in Castle Hill I observed a dozen young teenagers around the nearby bus shelter. As I drove closer to the bus shelter it was clear that many of the teenagers had either bottles or cans in their hands, and one young male was sitting in the bus shelter vandalising a wall.

I can see some members on the other side of the Chamber are alarmed at this outbreak of anarchy in the Hills, but do not worry. Our man of action, our super hero, the member for Baulkham Hills was on the spot. He continued:

I immediately stopped my car and asked the teenagers their names and began to take photographs using my BlackBerry ... Within seconds my car and I were surrounded by a large group of teenagers ...

Who would have thought it? He continued:

I was also surprised, if not a little horrified, at the language coming from children ...

Having introduced myself as the local member of Parliament, I continued to bear the brunt of some colourful language ...

The member for Baulkham Hills was clearly horrified. Do the youth of today not understand that when they meet a Liberal member of Parliament, the proper response is a respectful grovelling? When our man of action stops his car, starts to take photographs of random teenagers and tells them he is a member of Parliament, they should just keep quiet and tug on their forelocks. I can see those opposite are worried, but the Premier's man clearly has the solution. He continued thus:

I now want not only to introduce tougher penalties for parents of intoxicated youth but also to humiliate them.

Whilst he has not outlined the type of humiliation parents are to receive—

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Stocks!

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Yes, one's mind turns naturally to public floggings, stocks and the ducking stool. But I will wait until I see the legislation before I make a judgement on this matter. However, I do not want members to think the Minister is harsh. As the Minister for Counter Terrorism I am sure the member for Baulkham Hills will ensure teenagers have other outlets for their antisocial impulses. Indeed, alongside his penchant for military service his other ideas include the reintroduction of cracker night. As he states:

The reintroduction of cracker night to the calendar requires serious consideration. I hope that on the second Monday in June I will be able ... to take out my two sons, "Search" and "Destroy", and show them how to use throw downs and crazy jacks.

I am sure the Premier is mulling it over right now. He also said:

At the risk of raising the ire of the politically correct wowsers, I understand that there are safety risks with fireworks. However, surely heroin is a bigger risk. Besides, only the grown-ups use the most dangerous fireworks, and I know that as a responsible adult I would be the one firing them up, because they are the most impressive.

He would not have been at the top of my list for the Minister for Counter Terrorism, but the Minister has stated in the press that he has spent three days reading up on counterterrorism, so I feel reassured already. Personally, I know that I will sleep sounder at night knowing the member for Baulkham Hills is prowling the streets, ready to take random photos of my teenage daughters should they step out of line. I am sure the rest of New South Wales feels the same way.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI (16:16): I want to talk about a topic that I have been mulling over during the parliamentary summer break: the fast pace of technological advancement and its impact on people, the economy and politics. With the increase in automation and development of sophisticated artificial intelligence, some have predicted doomsday scenarios where machines take over most of our jobs, creating mass unemployment and completely changing the way we live.

The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps: Skynet takes over.

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI: There have been questions about whether, with this march of the machines, we are summoning the demons that will take control of humans, somewhat like Skynet in the movie *Terminator*. Others have noted the inaccuracy of such speculation that artificial intelligence would turn evil and jeopardise human safety or indeed even the risk of job losses. They claim that we have always lived with technological advances and that it has in fact created more jobs than it has destroyed. The example of automatic teller machines [ATMs] is often repeated. While bank tellers have been replaced by ATMs, new and more branches have opened up, making way for new customer service jobs.

Yet others predict a *Jetsons* style future nirvana in which we only work for a few hours a day, live a life of leisure and all mundane household tasks are done by robots. Whether any of this becomes reality, only time will tell, but what is quite clear is that there is rapid change happening in automation and technology, and the level of sophistication of machines is increasing like never before. With the advent of driverless cars, transport could become safer and more eco-friendly. Smart machines could analyse computed tomography [CT] scans and X-rays

more accurately, and make health care more efficient. New jobs would be created in science, medicine, technology, engineering, creative industries and areas we cannot even envisage at the moment. There is much to be excited about.

However, on the other hand there are some very valid concerns about the displacement of jobs. For example, with driverless technology most of the employees in the trucking industry and public transport could lose their jobs. Many workers who provide cheap labour in China and India, for example, could be replaced by machines in places like Australia, which currently relies on goods imported from these countries, resulting in millions of job losses and increasing poverty in already poorer nations. It is very likely that low-waged and unskilled occupations will be disproportionately affected. This also has implications for further increasing the already existing gender pay gap. Economic inequalities may further increase if wealth further concentrates with those who own these machines and technologies, and more and more workers are cut out of the process.

One way to deal with this would be basic universal income paid for by a higher tax on those who get the greatest share of wealth from the ownership of machines. While there is uncertainty about what exactly the future holds, there is plenty of scope to forecast what might happen, work out who the winners and losers may be and set into motion policies and legislation now to deal with the burden of inequalities. But we must start doing this now; otherwise, there is a real risk that we will always be chasing our tail.

Obviously, transitioning from one type of employment to another will require learning new skills and knowledge. It is necessary to make sure that all people have easy and cheap access to education and training to allow them to move with the pace of technological change. We must imagine a future that is optimistic, not pessimistic, and do it by genuinely engaging with the people we represent. Information and communications technology can be a huge benefit in this process. In shaping the future that we want, the key is to start planning, investing and preparing for this rather massive and rapid technological change.

For example, technology is used at the moment for learning and teaching. We can access massive open online courses, but we have to make sure that communities that do not yet have access to high-speed internet, such as regional and rural communities, are not left out of this training and innovation cycle. I am concerned that we are not doing enough to plan for this future. If there is greater unemployment, how do we support those people? How do we prepare for uncertainties? How will the Government fund programs if there are fewer tax-paying workers and more robots, who do not pay tax? The advances in technology are inevitable. As parliamentarians it is our responsibility to make sure that the machines march with us, not against us.

CLOSING THE GAP REPORT 2017

The Hon. SHAOQUETT MOSELMANE (16:20): I will speak to the Prime Minister's Closing the Gap report for 2017, which was released on 14 February. First, I acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and I pay my respects to their elders past and present. Sadly, as confirmed by this report, all States and Territories in Australia are not on track to meet the Closing the Gap target. The initiatives, as currently implemented, have a patchy record at best. Of the seven major targets, it is more than disappointing to see that we are not on track to halve the child mortality rate in Indigenous communities by 2018, we are not on track to close the gap in life expectancy by 2031, we are not on track to get 95 per cent of Indigenous four-year-olds enrolled in early education by 2025, we are not on track to close the gap on school attendance by 2018, we are not on track to halve the gap in Indigenous literacy and numeracy by 2018, and we are not on track to halve the gap in employment rates by 2018.

The Closing the Gap report demonstrates that all governments are failing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I refer to the work of suicide prevention researcher Gerry Georgatos, who describes a much worse disaster than is presented by the Closing the Gap report. Mr Georgatos notes that the life expectancy targets that were stated to be a 10-year divide are much worse than that. He describes the 10-year differential as an estimation. In his analysis, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are still living 20 years fewer than the rest of the population. Mr Georgatos argues that in 2014 the median age of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males born in New South Wales was 57.7 years. It was worse in Western Australia where the median life expectancy of Aboriginal males was 49.9 years. The Closing the Gap of life expectancy should reflect the actual divides, not estimations.

Mr Georgatos argues that if we are to close the gap, we must come together on all fronts and not cherry-pick only some targets. One in 18 deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is a suicide. This must be reduced, if not eradicated. Thirty per cent of Australian child suicides are Aboriginal children. New South Wales, which has the largest population of Aboriginal people, must lead the way with social reforms. Eighty per cent of suicides of children aged 18 years or under are Aboriginal children. Let us call for targets to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are incarcerated. Mr Georgatos found that one in eight Aboriginal people in this nation has been to prison. Those high rates shame this nation.

The only qualified success in this report is that the proportion of Indigenous people aged 20 to 24 who achieved year 12 or its equivalent has increased from 45.4 per cent in 2008 to 61 per cent in 2014-15. Since the rate for non-Indigenous people completing year 12 or its equivalent did not change significantly in that period, it is fortunate that the target to halve the gap of those achieving year 12 by 2020 is on track. Existing statistics show that there is a clear link between education and employment. In individuals who have achieved a high level of education there is virtually no employment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Indigenous Australians aged 20 to 64 years with a bachelor degree or above have an 83.9 per cent employment rate compared to the rate of 84.6 per cent for non-Indigenous Australians. It is a remarkable result and truly speaks to a path forward to closing the other gaps I have already outlined.

This will not improve, however, if the Government is determined to gut tertiary and vocational education services. Cuts to TAFE, privatisation, deregulation of our high education sector and \$100,000 degrees will do nothing to help people, let alone Indigenous Australians, achieve the qualifications and jobs they need and deserve. We should all reflect on the fact that from 1998 to 2015 Indigenous mortality rates did not change significantly in New South Wales. How is this permissible? This report is a wake-up call for us all. I ask that the Premier and her newly appointed Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, double the efforts of this Government so that progress towards closing the gap is accelerated sooner rather than later.

SMART AND SKILLED

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN (16:26): I wish to correct recent statements made by the Opposition that threatened to cause unnecessary anxiety to some of the more vulnerable members of society. On Tuesday 21 February, Labor publically stated that up to 3,000 students with disabilities were about to lose their places due to a funding cut in the Smart and Skilled program, which is funded by the New South Wales Government. Nothing could be further from the truth. Not one student under this program is at risk, nor will one ever be at risk of losing his or her place as a result of funding being terminated from the provider. This is because all funding for students under the Smart and Skilled program follows the students, not the providers. If anyone has any concerns because of those malicious lies, particularly those who receive funding under this program, I advise them to visit the website *smartandskilled.nsw.gov.au*. It is one thing to complain about policy or the way a program is run, but it is another thing entirely to cause unnecessary concern to those members of society who rely on us for certainty and support.

Under freedom of information guidelines, the Opposition received documents concerning the cessation of the provider's right to enrol new students and immediately sought to exploit the issue by seeking a short-term political hit. Unfortunately, it either failed to read the document properly or to make the correct inquiries as to how this impacted on the students. Anyone who has read the documents properly would know that they make no reference whatsoever to students with disabilities and at no time do they suggest that their funding has been cut.

Members in this place have a unique role to provide every opportunity to people with disabilities to achieve the skills they seek to help meet their needs. This is done by exempting them from fees and by providing additional loadings, which not only helps but also encourages them to develop their skills. Those irresponsible reports that Labor has placed with media outlets and on social media have placed undue stress and concern on people with a disability and their families. Once support has been sought, we have a further responsibility to ensure that all training is at the highest possible standard. That is why any provider who delivers poor quality or does not meet the required guidelines will not be allowed to provide that service. Smart and Skilled was introduced with tough quality measures to address serious issues impacting the provision of vocational education and training, including in the Commonwealth VET Fee-Help scheme.

The Australian Government has now remodelled its national scheme on the same approach we have taken with Smart and Skilled. We will work only with high-quality providers and are quick to determine those who fail to meet our standards while always providing affected students with alternative options to continue their studies with minimal disruption. We make no excuse or apology for tightening the standards that Labor operated under prior to the Liberal-Nationals taking office. New South Wales Labor handed over \$200 million to 500 private providers in 2010 with very little being done to ensure that the services provided would benefit those receiving it.

Under the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government, a suspended provider has the opportunity to rectify non-compliances, which could be minor, and is able to continue training students who are already enrolled, but it cannot enrol additional students in Government-funded Smart and Skilled training until any issues related to that suspension are assessed to the department's satisfaction. We will not, however, name suspended providers for minor breaches that could be rectified easily because this could needlessly damage a provider's reputation and cause students undue or unwarranted concern, which could be detrimental to their studies. If serious allegations are substantiated, we can and we will proceed straight to termination. I reiterate that the funding follows the student, and that they are not ever placed at risk. The Opposition's failed attempt at pointscoring at the expense of the most vulnerable in our community is a disgrace, pure and simple.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): The question is that this House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 16:30 until Tuesday 7 March 2017 at 14:30.