



New South Wales

Legislative Council

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Sixth Parliament
First Session**

Thursday, 6 April 2017

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday, 6 April 2017

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

The PRESIDENT read the prayers.

Bills

GREYHOUND RACING BILL 2017

Protest

The PRESIDENT: I report receipt of a letter of protest under Standing Order 161 against the passing of the Greyhound Racing Bill 2017. The protest will be entered in the *Minutes of Proceedings* for today and a copy will be forwarded to the Governor.

Dissentient:

1. Because, if enacted, this Bill will allow the continuation of the greyhound racing industry which has a track record of entrenched animal neglect and cruelty, dog drugging and the breeding and killing of tens of thousands of greyhounds for the purposes of gambling.
2. Because this Bill does not have adequate animal welfare measures to address the issues identified in the greyhound racing industry and protect animals from harm.
3. Because the "Code of Practice", the key tool required for implementing animal welfare, has not been developed and is not included in the Bill.
4. Because this Bill will subsidise an industry rife with animal cruelty by providing \$41 million of taxpayers money to the greyhound racing industry.
5. Because the case made for the Greyhound Racing Amendment (Greyhound Racing Integrity Commission) Bill 2016 to ban greyhound racing in NSW was based on strong and lengthy evidence, but the case for this Bill to overturn the ban is neither well founded nor grounded in fact, and has been done for political purposes.

Dr Mehreen Faruqi MLC
Mr Jeremy Buckingham MLC
Mr Justin Field MLC
Ms Dawn Walker MLC

Legislative Council Chamber
6 April 2017

Motions

AUSTRALIAN ENERGY MARKET

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (10:03): I seek leave to amend Private Members' Business item No. 1275 outside the Order of Precedence by inserting "recognising this will be a significant change for the market and the commission will need to address the implications of the contract market IT systems and metering, among other matters" after "Australian Energy Market rules" in paragraph (c).

Leave granted.

Accordingly, I move:

That this House:

- (a) recognises the potential for batteries, energy storage and demand management to both stabilise energy supply and drive down electricity costs in New South Wales;
- (b) supports a change in the wholesale electricity market rules to a five minute settlement period, rather than the current 30 minute settlement period, to create a level playing field for fast response technology such as battery storage and demand management; and
- (c) calls on the Australian Energy Market Commission to implement this change to the Australian Energy Market rules, recognising this will be a significant change for the market and the commission will need to address the implications of the contract market, IT systems and metering, among other matters.

Motion agreed to.

BUNDANOON IS BRIGADOON HIGHLAND GATHERING FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (10:04): I move:

- (1) That this House acknowledges the fortieth anniversary of Bundanoon is Brigadoon.
- (2) That this House notes:
 - (a) that "Brigadoon" is recognised as the premier Scottish event in Australia and is held in the Southern Highlands town of Bundanoon annually;
 - (b) the dedicated work of the Brigadoon Committee in coordinating the event, recognising their mantra of "by the community, for the community";
 - (c) that "Brigadoon" is an all-inclusive community affair featuring music, dancing, weightlifting, arts and crafts, food, competitions and performances; and
 - (d) that for the fortieth anniversary celebrations, the Chieftain of the Day will be a distinguished Southern Highlands resident, Mr Jimmy Barnes, AO.

Motion agreed to.

Irregular Petitions

SHOALHAVEN COAL SEAM GAS EXPLORATION

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow the presentation of an irregular petition from 41,074 citizens of New South Wales concerning coal seam gas exploration in the Shoalhaven.

Petition received.

Business of the House

POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I move:

That Business of the House Notice of Motion No. 1 be postponed until Thursday 4 May 2017.

Motion agreed to.

Committees

STANDING COMMITTEE ON STATE DEVELOPMENT

Reference

The Hon. GREG PEARCE: I inform the House that in accordance with the resolution of the House relating to the establishment of committees, the Standing Committee on State Development resolved on Wednesday 5 April 2017 to adopt the following reference from the Minister for Planning, the Hon. Anthony Roberts, MP:

- (1) That the Standing Committee on State Development inquire into and report on how Sydney's growing prominence as a global city enhances regional development in New South Wales, and in particular:
 - (a) ensuring the regions benefit from the expansion of international trade, infrastructure, employment, tourism, innovation and research in the greater Sydney region;
 - (b) identify the sectors of the economy that can provide the greatest opportunities for regional development, including forecasts for jobs growth;
 - (c) how collaboration between levels of government, non-government and private sectors can assist the regions to benefit from Sydney's global position; and
 - (d) any other related matter.
- (2) That the committee report by 28 April 2018.

Business of the House

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:

- (1) That the order of Private Members' Business for today be as follows:

- (a) Private Members' Business item No. 1283 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. Walt Secord relating to the Public Health Amendment (Vaccination of Children Attending Child Care Facilities) Bill;
 - (b) Private Members' Business item No. 767 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. Robert Brown relating to the Public Health Amendment (Registered Nurses in Nursing Homes) Bill 2016;
 - (c) Private Members' Business item No. 1291 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. Ben Franklin, No. 1289 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. Walt Secord and No. 1277 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of Ms Dawn Walker relating to floods in northern New South Wales;
 - (d) Private Members' Business item No. 1213 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. Daniel Mookhey relating to penalty rates;
 - (e) Private Members' Business item No. 1211 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. Paul Green relating to the Bible Society;
 - (f) Private Members' Business item No. 5 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile relating to the Alcoholic Beverages Advertising Prohibition Bill 2015; and
 - (g) Private Members' Business item No. 968 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. Bronnie Taylor relating to Dementia Awareness Month.
- (2) That notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the standing and sessional orders:
- (a) on the President calling on Private Members' Business item No. 1291 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. Ben Franklin, the following motions be moved in globo:
 - (i) Private Members' Business item No. 1291 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. Ben Franklin;
 - (ii) Private Members' Business item No. 1289 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. Walt Secord; and
 - (iii) Private Members' Business item No. 1277 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of Ms Dawn Walker.
 - (b) the time for debate on the motions be two hours;
 - (c) the mover of each motion may speak for not more than 20 minutes;
 - (d) any other member may speak for not more than 15 minutes;
 - (e) each mover may speak for not more than five minutes in reply;
 - (f) the question on the motions be put seriatim; and
 - (g) if the questions on the motions are not earlier disposed of, after one hour and 45 minutes the President is to interrupt business to allow the movers of the motions to speak in reply, after which the President will put all questions to finally dispose of the motions.

Motion agreed to.

Bills

PUBLIC HEALTH AMENDMENT (VACCINATION OF CHILDREN ATTENDING CHILD CARE FACILITIES) BILL 2017

First Reading

Bill introduced, and read a first time and ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Walt Secord.

Second Reading

The Hon. WALT SECORD (10:20): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

As Labor's shadow Minister for Health and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I am pleased to introduce the Public Health Amendment (Vaccination of Children Attending Child Care Facilities) Bill 2017. The bill is for an Act to amend the Public Health Act 2010 to prevent unvaccinated children being enrolled at childcare facilities if the only reason that they are unvaccinated is a parent's personal beliefs, which are inaccurately described as "conscientious beliefs". For the purposes of the bill a childcare centre is a childcare day centre, a family or home day care environment or a preschool. To be very clear, this bill will not affect exemptions for children with genuine medical contraindications certified by a medical practitioner.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: Bit of a mess, isn't it?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Are you against this, Duncan?

The Hon. Duncan Gay: I am listening to what you are saying. It does not make a lot of sense.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: That is because you are not very smart.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Walt Secord has the call and will direct all his comments through the Chair.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Indeed, the purpose of the bill is to protect those children who legitimately cannot be vaccinated by encouraging healthy children to be vaccinated. Of course, as soon as I say that, I must note that it is not the healthy children of New South Wales we need to encourage—it is their ill-informed and ill-advised parents, and it is not encouragement that we need to give on medical or scientific grounds. A parent's refusal to vaccinate their child is not based on science or medicine; it is based on individual belief. I encourage members to be clear on that distinction as we debate this bill. The bill only affects parents who, due to their personal beliefs and opinions, deny a proven medical treatment that protects both their children and other children from preventable serious illnesses. As we talk about individual choices and parents' rights, let us keep that specific factual context in mind.

The bill is necessary because of a loophole in the existing legislation, created by the previous Minister for Health. It is now necessary to ban the setting up of specialist anti-vaccination childcare centres in New South Wales. Labor's bill also makes it an offence for a principal or operator to enrol a child at a childcare facility or at home-based child care without a vaccination certificate or a medical contraindication certificate. The maximum penalty for a principal or operator will be \$5,500. This legislation fixes and builds on the work of the Public Health Amendment (Vaccination of Children Attending Child Care Facilities) Act 2013. I supported that legislation in June 2013, but at that time I expressed my concerns about the so-called "conscientious exemption". It turns out my concerns were well founded as this loophole was set to be significantly exploited.

To give context, Australia, including New South Wales, clearly has a vaccination crisis. We now have preventable diseases such as measles, whooping cough, tetanus and tuberculosis. Only yesterday, NSW Health reported another measles outbreak in Western Sydney. NSW Health Director of the Communicable Disease Branch, Dr Vicky Sheppeard, said that measles was the most contagious disease known. A person can catch measles by entering a room half an hour after an infected person has been there and they can still catch the infection. This morning, we learn that another six people have been infected, including three children. NSW Health confirm that the victims spent time at Westmead Children's Hospital. This brings the total number of people with measles in New South Wales for 2017 to 19, according to official notifications.

The March edition of the *Medical Journal of Australia* reported that approximately 37,000 conscientious objectors are registered nationally. That means there are about 13,000 in New South Wales. Now we learn that anti-vaccination groups are planning to further exploit this loophole, with two separate reports that groups are planning to set up a so-called "vaccine-free day care" centre. A mother on Sydney's northern beaches has called for expressions of interest. In September 2015, a Lismore mother announced she wanted to set up a similar venture. Both have attracted national attention.

In recent months, reports show that patients are presenting to New South Wales hospitals with vaccine-preventable diseases in increasing numbers. This is, of course, no coincidence. The statistical linkage between low-vaccination rate areas of Australia and the incidence of vaccine-preventable infections is well established. Children are getting serious illnesses that are entirely preventable as a result of parents failing to properly vaccinate. That alone would, in my view, justify closing the so-called conscientious objector loophole. Added to the argument is a rational, objective view about what the loophole truly supports.

The fact is that this is not conscientious objection. The term "conscientious objection" comes from the anti-conscription movements of the early twentieth century, and the anti-vaxxer movement has stolen the term in an attempt to lend moral credibility to vaccine refusal. That comparison is not valid, nor does it deserve any credibility. Vaccine refusal supports personal opinion—not the opinion of the child, but of the parent, who is not an expert. There is no scientific or medical debate on this: That is settled. The jury is in. Vaccinations work and they save lives.

The greatest improvements to world public health are due to sterilisation of equipment, washing hands, the provision of clean water and, yes, immunisations. No great public debate takes place in our churches, mosques, temples, synagogues, or other places of worship. No great debate takes place amongst our ethicists or philosophers. Vaccine refusal is not a scientific, moral or ethical resistance. It is an egregious elevation of personal choice. The fact of the present situation is that children are getting ill—unnecessarily ill, seriously ill and sometimes fatally ill. It is due to deference to personal choice. That is wrong.

I am a parent and my partner has three young grandsons. I am a big defender of personal choice, but my defence cannot run as far as the right to refuse to vaccinate your child. Personal choices that needlessly deny

medical treatment to children have a name—child neglect. I will say that again: To refuse to vaccinate your child or to subject someone's child to your unvaccinated child is child neglect. We do not give parents personal choices to not educate their children, because this would be neglect. We do not give parents personal choices to not adequately house or clothe their children, because this would be neglect. We do not give parents personal choices to not adequately feed and nourish their children, because this would be neglect. Why then are vaccinations any different? To those who will argue that this is the State interfering in parental choices, I will be very clear: Yes, we are interfering in parental choices.

A State does this in various ways in a civil society on a daily basis. We do not opt-in to seatbelt laws, because they save lives. And so on and so forth. Why should vaccination refusal be so privileged by this Parliament? Why would our State fine the parent who does not have his or her child in the right booster seat but respect the one who skips booster shots that vaccinate against polio, tetanus and whooping cough? The fact is that the anti-vaxxer loophole deeply privileges personal opinion in the face of all medical, scientific and policy evidence. It never should have been opened by the previous Minister for Health, and it certainly needs to be closed. It is in everyone's interest to increase vaccination rates.

I do not want to revisit the evidence for that statement in detail, because I do not wish to add to the perception that there is any debate about it from any evidence-based framework. That is settled. Vaccinations have saved millions, probably billions, of lives in the developed and developing world. That is settled. This is why mothers in Africa and the Indian subcontinent line up for hours to vaccinate their children, yet on the northern beaches of Sydney and on parts of the North Coast, they are resisting. Vaccination rates in northern New South Wales, in some parts of the State's east and on the northern beaches have slipped to unacceptably dangerous levels. In 2014-15 the Byron shire rate was 61 per cent, the Mullumbimby rate was 46.7 per cent, and the Murwillumbah rate was 76 per cent. These are at dangerous levels. Across the northern New South Wales local health district the vaccination rates for children under the age of two is just 84.9 per cent. That is the worst local health district in the State.

Just yesterday I read about a measles outbreak in Romania where the national vaccination rate is at 86 per cent. Romania has seen nearly 2,000 cases of measles, including 17 children who have died since February 2016, the World Health Organization has reported. The decline in vaccinations in Romania has been attributed to the anti-vaccination movement in Romania. Romania now has Europe's highest measles infection rates. In contrast, there is some good news in New South Wales. Parts of Wollongong have the highest vaccination rates in New South Wales. Woonona, Woonona East and Russell Vale have the second-highest vaccination rates in Australia, second only to the Goulburn Valley in Victoria.

In Australia, we need to have a herd immunity rate of about 95 per cent so that we can provide a form of indirect protection from infectious disease that occurs when a large percentage of a population has become immune and, sadly, as these vaccination rates drop, we are seeing these diseases in New South Wales again. Just last month it was reported that for the first time in decades a tetanus case had emerged in a seven-year-old girl in northern New South Wales—that is truly terrifying.

How could this House accept that New South Wales vaccination rates are lower than those in developing countries such as Rwanda, Eritrea and Bangladesh, which have vaccination rates of between 93 and 99 per cent? How can we continue to accept that parents in an affluent and fortunate country such as Australia would choose not to vaccinate their children? We have to find ways to increase vaccination rates. The results of the anti-vax movement now show us it is not only open to us but incumbent upon this Parliament to plug choice-based loopholes. Vaccinations are the only way to protect against serious diseases like polio, mumps, whooping cough, meningococcal, diphtheria and tetanus.

No-one has the right to infect someone else's child, as has been proposed in a number of invitations on social media forums to set up "pox parties". To fail to vaccinate your child is simply irresponsible; it is neglect. It is for this reason that the New South Wales Labor Party has supported Federal Government measures like "No jab, no pay" and the stand of the Prime Minister to drive up vaccination rates. I was asked yesterday on ABC Illawarra by broadcaster Nick Rheinberger if I supported Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's position on vaccinations. I said yes, without hesitation. I am 100 per cent on board. I am in total agreement with him and Labor leader Bill Shorten.

In fact, I would support even further and tougher measures on vaccinations at both the State and Federal levels. It is for this reason that we propose that New South Wales should take the lead on this issue. This legislation before us will give New South Wales the toughest anti-vaccination laws in Australia. We make no apologies for taking these tough steps to protect children and the overall community. I take this opportunity to appeal to New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian and Minister for Health Brad Hazzard to put aside partisan politics and provide bipartisan support for this sensible legislation. On the weekend the Premier was asked at a press conference of her views on this bill and she was reluctant to give her in-principle support. Former health Minister

Jillian Skinner refused to toughen the laws, but we have a unique opportunity before us: we can protect a whole generation of children.

I now will briefly address the specifics of the bill. Clause 2 states that the bill will commence on the date of assent of the proposed Act. Clause 3 amends the Public Health Act 2010 with the effect that the principal of a childcare facility must not enrol, or permit to be enrolled, an unvaccinated child at the facility if the only reason provided for failure to vaccinate the child is that the parent of the child has a conscientious belief that the child should not be vaccinated against specified vaccine-preventable diseases. The proposed amendments also make it an offence for the principal of a childcare facility to enrol a child at the facility if the principal has not been provided with a vaccination certificate or a medical contraindication certificate. Breaches of this requirement will result in a penalty of 50 penalty units. That is currently set at \$5,500.

Furthermore, under the legislation, a medical contraindication certificate means a certificate in the approved form by an authorised practitioner certifying that a specified child should have an exemption for one or more vaccines for specified vaccine-preventable diseases due to a medical contraindication to vaccination. I would not dispute the right or the need to have exemptions for the rare cases of children who cannot be safely vaccinated on legitimate, documented and proven medical grounds. I refer to genuine medical risks assessed by practising general practitioners—not those placed on the internet by people with no medical qualifications or quacks, like the American David "Avocado" Wolfe who visited Australia in February. I make no apologies for calling on the State Government to intervene to stop a talk by him at the new International Convention Centre Sydney, paid for by the New South Wales taxpayers. I thought it was irresponsible for the Berejiklian Government to allow a taxpayer-funded facility to be used as a platform for him. I also note that the member for Summer Hill, Jo Haylen, led an effort to remove him from a council facility and it was successful.

At the end of the day, this bill comes down to whether personal opinion should trump evidence in a matter of public health policy. We know, as legislators, that it cannot. As I have said on many occasions, I am all for listening to other views, but public health policy is not a matter of opinion, philosophy or religion. Public health policy is a matter of evidence. There is no other way to do it. The evidence is in and the jury has reached its conclusion. It is clear. It is settled. Despite endless revisiting, re-publication and promotion of that evidence, a fringe just refuses to accept it. Is that their right? Yes, it is. But it is not their right to think that it is fine to drive after 10 schoolers or to refuse to wear seatbelts or to drive excessively in a school zone—if they act on those thoughts, the law will intervene to protect everyone else, including our children.

As I have said, we would not privilege the views of a person who argued against drink-driving laws, speed restrictions in school zones, or seatbelt laws due to personal choice, so why should they apply to vaccinations? I would like to close by referring to a recent article written by two American paediatricians—one a mother of three—based on their experiences at Miami Children's Hospital, Florida. In a moving piece Dr Phoebe Danziger and Dr Rebekah Diamond wrote of their great frustration in treating:

...a purposefully un-immunized child for a serious brain infection ... requiring weeks of hospitalisation with intravenous antibiotics—and then watch his mother continue to refuse vaccines for him or his siblings, and we can't do anything about it.

They continue:

There are many ethically grey areas of medicine, but this is not one ... By continuing to allow exceptions, we are fuelling the misconception that vaccinations are an option, a choice, a subjective topic ... when all of the data proves they are not. Enacting a policy that is consistent with the science would provide clarity for the parents—the majority of whom are loving caretakers trying to do the right thing.

They conclude:

There is simply no reason vaccinations should be treated differently than any other form of medical care, and they must be protected within the same framework that has been created for child protection and against medical neglect. As a legislator, I can only agree. In almost every question this House faces where parental choice comes up against children's rights, we defer to the rights of the child. This is no different. If vaccination refusal is viewed as a right of parents it is one that directly conflicts with the right of a child to be free of preventable, serious, and possibly fatal, illnesses. It is time to treat vaccination not as a choice of parents but as the right of children. This bill takes a small but significant step in upholding that right. I thank members for their consideration and commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

PUBLIC HEALTH AMENDMENT (REGISTERED NURSES IN NURSING HOMES) BILL 2016

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 12 May 2016.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR (10:40): I begin by acknowledging the nurses who are in the public gallery. As someone who practised as a nurse for many years before joining this Parliament, including as a clinical

nurse specialist in palliative care, I appreciate and thank them for the job that they do. On 6 May 2015 I stated in my inaugural speech to this Parliament that I have seen the best and the worst of government in health. At its worst, government imposes policy upon communities that simply does not fit. At its best, it partners with communities to assist in solving their health issues. I also stated that my nursing career taught me to deliver a message with truth and transparency, no matter how difficult it is to hear. In this spirit, I say with all due respect that this bill is unwisely and unnecessarily seeking to impose requirements on an aged care system in a way that does not prioritise the diverse needs of those who use it.

The Berejiklian-Barilaro Government supports maintaining and promoting appropriate levels of nursing care in aged care facilities. This has been made clear throughout the debates that have arisen around the question of nursing levels. However, this bill seeks to impose on a system which is under Commonwealth jurisdiction and which is under review to benefit from a national approach. These issues are complex, and that is demonstrated by the range of recommendations made by the General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3 report tabled in October 2015. As a member of the committee, I am fully aware that a range of issues need to be worked through and very carefully considered. Taking one of those recommendations and legislating in isolation, as this bill proposes, will not address them. Legislation is too blunt a tool to deal with such a complex issue.

Before turning to the terms of the Public Health Amendment (Registered Nurses in Nursing Homes) Bill, it is important to correct some of the comments made by the Hon. Robert Brown when introducing it. The suggestion was made that the changes proposed in the bill to require all facilities to have a registered nurse in attendance 24/7 was not new and had been in place since 1988. That is not correct. In 2005 the regulation of aged care changed in Australia when the Commonwealth Government took over the role of both funding and regulating aged care facilities. As regulator, the Commonwealth Government is responsible for oversight and inspection of facilities, managing and investigating complaints, and enforcing the standards. States and Territories no longer have a regulatory role.

In recognition of this, the NSW Nursing Homes Act was repealed. The requirement for nursing attendance was also changed at that time. From 2005 the requirement was limited to facilities designated by the Commonwealth Government as "high care". Low-care facilities were not required to have 24/7 coverage. The changes in this bill go beyond the 2005 position and apply the requirement to all facilities, and by so doing seek to change the rules that have been in place for 12 years. The concerns raised by the aged care sector with the Government about the potential impact on current aged care services, particularly those in small facilities in rural and remote areas of the State, remain very real.

The evidence heard by the General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3 inquiry also dealt with the potential impact of such a blanket approach on the viability of smaller aged care providers. Many of these facilities are in rural and remote locations where there is already limited access to aged care services. Such facilities provide vital support that enables residents to remain in their communities, close to family and friends. No-one here can argue against the importance of remaining close to one's community at such a vulnerable time. A reduction of aged care services in rural and remote areas would therefore impact directly on elderly people who would be displaced from their local communities.

The committee took the concerns raised by providers seriously. It recognised that the issues involved in ensuring patient-centred care in the aged care sector are wider and more complex than simply imposing a blanket legislative requirement. These patients may not need 24/7 registered nursing care. Instead, their needs may best be met by an enrolled nurse or an assistant in nursing. The committee expressly stated that it did not intend the 24/7 requirement to be extended to all aged care facilities; rather, it recommended a system of exemptions. While there were difficulties with the exemption regime proposed, particularly as it would, in part, duplicate the existing Commonwealth regulatory framework, the approach focused on the needs of residents in aged care, and on ensuring that support and services are maintained.

This bill proposes to insert a new definition of "nursing home" into the Public Health Act, and to extend the requirement for a 24/7 registered nurse to all aged care facilities in New South Wales, irrespective of the level of care they provide to residents. Surely the care level needs to determine the skill mix, not rigid legislation. The reference in the bill to facilities providing a "high level of residential care however described" is meaningless. The term is no longer used or defined in the Commonwealth aged care legislation. The phrase is vague, there is no guidance as to its meaning, and it fails to recognise that not all high-care needs involve medical or nursing support. As I already stated, the regulation of aged care services transferred to the Commonwealth Government in 2005. That is, the aged care system has been regulated at a national level for 12 years.

The best path for action is to work with our colleagues around Australia to improve the national regime rather than tinkering with elements at the State level. The Government has made a commitment to do this, and has followed through with that commitment. It also made a commitment not to repeal the existing regulation,

which maintains the status quo in New South Wales until the Government is satisfied with the outcome of these discussions. That remains the case.

I entered this Parliament as a very proud nurse. I would not stand here today and talk about the things I have unless I really meant them. I truly believe that mandating ratios will not deliver the best health outcomes. Good, holistic health care is about a patient-centred approach that includes all professionals who work across the system. The community expects patient-centred care and we cannot achieve that with inflexible legislation reaching out from Macquarie Street and into every aged care facility across our diverse State. The Government does not and cannot support this bill.

The Hon. Walt Secord: When you were a nurse, you supported ratios.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I did not. I never did.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. WALT SECORD (10:49): As Deputy Leader of the Opposition, shadow Minister for Health and one of two Labor members on a parliamentary inquiry into registered nurses in aged care, I lead for Labor in debate on the Public Health Amendment (Registered Nurses in Nursing Homes) Bill 2016. I note that this is a crossbench bill from the Hon. Robert Brown of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. He introduced the bill on 12 May and moved its second reading on the same day. I commend him for his work in this important public health policy area. I would like, first, to correct a statement by the Hon. Bronnie Taylor representing the Government. Amendment No. 3 refers specifically to high-care facilities. It is not a "grey" piece of legislation, as she has claimed. She is part of a government that watered down protections for the elderly in our community.

I am surprised she would draw on her days as a nurse to try to cover up the watering down of protections that the Government has overseen. This is an important bill because it is about protecting the most vulnerable in our community—the frail and aged. The bill would amend the Public Health Act 2010 to ensure that section 104 is kept. That section is about ensuring that a registered nurse is required to be on duty in a nursing home at all times. The object of this bill is to ensure that this requirement is continued by updating the definition of "nursing home" so that it is consistent with the terminology relating to aged care facilities under the Commonwealth Aged Care Act 1997. The stance by the Baird and Berejiklian governments on this important policy area has been nothing short of deplorable and cruel. They would see this basic protection for nursing home residents stripped away through legislative anomalies. They would see our aged willingly made to suffer through a failure to correct the fine print. It is mean and tricky politics at its worst.

If the Legislative Council passes this bill, the new health Minister, Brad Hazzard, may have an opportunity to redeem a tiny portion of his predecessor's odious legacy by supporting this legislation. If he does not then without this bill nursing home residents will have to wait hours for pain relief or wait to be transferred to a hospital or the emergency department. A registered nurse is highly trained, has completed a three-year bachelor of nursing degree, has a minimum of 800 hours of clinical placement and must apply to the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia and undertake at least 20 hours of professional development each year.

Registered nurses administer schedule 8 drugs, oversee medications including managing side effects, undertake nursing procedures such as wound care and the insertion of urinary catheters, provide palliative care and support, and supervise enrolled nurses and assistants in nursing. In short, they can carry out procedures in an aged care facility that would otherwise have to take place in a hospital setting or in an emergency department. There are more than 80 emergency departments in New South Wales. Anyone who understands aged care will know that for those reasons registered nurses save lives and reduce suffering and pain for the elderly. That is to be supported.

If health Minister Brad Hazzard and the Premier fail to support this bill they will be condemning our public health system to an unnecessary additional burden. Registered nurses provide a valuable service in reducing unnecessary admissions to emergency departments. Our State's emergency departments are already at breaking point. We know that aged care facilities without registered nurses send elderly patients to emergency departments because they do not have access to a general practitioner [GP] or registered nurse. Unfortunately, at any given time at least 550 elderly patients are in New South Wales hospital beds when they would be better suited to care in an aged care facility.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: How many?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: There are 550 on any given day in this State. Elderly patients should be in an aged care bed rather than a hospital bed. Many elderly patients are taken to emergency departments because the aged care facility does not have a registered nurse available to carry out certain procedures. That results in considerable cost-shifting to the New South Wales health system and exacerbates the problem known as bed

block. While aged care is a Commonwealth responsibility, a poorly run and mismanaged aged care facility is a concern for all levels of government. Those are two good reasons for the new health Minister to draw a distinction from his failed predecessor, Jillian Skinner.

Members are aware that I have a longstanding interest in and knowledge of the aged care sector after having served as chief of staff to a Federal aged care Minister from 2007 to 2009. During that time I became convinced of the need to provide comprehensive protections for the aged, who are amongst the most vulnerable in our society. At that time then Minister for Ageing the Hon. Justine Elliot, who is also the member for Richmond, introduced comprehensive quality checks and ramped up the number of unannounced visits to aged care facilities. Through the Federal Department of Health she issued sanctions against a number of aged care providers who fell short of what was required by failing to provide proper nutrition and hydration to residents. Unfortunately, the Abbott Government wound back many of those protections. This was in response to representations from greedy commercial aged care providers, particularly some notorious ones in southern Queensland.

Although I stress there are some great and ethical operators in this field, my experience of dealing with some of the for-profit aged care providers in southern Queensland was deeply distressing. However, I developed a particular admiration for the faith-based aged care providers who put their residents ahead of profits, unlike their commercial counterparts in southern Queensland that I encountered. I found wonderful people like Dr June Heinrich, who was involved with Baptist Community Services at the time, and Bryan Lippman of Wintringham, who organised specialist aged care for homeless men in Victoria. He received an Australia Day recognition for his work. He was a champion for the powerless.

Caring for our ageing population is one of the biggest challenges facing our nation. Australians have one of the longest life expectancies in the world and now rank alongside the Icelanders, the Japanese and the Spanish for longevity. The number of Australians aged 65 years and over is expected to increase rapidly, from around 2.5 million in 2002 to 6.2 million in 2042. That is up from approximately 13 per cent of the population to approximately 25 per cent—almost double. For Australians aged 85 years and over the growth will be even more rapid, from approximately 300,000 in 2002 to 1.1 million in 2042. A third of those people will live in New South Wales and many of them will live on the Central Coast, mid North Coast and far North Coast. By 2056 the overall population of New South Wales will rise to 11.2 million people—approximately 50 per cent more than it is today.

Life expectancy for males will increase from 81 years to 89 years and for females it will increase from 85 years to 91 years. New South Wales will have approximately 18,000 people over the age of 100 years compared to the current number of 1,500. Almost a quarter of the population—24 per cent—will be more than 65 years old, which is up from the current figure of 16 per cent. That is something to be welcomed and celebrated. This will be due to medical advances and our healthy lifestyles. But we must prepare our health system for this population and demographic shift. We cannot squib this. Health will be one of the largest shares of State expenses—a worthwhile and important one. The challenges of an ageing population are many but that is not an excuse to vacate the field and wind back protections in the way the Baird Government and the Berejiklian Government have done.

We must ensure that when people turn to aged care they are cared for properly. That is why I congratulate the Hon. Robert Brown and the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party on introducing this bill. In his second reading speech in May, the Hon. Robert Brown said that he hoped he had the support of the crossbench and the Opposition. I can confirm today that Labor will be supporting the bill. Last year, shortly after he introduced the bill, it was unanimously supported by our shadow Cabinet. After all, this was Australian Labor Party policy at the March 2015 State election, and it was a key recommendation of the parliamentary committee into the matter, chaired by the then Greens member of the Legislative Council, Ms Jan Barham, who has since retired. It has also been the subject of a highly successful and effective grassroots campaign by the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association—I note the association is represented in the gallery today—and the whole community. It is supported by doctors, nurses and various medical bodies, groups representing seniors and aged care residents themselves.

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association lodged a petition with more than 24,000 signatures in this Parliament advocating retaining registered nurses in aged care. Furthermore, many of my colleagues have received representations from members of the community pleading with us to fight the Baird and Berejiklian governments' plans to wind back protections for the aged. I still get such letters. Just last week I got a letter from the Summer Hill Labor State Electoral Council saying that it wanted to see a restoration of registered nurses, and wanting to know whether we were going to support the bill. I can assure the council that we strongly support this requirement. I take this opportunity to appeal once again to the Government to reconsider its position and now support the bill.

We all know that the then health Minister, Jillian Skinner, indicated that her Government would be removing the requirement to have registered nurses in aged care 24 hours a day, seven days a week, whereas New South Wales had previously led Australia by mandating higher standards for aged care. We know she dropped the news late on Friday afternoon on 29 April 2016 to avoid scrutiny, hoping that no-one would notice. But everyone noticed. It was a deplorable attack on the protections and rights of our aged. Her term as health

Minister showed that she was insensitive to the community and community attitudes. The new Minister, Brad Hazzard, has an opportunity to reverse Mrs Skinner's deplorable actions. I encourage the new Minister to diverge from the path of his predecessor and embrace this opportunity to show our aged care community that he is a Minister for health.

I turn briefly to the technical matters of the bill. The object of this bill is to ensure that this requirement is continued by updating the definition of "nursing home" so that it is consistent with the terminology relating to aged care facilities under the Federal Aged Care Act 1997. By way of background, on 1 July 2014 the Commonwealth Government repealed the distinction between high- and low-level residential care in Australia. Subsequently, section 104 of the New South Wales Public Health Act 2010 was rendered inoperable. This was because the definition of "nursing home" relied on the definition of "high level of residential care" in the Commonwealth Aged Care Act 1997. Shortly afterwards, New South Wales gazetted the Public Health (Nursing Homes) Regulation 2014 that maintained the requirement of a registered nurse 24/7 in facilities that were classified as nursing homes before 1 July 2014. However, it would not apply to any new facilities after that date.

On 29 October 2015, General Standing Purpose Standing Committee No. 3 released a report entitled "Registered Nurses in New South Wales nursing homes". I served on that committee which recommended that the Baird Government retain the requirement for registered nurses 24/7. That committee received evidence upon evidence supporting the retention of the regulation. The only people who spoke against it were commercial aged care providers—people who make profits out of aged care. It was very disappointing that the then Minister for Health was listening to the commercial aged care providers, who want to reduce oversight and protections.

The reaction to the decision has been justifiably overwhelming and angry. The Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association said it was gobsmacked by then Minister for Health Jillian Skinner's response to the parliamentary inquiry that had urged the Baird Government to retain 24/7 registered nurses. The Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association policy coordinator Ellis Blaikie said, "The only benefit of removing the 24/7 Registered Nurse requirement is increased profits for nursing homes. But it comes at a high cost to elderly residents and their families." I agree unreservedly.

I reject claims being spread by nefarious players in the commercial aged care sector. It is absolutely untrue that having one registered nurse on staff will be onerous. In fact, one nursing home provider in Bankstown claimed that this legislation would drive up his costs by \$1 million a year. That is a lie. It is shameful that they are peddling false information on such a vital public health issue. I believe that there should be a special Federal parliamentary inquiry into commercial aged care providers and their profits. When I was working at the Federal level, I encountered southern Queensland aged care providers who claimed that they could barely make a profit. We discovered that they were sending their profits to Vanuatu. They had set up shelf companies overseas, where they had millions of dollars saved. Having at least one registered nurse on staff is not an onerous requirement, especially given the size of some aged care facilities. And the requirement has been standard practice in this State for 28 years—stretching back to the Nursing Homes Act 1988, which said:

The licensee of a nursing home shall, at all times while the nursing home is being conducted, cause a registered nurse to be on duty in the nursing home.

That was in place for 28 years, but the Baird and Berejiklian governments removed that protection. I recognise that there are challenges for rural and regional areas, but that is not a reason to remove the requirement. I think there are ways to address this. I conclude by once again reiterating my special plea to the new Premier, Gladys Berejiklian, and the new Minister for Health, Brad Hazzard. They should overturn the previous Minister's heartless approach to aged care and her desire to wind back protections. The new Minister owes it to older Australians to protect them by resisting commercial for-profit aged care providers who want to reduce oversight and protections such as requiring registered nurses in aged care facilities. Having a registered nurse on duty also gives other nurses extra support, back-up and experience when it comes to making decisions involving the welfare of the frail aged in our society. I commend the bill to the House and urge Coalition members to reverse the decision of Jillian Skinner and support the bill of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. I congratulate the Hon. Robert Brown; he has done fantastic work.

Ms DAWN WALKER (11:08): The Greens support the Public Health Amendment (Registered Nurses in Nursing Homes) Bill 2016. Elderly people in aged care facilities are vulnerable members of our community and this bill will restore the level of care that was afforded to them for almost 30 years until the law was changed in 2014. As our population ages we must provide more assistance and resources for their care, not less as the Government has done since 2014. A sad case of what can happen without a registered nurse on staff was reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* two years ago, when Mrs Rogers, a resident of a low-care nursing home, fell out bed and was admitted to Prince of Wales Hospital emergency department suffering compression fractures in her spine.

The next day the hospital asked the nursing home to take Mrs Rogers back, but the nursing home said it was not able to do so for two more days, which is when a registered nurse would be rostered on duty. The Prince of Wales Hospital could not accommodate Mrs Rogers any longer. She was forcibly moved to another hospital and was not able to return to her nursing home. She died from her injuries five days later. Her case highlighted the need for registered nurses to be on staff in aged care homes at all times so that people can return safely to their nursing homes instead of remaining in hospital. I thank the Hon. Robert Brown for introducing this bill, which builds on the significant work done by my predecessor, Ms Jan Barham. In 2015 an inquiry chaired by Ms Barham examined a range of issues dealing with aged care. The need to restore registered nurses to aged care facilities was a key recommendation of that inquiry. All members of the committee—Government, Opposition and crossbench members—supported that recommendation.

The NSW Nurses and Midwives Association is a strong supporter of this bill and has worked closely with the offices of Ms Jan Barham and the Hon. Robert Brown to develop it. This bill restores the requirement, which had been standard practice in this State until 2014, to have a registered nurse on staff in an aged care facility at all times. Since that time, aged care facilities have been able to operate without a registered nurse on staff at all times, leading to lower standards of care for aged care residents across New South Wales. This is a good bill, which will ensure we provide properly qualified, high-standard and timely care to some of the most vulnerable members of the community when they need it most. It is a step in the right direction to a more compassionate and dignified approach to caring for our society. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

GREYHOUND RACING BILL 2017

Messages

The PRESIDENT: I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly agreeing to the Legislative Council's amendment to the abovementioned bill.

Motions

NORTH COAST FLOODS

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: I move:

- (1) That this House acknowledges that communities in northern New South Wales were devastated by flooding on 31 March 2017, 1 April 2017 and 2 April 2017 caused by Cyclone Debbie.
- (2) That this House notes that Lismore, Tweed, Ballina, Byron, Kyogle and Richmond Valley local government areas have all been declared natural disaster areas.
- (3) That this House offers condolences to the families and friends of those who have lost their lives as a result of the North Coast floods.
- (4) That this House thanks the State Emergency Service volunteers, and all other volunteers and emergency services personnel for providing assistance to victims of the North Coast floods.
- (5) That this House supports efforts to help northern New South Wales recover from the floods and notes the appointment of Mr Euan Ferguson as the recovery coordinator.
- (6) That this House commends and thanks those members of our communities who volunteer their time, effort and skill, and who show such bravery in times of crisis for the benefit of others.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I move:

- (1) That this House acknowledges and supports flood-affected communities on the North Coast following the worst floods in more than five decades.
- (2) That this House calls on the State Government and the Federal Government to provide assistance to families, local government, community groups, farmers and businesses in the region.
- (3) That this House acknowledges and thanks the police, health workers, State Emergency Service, volunteers and other emergency workers for their tireless efforts.
- (4) That this House expresses its sympathy and condolences to family and friends who lost loved ones in the floods.

Ms DAWN WALKER: I move:

- (1) That this House acknowledges:
 - (a) the impact on communities in New South Wales and Queensland from Cyclone Debbie, including the biggest floods in the New South Wales Northern Rivers since 1974;
 - (b) that around 20,000 people were ordered to evacuate their homes in Lismore, Murwillumbah and surrounding towns;

- (c) that this has been a very difficult time for many people in the community and that tragically several people have lost their lives; and
 - (d) that many people have also lost their homes, businesses, property, cars, pets, livestock, crops and other valuables.
- (2) That this House thanks the State Emergency Service, other State and Federal emergency agencies and volunteers that have assisted flood victims.
 - (3) That this House expresses its ongoing commitment to the flood clean-up and recovery to help these communities get back on their feet.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN (11:13): On 30 March and 31 March this year a strong cold front combined with an upper trough associated with ex-tropical Cyclone Debbie moved from Queensland down through New South Wales, bringing with it a mass of destruction. Up to 900 millimetres of rain fell in areas of northern New South Wales. Due to this, major flooding was experienced across three river basins in our State, including the Tweed River, the Richmond and Wilsons rivers, and the Brunswick River. Previously the destruction in these areas was, literally, unimaginable. It is genuinely heartbreaking to see my community and surrounding communities go through such utter devastation. Lives have been lost, businesses destroyed and homes rendered uninhabitable.

Our communities will have to summon up every last bastion of strength, courage and tenacity to recover and rebuild, but they will. Events such as this are horrific but they bring communities together, united in their grief to turn their anger and sadness into one aim—the herculean effort of rebuilding lives that have been utterly demolished. In Lismore, ground zero of the devastation, the Wilsons River peaked at nearly 11.6 metres and overtopped the levee at 4 o'clock in the morning on Friday 31 March. The central business district [CBD] was subsequently submerged in floodwater, and more than one million litres of water has been pumped out of the Lismore CBD since then. Floodwaters are currently receding, although minor to moderate flood warnings remain in place for the Richmond and Wilsons rivers, and moderate to major flood warnings are in place for the Macintyre River in Queensland, which can impact north-western New South Wales.

Over the period of the floods, the NSW State Emergency Service [SES] issued four evacuation warnings, 11 evacuation orders and 21 emergency alerts at various stages throughout this event, at one point impacting more than 25,000 residents in areas such as Lismore, Tweed Heads and Murwillumbah. An evacuation order remains in place for Tumbulgum for approximately 330 people. More than 500 SES volunteers are assisting in the clean-up efforts, with an additional 500 personnel from other agencies. The SES State Operations Centre received 10,382 phone calls between 28 March and 5 April 2017, and has responded to 2,868 requests for assistance since the event began. There have been a total of 493 flood rescue activations for this event. I applaud the tireless work of the SES, and all the volunteers from across the State who have left their homes and their loved ones to stand shoulder to shoulder with those whom they have probably never met.

At a time when the sense of service to the community and of civic duty is in decline around the world, active and dedicated volunteers are stoking the fires of social cohesion. We thank them and we honour them. We could not get through this without them. However, it is with great sadness that I report to the House that, as of today, there have been six confirmed fatalities as a result of the floods—lives cut short tragically and needlessly by this act of God. This includes, of course, the almost unfathomable tragedy of the three fatalities near Tumbulgum that resulted from a vehicle careering into the already flooded Tweed River. But, as we know, those three fatalities could have been four. I will never forget the extraordinary, selfless, heroic act of Stephanie King for as long as I live. Our thoughts, our prayers and our hearts are with the friends and families of all those who lost their lives.

Approximately 100 people remain isolated on rural properties across the region, with the majority located in the lower Richmond River area. The SES is continuing to provide support and assistance to flood-affected communities in conjunction with Fire and Rescue NSW, the NSW Rural Fire Service [RFS], NSW Ambulance, the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association and the South Australian SES. New South Wales RFS personnel have provided 24-hour response and incident management team support since 29 March 2017. In addition, the RFS provided five aerial rescue crews, which have completed 19 rescue missions—rescuing a total of 25 people and two domestic animals—eight reconnaissance missions and 10 transport operations.

The crews have moved 10 strike teams into Lismore to assist with recovery. The RFS will continue to support operations in these communities over the coming days. I am pleased to say that high-voltage electricity has been restored to the region and Essential Energy is undertaking door-to-door assessments of flood-affected premises. While some premises in south Lismore and Tumbulgum remain without power due to electrical safety concerns, the appropriate entities are working as fast and effectively as they can to get power restored. Operations are now transitioning from a response phase to a recovery phase as floodwaters continue to subside and the full

impact of the damage is assessed. The New South Wales Government is doing all it can to offer assistance to those affected by this devastation.

To assist the House and all of those affected on the North Coast, I turn now to a range of logistical arrangements that have been put in place to deal with the tragedy. Some 1,293 people have been accommodated through Family and Community Services [FACS] and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency. Red Cross and FACS have assisted residents in emergency accommodation to provide personal support and identify any other needs. Outreach home visits will also be conducted in the affected communities. This is to ensure that residents are aware of the assistance available for loss or damage to homes and contents, according to established eligibility criteria. Information will also be provided regarding recovery assistance, avenues of help in local communities and relevant helplines for specific services. The Disaster Welfare Assistance Line is open from 8.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Disaster welfare operations are ably supported in all events by FACS staff and five key non-government agencies: Adventist Development and Relief Agency [ADRA], Anglicare, Australian Red Cross, Salvation Army, and Uniting Church. For information about disaster assistance, affected individuals should call the Disaster Welfare Assistance Line on 1800 018 444 or visit www.emergency.nsw.gov.au. I can advise the House that Mr Euan Ferguson has been appointed as the recovery coordinator for the floods. Mr Ferguson will work with representatives from each of the affected councils and local, State and Federal representatives to identify the immediate and longer-term impacts of the floods and ensure that there is a coordination of effort to address issues that have arisen.

Impact assessments will also be conducted. As floodwaters recede, agencies are getting out on the ground as quickly as possible to assess the damage to homes, businesses, agriculture, and community infrastructure. These impact assessments will help to inform the development of a recovery strategy. Mr Ferguson will also ensure that the public can voice their concerns and access information about the services that are available. In coming days he will be meeting with local government and other personnel to determine the best recovery structure for this event.

Recovery centres are being established in Lismore and Murwillumbah, and will open today at noon. The Lismore Recovery Centre will be located at the Public Works Facility, 120 Dalley Street, East Lismore. A shuttle bus will be available from the Lismore town centre to the facility running every half-hour to assist people to access the centre. The Murwillumbah Recovery Centre will be at the Murwillumbah Community Centre, Nullum Street, Murwillumbah. These centres will provide a one-stop shop for affected residents, businesses and farmers to help them access the support and information they need to help them recover from these floods.

A wide variety of services is available for individuals impacted by the floods. These include the provision of personal support services by the Australian Red Cross, assistance and advice for small businesses through the Small Biz Connect program, assistance with livestock and other animals affected by the floods through Local Land Services, and information relating to community mental health following a natural disaster. Information on each of these services can also be found at www.emergency.nsw.gov.au. Chaplains from the Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy Network will also be in Lismore from today to talk with small businesses, provide support and help them to complete the survey.

Disaster assistance provided through the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements has been made available to affected communities. The local government areas of Tweed shire, Lismore City, Ballina shire, Byron shire, Richmond Valley and Kyogle will receive this assistance. Assistance measures that are available include: assistance to help people who are uninsured, have sustained damage to homes or contents, and meet an assets and income test; assistance to help councils in the affected areas, with the costs associated with cleaning up and restoring damaged essential public assets; concessional interest rate loans for small business, primary producers and not-for-profit organisations; freight subsidies for primary producers; and grants to not-for-profit organisations.

I urge all those affected to seek information and assistance. For information on personal hardship and distress assistance, individuals should contact the Disaster Welfare Assistance Line on 1800 018 444. To apply for a concessional loan, grant or freight subsidy, they should contact the NSW Rural Assistance Authority on 1800 678 593 or visit www.raa.nsw.gov.au. Information on the disaster assistance available can be found on the Australian Government's Disaster Assist website at www.disasterassist.gov.au and www.emergency.nsw.gov.au.

The New South Wales Government has activated special assistance for local councils to support the massive clean-up efforts that are underway. Under this special assistance package, the New South Wales Government will reimburse councils for their expenditure on the additional resources that are required to make safe, remove and dispose of green waste and general debris from residential properties that have been impacted

by the floods. We expect this assistance will provide a massive boost to clean-up efforts, and will help residents and communities get back on their feet as speedily as possible.

The Commonwealth Government has now activated the Disaster Recovery Payment and Disaster Recovery Allowance for eligible disaster-affected residents in the local government areas of Lismore and Tweed. People eligible for the Disaster Recovery Payment are those who have suffered serious injury or major damage to their homes as a direct result of the disaster. These people can access a one-off payment of \$1,000 per adult and \$400 per child. People eligible for the Disaster Recovery Allowance can access income assistance for up to 13 weeks. This assistance will help employees, primary producers and sole traders affected by the disaster to get back on their feet as quickly as possible. People can lodge a claim for the disaster recovery payments by calling the Australian Government Information Line on 180 22 66 between 8.00 a.m. and 7.00 p.m., Monday to Friday and between 8.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. Saturday to Sunday, or via humanservices.gov.au/disaster. Completed claim forms can also be lodged at an Australian Department of Human Services service centre, agent or access point.

It is devastating that these motions had to be moved in the House today. I cannot overstate how much I wish that there were no need for them. But I am pleased about the way the House is handling this—three motions from all sides of the Chamber debated as one—which shows that this is not a time for petty politics. It is not a time for cheap political point-scoring; it is a time to unite as a Parliament and do all we can to get these communities back on their feet. We know this on the North Coast, too. I have had lengthy conversations with a range of people across the political spectrum on how we can best support our communities. Whether in discussions with the Labor member for Richmond, The Greens mayor of Byron shire, the Independent mayor of Ballina shire or my locally based Liberal colleague from this place, at this time, on this issue, political stripes have disappeared. We are working together as one for our communities because that is exactly what they expect and deserve. I commend the motions to the House.

The Hon. WALT SECORD (11:26): As Labor's shadow Minister for the North Coast and Deputy Leader of the Opposition I speak in debate on these motions on the devastating North Coast floods. There are three separate motions expressing similar sentiments: one from The Greens' Dawn Walker, one from the Parliamentary Secretary for Renewable Energy and Northern New South Wales, and the Deputy Government Whip, the Hon. Ben Franklin; and one from me. I welcome the constructive decision by the Government Whip, the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, to consider them in globo as a single motion of the House.

Our thoughts and prayers must first be with those who have lost loved ones in the floods. There have been six confirmed deaths. Sadly, the numbers have increased as each day passed and the effects of the aftermath of Cyclone Debbie have been revealed. I particularly mention the tragic loss of mother Stephanie King, aged 43, and her children—Jacob, aged seven, and Ella-Jane, aged 11—who perished on Monday in the Tweed River. Tweed police have said Stephanie King died trying to save her children. Stephanie King's eight-year-old daughter, Chloe-May, miraculously escaped the car as it was washed into the swollen water and was taken to the Tweed Hospital. We also extend our sympathy to the family of Mark Austin, aged 45, who drowned in his caravan and another man, Mr Matthew Roser, aged 46, who died of a heart attack. Both lived in South Murwillumbah.

The latest information available states that the State Emergency Service [SES] has responded to more than 2,700 calls for assistance and assisted in 493 flood rescues. But work continues and will continue for weeks and months. Across this vast continent we often see fire as a clear danger, but we sadly underestimate water, which can kill with the same ferocity. As the Hon. Catherine Cusack said in an adjournment speech on Tuesday night, the Bureau of Meteorology had predicted rainfall in excess of 100 millimetres; however, this proved to be a gross underestimate. In fact, massive rain poured across already saturated catchments for the Richmond-Wilsons rivers and the Tweed River. Lismore and the Tweed Valley, respectively, received at least 400 millimetres and 500 millimetres in just 24 hours. To give it some perspective, Sydney receives an average of 1,220 millimetres of rain a year.

Sadly, the North Coast knows the impact of heavy rain all too well but it was an unprecedented natural disaster with surging wild water, in some cases more than three metres deep. At Lismore the Wilsons River broke the levee and the central business district was submerged in 3½ metres of water. Lismore, Tweed, Chinderah and Murwillumbah took the brunt. The water swept across the Lismore, Tweed, Byron, Ballina, Kyogle and Richmond local government areas. These are great New South Wales communities and some of our oldest. While natural disaster declarations have been made, I understand that concerns exist about the flow of State and Federal assistance, in particular to Byron shire. For the record, the Labor Opposition provides its bipartisan support at State and Federal levels to the recovery of the region as the North Coast starts to rebuild and heal after the worst floods in more than 50 years.

As the crisis developed, the Opposition contacted the Federal Labor member for Richmond, Justine Elliot, and Lismore Labor Mayor, Councillor Isaac Smith. I note that on Monday the Premier was on the North Coast with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull. The Opposition welcomes the natural disaster declarations and the

decision to appoint a disaster recovery coordinator. However, we want to see funds flow from those natural disaster declarations to affected families, businesses and communities and local government. Much work needs to be done and a single coordinator is needed to oversee the clean-up and recovery effort for the region. I also note and welcome the Premier's warning to insurers not to delay payments to flood-affected residents. She said she was putting them on notice and that "No one is to drag their feet." She went on to say:

They'll be answerable to me. They'll be answerable to every person in the community.

I hope she follows through on her word. We are ready to support any moves to enforce them. The jobs of State and Federal governments are clear—assistance and support must immediately start to flow to the North Coast communities. It must flow to families, community groups, local government and businesses. I note the State Government has appointed Euan Ferguson as the regional recovery coordinator. Hopefully, the disaster coordinator will reduce duplication and provide a single point of contact for struggling families and businesses and local government on the North Coast. This was one of the worst natural disasters to hit the region and we have to remove all obstacles so that the community can heal, repair and recover quickly, especially as many of the health risks associated with flooding continue to build after the waters have receded.

The Opposition knows that it has an important role to play. Our job is to ensure the State and Federal governments honour their promises to the families and businesses on the North Coast. On the first day in Parliament after the floods, we asked all seven questions without notice to the State Government on their response to the floods. We will continue to monitor and ask questions. The response from the Queensland Premier, Anastacia Palaszczuk, to Cyclone Debbie was outstanding. North Coast locals told me that they saw her more than a week before the cyclone struck, leading and preparing Queensland and getting the whole State ready for Cyclone Debbie. Sadly, we did not see the same leadership here.

Night after night we saw Queensland Premier, Anastacia Palaszczuk, on television, on radio, on Facebook and on Twitter. She was involved in every conceivable media and social media platform, urging residents to get ready for the impending cyclone. I note the commitment of the Leader of the Government in this House in his answer to a supplementary question without notice from Ms Dawn Walker yesterday that Parliamentary Secretary, the Hon. Ben Franklin, "will be doing everything he possibly can to ensure that the communities in Ballina and Byron are helped through their difficulties at this time".

On a positive note, as is always the case when there is disaster, we see the best in people. We have seen a community pull together to assist with the rescues. We have seen the SES and other emergency workers, as well as police and health workers, put the interests and welfare of others first. I understand that more than 550 SES volunteers are assisting in the clean-up efforts with the help of an extra 500 personnel from other agencies. Sadly, we have also seen the disgusting appearance of looters on the streets of the North Coast. Police say they have made arrests and have moved on approximately 16 suspicious individuals. I do not want to focus on them. They cast themselves out by their own conduct. In the meantime, we are seeing a strong North Coast community banding together—neighbours are helping neighbours, a former police officer trying valiantly to help a mother and two children in the Tweed River, who sadly perished. This community is a strong one, but it needs our support right now and I hope the Government follows through. I thank the House for its consideration and I commend my two other colleagues for moving similar motions.

Ms DAWN WALKER (11:34): On Thursday 30 March and Friday 31 March, my home in the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales was hit by the biggest floods in 50 years as the aftermath of tropical Cyclone Debbie moved south into northern New South Wales. The Wilsons River Valley, where Lismore is located, received up to 430 millimetres of rain in 22 hours. Between 500 millimetres and 740 millimetres of rain was recorded in the Tweed River Valley in the 24 hours to 2.00 a.m. on Friday 31 March. Emergency evacuation orders were issued for residents of Lismore, Murwillumbah, Condong, Tumbulgum, Chinderah, Tweed Heads, Kingscliff, Fingal Head and Bilambil, Kyogle, Billinudgel, Ocean Shores and New Brighton. Around 20,000 people were evacuated, while 10,000 were without power and a safe water supply. Residents were told to bring important documents, spare clothing and sleeping bags, to check on their neighbours, and to turn off their electricity and gas before leaving their homes.

On Thursday night the New South Wales Department of Education said 54 public schools—including primary schools and high schools—would be closed on Friday. Some of the main areas affected were around Murwillumbah, where residents sought refuge in ceiling cavities and on the roofs of their homes. In Lismore, the Wilsons River reached a flood height of 11.6 metres. The New South Wales State Emergency Service made approximately 330 flood rescues in 36 hours over those two days. As people returned to flood-affected areas they were warned of possible health hazards involved in the clean-up, which authorities say could take a month. People are heartbroken, exhausted and emotional. Many people have lost generations of memories, along with cars, homes, businesses, property, pets, livestock, crops and other valuables.

As the water receded, incredible stories of survival that remind us of our humanity have come to the fore. Like the terrifying moment when Janet and Darryl Byrne watched as their daughter, Erin, was almost sucked away by the surging currents that filled their home in Murwillumbah. Fortunately, their 21-year-old son was able to think quickly to give his sister a household cord and drag her back, despite describing the situation as the scariest of his life. The Rendall family had to climb out of a window of their house into a boat before the surging waters completely inundated their Murwillumbah home. The family has lost almost all their possessions, but they managed to save their two dogs and cat. They regard themselves as lucky to be alive.

The most tragic and heart-wrenching event involved local mother, Stephanie King, who died with two of her three children after their car plunged into the swollen Tweed River at Tumbulgum. Ms King, her seven-year-old son, Jacob, and her 11-year-old daughter, Ella-Jane, drowned. Her eight-year-old daughter, Chloe-May, was somehow able to escape from the sinking vehicle. Police say that this heroic mother died trying to save her beautiful children. My heart goes out to their family and friends. Despite the hardship, the resilience shown by our community has been nothing short of remarkable. Groups organically sprang up online and on Facebook to coordinate volunteer efforts, including Lismore Helping Hands and Helping Hands Byron Shire. Amazing stories of locals travelling from higher ground to assist people in cleaning up in drenched Lismore and Murwillumbah are not only heart-warming but also highlight a defining characteristic of the North Coast community.

Similarly, donations of clothing, baked goods, utes for rubbish removal, fridges, linen, white goods, plumbing services, and fresh fruit have poured in from community members and local businesses alike to help in the flood recovery effort. Donation centres have sprung up across the region in Lismore, Mullumbimby, Ocean Shores, Byron Bay, Murwillumbah, Pottsville, Tweed Heads and elsewhere to support people who have lost so much. I cannot express how proud I am of our community. I have been told about support coming from further afield. Dan, a carpenter from Newcastle, immediately reorganised his work commitments so that he could help when he heard about the crisis on the North Coast. He is now there replacing doors for local businesses and residents. This grassroots community effort has been made in conjunction with our tremendous local State Emergency Service, local councils, rural fire commands, and other organisations.

The sad reality is that flood insurance is unaffordable for many, if not most, because it adds thousands of dollars to a home insurance policy. The cost of flood insurance will no doubt skyrocket further out of reach of ordinary people following this latest event. Insurers are responding to the increasing impacts of climate change, even if governments are not. The tragedy is that communities will suffer the most and they will suffer increasingly as floods of this magnitude become more common. The tragic loss of life and deep impact on families, homes and businesses are a wake-up call that more must be done. Devastating and potentially life-threatening floods and other natural disasters will only increase in severity and frequency on the North Coast as a result of climate change. The Government's own climate modelling for the North Coast shows that autumn rainfall will increase by 37 per cent and spring rainfall will increase by up to 25 per cent by 2070. The North Coast has entered the age of climate change consequences, and the decisions made now will determine whether the community can weather the storm, survive and thrive.

Natural disaster areas have been formally declared in the Lismore, Ballina, Byron, Kyogle, Richmond Valley and Tweed local government areas following the North Coast floods. However, only people and businesses in the Tweed and Lismore local government areas have been declared eligible by the Commonwealth Government for the Disaster Recovery Payment and the Disaster Recovery Allowance to assist them to get back on their feet after this devastating event. That is concerning, given that the towns of Mullumbimby, Ocean Shores, Billinudgel, Cabbage Tree Island, South Golden Beach, and New Brighton were also inundated. Many people there also need support to get back on their feet. The Greens are calling on the New South Wales Government to make urgent representations to the Commonwealth Government to allow the people of Ballina and Byron shires to access the Disaster Recovery Payment and the Disaster Recovery Allowance. The New South Wales Government must act urgently on climate change and prioritise a comprehensive adaptation plan to help our communities manage floods like the ones that my community has just endured.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK (11:43): I thank members for moving these motions about the disaster on the far North Coast and I congratulate Ms Dawn Walker on her speech. I am also a resident of the far North Coast. I had an opportunity in the adjournment debate on Tuesday evening to speak about the impact of the collision of two massive weather systems. I take this opportunity to focus on why this was such a bad flood. Floods such as the one on the North Coast are often measured against the 1974 floods. These days that is a useless measuring stick because many more people now live in the region, and particularly in flood-prone places that were not populated in 1974. These floods went everywhere and in different directions compared to the 1974 floods. I maintain that this is not one of the worst natural disasters to hit the region—it is the worst.

I will briefly explain to members who are not familiar with the geography of the area what made this such a terrible flood. Mount Warning is the plug of a massive extinct volcano known as the Tweed Volcano. It was recorded by Captain Cook in 1770, and it gets the first rays of sunshine that fall on Australia each morning. All the mountains in the Gold Coast hinterland, the Lamington Plateau, the MacPherson Range, down to the Border Ranges, and around south to the Nightcap Range and Mount Jerusalem—which is home to the headwaters of the Wilsons River—are the remnants of the shield of this once mighty volcano. When seen from the air, it is clear that Mount Warning is now one-quarter of the size it once was.

The three river systems referred to by my colleague the Hon. Ben Franklin—the Wilsons River system coming out of Nightcap National Park, the Tweed River, and the Brunswick River—are part of a patchwork of waterways that have worn away this incredible volcano. That explains why the topography is so difficult and why communities are so easily cut off. We are very dependent on a patchwork of roads and timber bridges in our region. Those roads and bridges are vital to communities stretching from Kyogle, through Nimbin and the broader Mount Warning and Wollombi hinterland. Because of the incredible power of the water carving through the volcano shield and constantly changing it, the network of creeks with very steep slopes fill up rapidly and cause flash flooding, which is a huge issue in the area.

That is also why the region is so stunningly beautiful and why it is revered by residents. My predecessor the Hon. Brian Pezzutti is fond of describing the Richmond-Tweed region as lifestyle rich and income poor. Indeed, we have some of the lowest socio-economic local government areas in Australia. When I told the House on Tuesday about a journey that I made to Upper Burringbar on the weekend, I reflected on the mountains of possessions lining Tweed Valley Way. I realised that 48 hours earlier many of those things were people's most precious possessions. I could not help but reflect on how modest they were. The people who had lost everything were on very low incomes and did not have much to lose in the first place. That is devastating.

There were vehicles lining the sides of the road with their doors open. Obviously they had been inundated, and they will be written-off. I am told that Tweed Shire Council lost 80 per cent of the vehicles at its Murwillumbah depot. Of course, the council would have been planning to rely on them for the recovery effort. The loss of vehicles and the closure of roads because of landslides and flooding has happened on such an enormous scale that the clean-up is completely overwhelming our emergency services. As members have said, the flooding occurred in the middle of the night with very little warning. We have heard terrifying stories of people being coaxed out of ceiling cavities into the arms of rescuing neighbours.

I return to the problem of the road network and the sheer scale of closures. ABC radio did an amazing job. It was relying on people ringing in and telling their neighbours what was going on with the roads, warning them that roads were closed, that people were cut off, and asking them not to drive on those roads. I have described the special nature of this region, and many people have asked me, "Why, with the scale of the problem and the resources needed to deal instantly with the emergency, was the army not called in?" I think the simple answer to that question is that it was simply not known how bad it was at the time. This flood has revealed itself in increments.

The first fatality was in Burringbar where a woman tried to walk home in the middle of the night. At that stage nobody realised how bad the flooding was. She fell into a creek. I asked my friend how that could possibly happen. The answer was that there had previously been no creek there. The woman had done that walk before when there was no creek there, but in the middle of the night she fell into the creek and was lost. The police were unable to respond to that for more than a day, which gives us an idea of how overwhelmed they were. All of the services did an incredible job with professionalism and calmness.

There has been a big focus on Wilsons River and the destruction in Lismore. More must be done for the businesses in Lismore. Apart from the Casino meatworks, our region does not have the big employers. The *Yellow Pages* is four times thicker than the *White Pages* on the North Coast. Everybody is in small business, often working with their children. To lose all their stock and everything is a financial disaster. The land prices up there are cheaper because the land is prone to flooding. That makes land more affordable but it also makes insurance more unaffordable. This is a unique flood and a special situation. It is vital that we get those people back on their feet as quickly as possible.

I respond to comments made by the Hon. Walt Secord regarding the Premier's visit, comparing the response of the New South Wales Government with the response of the Queensland Government. The critical difference is that the Queensland Premier had days of warning about the cyclone to get organised and she could ask people to start preparing, while the New South Wales floods came with no warning. The Government and residents had no warning. It is deeply unfair of the member to try to draw a comparison between the two responses.

On Friday Mr Troy Grant was interviewed on local ABC Radio. I congratulate the Minister. He has done an extraordinary job and was a calming and informed voice in the community. He made it clear as an ex-cop who

had worked in these sorts of emergencies that there was no way he or the Premier were going anywhere near the region and diverting resources. He spoke with passion as a police officer. He had experienced politicians arriving in helicopters and distracting people from the vital work they were doing. He was not going to go anywhere near the region until the local emergency services said they could cope with a visit without diverting resources. That advice was received and that visit was made on Monday. For the Hon. Walt Secord to criticise that is cheap, ignorant and deeply unfair.

The Hon. Adam Searle: Point of order: The member has made an observation and then has reflected on another member of the House, in his absence, particularly. She should not do so.

The Hon. Niall Blair: To the point of order: The member is responding to comments made earlier in the debate. I note the absence of the Hon. Walt Secord, who made those comments. I note also that it is disorderly for the Opposition Whip to interject on the Hon. Catherine Cusack when other members have been heard in silence. He should be called to order.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Dr Mehreen Faruqi): There is no point of order. Members have had a very respectful debate up to now and should continue in that manner.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: I echo the remarks I made on Tuesday evening that more needs to be done for the North Coast. This is not an ordinary flood. The packages of assistance that are delivered under the guidelines of Commonwealth-State arrangements, which have served us well in the past, are not properly tailored to the unique circumstances of this event. I have sent a personal message to Prime Minister Turnbull making the case that more needs to be done for the North Coast. I have also sent a personal message to the Premier, of course, who I know was deeply moved by the confronting scenes that she saw when she visited with Minister Grant on Monday.

I again congratulate my community. Everywhere I went I saw heartbreaking scenes of devastation. Over and over again people said to me, "We are so lucky." These are people who have lost everything. In the middle of the night they have had to choose which precious possession they will save. Often it turned out to be something like their grandmother's piano, which is a completely useless piece of furniture, but it is the precious family asset. They could show me that they had saved the piano while everything else was out on the street covered in mud. They are working together. The neighbours are pitching in. The North Coast is saving itself in many ways but it needs additional support. I believe that lessons are to be learned from this extraordinary disaster that relate specifically to our region and the geography I have described. I am proud of the Government's response and the training and professionalism of all of the services that pitched in to assist people. We have a long journey ahead of us. I hope that this Parliament and members on all sides of politics will join together and hold hands with our community as we try to make our way back.

[Business interrupted.]

Visitors

VISITORS

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Dr Mehreen Faruqi): I welcome to Parliament student leaders from high schools in New South Wales who are attending the Secondary Schools Leadership Program conducted by the Parliamentary Education unit.

Motions

NORTH COAST FLOODS

[Business resumed.]

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE (11:56): I speak as Leader of the Labor Opposition to express the sympathy on this side of the House for the people of the far North Coast of New South Wales and for the families who have lost loved ones in the flood. I am a former resident of the North Coast, having spent many of my formative years attending the Main Arm Public School and Mullumbimby High School, and I have many friends in the region who have been affected by the weather events. Across this vast continent fire is a danger we well understand. Water is the danger we often underestimate, yet it causes damage and loss just the same. So it was that an unprecedented deluge left families on the North Coast in this State bereaved, in pain and in grief over the loss of people who helped shape their lives and whose presence was a comfort, a source of strength and a motivating purpose in their lives. That trauma and loss should shape our resolute response to this disaster. We should be totally committed to assisting the people and communities affected by these events to rebuild and re-establish their way of life.

The Northern Rivers is accustomed to flooding. I well remember as a child the floods of 1977, but they were not on the same scale as this. I remember the residents of Murwillumbah fighting, literally, for their lives, some telling of the water nearly sucking them out of their homes; and Lismore—a whole city dark and under water, with no power and at the mercy of an implacable force. Water was unleashed on a scale not seen in more than four decades. Lismore had always been confident about its levee. The levee did not break; the water just went over it, inundating every business in the central business district. Some were under more than three metres of water—a surging wall, rising higher by the minute and drowning everything it covered.

Lismore and Murwillumbah took the brunt but the whole of the North Coast was pummelled as if the ocean had arrived in streets and backyards without warning, drowning a mother and her two children in the Tweed River. At a South Murwillumbah caravan park a man in his forties was drowned in his caravan because the water covered its roof. Not far away the flood forced a door open, pouring water freely into a house. The threat to the family was so immense it shocked and panicked a father to the point of triggering a heart attack; he died within minutes. Through all of this—in the storm, the lashing rain, the swollen rivers and the land that became an inland ocean—our State Emergency Service volunteers were a constant. They prove time and again that they have no equal. We thank them for their remarkable heart and spirit. They employ knowledge and training to keep the community safe when nature is at its worst and they help with recovery when storms have passed. The water is now receding. In Lismore, an estimated 10,000 tonnes of kerbside waste is to be collected. Through all of this we are struck by the extraordinary stoicism of the people of the North Coast.

On properties and in small businesses, people just front up and get on with it, even though some business owners know that they may never trade again, and even though, for many, the everyday insurance costs were so prohibitive they could not afford them. As the Hon. Catherine Cusack said, the resilience of people on our North Coast is inspiring. Neighbours look after neighbours—the best example of the Australian way. We would want those people on our side in any undertaking and in any crisis. To all the emergency services workers and to the many hundreds of community volunteer helpers we say thank you. Our sympathy and prayers are with the bereaved families in this, their worst of weeks. I join with all the previous speakers—my colleague the Hon. Walt Secord and everyone who has moved these motions and participated in this debate. It is important that we come together in circumstances such as these to send a clear message on behalf of the whole Parliament to the whole community. We say to all those affected on the North Coast: We are with you in your recovery.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD (12:01): In speaking in debate on the three motions I echo the contributions made by other members. It is a credit to us that we have been able to debate these motions together and spend some time today to reflect on what has happened on the North Coast. I have to be honest: my eyes had turned to Queensland as I come from central Queensland and I have family in Rockhampton. I was looking at the way the cyclone was tracking and I was expecting significant impacts in Queensland. I note that this morning Rockhampton is facing flood peaks. Devastation from Cyclone Debbie continues. I was really taken by surprise by the flooding and the devastation that hit the North Coast—its speed and extent. Some other speakers this morning also reflected on that.

I particularly acknowledge the contributions of the people in this place who live on the North Coast—my colleague Ms Dawn Walker and the Hon. Catherine Cusack in particular—who have explained, to those of us who have not seen it on the ground yet, the extent of the impact on the community. As a young bloke I lived for a number of years on the Gold Coast and I spent a bit of time surfing on the North Coast. Since I have been involved in politics I have spent a lot of time on the North Coast with the community, campaigning on a number of issues. So I know the resilience of the members of that community, and how they come together at times when they are challenged. That has certainly been reflected in the way they have responded to this challenge. But the challenge has been overwhelming, and that has been made clear by the speakers this morning.

I join others in this place in recognising the efforts of emergency services, council workers and members of the community who have come together. We owe it to the community to recognise the unprecedented impact of these floods, to recognise the effort and courage of community members and emergency workers—it was indeed inspiring—and to encourage an immediate response to deal with the impact on families, on community infrastructure and on businesses. Members of this place also owe it to the community to play a role in reducing the risk of future flooding. It is our duty. A big feature of this is in responding to the increasing risk of climate change on communities across New South Wales.

Cyclone Debbie has left a path of destruction that is massive in its extent, with highest ever wind speeds recorded during a cyclone. There was significant flooding and damage on the Queensland coast and that damage has extended into New South Wales. We know that weather events such as this will get worse; comments have been made about it in the House this week. The Premier acknowledged the increasing risks associated with climate change. The Government's own North Coast Climate Change Snapshot makes clear these risks and specifically highlights that rainfall at this time of the year is expected to increase over the next few years. The risks to

communities rebuilding without serious attention to adaptation is that they will suffer similar floods over the next few years. That is a real challenge for us in this place.

I recognise that the Government's position is to move to net zero emissions by 2050. There has been some criticism of that—mainly with respect to how we chart a course to achieve that goal. It is essential that we take that step but I note that the Government is also committed to developing an action plan for adaptation. It is critical that we present that to the community as soon as possible—the Government said that the plan will come out this year—and to engage with the community in a discussion about how that can be delivered on the ground. Adaptation will become more and more critical as the impacts of climate change are felt more directly by communities across the North Coast. As we reflect on this damage and work out how we can best support the North Coast community, let us not shy away from challenging ourselves to work out how adaptation and dealing with climate change will start to be part of the everyday business of governments and of this Chamber as the risks of climate change get ever greater.

The Hon. NIAL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (12:06): It is rare in this House to have a member of the Government, a member of the Opposition and a member of The Greens combine their motions. They have done that so that we can reflect upon what we have seen in northern New South Wales and in Queensland over the past week. The motion is important for a number of reasons. As Minister for Primary Industries, I have had to attend different types of disasters such as floods and bushfires. It is important for those communities—this applies to what has happened on the North Coast—to know that we are thinking of them and reflecting on the losses they have suffered and some of the tragic circumstances. One thing that I have taken from all the disasters with which I have been involved is that it is not just now that those communities need our thoughts; it is in the weeks and the months ahead that they will be hurting the most.

I am critical of one thing that we all do in this country. When the television cameras and the politicians have gone we forget. In this instance we must set ourselves a challenge not to do that. These communities will take months and months—if not years—to rebuild and recoup. We need to make sure that we will be as diligent and thoughtful of them in that time as we are today when debating this motion. As a Minister of this Government I will take up that challenge, but I challenge every member of this place and in the other place. We must not forget these communities when the television cameras have gone and we return to other parts of the State. We may think that it is all over but it will not be. Many members have spoken about some of the tragedies. I will not go over those. I will only say that I too would like to commend the paid emergency services workers and the volunteers—particularly in agencies like the State Emergency Service [SES]—for the contributions that they have made for their communities. When others are heading away from danger, our emergency services—paid workers and volunteers—head into the area of danger to try to help others. That has been mentioned by other speakers today.

As the Minister for Primary Industries I have two important agencies that have played a vital role in responding to these North Coast floods in particular: the North Coast Local Land Services [LLS] and the Department of Primary Industries [DPI]. The North Coast LLS has been providing support for livestock and other agricultural issues within the region and will be doing this for many months to come. I can confirm that a range of natural disaster assistance measures have been made under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements. Affected primary producers and small business operators can apply for loans of up to \$130,000. Freight subsidies of up to 50 per cent on the transport of fodder and water to a property, of stock to or from agistment and of stock to sale or slaughter are also available to eligible primary producers.

One thing we forget when we talk about the impacts is those that will occur in the months to come. There is a significant impact after a flood on pastures, in particular in the dairy sector. There are significant impacts on water provisioning for some livestock operators. So some of those natural disaster relief measures can be used by farmers to transfer stock out or to bring fodder in to make sure their herds remain productive. In addition, Premier Gladys Berejiklian and Minister for Emergency Services the Hon. Troy Grant announced the appointment of Euan Ferguson as recovery coordinator to manage flood recovery efforts on the North Coast. Mr Ferguson's responsibilities will include working with small business and primary producers to understand the flood's impacts and ensuring that insurance companies work rapidly to resolve claims.

I will step the Chamber through some of the impacts that this flood has had on our primary production sector, including agricultural and horticultural producers, on the North Coast. Obviously many agricultural businesses have been seriously impacted. Banana growers are reporting that approximately 30 to 50 per cent of their plantations are damaged, with some plantations experiencing 80 per cent damage. Some of this is as a result of large landslips which accompanied the flooding. The dairy industry has damage to fencing, roads and infrastructure. That can be significant, in particular when the dairy farm does not have the ability to store milk on the farm. If the tankers cannot get in to take away the milk, farmers may have to pour it out onto the paddocks.

In events like floods, the ability of dairies to keep operating is key because of the impacts on milking cows if they are not milked—for example, if the farmers cannot get them to the dairy for milking because they are stranded in paddocks, or if there is a loss of electricity and the dairy cannot operate. Those cows can face a whole range of problems which can lead to ongoing animal health concerns in regard to mastitis and the risk of continued lameness with waterlogged ground. We will see similar issues in other livestock industries. As a horse owner, I deal continually with issues such as greasy heel and things like that in waterlogged paddocks. In an event on a scale such as this, those issues will obviously be compounded.

The soybean industry is reporting major losses in the Tweed of about \$1 million. On the lower Richmond a \$4.2 million loss to the soybean industry is estimated. Sugar cane growers are reporting major inundation and significant flood levels on the Tweed. The Condong Mill had some inundation, with cane farmers also suffering damage and losses to machinery and equipment. Pecans could have a 30 to 40 per cent crop loss, with nuts on the ground impacted if harvesting is delayed. Some of the protected cropping areas in our herb and vegetable production sector suffered product stock loss not only onsite but also in transit or at depots. Nothing could be more frustrating than seeing a crop that has been harvested and sent off for processing or dispatch then lost in transit. That is something we have seen as a result of these floods, particularly in the Lismore, Ballina and Tweed shires.

Other food manufacturers and food businesses have also been impacted, and transport access issues continue to be a problem for many commodities on the North Coast. We will continue to see the impacts of this flood for a long time. This is not just about now; there will be impacts for many months to come. One thing we can be assured of is that the staff of Local Land Services and the Department of Primary Industries are doing an amazing job. We have our veterinarians available and other staff assisting with fodder and identifying stranded stock.

The Hon. Catherine Cusack made mention of the fact that it was difficult for agencies and particular politicians to get into this area during the first few days after the flooding. The Minister for Emergency Services made it clear that he was not going to divert resources by going there to visit. Our agencies had trouble getting helicopters off the ground because of the high winds for many days coming off the back of the cyclone. I was told that they were having trouble identifying stock that were stranded and carrying out fodder drops simply because it was too risky to allow the helicopters into the air due to some of the high winds and dangerous conditions. I commend all the agencies working in this area.

As the Minister for Primary Industries I commend in particular Local Land Services and the DPI. Some of our staff have only just finished responding to the fires that occurred in the Hunter Valley. Some teams basically went straight from there to the North Coast. This is off the back of them assisting with recovery from the floods on the Lachlan and down on the Murray. So on behalf of the Government I acknowledge everyone who has been involved. I commend the motions and congratulate the members who have worked together on this issue and spoken in this debate.

I will finish where I started—the challenge for all of us is to not allow this issue to be forgotten when it disappears off the front pages of the newspapers and falls out of the media. The challenge for all of us is to continue to make sure that we work with those affected communities to help them rebuild and recover. Unfortunately this is something that they are used to; it is not the first time that we have seen this. As the Hon. Catherine Cusack said, we need to learn from each one of these incidents so that we can do better in responding in the future.

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (12:18): I will make a brief contribution to debate on the collective motions moved today on the North Coast floods. I commend the members who have moved these motions and those members who have, in a spirit of consensus, come together and spoken in debate so far. At the outset I say that my thoughts are with the people of the Northern Rivers. So many people have been tragically impacted by this event. People have lost loved ones and had their livelihoods and their community life so devastatingly disrupted. I put on the record also that it is inspirational to see the agencies we have working there so professionally and so bravely. For example, the State Emergency Service [SES] and paid emergency services professionals working in their well-trained way are getting out there, working together, performing rescues and making sure that people are safe.

I commend emergency service personnel who serve their communities and this nation, and acknowledge that we are lucky to have those services. Other countries hit by natural disasters, such as Peru in South America where recent terrible flooding has led to loss of life and property, have to deal with the aftermath of these disasters without the resources, the professional services and the coordinated approach taken on the North Coast. We are well served by those brave people, and I commend the State and Federal governments for their response to this disaster. I recently moved to a community on the mid North Coast that is routinely flood affected, the Bellingen-Dorrigo area. Dorrigo holds the New South Wales record for the highest rainfall in one day—800 millimetres.

However, the community is well prepared for those events. Being new to that community, I have been amazed to see how people get together in times of flood.

People who are at risk, such as the elderly, are looked after. Neighbours knock on their doors and offer to look after their stock or notify people if a fence is down. As the disaster evolved I rang one of my friends in Lismore, Councillor Adam Guise, to see how he was going. It was remarkable to hear him responding calmly about talking to his neighbours to work out who was safe and what emergency services could do to look after assets. Humanity is remarkable in a crisis because at such times what is important becomes clear; we focus on loved ones and put aside material possessions to make sure that we look after human life and things that will sustain us in the future. In times of disaster, professionals and community members come together to aid others.

We need to be aware that flood and other natural disasters will occur in the future, and we need to be prepared to deal with such events. There is no doubt that natural disasters affect nearly all countries. Mother Nature is an incredibly powerful force. Some say that in all matters nature bats last; it has the final say. The Government has taken some steps to acknowledge that we are going to have to deal with climate change mitigation. We are going to have to go beyond adaptation, because governments and communities must recognise that we cannot just adapt to climate change. We must make sure that we can provide for communities to enable them to respond to natural disasters. This will involve setting aside enough money for the operations under the National Disaster Relief and Recovery Agreement [NDRRA]. Is enough money being collected by the levy to deal with responding to natural disasters? Is there enough money to make sure communities can bounce back?

I note the contribution of the Minister, but when we start to join the dots, I think there is an alarming trend. We have experienced record heat and seen how it impacts on bushfires. We have experienced record rainfall repeatedly in particular areas, and we have to look at whether or not we have sufficient funds to respond and to adapt. We have to be mindful of the science. If we look at the record of the natural disasters that have happened, we find that they are alarming. Reports suggest that some catchments in northern New South Wales and south-east Queensland received up to 900 millimetres of rain in 48 hours—that is, a metre of rain. The rain gauge at Lismore recorded 400 millimetres of rain before it stopped operating at 3.00 a.m. I do not know how we can adapt to that situation. These communities were subjected to a terrifying amount of water. I do not know whether we can adapt to such events without mitigation. We should be doing everything we can to lessen the impacts of climate change.

We have to consider whether people can continue to live in certain areas if these events become routine. Some farmers I have spoken to around the State have said they are becoming inundated frequently. I spoke to a dairy farmer in Kyogle and he said, "I am being flooded all the time." That family has been in the area for four generations, and he said, "Our herds are now always in the top paddock because of these constant extreme events." Modelling is showing that there will be increased intensity of extreme rainfall events, and these projections are made with high confidence. It also shows that mean sea levels will continue to rise, and the height of extreme sea level events will also increase.

Nothing is more important for life on this earth—in fact, for humanity and civilisation—than the Pacific Ocean. The Pacific Ocean is the big game. If sea levels increase floods like the one in Lismore will become even more devastating. One of the key factors triggering these events is high tides. The reason is that the water backs up in the rivers and it cannot get out into the ocean, such as when the Richmond and the Wilsons rivers flooded and high tides prevented the water from flowing into the ocean. We have to recognise that of the 10 largest cyclones that humanity has recorded, three of them have occurred since 2010. Cyclone Debbie packed the fastest landfall wind speed ever recorded in Australia.

Many of these natural disasters are caused by climate change. In fact, the Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory, which is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [NOAA] in the United States, said there are better than even odds that anthropogenic warming over the next century will lead to an increase in the occurrence of very intense tropical cyclones in some basins. It also predicted that anthropogenic warming by the end of the twenty-first century will likely cause tropical cyclones with substantially higher rainfall rates. The World Meteorological Organisation said that by the late twenty-first century greenhouse warming would likely cause the number of tropical cyclones to decrease but the intensity to increase by up to 10 per cent and near-storm rainfall rates to increase by 20 per cent.

Those statistics sound dry—no pun intended—and a bit boring but the statistics equate to human lives and communities being impacted by natural disasters and the devastation that follows. We have to acknowledge that we stand with these communities. We will help them to rebuild. As the Minister said, we will continue to help them after the television cameras have left the area. Local, State and Federal agencies will contribute to the effort to help people rebuild their communities and ensure they have a future. We have to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change. It is the responsibility of government to acknowledge the impact of climate change and that we need a whole-of-government and whole-of-community response to lessen the impact on our ecology.

and our economy and make sure fewer lives are lost. We should be working to try to avoid or at least mitigate these tragedies. I join other members in supporting these motions, and I commend the movers of the motions for bringing them before the House. I commend the motions to the House.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH (12:28): My contribution to debate on the motions on the flood disaster in northern New South Wales will be brief. I acknowledge that it is unusual to have three motions debated at once. My thoughts are with the families and communities that have lost loved ones. I also extend my support for the communities that are working their way through the aftermath of the floods—the families, the small businesses, the farmers and even the travellers in the region at the time. Like others, I extend my appreciation to emergency services personnel as well as the volunteers and, importantly, the council workers, who often get forgotten in these circumstances. I also thank the Local Land Services staff. I know other personnel are engaged in the post-event recovery, and I also thank them.

It will take a while to recover, but I am sure these resilient communities will rebuild. It will take a while to estimate the damage, not just the hard infrastructure. We all draw on our own personal experiences to gain an appreciation or some sort of understanding of what the good folk on the North Coast are experiencing right now, but also what they experienced at the height of the flooding. It is important that we undertake that post-event analysis to work out what we can do better, what we did wrong as a society. We have to learn those lessons; it is important. I will pick up on some of the themes from a couple of other speakers but that post-event analysis is never undertaken with TV cameras or newspapers around; it is always done long after. That is a part of the work that has to continue after each of these terrible events, so that we can learn the lessons and make the corrections and as a society get it right at some stage.

As most members of the House will know, I have been a critic of Local Land Services [LLS], but in this instance they have a role to play. I am told that the LLS staff are doing a good job in what are very difficult and trying circumstances. For that we should acknowledge the good work that they are doing right now. The Minister outlined some of the impacts of the floods on our primary producers. I will not dwell on all of those, except to say that this morning I had a phone conversation with a dairy farmer from the North Coast about the damage caused to the infrastructure, not just the fences—everyone thinks of the immediate damage to fences—but also the laneways and fodder. He has lost his silage. He spoke about the number of years it will take him to recover from this flood. He is working through the issues with his family and his community, but he is also looking at his business operation to determine what he will have to do to accommodate a significant hit to his productivity.

He said that it will take a while to recover, and even if there are grants, subsidies or even low interest loans he will have to change his business model to accommodate a productivity loss for a number of years. He is not the only one who is in that situation. These types of motions that we are debating give us a moment to reflect, but a lot of hard work must be done in communities across New South Wales to ensure that in some way we learn the lessons and we mitigate. I have no idea what it was like to be there at the height of this flood. I have no idea what people were going through. I have an appreciation of it, having been through floods on the Murrumbidgee River, but this event was of such force that I can only imagine what people were going through. It is sad that people and communities have lost loved ones, tragically in some circumstances. Watching the news on television we saw images and the distress in people's faces.

But as Mr Jeremy Buckingham said, people suddenly find that they are heroes as they have saved people. It is not something that they wanted to do; it is just that they were there at the time and they did what they had to do. The good side of humanity is brought out in these types of circumstances, in these types of events. I congratulate those who have brought these motions before the Chamber and I extend appreciation to all the workers on the North Coast, volunteers or otherwise. My thoughts are with those communities as they go through a significant and long-term rebuilding process.

Mr SCOT MacDONALD (12:33): I also congratulate the three movers of these motions. The North Coast is important to me. My mother came from the North Coast. My mother's family is still there. One of my mother's cousins is a mid-80-year-old dairy farmer who lives just south of Byron, and he is still actively dairy farming—the Armstrongs, down Armstrong Road, south of Byron as they say. My family still has lots of good connections up there. I cannot contribute to this debate without commenting on the process that we have adopted today to debate three motions simultaneously. I am disappointed, and I will make a comparison with similar past motions. When we dealt with things such as the Hunter it was not politicised; it was very much bipartisan. It was not a competition about who would give a notice of a motion. I hope that we can move forward from this because I do not think it reflects well.

Our communities are attuned to how we talk about them and how members conduct themselves in this place. I know people are a little agitated about that but before it goes too much further I urge caution. I have been involved in motions regarding the Hunter as well as personal circumstances in the Murrumbidgee, which the Hon. Mick Veitch mentioned. I was in Griffith during the severe floods in about 2010 and in Brisbane in 1974—

that dates me, unfortunately—when from recollection 18 people died. All of these circumstances are difficult. This is not a time for agendas, talking about people's political philosophies or the things to which they attribute; this is about the community and not about us. However, it is about showing our support and bringing to the attention of the wider community the difficulties that people are facing and acknowledging the good work of the first responders—the police, ambulance services and other emergency services.

As was noted previously it does not work without the salaried workers and the volunteers—it cannot work without them—and the unofficial people who swing in behind them. In these situations the SES are the heroes in my mind because when they are called out they are under a huge amount of pressure. Most of them are volunteers. They are working in the dark. They are working when the floodwaters are still coming through. They are flying by the seat of their pants, literally, and it is incredibly difficult. I reinforce what a couple of members on this side noted. This is not a time for political grandstanding; it is not the time for people to place themselves at the response stage. There is a role for politicians to move in quickly as things settle and the recovery process gets underway.

One of the key things, which I think the Premier did early with the Hon. Troy Grant, was to appoint a recovery coordinator who is crucial, as we saw in the Hunter. That is the person who pulls the threads together and who gets people talking, but most of all that person's role is to go into the community. Brigadier Norman in the Hunter became a person to whom the community could reach out and to whom they could explain their difficulties. He became a counsellor in many respects; he was not there for the cameras. I saw him in places such as Stroud at odd hours of the day and night talking to people who were going through difficult times.

As the Minister said earlier, the Government's role now is to get agencies such as the Local Land Services, the Department of Primary Industries, health, small business and tourism to support the council and to work through this disaster. What sticks in my mind from the Hunter is that in the first three weeks after the floods people were running on adrenalin and doing what they needed to do. But the crunch came about five weeks or so later when communities and business people started to suffer from mental health stress. Government representatives who were on the frontline and who had been working incredible hours were dealing with people in stressful situations. The role of parliamentarians at this point is not to grandstand but to be compassionate and to demonstrate empathy and concern. We must also ensure that the Government directs resources where they are needed the most. North Coast communities need to know that we are here for them and that we are not using them for political purposes.

The North Coast is a dairy farming area, and long may it be so. Yesterday I had the opportunity to speak with some dairy farmers. As the Minister for Primary Industries said, they have been subjected to considerable disruption. I suggested that they speak to BlazeAid, which has done an enormous amount of work at Coonabarabran. I believe a team is now working at Sir Ivan. I have passed on contact details and the dairy farmers might reach out. I hope that they do because BlazeAid does not only physical work but also assists by restoring resilience when those who have been affected find it difficult to get out of bed in the morning and it all seems too much. I hope that connection is made.

This is a difficult time. I am pleased that the Premier and the Prime Minister visited the area. I saw how they engaged with the local State members of Parliament—Geoff Provest and Thomas George. Of course, the Minister for Emergency Services did what he does so well; that is, being there for people and not making himself the story. He believes this is about providing appropriate support. A friend of mine, Tweed Shire councillor James Owen, has been out and about, as have all councillors. We wish them well and we will support them wherever we can. I would like members to take a step backwards. Our role at this time is to thank the responders and the people who follow them, and to demonstrate our support for the community. We grieve for the people who have lost loved ones. It is incomprehensible that someone's loved ones could go out for a drive but not all return. It takes a long time to deal with such a disaster. Tragedies like that affect everyone in the community whether or not they knew the victims.

These communities are relatively small and tightknit. We share our lives at school and in our sports teams, and we see each other in the main street. We bicker about politics, but at the end of the day we get on with them and have a strong appreciation for their wellbeing. I thank the three members who moved these motions. Our job is to get on with our work and to support the North Coast. As members have said, the recovery will take a long time. Our role as members of Parliament is to support the affected communities in the months, if not years, ahead. In the six years that I have been in this place New South Wales has experienced many disasters, and there will be more floods and fires. We get on with life and we cope by providing appropriate resources, but we do not play politics with these events

The Hon. PAUL GREEN (12:43): Cyclone Debbie hit the Queensland coast on 28 March. The deadly flooding it caused moved south and inundated the North Coast, particularly last week. Flood evacuation orders were issued by the State Emergency Service for Bilambil, Cabbage Tree Island, Chinderah, Condong, Fingal

Head, Kingscliff, Kyogle, Lismore, Lismore South, Lismore North and the central business district, Murwillumbah East, Murwillumbah South and the central business district, Tumbulgum, and Tweed Heads, Tweed Heads South and Tweed Heads West. I spoke on the phone with my brother, who lives at Kingscliff. He said that the floods in his area were the worst since 1954. Fortunately the water level has dropped quickly, but they are now facing the clean-up.

New South Wales State Emergency Service Commissioner Mark Smethurst singled out Lismore as the worst hit area. I recently asked a question without notice of the Minister for Primary Industries, who undertook to provide information about what resources would be available. Councillor Batista, from Lismore City Council, called me and I could hear the anxiety in his voice when he talked about the impact of the flooding on local businesses. He told me about the clean-up and the piles of waterlogged equipment. I could hear the desperation in his voice when he pleaded with me not to let them be forgotten. As I said, Minister Niall Blair has given an undertaking that he will help us to understand what resources are available, particularly for business owners who have not been able to insure their properties because the cost of flood insurance is prohibitive. Premiums can be as much as \$30,000, which is unmanageable for many businesses. That problem is not unique to the North Coast; it is being experienced across New South Wales.

Mr Jeremy Buckingham talked about flood mitigation. That is a wise move, given the cost of flood insurance premiums. When I was the mayor of Shoalhaven, I was shown mitigation maps and flood modelling. The maps are produced by putting mathematical assumptions into a computer and it works out where the water will flow. Insurance companies use that modelling and adjust their premiums according to the assumed risk. As a result, flood insurance premiums go through the roof. Now is the time, while we are experiencing floods, to get drones into the air to record the behaviour of the water; that is, where it is flowing, where it is pooling, and where it is causing the most harm. That will assist insurance companies in calculating the real risks rather than relying on computer modelling that has no basis in reality.

Mr Jeremy Buckingham referred to the location of houses and businesses in flood-affected areas. It is often a commercial imperative to establish businesses close to rivers because water is so important. Historically, many of our townships are adjacent to rivers and streams, and as a result they are vulnerable to flooding. Of course, many of our northern neighbours live in Queenslanders, which are designed to allow floodwaters to flow through at ground level, while the upstairs living areas are protected. It is that sort of forethought that should guide our future development planning if, as is predicted, we will be experiencing more flooding. Most of the affected areas have one-in-100-year flood ratings.

If one does the calculations, once in 100 years does not seem a bad run; there has been a run of quite a few floods. If there are three one-in-100-year floods in 10 years, that is not a good investment and the process must be looked at. Some development applications have the general consideration of a one-in-100-year flood in place for when it happens and absorb some of the risk, but it is obvious the risks are getting heavier and harder. We have heard that with this storm event it is only two years since some of the affected townships suffered from a cyclone—for instance, in the Rockingham area. They are only in the final stages of recovery from the last cyclone and they have now been beaten down by this flooding. Infrastructures must exist—they are part of the business model of these wonderful regional communities—but an element of risk comes with that. We must work with affected communities to avoid or minimise those events. In relation to flood minimisation, many communities are against having levee banks, but there is no doubt they can play a key role in reducing flood flows or redirecting floodwaters at speed on occasion. Premier Gladys Berejiklian noted:

The extent of the seriousness of the flood was not anticipated because the forecast underestimated how much rain would be received in a very short amount of time ... which is why so many people have been impacted.

We are trying to predict and address climate change 50 years and 100 years into the future, but we cannot even predict the weather one day or one week ahead. There is so much inconsistency in predicting levels of rain that it is difficult to help our communities prepare for it. There is a big difference between 300 millimetres and 700 millimetres. The reality is that these devastating floods have claimed lives and left widespread destruction in several communities in northern New South Wales. On Saturday it was confirmed that there had been three deaths in floodwaters across the two States and that figure has now risen to six.

I will not revisit it in its entirety, but I note that the Hon. Ben Franklin and Ms Dawn Walker mentioned the loss of Stephanie King and two of her children, Jacob and Ella-Jane, who were swept into the Tweed River. I note that they are survived by Ms King's partner, Matt, and daughter, Chloe-May. The Christian Democratic Party's prayers and thoughts go out to them as they deal with this incredible loss. I note that there is a GoFundMe page to raise funds for the family. If people are of the view that they are able to contribute, donating in that way may be a way to help the healing process, and to alleviate some of the pain and heartache of that family.

An ongoing concern that arises following natural disasters is insurance, as families and communities set about cleaning up and rebuilding their lives. The development application [DA] process for the rebuilding of some infrastructure can be harder than it is at other times. People tend to underinsure. That is what happened with the bushfires in the Blue Mountains. When events are examined—what happened, how it happened and why it happened—and development process requirements are strengthened as a result, those requirements often require the use of a higher standard of construction materials such as steel, wood and window-making materials, which can triple the cost of those items. For many businesses needing to rebuild, the cost of some things can be triple the cost of those things that have been insured. The Government can play a hand in ensuring that the rebuilding and reinstating of their business is achievable.

On a lighter note I reflect on a good news story that came out of this disastrous flood: A pregnant cow survived a mammoth swim through the floodwaters between Lismore and Ballina. The Angus-cross cow, which was six months pregnant and due to calve in a few months, clambered up onto land at Pimlico near Ballina at the mouth of the Richmond River. On Sunday morning, much to the surprise of the landholders, she was found quite a distance down the river. She had survived something like three days in the floodwaters and was found downstream. Someone phoned the property owner and said, "I think I have one of your cows," and it was one of their cows. An article on the ABC News site states the property owner said:

I love my cattle and spend a lot of time with them. I said to my wife I feel like I'm in the boxing ring with my hands tied behind my back. It's been pretty traumatic.

This cow survived, which is a fantastic outcome for this man. This breed of cow is worth about \$50,000 per head of cattle. It is a lot of money. The Minister for Primary Industries mentioned the need to be mindful of the farms that are losing access to their dairies because of the electrical problems that come with floodwaters. It is also important to be mindful of the fact that the fencing on these farms takes an incredible amount of effort to maintain. There are some volunteer organisations that help with fencing in flooding situations such as these.

Stories such as the one about this cow are great and a credit to people. They remind us of the resilience of our communities—it is amazing that they are able to absorb such horrific flooding. People are standing up to help each other and that is the spirit of the Australian people. I also mention our volunteer services that are out there risking their lives day and night to ensure that everyone can have another day with their families and communities. I thank all of our SES volunteers and all of those people extending a hand, such as church groups and charities. They make the day a little easier for many of those experiencing the pain of these floods. I thank those who moved these motions and commend the motions to the House.

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX (12:57): I stand with my colleagues in this Chamber from all parties to congratulate those members who moved these motions. In particular my sympathies, thoughts and prayers are with those who have been affected by these terrible floods on the North Coast. It was great to hear some of the wonderful comments and contributions this morning. I think the people of the North Coast just want to know that the Government has their back. We are here to support them and we will do everything we can to support their communities. Through our agencies we will continue to help them in recovery.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Shayne Mallard): According to sessional order, debate is now interrupted to permit the three movers of the motions to speak in reply.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I move:

That:

- (a) the time for debate on this motion be extended by 15 minutes; and
- (b) each subsequent speaker may speak for not more than five minutes.

Motion for extension of time agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Shayne Mallard): I will now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.30 p.m.

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

Questions Without Notice

WALLERAWANG POWER STATION

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE (14:30): My question without notice is directed to the Leader of the Government and Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities. In light of the Victorian Government's creation of a special economic growth zone supported by hundreds of millions of dollars to assist the Latrobe Valley community respond to the closure of the Hazelwood power station, what assistance has the Government provided to the community of Lithgow to assist in responding to the closure of the Wallerawang power station?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (14:30): I imagine that question could well have been asked of my colleague the Minister for Trade and Industry as it covers some of his portfolios. The Victorian and South Australian governments have got into all sorts of difficulties because of their policies on energy. In particular, South Australian businesses are suffering because of the stupidity of their State Government. It is extraordinary and the behaviour of the Government is shameful.

By contrast, this State Government has a strong economic record, with the lowest unemployment in the country. When we came to office six years ago, the State was last on virtually everything, but because of the hard work of the whole team under Premiers Mike Baird, Barry O'Farrell and now Gladys Berejiklian, we are number one again. This State is number one on employment as well. The State's economy is strong. The Government's record is strong, and we are proud of plenty of projects. I am happy to obtain information from my colleagues about specific programs around the Lithgow area. Lithgow has a local member like the member for Bathurst, Mr Paul Toole, and I can well imagine he too is proud of an extensive list of assistance. I will ensure that the Leader of the Opposition receives the details he is seeking so he can see how impressive the assistance has been.

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK (14:32): My question is addressed to the Minister for Energy and Utilities. How is the Government helping households and businesses adopt cutting-edge technology to have greater control over their energy use?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (14:33): We are seeing an incredible global technological revolution, and it is changing the way we produce, consume and manage energy. Solar energy is being adopted at homes and businesses, for pumping in agriculture, and in industries such as mining. Batteries are entering homes, universities and vehicles. The Government wants New South Wales households and businesses to benefit from those changes and not be left behind. It is about consumer choice, and supporting families and businesses in their aspirations.

That is where my department's Sustainable Energy Programs team comes in. The team's programs build understanding of sustainable energy technologies in New South Wales, and encourage its voluntary uptake. Those technologies can help consumers and businesses have greater control over energy. We have 350,000 homes with rooftop solar, and regional towns and Western Sydney are leading the way. We want our regional towns to be powerhouses, literally and figuratively, with more control over their energy. A study conducted by Energy Consumers Australia indicated that 33 per cent of residential consumers are considering purchasing energy storage. That would fundamentally reshape the energy market, driven by consumer choice. That is why the Government is developing user-friendly consumer guides on residential battery storage.

The guides will be available in July 2017 and will give householders independent resources. For businesses, we have a Clean Energy Strategies for Business project, in partnership with the Office of Environment and Heritage. This program is providing expert advice to 20 leading businesses—big employers such as Qantas, Unilever Australia and AMP Capital—helping them implement strategies to achieve strong, clean energy targets such as 100 per cent renewables or net zero emissions. The businesses represent a wide cross-section, with the majority of operations in regional New South Wales. The program will make them more energy independent, more efficient and more productive. Commercial and industrial energy use makes up 45 per cent of consumption in New South Wales, so helping companies is critical for their competitiveness.

These add to other projects delivered by the team, such as the award-winning Energy Saving Scheme, which provides financial incentive for energy saving activities. We recently raised the scheme's target by 70 per cent and expanded it to include gas efficiency to add to the existing 17,000 gigawatt hours of energy savings it has delivered. This will deliver \$2.6 billion in bill savings for New South Wales households and businesses over the next decade or more. In summary, the pace of technological change will only accelerate. We want to help households become more energy independent and help businesses become more productive, profitable and sustainable.

WESTERN SYDNEY ARTS FUNDING

The Hon. WALT SECORD (14:37): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for the Arts. Given his answer yesterday in response to a question without notice from the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox about Sydney arts funding, what is the Minister's response to major Western Sydney arts organisations who say they are frustrated that they are not getting a fair share of the stated "commitment of \$600 million to supercharge cultural infrastructure in this State," and when will Western Sydney arts organisations get their fair share?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (14:38): This is an interesting question from the Opposition, which only yesterday was asking me

about the move of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences to Parramatta, which is happening. It is going to be an iconic facility in Western Sydney that will activate the whole arts and cultural space in the heart of Western Sydney—Parramatta, the second city of New South Wales. That is an extraordinary question to ask. Self-evidently, there will be hundreds of millions of dollars of expenditure at the heart of Western Sydney in Parramatta.

In any case, the Government has an ambitious agenda for arts and culture in Western Sydney so it can meet the demands and expectations of rapid population growth in the region. There has been, it is true, a historic disproportion in the allocation of arts and cultural funding to Western Sydney. The Labor Party must accept its share of the blame for not having done anything in its 16 years in government to correct that imbalance. I am proud of the extra \$7.5 million that this Government is investing over the next four years to grow artistic excellence in the region and to invest in local Western Sydney talent and jobs.

In 2015-16 the Government invested \$3.4 million to support the arts and cultural programs of 19 organisations in Western Sydney. In that year alone, that figure represents an increase of 40 per cent in program funding. The funding will support the wonderful creative work of key organisations in Western Sydney such as the Powerhouse Youth Theatre in Fairfield, CuriousWorks in Liverpool, the Blacktown Arts Centre, and the Information and Cultural Exchange in Parramatta. The Government also supports public libraries in Western Sydney, investing \$5.9 million in subsidies and grants in 2016-17. In 2015-16, the Government invested more than \$500,000 to support public library infrastructure projects in the region through the Public Library Infrastructure Grants program.

The Government is also investing \$800,000 over four years into the new National Theatre of Parramatta at the Riverside Theatre, in partnership with the Parramatta City Council. This will support local stories and create pathways for Western Sydney artists. The Government will invest \$150,000 over the next two years to deliver micro music festivals, in partnership with local councils and the live music office, which will feature local musicians and bands across Western Sydney. Some \$300,000 has been invested in targeted funding to support music and literature development in the Western Sydney region. The Government is also providing \$400,000 this year under the Making Spaces program to help artists in Western Sydney access new facilities and to encourage partnerships to develop new spaces, including pop-ups, studios and offices. I thank the Hon. Walt Secord for his Dorothy Dixier question. Please, keep serving them up.

The Hon. WALT SECORD (14:42): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer. Does he include the funding of Blue Mountains arts organisations in his list of funding for Western Sydney arts organisations? Did you fudge the figures, Donald Thomas?

The Hon. Adam Searle: Now he is blushing.

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (14:42): I am just surprised to be called Donald Thomas. I am very proud of my name. In fact, I am named after my father and my grandfather. My grandfather, Thomas, was in fact—

The Hon. Walt Secord: Point of order: My point of order goes to relevance. My question was about whether the Minister is including the funding of Blue Mountains arts organisations to pump up those figures?

The PRESIDENT: I remind all members of the past rulings of former President Harwin that interjections and responses to interjections are disorderly at all times. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I enjoyed nothing more than using the rulings of former President Fazio and former President Primrose against them. I completely understand the exhilaration that the President must be feeling right now in using one of my rulings against me.

The PRESIDENT: The Minister will answer the question.

The Hon. Walt Secord: Are you cooking the figures or not?

The PRESIDENT: Has the Minister finished his answer?

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I am not cooking the figures. The Hon. Walt Secord obviously has a great interest in the arts in the Blue Mountains, as does my colleague the Hon. Shayne Mallard and several other Government members. At some future time we might have an answer to the question and we can talk extensively about the support this Government is giving to the arts in the Blue Mountains.

LIDDELL POWER STATION

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (14:44): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Resources, and Minister for Energy and Utilities. Given AGL has committed to shut down the 2,000-megawatt

Liddell coal-fired power station in the Hunter Valley by 2022, or even earlier, what is the Government's plan to manage the shutdown for the energy market and the impacted workers and communities?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (14:45): I have given extensive consideration to issues like this one. I met with Andy Vessey from AGL and we talked about this issue. One of the wider issues before the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] Energy Council, and indeed all energy Ministers around Australia, is the importance of the orderly closure of coal-fired power stations. The simple truth is that coal-fired power stations do not last forever. Most of them have a lifespan of somewhere around 50 years. Liddell power station is ageing, so it is important that we get those sorts of decisions right, not only for the Liddell power station but also for its workforce.

My number one priority as the Minister for Energy and Utilities is reliability of supply. It is important, and I am pleased to say that New South Wales is in a strong position with around 20,000 megawatts of electricity generation capacity from a mix of energy sources, including coal, gas and renewables. Of course, we cannot be complacent about that. The Finkel review, which I mentioned a little while ago, and the New South Wales Energy Security Taskforce, which I established, chaired by Chief Scientist and Engineer Professor Mary O'Kane, will be critical to ensuring our energy security in the future. We are focused on attracting investment in technologies that will boost our supply from a diversified energy mix. We are not going to rely on one technology; we are going to keep our energy mix diversified.

In addition to a range of work that is being done by me and officials on the COAG Energy Council, New South Wales is focusing on prioritising security, reliability and affordability through various initiatives. This will complement the work we are doing through the COAG Energy Council on the National Electricity Market [NEM]. In fact, we are having a meeting on Monday to discuss a number of issues to do with the future of the National Electricity Market and a number of the developments that are taking place in States around Australia. In particular, we will discuss some of the recent moves that the South Australian Minister has made about the National Electricity Market. He has said some concerning things, so we will deal with this important matter.

Obviously the Independent Review into the Future Security of the NEM being undertaken by Alan Finkel is a critical issue. It will impact on a lot of the matters that Mr Jeremy Buckingham has raised in his question. The Australian Energy Market Commission [AEMC] System Security Market Frameworks Review will also be relevant in the longer term and we are engaging with it. I think it was a fortnight ago that I met the chairman of the AEMC and we had a long discussion about some of those issues. [*Time expired.*]

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Trevor Khan has the call.

Mr Jeremy Buckingham: I wish to ask a supplementary question. I have been yelling out "supplementary".

The PRESIDENT: I have given the call to the Hon. Trevor Khan and I will adhere to that call. I did not hear Mr Jeremy Buckingham seeking the call to ask a supplementary question because of extensive interjections. The Hon. Trevor Khan has the call.

[*Interruption*]

The PRESIDENT: I make it very clear to Mr Jeremy Buckingham that he should be careful about the manner in which he addresses me.

PEST ANIMALS MANAGEMENT

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN (14:50): My question 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 what the Government is doing to manage feral cats in New South Wales?

The Hon. NIAL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (14:50): I thank the Hon. Trevor Khan for his question. Feral cats are recognised as a major threat to the State's native wildlife. The NSW Scientific Committee has listed predation by the feral cat as a key threatening process under the Threatened Species Conservation Act. Feral cats occur in all habitats, from rainforests to rangelands, across New South Wales, roaming into farmland and populated areas where they can spread disease to livestock, wildlife and people.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries [DPI] is part of a major collaborative research project that aims to better inform our understanding and management of feral cats. Through the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre [CRC], DPI is working with the University of New England, NSW National Parks and Wildlife, Local Land Services, industry and farming groups to monitor the movements and behaviour of feral cats. The project has caught and collared approximately 50 feral cats with global positioning system tracking devices. Data

from this tracking program is informing us of the scale of the problem as well as identifying the locations at which we can best apply feral cat management in New South Wales.

The tracking program has shown feral cats roam across huge areas, with some covering areas exceeding 50 kilometres. Researchers have reported seeing feral cats the size of foxes. Male feral cats in eastern New South Wales can weigh more than six kilograms, while females are generally smaller, weighing up to five kilograms. Analysis of the stomach contents of feral cats reveal a diet of native birds, lizards, small mammals, mice, rats and insects. They have even been witnessed taking small wallabies. This research is informing scientists who are developing humane controls to deal with the impacts of feral cats.

FeralCatScan is another initiative to which the New South Wales Government is committed. This program is run by the Invasive Animals CRC and managed by NSW Department of Primary Industries. It engages with the general public to encourage monitoring and recording of feral cat numbers in local areas. DPI is also using detector dogs to uncover feral cats and foxes, as well investing in research and the development of effective bait strategies. The research will help to identify how feral cats use the landscape, how far they roam, when they are active, when they breed and how they interact with other pest species. Our research has already found it is not uncommon to find feral cats living alongside wild dog and fox populations.

This research will help the New South Wales Government to devise humane control programs, which will reduce the threat that feral cats pose to native wildlife, livestock and people. NSW DPI plans to publish results of the research findings of disease prevalence in feral cats by the end of 2017. This is another fine example of the great minds we have within the Department of Primary Industries, which is working with other agencies and industry to look at the latest data and research to address this significant problem. The problem is significant when looking not only at the number of feral cats that exist but also the impact they have on our native wildlife. I am always impressed by the research programs that our people are undertaking. We have the best minds in this State—if not the country or the world—working in DPI. Every person in New South Wales, the environment and many stakeholders will benefit from this research. We congratulate the researchers on their great work.

MANGROVE MOUNTAIN LANDFILL WATER CONTAMINATION

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (14:54): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry. Will the Minister confirm that the Department of Primary Industries has evidence of breaches of the groundwater aquifers at the landfill site at Mangrove Mountain as a result of unauthorised earthworks? Will the Minister confirm that there is no controlled activity approval under the Water Management Act regarding the operation of the Mangrove Mountain landfill site? What action will the Minister take to investigate those matters?

The Hon. NIAL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (14:55): I thank the Hon. Penny Sharpe for her question, which contains a fair bit of detail. I can honestly say that I am not aware of the situation at this stage. I imagine that a number of agencies are involved in the landfill site and that Department of Primary Industries—Water may also play a role in the operation of such a facility. I will take the question on notice and refer it to my agency for a detailed reply.

FARM TRESPASS POLICY

Dr MEHREEN FARUQI (14:55): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry. Has the NSW Farm Trespass Policy been finalised, and is the Government pursuing the removal of charity status for organisations that uncover animal cruelty?

The Hon. NIAL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (14:56): I thank Dr Mehreen Faruqi for her question. Farm trespass is a concern to the New South Wales Government, as is trespass in general. It does not matter if people live in Tamworth or Tempe, in Byron Bay or Balmain, in Queanbeyan or Queens Park, in Nimmitabel or Newtown, in Gunnedah or Gympie, in Rockdale or The Rock—everyone in New South Wales deserves to enjoy their own property without having to deal with trespassers.

This Government firmly believes that trespassing is not tolerated in any of those Sydney-based suburbs and it should not be tolerated in regional places, particularly farms. That is why this Government, and me in particular, have taken an interest in this topic. Members may know that, in conjunction with the Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce, there was a farm incursion roundtable discussion talking about the seriousness of farm trespass. We know about some of the problems concerning farm trespass, particularly when looking at the latest results from the Bureau of Statistics, which shows that stock theft has gone up around 8 per cent. When we look at the price of livestock we find that livestock farming is a big business and it is adversely affected if farms are having their highly valued and prized stock stolen as a result of—

Dr Mehreen Faruqi: Point of order: Mr President, my point of order relates to relevance. I asked a specific question about whether the NSW Farm Trespass Policy had been finalised and whether the Government was pursuing the removal of charity status for organisations that uncover animal abuse. I believe the Minister has not answered that question.

The PRESIDENT: I remind members that although a specific question has been asked, the Minister's answer is only required to be generally relevant. The Minister was being generally relevant. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: As I said, we have been doing some work in this area, as I did with the Deputy Prime Minister, because there are a number of problems with farm trespassing, not to mention the concerns about theft. Obviously we have biosecurity concerns, particularly with people who are entering into intensive livestock operations without the proper decontamination procedures being undertaken. That is certainly a concern this Government has and that is why we take biosecurity seriously. One of the reasons we put a change in legislation through this Parliament in 2015 was that we did not want anyone entering anyone's property without having the correct biosecurity clearances. This is an area on which we are continually working. In relation to the charitable status of any organisations, I suggest that the member refer that part of the question to the Treasurer or to any Minister who may be responsible for that area.

PACIFIC HIGHWAY PROJECT ABORIGINAL WORKFORCE

Mr SCOT MacDONALD (15:00): My question is directed to the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education. Can the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government is ensuring Aboriginal participation in the upgrade of the Pacific Highway?

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) (15:01): As members of this House are well aware, the duplication of the Pacific Highway is the largest road project under construction in the Southern Hemisphere. What members may not know is that as part of the construction of the Pacific Highway upgrade 10 per cent of the workforce is Aboriginal. I take this opportunity to thank the former Minister for Roads, the Hon. Duncan Gay, not only for all the work that he did in this area but also for reinstating the funding agreement with the Federal Government to see this highway upgraded once and for all, with all the benefits that it will bring to the Aboriginal community. I am sure that Minister Pavey will continue to build on this momentum.

I am extremely proud that the New South Wales and the Australian Liberal-Nationals governments are building a workforce that reflects the diversity of communities that the Pacific Highway passes through. The Pacific Highway runs right through the heart of regional New South Wales. While the Government is building big infrastructure projects, it is also investing in the futures of both the local and the Aboriginal communities along the highway. I was pleased to hear that starting today the project team for the Woolgoolga to Ballina section of the Pacific Highway upgrade will visit local communities to encourage Aboriginal participation as construction work across the project increases. Information sessions will highlight opportunities for Indigenous Australians and businesses to work with contractors to deliver the project. The overall Pacific Highway upgrade between Port Macquarie and Ballina has roughly 10 per cent Indigenous employment and along with the Federal Government we, at a State level, are working hand in hand with communities and looking at ways that we can increase that participation.

It is important that the local Aboriginal workforce has every opportunity to be involved in an infrastructure project of this size. Drivers have only to look outside their car windows when they are travelling along that section of the highway to see the extensive work that is being done to upgrade it. But they might not see or know of the efforts that are being made to ensure that the local Aboriginal workforce is engaged. A number of initiatives are already in place, including implementing contracts with higher mandatory Indigenous participation, direct engagement of Indigenous companies to provide fit-out of contractor offices and the use of local Indigenous artists to design art for one of the project vehicles. Information roadshows are being held along the upgrade route to encourage the best possible participation rate by the region's Aboriginal workers and businesses. All major work on the Woolgoolga to Ballina upgrade is expected to start by the middle of the year, so this is a great time for the locals to participate and we are hopeful that those sessions will be very successful.

Providing clear information on pathways to access employment and business opportunities is an important part of the project's Aboriginal participation strategy. Whether it is one person looking to work onsite or a business hoping to provide goods or services, members of the project team and contractors will be on hand to talk about the process for getting on board. Information sessions will be held from today until Wednesday 4 May and I encourage all members in this Chamber to feel free to let anyone they may know in that area who may be interested in attending these sessions to go along. I think this is something that goes beyond politics; it is

about trying to improve the economic development and job opportunities for Aboriginal people, particularly in this instance on the North Coast. This is yet another reminder that it takes Liberals and Nationals in government to invest in the infrastructure our communities need. Just as importantly, we are investing in our local workforces, and I am proud, as the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, that this project will deliver real outcomes and opportunities for the Aboriginal communities of the North Coast.

SHARK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Mr JUSTIN FIELD (15:04): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries. Why did representatives from the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries, after being invited twice, decline to give evidence at the recent Senate inquiry into shark mitigation and deterrent measures, noting that there was a significant body of evidence provided to the inquiry that focused on the New South Wales meshing programs, being the North Coast shark meshing trial and the New South Wales shark meshing program?

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (15:05): I thank the member for his question. I am proud of the role that the Department of Primary Industries [DPI] has been playing in this area. We have, I believe, been the leading jurisdiction in the world on this matter and that has been because of the expertise and the advice of the staff within the Department of Primary Industries. Following the instances we have had of shark attacks in New South Wales in recent years, which can have very traumatic and emotional impacts on communities, we have taken a science-based response. There have been some State-based inquiries in relation to this matter that looked at a range of impacts that these incidents have had on communities, particularly on the North Coast. Again, not too much came out of those inquiries that DPI had not already been doing.

When it comes to how we are tackling this issue, we are doing things in this State that have not been seen in Australia before. When we look at what we are doing in New South Wales with technology like smart drum lines and then we look across the border and see what Queensland is doing, The Greens should be congratulating the New South Wales Government on its approach. I hear the mumblings from Mr Jeremy Buckingham about killing marine life. There is no comparison between the way we have addressed this issue in New South Wales and what we see in some of the other jurisdictions. That is something I would expect The Greens to be celebrating.

It could be very easy for the department to just have a kneejerk reaction and go back to some of those old technologies. That is one thing that Mr Jeremy Buckingham is embarrassed about. It has taken a Liberal-Nationals Government to cut all of the spin and use a science-based approach to show other jurisdictions that we can think outside of the box, put record amounts of funding towards this issue, be brave enough to trial new technologies that have not been seen in this country, and to back ourselves and the communities on the North Coast—not just go to old-school technology, but think differently.

We are using drones and we are using more aerial surveillance than ever before in this State. To be honest, the Opposition have nothing left because we already were doing everything that they suggested. This is something on which the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is leading the world. It is being backed by the best minds. We have the best scientists working in this area in the Department of Primary Industries. We have engaged staff to do stakeholder engagement with those communities that have been hurting.

We have not been trying to spin our way out of this. We have not been trying to play politics. We have used science. We have listened to the communities. When you go up into the North Coast in particular and you talk to businesses and community leaders, they will tell you that the confidence is coming back. They will tell you that the Liberal-Nationals Government has handled this with a sensitive, yet modern, approach. We are leading the world in this area and we will continue to do so. That is the Government's commitment; that is what we do. We do not simply talk about things, we do them.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD (15:09): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer with regard to the new technologies and the world-leading response of the New South Wales Government, and explain why he would not share those learnings with the Senate and other States?

The PRESIDENT: Order! The supplementary question is out of order. The member is simply referring to part of the answer. Referring to a separate part of the original question is not a supplementary question. Members—particularly Mr Jeremy Buckingham—should look closely at Standing Order 64 (4), which states that supplementary questions are allowed at the discretion of the President. Members do not have an absolute right to ask a supplementary question. It is allowed at my discretion.

Mr Jeremy Buckingham: Oh well, you're exercising your discretion. That's a new rule.

The Hon. Niall Blair: Point of order: Mr President, Mr Jeremy Buckingham's latest interjection after your clarification of the standing orders was out of order. I hope Hansard recorded it. For a member to come into

this Chamber and to disrespect the standing orders and question a clarification or a ruling of the President is absolutely out of order.

Mr Jeremy Buckingham: To the point of order: I ask the Minister to withdraw the point of order. He has not indicated what I said. He should have the gumption to put it on the record.

The Hon. Scott Farlow: What did you say?

Mr Jeremy Buckingham: The Minister took the point of order. He should put his money where his mouth is.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I did not hear the interjection from Mr Jeremy Buckingham because there were so many interjections. I will not rule on the point of order raised by the Deputy Leader of the Government.

NEWCASTLE ART GALLERY

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (15:12): I direct my question to the Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts. In the light of a recent letter to the Minister signed by seven Hunter and Newcastle members requesting that he meet with them to tour the Newcastle Art Gallery and to discuss the redevelopment, will he now meet with them?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:12): Absolutely. I have been delighted to accept an invitation from the Hunter Business Chamber to a function it is holding on Friday 19 May. I spoke yesterday with the Hon. Mike Gallacher about my visit to Newcastle. I will be doing a number of things over the course of the couple of days that I will be in the Hunter. I plan to visit some of the power stations in the area, and some very interesting mine rehabilitation projects in the Upper Hunter have been drawn to my attention. The Minister for Regional Water intends to meet with those involved to discuss a number of issues of interest to them. I plan also to go to the Newcastle Art Gallery. A number of the Hunter-based members have been talking to me about that, including Mr Scot McDonald, who is the Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter and who does a fantastic job. He has been filling me in on some of the concerns that have been raised about the gallery.

This issue has been raised with me before and it is absolutely on my agenda to visit to the gallery. I have not yet had a chance to speak to the local members of the Legislative Assembly, but I intend to do so. They are most welcome to speak to me. I know this is of interest to the member for Newcastle and I am sure the member for Wallsend also has a keen interest in this issue. I have spoken with her on many occasions about issues affecting the Hunter. I also had discussions with her predecessor. The former member for Wallsend is a particularly fine fellow with whom I often found common cause. I will be happy to visit Newcastle Art Gallery on the occasion of my visit to discuss the concerns that have been raised.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (15:15): I ask a supplementary question. In light of the Minister's answer, can he indicate specifically when he will be able to meet with the local members regarding the Newcastle Art Gallery redevelopment plans?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:16): I just said that I would be there on Friday 19 May.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: No, you did not.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I did. The Opposition is having a bad day today.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I remind members that today we started the new book used to record members' calls to order. I ask the Clerk to show members the book—of course he is not using it as a prop. I do not want members to interpret that as an invitation to have their name recorded first.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: As I thought I said at the beginning of my answer—perhaps the Hon. Greg Donnelly was not listening—I believe the Hunter Business Chamber function will held be at Merriweather on Friday 19 May. I am not exactly sure whether I will be arriving that day or on the previous night, but I will be there for several days. At some point during that period a visit to the Newcastle Art Gallery will be arranged, and I am happy to meet with any of the Hunter-based members of Parliament who want to see me. Indeed, if they want to see me before then, they should feel free to drop in.

CREATE NSW ARTS AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE (15:17): I address my question to the Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts. Will the Minister provide an update on the Create NSW Arts and Cultural Development Program and give an insight into how it has advantaged the creative aspirations of artists and creative practitioners in Western Sydney and regional New South Wales?

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:17): I thank the Hon. David Clarke for his question. Last night he and I were talking about all sorts of cultural matters. I know the honourable member has a great interest in the arts and in our creative industries in New South Wales. I spoke a little earlier about the Arts and Cultural Development Program [ACDP] in respect of Western Sydney in response to a question asked by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, so I will not repeat what I said then. However, it is important to focus on regional New South Wales, and I am happy to do so. The ACDP is a key mechanism through which the Government supports the arts sector. It provides funding to more than 300 arts and cultural organisations and individuals across the State each year including, but not limited to, visual arts, dance and theatre. The program also supports the State's major performing arts companies, State-significant organisations and key festivals.

I am pleased to announce that in 2017-2018 the ACDP will provide increased support specifically to organisations and activities in Western Sydney and regional New South Wales, increasing access to quality arts and cultural activity. In 2017-2018 the ACDP will be more flexible and responsive to the needs of the sector by providing multiple entry points for funding. This includes quick response artists support, Aboriginal small grants and two rounds of arts and cultural projects funding. We will offer a suite of fellowships that support professional development opportunities including for artists with a disability, Aboriginal artists, artists in Western Sydney and regional arts fellowships.

In addition, 25 Young Regional Artist Scholarships worth \$10,000 each will be available to young people aged between 18 and 25. The Government has provided a total of \$52.3 million in 2016-2017 to the ACDP. In previous years, the program has provided \$8.7 million to projects and programs in regional New South Wales. Among these is over \$1.6 million in direct program and project funding to regional New South Wales museums and galleries, such as the Orange Regional Gallery and Orange Regional Museum, the Albury Library Museum and the Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery.

We have funded over \$500,000 in funding for regional capital, such as to the Cootamundra Creative and Cultural Centre for a storage extension and the Inverell Art Gallery for air-conditioning. More than \$700,000 has been directed through the Performing Arts Touring category to support projects that provide access to the performing arts for audiences living in regional New South Wales. For example, they have included supporting major companies like the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Bangarra, the Sydney Theatre Company, the Sydney Dance Company, Opera Australia and the Australian Ballet, who have all been touring regional New South Wales. There are also programs—for example, like the Australian Chamber Orchestra's Move program—which run outreach for physically and mentally handicapped students across New South Wales. They are doing great work. In 2016-17, funding through the ACDP for programs and projects in the Central Coast region—*[Time expired.]*

MICHAEL GUIDER PAROLE

The Hon. PAUL GREEN (15:22): My question is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries, representing the Minister for Police. Earlier this week it was reported that Samantha Knight's killer, Mr Michael Guider, is up for parole. Mr Guider has been convicted of 75 child sexual abuse charges and the manslaughter of Samantha Knight. Up until now Mr Guider has failed to disclose the location of Samantha's body to the police. What is the Government doing to ensure that the eventual whereabouts of the body of Samantha Knight is made known to her family? When will the Government introduce to this Parliament "no body, no parole" legislation similar to that of the Northern Territory?

The Hon. NIAL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (15:22): I thank the member for his question—a question that is obviously of great concern to him and involves details of cases that are certainly against what every person in this House would consider to be acceptable at any stage. As he has asked a question of my colleague in the other place and it is a question of detail and legislation that is the responsibility of that Minister, I will refer that to him and come back to the member with a response.

ROSS RIVER FEVER

The Hon. WALT SECORD (15:23): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry. What steps is the State Government taking to protect the community against Ross River fever as floodwaters recede on the North Coast? Will the Government consider comprehensive aerial spraying?

The Hon. NIAL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (15:24): I thank the member for his question. It is a question of detail very similar to one he asked me in relation to the floods that occurred in the Lachlan River area late last year. Those

types of programs are something that NSW Health is particularly responsible for. My agencies are normally concerned about the impacts of those sorts of things on livestock. Like all responses in the North Coast, I am sure that all of our agencies are working together to consider what actions are required in response to anything that pops up out of this disaster on the North Coast.

I have confidence that the agencies will be considering issues like this. As Minister, my job at the moment is to let them do their job. That is certainly what I have been doing with my agencies. As I do each week, I have been getting briefs and updates. The issue of the response is certainly an agenda item that we have been discussing. I will allow agencies to work together. We will be guided by the experts in Health, Primary Industries, the State Emergency Service [SES] and the police. Our job is to let them do their job. Our job is to support them and thank them, and that is what we will be doing.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND SMART REGION INCUBATOR

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN (15:25): My question is addressed to the Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry. Can the Minister please update the House on what the New South Wales Government is doing to ensure we create the jobs and industries of the future?

The Hon. NIAL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (15:26): I thank the Parliamentary Secretary for his question. The economy of tomorrow comes from the discoveries of today, and the research institutions of New South Wales have an outstanding record in delivering world leading discoveries. The challenge that follows is to turn these discoveries into new products and industries through cooperation with the business community. To help play our part in meeting this challenge, the New South Wales Government has launched a number of initiatives to build better connections between researchers and the business community. These include the Boosting Business Innovation Program, under which the New South Wales Government has provided a total of \$12 million to the 11 public universities in New South Wales and the CSIRO to turbocharge innovation and the industries of tomorrow.

The latest initiative under this program, the University of New England's [UNE's] SMART Region Incubator, allows small and medium-sized businesses and entrepreneurs access to the latest research data generated by the UNE SMART Farm and Centre for Agribusiness, accelerating the commercialisation of research. In this case not only will research drive business but the incubator's plan for a smart data community will also assist business to inform research. The SMART Region Incubator was co-launched in Armidale by the member for Northern Tablelands, Adam Marshall, and the chief executive officer of Sydney-based electronics design company the LX Group, Simon Blyth. Mr Blyth provides a fantastic role model for budding entrepreneurs from regional areas. An alumnus of the University of New England, he built his own successful start-up company and secured awards for his entrepreneurship.

The SMART Region Incubator was co-launched in Tamworth by Catherine Eibner, the general manager of start-ups at one of the leading Sydney-based accelerators, BlueChilli. I thank the University of New England's vice-chancellor, Annabelle Duncan, for the university's vision in throwing its support behind the New South Wales Government and helping to launch the very important SMART Region Incubator. The Boosting Business Innovation Program also funds the Macquarie Park Innovation District, which is developing innovative solutions in health and pharmaceuticals, biotech and digital technology. In February the district held a two-day healthcare hackathon, the first such event to target the healthcare industry. It attracted more than 80 researchers, students and entrepreneurs, who were placed into teams and given exclusive access to the National Australia Bank's [NAB's] healthcare data.

The solutions produced at the Healthcare Hackathon included an integrated medical billing and payment service to consolidate patient invoices into one streamlined system; a chatbot application that gains insights from a person's online presence to manage their healthcare needs, including locating specialists and booking appointments; and a web service drawing on 3D augmented reality technology. This has been very successful, and I am confident that I will soon be able to update the House on equally remarkable and valuable results from the University of New England SMART Region Incubator. While I am talking about innovation I urge people to get out to the Royal Easter Show. Everyone should visit the Sydney Royal Easter Show. The best that we have from our regions is on show right here in Sydney. Citizens should take their kids along. It is a good way to educate everyone, have a great time and talk to a farmer. I urge everyone to get out there. Have a wonderful Easter and we will see you in a month.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: If honourable members have further questions I invite them to place them on notice.

WESTERN SYDNEY ARTS FUNDING

The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:31): Earlier in question time the Hon. Walt Secord asked a supplementary question that concerned arts funding in Western Sydney. Entirely consistent with the answers that I gave him, I confirm to the House that in calculations of arts funding to Western Sydney, the Blue Mountains is included.

Visitors

VISITORS

The PRESIDENT: I take this opportunity to welcome into the public gallery, as the guests of the Hon. Shayne Mallard, Simon Westaway, chief executive officer of Australian Livestock Exporters' Council, his wife, Rachel Westaway, who is a member for the Administrative Appeals Tribunal in Melbourne, and their three children Jasmine, Fletcher and Scarlet. On behalf of all members I welcome you into our Chamber and to the number one city in Australia.

Committees

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 6 – PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

Reference

The Hon. PAUL GREEN: In accordance with paragraph 2 (6) of the resolution of the House establishing the portfolio committees, I inform the House that this day Portfolio Committee No. 6 - Planning and Environment resolved to adopt the following terms of reference:

That Portfolio Committee No. 6 — Planning and Environment inquire into and report on matters relating to the waste disposal industry in New South Wales, with particular reference to "energy from waste" technology, and in particular:

- (a) the current provision of waste disposal and recycling, the impact of waste levies and the capacity (considering issues of location, scale, technology and environmental health) to address the ongoing disposal needs for commercial, industrial, household and hazardous waste;
- (b) the role of "energy from waste" technology in addressing waste disposal needs and the resulting impact on the future of the recycling industry;
- (c) current regulatory standards, guidelines and policy statements oversighting "energy from waste" technology, including reference to regulations covering:
 - (i) the European Union;
 - (ii) United States of America; and
 - (iii) international best practice.
- (d) additional factors that need to be taken into account within regulatory and other processes for approval and operation of "energy from waste" plants;
- (e) the responsibility given to State and local government authorities in the environmental monitoring of "energy from waste" facilities;
- (f) opportunities to incorporate future advances in technology into any operating "energy from waste" facility;
- (g) the risks of future monopolisation in markets for waste disposal and the potential to enable a "circular economy" model for the waste disposal industry; and
- (h) any other related matter.

Personal Explanation

RULINGS FROM THE CHAIR

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (15:33): By leave: I wish to make a personal explanation. Earlier in question time the Minister for Primary Industries took a point of order. I believe that he made an assertion that I had called into question your ruling, Mr President, and attributed a particular attitude to what I had said. I would like to put on the record what I did say, which was, "It is good to see the President using his discretion." That is perfectly in order and within the standing orders.

*Committees***GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 5****Government Response**

The CLERK: According to standing order, I announce receipt of the Government's response to report No. 43 of General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5, entitled "Wambelong fire inquiry evidence", tabled on 21 October 2016, received out of session and authorised to be printed on 5 April 2017.

*Motions***NORTH COAST FLOODS****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX (15:35): As I was saying before the lunch break, it is certainly a pleasure to stand with my colleagues in this Chamber to support the communities of the North Coast in this really tragic circumstance. I reflected upon the fact that it is very important for the people of the North Coast to understand that we have their backs. Their representatives in this place support them. I congratulate all three members who moved these motions. It is also important that we should not use this as an opportunity to push other agendas. I will leave it as simple as that: I think members know what I am talking about. I congratulate the emergency services organisations and other agencies of the New South Wales Government on the wonderful work they are doing. I certainly appreciated seeing the Premier, the Prime Minister and other leaders of the community on the North Coast and really backing the people of the North Coast. I encourage all members of this Chamber, if they have the time, to go up to the North Coast to do something practical because that is where we can make a difference. I strongly support the motions.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (15:37): I support these three motions and also express my deepest sympathy to the family and friends of those who have lost their lives. Like my colleagues, my thoughts are with those who have lost their homes, businesses and possessions. I also acknowledge that we are debating three motions, one moved by the Government, one by the Opposition and one by The Greens. I commend the spirit with which we acknowledge this terrible tragedy that has affected parts of New South Wales and Queensland. I also acknowledge the work of our emergency services personnel—police, health professionals and the many volunteers who have been supporting the community during this very tough time.

Sadly, 20,000 people in New South Wales were subject to evacuation orders, and slowly these people are being given the all-clear to return to their properties. The impact of Cyclone Debbie has been felt across numerous communities in both New South Wales and Queensland. The gale force winds uprooted trees, downed power lines, and damaged homes and infrastructure; but worse than the winds was the torrential downpour that came with the storm, resulting in widespread flooding—the worst we have seen in 40 years. The recent floods have been devastating to say the least, but one thing that has come through is the kindness of ordinary people.

We have heard stories of towns coming together and community spirit, of neighbours rolling up their sleeves and helping each other in the clean-up effort. Most importantly we have seen in these communities resilience, grit and generosity displayed by everyday Australians—from small business owners in Lismore working side-by-side with their staff and suppliers to try to restore some semblance of normality to the simple kindness shown by neighbours bringing a 10-year-old girl in Murwillumbah a birthday present after learning that she had lost everything. The kindness and compassion of our communities cannot be overstated.

Of course, when we speak of community spirit we must always acknowledge and thank our emergency services personnel—our State Emergency Service [SES] volunteers and our Rural Fire Service [RFS] volunteers—for their courage, bravery and determination to help others despite the dangers posed to themselves. These volunteers come from across Australia. Without them, the already momentous task of recovery would be just that much harder. Our communities, our State and our country are truly richer for the contribution of these selfless individuals. My thoughts and prayers are with friends and family who have lost loved ones. The floods have ruined people's homes and destroyed people's businesses. It is important to remember that, although the floods have come and gone in a matter of days, the clean-up and recovery will take weeks and months.

Our communities will continue to deal with the aftermath of the floods—now in excess of \$200 million in damages. In recognition of this fact, the New South Wales Government has made disaster assistance funding available for affected communities through the natural disaster relief and recovery arrangements. The assistance will include payments for people whose homes and belongings have been damaged, support from councils to restore roads and bridges, concessional interest rate loans for small businesses, primary producers and not-for-profit organisations, and further grants of assistance.

The Government is also in the process of collecting additional information to determine what further assistance is required has appointed Mr Euan Ferguson to act as the recovery coordinator to effectively manage the recovery efforts on the North Coast. Mr Ferguson is eminently qualified for the role, having more than 40 years' service in the emergency services sector, including time as the chief executive officer of the South Australian Country Fire Service and chief officer of the Victorian Country Fire Authority. Mr Ferguson's responsibilities include: establishing recovery centres, which has been done; arranging short- and long-term accommodation for those in need; supporting clean-up efforts; working with small businesses and primary producers to understand the floods impacts; and ensuring insurance companies work rapidly to resolve claims. I reiterate that my thoughts and prayers are with those who have been affected by this terrible tragedy and I commend the motions to the House.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN (15:42): In reply: I thank all members for their contribution to the debate on these extremely important motions: the Hon. Catherine Cusack, the Hon. Adam Searle, Mr Justin Field, the Hon. Niall Blair, Mr Jeremy Buckingham, the Hon. Mick Veitch, Mr Scot MacDonald, the Hon. Paul Green, the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox and the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones. I particularly thank the two movers of the other concurrent motions: the Hon. Walt Secord and Ms Dawn Walker. We did something unique today; in fact, I spoke to the Clerks about whether this had been done before in the New South Wales Parliament and they said that it has not. We have made history today by doing something that is, as I said in my initial contribution, above politics. It has been something behind which the whole Parliament can unite, which is something of which I am extremely proud.

The Hon. Catherine Cusack made the comment that this was the worst natural disaster to hit the North Coast region. I agree with her and I think this House does too, and that is why the depth of feeling, emotion, sincerity and response has been felt across the entire Chamber. The fiscal impact of such a tragedy is crushing. It has affected homes, businesses, farms and infrastructure across northern New South Wales. But the psychological impact of these events has been just as bad, and it will continue into the future. When regional communities go through times of trauma, difficulty and crisis they understand the need to pull together and to look after each other, and they do that. But this time they will be very sorely tested indeed. That is something of which we all need to be conscious, not just in the days and weeks ahead but also, as my friend and colleague Minister Blair said, in the months and years to come. Even when the cameras go away, we still need to be there and we need to show our support for the work that needs to continue.

Many shoulders have been put to the wheel already. All three levels of government—local, State and Federal—and all of their associated entities and personnel are working together to provide the assistance that is needed. I acknowledge all the volunteers—the extraordinary and magnificent volunteers who have come from across the nation and descended upon the North Coast. They have our deepest thanks and appreciation for all the work that they have done and all that they will do. Most importantly, I pay special tribute and give honour to the communities of the North Coast. Through their grief and loss they have shown resilience, tenacity and the commitment to rebuild once again. I say to them, "We share your pain, we understand the support you need and we will not let you down—we will stand with you every step of the way".

The Hon. WALT SECORD (15:45): In reply: I thank my colleagues for their contributions to this debate: the Hon. Ben Franklin, Parliamentary Secretary; the Hon. Adam Searle, upper House Labor leader; Mr Justin Field from The Greens; the Hon. Niall Blair, the Minister for Primary Industries; the Hon. Mick Veitch, Labor's agricultural spokesperson; Mr Jeremy Buckingham, Leader of The Greens; Mr Scot MacDonald, Parliamentary Secretary; the Hon. Paul Green of the Christian Democratic Party; the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox; and the Hon. Natasha McLaren-Jones, Government Whip.

While we may not agree on some policy matters, I want to cite Ms Dawn Walker. With her considered contributions, she is truly emerging as a great representative for the North Coast for The Greens. Ms Dawn Walker and the Federal Labor member for Richmond, the Hon. Justine Elliott, are right to ask why Byron and Ballina are missing out on recovery assistance from the State and Federal governments. I am referring to the comments published online within the last three hours on the Echonetdaily online news service.

All of the North Coast news agencies have done a sterling job covering the unfolding disaster. I cite in particular the *Tweed Daily News*, the Lismore-based ABC, 2LM, the *Northern Star* as well as the *Ballina Shire Advocate* and the *Tweed Valley Weekly*. During natural disasters the local media play a pivotal role in communicating with local communities. I note that the Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon. Niall Blair, made reference to my absence during proceedings. For the record, I had popped upstairs to make contact with North Coast locals to get the latest information. I will read into the record a statement just issued by the Federal member for Richmond, Justine Elliott, which reads:

Local MP Justine Elliot today demanded that the Federal and State Governments urgently activate Category C assistance under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements [NDRRA].

"Our region desperately requires more assistance from both the Federal and State Governments. They have the capacity to activate Natural Disaster Relief today to ensure that major and significant funding and assistance is delivered to our community.

"The recent flood has been devastating for our region. We've had lives lost. We've seen family homes destroyed and we've seen local businesses completely ruined. Our Councils have had major infrastructure damage. I've visited some of the worst affected areas and it is heartbreaking talking to locals and hearing firsthand about the extent of the damage.

"We need urgent action. I'm demanding that both the Prime Minister and the NSW Premier deliver major funding to rebuild the North Coast by activating Category C funding through the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements," Justine said.

I had not intended to exercise my five-minute right of reply as we have before us unusual multiparty motions supported by all members. I had intended to defer to the Parliamentary Secretary the Hon. Ben Franklin, but the conduct of other members made me reconsider my decision. Finally, I note that in my absence the Hon. Catherine Cusack launched an attack on me and my contribution during her contribution. Admittedly, it was highly unusual to use a motion on a natural disaster to cast aspersions on another member. But we are going to disagree. When it comes to comparing the activities of Queensland Premier Anastasia Palaszczuk with the response of New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian, the differences are abundantly clear—they are stark. I stand by my comments in the media and in this Chamber earlier today. In conclusion, our thoughts and prayers are with the families and businesses on the North Coast. We want to see those hard-hit communities recover and heal. I will leave it at that. I thank the House for its consideration and I thank my colleagues, friends and Government members for their contributions. I commend the motions.

Ms DAWN WALKER (15:49): In reply: I thank all the members of this House for coming together in this way with a historic joint motion to acknowledge and support the people of the Northern Rivers in this time of great difficulty and human tragedy.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): The Hon. Ben Franklin has moved Private Members' Business item No. 1291 outside the Order of Precedence. The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): The Hon. Walt Secord has moved Private Members' Business item No. 1289 outside the Order of Precedence. The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): Ms Dawn Walker has moved Private Members' Business item No. 1277 outside the Order of Precedence. The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Business of the House

POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: On behalf of the Hon. Daniel Mookhey: I move:

That Private Members' Business item No. 1213 outside the Order of Precedence be postponed until a later hour.

Motion agreed to.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: On behalf of the Hon. Paul Green: I move:

That Private Members' Business item No. 1211 outside the Order of Precedence be postponed until a later hour.

Motion agreed to.

Bills

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES ADVERTISING PROHIBITION BILL 2015

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 22 September 2016.

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN (15:52): On behalf of the Government I speak in debate on the Alcoholic Beverages Advertising Prohibition Bill 2015. Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile introduced this bill into the Legislative Council as a private member's bill on 10 September 2015. The Government acknowledges Reverend Nile's intentions with this private member's bill, which prohibits advertising and other promotional activities that assist the sale of alcoholic beverages and provides for the staged withdrawal of these activities with the aim of reducing the incentive for people to consume alcohol. The proposed prohibition on alcohol advertising is very wideranging and applies to advertisements in public places, on radio or television, in handouts and promotions, and through sponsorship arrangements.

The bill provides that the Minister for Health may grant an exemption in relation to sporting, racing or arts events of national or international significance, but only after consulting with the appropriate Minister. The bill goes beyond prohibiting advertising and sponsorship. It provides for "local option" areas to be declared, in which alcohol cannot be sold, purchased, delivered or consumed in a declared local area if supported by 10 per cent of local residents. The Minister for Health can declare an area to be a local option area where a petition is received from at least 10 per cent of the residents. The declaration could make illegal what would otherwise be the lawful operation of licensed premises in selling or delivering liquor within the local option area. Declarations could be in force for up to 24 hours per day.

Honourable members previously considered bills similar to the one now before them. The Government's position remains that the regulation of alcohol advertising across various forms of national media is primarily a matter for the Commonwealth Government, with advertising controls most effectively implemented through a national model. The Government believes that prohibitions in the bill are a disproportionate response to calls to encourage healthy lifestyles and are too focused on reducing overall consumption rather than alcohol abuse; and that alcohol advertising regulation must be measured and strategically targeted, recognising that alcohol is a product the industry may lawfully invest in and promote to adults within approved standards.

The restrictions contemplated in the bill might have limited impact on alcohol advertising, given the reach of the industry across jurisdictions and its limited capacity to control activities on social media. At the same time they would significantly affect the liquor advertising and marketing industries in New South Wales. The bill's proposed local option areas, which fall outside the scope of alcohol advertising regulation, would have a major impact on the operators of licensed venues and the communities in which they provide services. These local option areas can be established far too readily without broad community support. A local option area could be established where 90 per cent of the local community does not support such a declaration.

The Liquor Act 2007 already contains provisions that allow alcohol sales restrictions to be applied by the declaration of a restricted alcohol area, but importantly requires majority community support before this can be considered. It also would be inappropriate to introduce bans that may affect event sponsorship, and therefore the viability of certain community and sporting events, in the absence of a debate involving industry and community stakeholders. The Government has taken a targeted approach to reducing alcohol-related harm in the community through a series of reforms and initiatives introduced since 2011. These have included the three strikes disciplinary scheme, precinct-based measures in the Sydney central business district [CBD] and Kings Cross, a restriction on takeaway liquor sales after 11.00 p.m. and a tough escalating sanctions regime that applies penalties of licence suspension and cancellation where alcohol is sold to minors.

We have seen local liquor accords implement their own schemes to counter alcohol-related violence based on the lockout and last drinks initiatives implemented by the Government in the CBD and Kings Cross. Updated liquor promotion guidelines were released in 2013 and are being reviewed this year. Those guidelines provide guidance to industry on responsible promotions, including where promotions extend beyond the point of sale and involve the use of social media for marketing purposes. They recognise that liquor promotions can have a significant influence on the way people drink alcohol and help to identify inappropriate promotions.

In 2016 Liquor and Gaming NSW investigated 46 cases of potential irresponsible alcohol promotions or activities. In previous years action has been taken against promotions that encouraged intoxication or rapid consumption of alcohol, including promotions for unlimited free drinks, the sale of alcohol in buckets and beer-drinking competitions, among others. Those with special appeal to minors also have been previously targeted and include a promotion for the sale of novelty alcoholic products, like vodka-infused gummy bears at a regional hotel. Given the role of the Commonwealth in alcohol advertising, the activity underway to address the wider issue of alcohol-related violence, the significant challenges presented by the prohibition approach of this bill and its proposed local option areas approach, the Government does not support this bill.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ (15:58): I will put forward some views on the Alcoholic Beverages Advertising Prohibition Bill 2015, although I do not lead for the Opposition on this bill. It is important that we debate the bill in this place, given our views on encouraging healthier lifestyles, particularly those expressed by the shadow Minister for Sport. It is important for us to look at ways of getting much better outcomes to encourage healthy lifestyles. The advertising of alcoholic beverages has been raised in this place, particularly in regard to advertising at large sporting events. There is always an important balance that needs to be struck between the recreational use of alcohol and the abuse of alcohol. As we know, advertising is a large industry. It is a significant industry and the fact that billions and billions of dollars around the world—

The Hon. Don Harwin: Point of order: The contribution that the Hon. Lynda Voltz is making, in all the circumstances, is an excellent contribution. I do not know how many times the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has already been called to order.

The Hon. Walt Secord: None today.

The Hon. Don Harwin: I am shocked. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition yet again is interjecting on his own colleague. Admittedly, the Hon. Greg Pearce should not be responding, but I take a point of order that the conduct is disorderly.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): I note the following ruling: it is contrary to the standing orders for members to interject whilst a member has the call. The Chair accepted that this tends to be honoured more in the breach than in its observance. However, when such activity reaches a height at which no one, particularly Hansard, can hear the proceedings and the House dissolves into a disorderly rabble, the Chair is forced to take some action. Members on both sides of the House should give consideration to the proper dignity and operation of the Chamber. I have given this matter careful consideration and on this occasion I have decided that no action is required.

According to sessional orders, proceedings are interrupted to permit the Minister to move the adjournment motion if desired.

The House continued to sit.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): According to sessional order, Government business takes precedence.

Committees

COMMITTEE ON THE OMBUDSMAN, THE LAW ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT COMMISSION AND THE CRIME COMMISSION

Membership

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I move:

That the Hon. Scott Farlow be discharged from the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission and the Crime Commission, and that the Hon. Lou Amato be appointed as a member of the Committee.

Motion agreed to.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I move:

That a message be forwarded to the Legislative Assembly conveying the terms of the resolution agreed to by the House.

Motion agreed to.

Adjournment Debate

ADJOURNMENT

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

PEST ANIMALS MANAGEMENT

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN (16:03): I will speak slowly at this moment because I am hoping that a few of The Greens will come to the Chamber to hear what I have to say. The political opportunism of The Greens never ceases to put a wry smile on my face. That happened earlier today when The Greens pulled a stunt "briefing on the impacts of feral deer", which was organised by Mr Jeremy Buckingham. Make no mistake—this stunt was a last-ditch, vain effort by The Greens and their friends to distort the truth about the impacts of deer, and twist the arm of Government into declaring all species of deer a pest. I know The Greens are not used to using the truth, as it does not serve their business model well, so in the light of this I will spend a few minutes enlightening them on a few facts related to deer.

Let us take Mr Buckingham's very flawed statements yesterday that only 896 deer were culled by recreational hunters in 2015. The figure is closer to 40,000 when we account for private and public land hunting. The number that Mr Buckingham was quoting related only to the small number of State forests that are currently open for R licensed hunters. Whoops! Last year, the Natural Resources Commission received more than 400 submissions on the draft report following the review of pest animal management and 384 non-confidential submissions were submitted to the commission's review. Of this, only 36 independent submissions—that is just over 9 per cent—were made supporting the recommendation to declare deer as a pest species. Mr Buckingham's mates at the grandly named Invasive Species Council orchestrated the submission of another 92 "form" submissions in support of this declaration. Under the review, the Invasive Species Council form submissions make up 72 per cent of all submissions calling for deer to be declared a pest. Again, whoops!

All governments know that little weight should be given to form submissions, given that they do not reflect independent or authentic opinion and are easily churned out, particularly in this modern day and age of being able to press a button and in goes your submission. In other words, form submissions are used as a tool to frustrate the truth and arguments around sensible policy. The Greens talk a lot about sensible policy but they do not like it; nor do they have much of it. This unsurprising and long-used tactic from The Greens and other extremists is deliberately designed to present a distorted view of the truth and so-called public opinion. You hear them use the words ad nauseam: the community thinks this, the community thinks that. Their tiny community may well think that but the community seldom thinks what The Greens think.

We often find ourselves in a position where The Greens—together with extremist, quasi-political outfits like the so-called Invasive Species Council—attempt to hijack public debate, or worse, completely misrepresent the truth. They would not do that, would they? Of course they do. We know they do this because they are, and have always been, a vocal minority seeking attention and an audience. Take that away from them and they get relevance deprivation syndrome. In order to compensate for the obvious flaws in their misinformed and deliberate mistruths on issues such as deer management, they disguise their flawed arguments as if they were considered and thoughtful independent evidence. This, of course, is then distributed en masse throughout the community hoping that somebody will bite. It does not happen only about deer. That just happened to be the issue that Mr Buckingham thought he would hang his coat on yesterday and today.

This situation occurs in all of these issues and campaigns that The Greens run. Recreational fishers, pig farmers, the greyhound industry and miners are only recent victims of those smear campaigns. The aim of The Greens is to shut down and destroy any industry they do not like—and they do not like industry—or that does not conform to their dangerous agenda, regardless of the social, cultural, and economic impacts that their indifference—and these lies—cause. On a final note, Pumpkin—and he is not here—our party treasurer is still waiting on a gold coin donation for the four freshly hunted Bambi bangers he quaffed down at our children's hospital fundraiser, which was too long ago to mention.

CYBERSECURITY

The Hon. GREG PEARCE (16:07): In this digital age of connectivity and disruption of opportunity and threat, long-established relationships have been re-evaluated and reinvigorated. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association [CPA] is providing a forum for its 52 members from all parts of the world to lead initiatives. Last week the CPA hosted an International Parliamentary Conference [IPC] on National Security and cyber security at Church House in Westminster. The IPC is a major event hosted each year by the United Kingdom branch of the CPA, which brings together parliamentarians from around the world to explore issues of particular importance. This year's IPC was the largest to date, with more than 90 delegates representing 37 countries. It was held following the terrorist attack on Parliament. All delegates expressed their commiserations to the victims and their families. The IPC was opened with an address from the Secretary of State for Defence for the United Kingdom, Sir Michael Fallon, MP, who emphasised the importance of international networks, including the Commonwealth, in addressing national security issues, human rights, peace and stability against aggression, terrorism and threats to national security.

Sessions focused on the global context of national security and cybersecurity issues and the way in which the world has become more interdependent. The intermingling of populations, global markets and the internet has meant that events have a ripple effect throughout the world. A discussion on terrorism addressed the wider strategic picture of stability and good governance of which counterterrorism forms a component. Sessions on cybersecurity noted that the incidence of cybercrime and cyberterrorism is on the increase and the proactive role parliamentarians need to take in protecting the new digital space. The discussion emphasised the need for greater awareness of cybersecurity and the correct response to cybercrime not being to shut down the internet but to educate users.

Delegates had the opportunity to explore the establishment of the United Kingdom National Security Council as a case study to unlock some of the broader issues in context with contributions from members of the council, advisers and academics. A fascinating session focused on cyber hacking. It explained the different types of hacking and how to prevent them. The session also touched on the current challenges authorities face in accessing encrypted platforms such as WhatsApp. There was a demonstration of an ethical hack that highlighted the ease of hacking using accessible apps. Delegates concluded that cybercrime is overtaking normal crime. It was stressed that there is a need to grow by partnering with the private sector so that information can be shared more easily and by bringing more talent into organisations.

The conference also hosted the launch of the "E-handbook on Cybersecurity", which was produced by CPA UK. The e-handbook is a resource for parliamentarians to equip them to deal with the challenges of cybersecurity. More than 100 experts contributed to the handbook. I urge members to go to the CPA website to access it. Delegates also explored the specific role for parliamentarians with regard to cyber challenges and

cybersecurity. The challenge facing parliamentarians is how to protect the rule of law in cyberspace, which of course is ungoverned by state borders. The Budapest Convention on Cybercrime was held up as a great example of some of the strategies being used to legislate at a national level. A session also looked at the role of parliamentary committees. It drew on the example of the United Kingdom Joint Committee on National Security and the role of parliamentarians in building partnerships to fight cybercrime. I congratulate CPA UK and the delegates and speakers on providing this important opportunity to explore such vital issues and to build communications and connectivity.

RIVERLANDS GOLF COURSE

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ (16:12): For 30 years the residents of Milperra have fought to protect the open recreational spaces of the Riverlands Golf Course. The golf course was established in the 1930s when the Smith family leased 34 acres of river terrace forest comprising scribbly gum, red mahogany and ironbark on the banks of the Georges River. The family worked on turning the bush and marshlands into a nine-hole golf course on weekends and after work during the week. Work was interrupted by the Second World War, but the first clubhouse and 18 holes were completed by 1964. In the early 1980s, approaching retirement, the Smith brothers looked to offload the property. Property developers were quick off the mark expressing a desire to develop the site, which prompted an immediate backlash from local residents who were determined to protect one of the last areas of natural bushland in Bankstown.

Following the public outcry and a request from the City of Canterbury Bankstown, then Premier Neville Wran committed \$2.9 million for the purchase of the site. At the time Councillor Phil Boulton noted that the golf course was "one of the last stands of bushland open space in Bankstown", and urged the council to "get rid of the developers once and for all". Despite the offer from the Wran Government, golf club members convinced the owners to sell the site. After the original purchase by a consortium for a rumoured \$1 million, a Japanese consortium paid \$16 million. The consortium proposed a country club style development, intending to expand the site to a 27-hole golf course.

I note Greg Norman's involvement in the marketing program, which featured "the natural beauty of the Georges River setting with its established stands of mature trees". At the time, local residents were relieved that the large-scale residential development had been replaced by a new golf course that protected the natural qualities of the area. While the country club never eventuated, the golf course remained, and since the 1930s has been recreational open space. Developers have tried time and again to get this piece of land rezoned for residential development, but the local community and the City of Canterbury Bankstown have stood their ground protecting this important piece of bushland on the Georges River.

It now appears that under the Berejiklian Government, which has shown such a reckless disregard for cultural, heritage and environmental sites, 30 years work done by the local community has been thrown out the door. In 2015, the City of Canterbury Bankstown moved to protect the bushland with the zoning of 18 hectares as E3. E3 zoning classified this land for its special ecological and aesthetic attributes and required careful consideration and management to ensure development is compatible with these values. This zoning would protect its important biodiversity and bushlands while allowing some minimal development. The rest of the site remained zoned recreational open space.

However, on 10 October 2016, the New South Wales Government, through the Department of Planning and Environment, changed the zoning to R2 low density to allow for 500 new homes to be built on the land. Reading the New South Wales Government press release, one would think that the City of Canterbury Bankstown had proposed changes to planning rules to allow for 15 hectares of land for new detached homes. What it does say is that the Department of Planning and Environment changed the zoning of 15 hectares of the land from E3 to R2 low density residential zoning. With the stroke of a pen, the Government has disregarded 30 years of protection of one of Western Sydney's most important pieces of bushland on floodplains on the banks of the Georges River.

One would think that the local member, the member for East Hills, would be up in arms on behalf of his community to protect this land, as previous members of Parliament have been. However, not only has the member for East Hills rarely been seen in his electorate in the past year but also he has been non-existent in the other Chamber. He has not got to his feet in the other place once in the past 12 months to make any comment on behalf of his electorate, certainly not to argue for protection of these important riverlands. Not one word has he spoken in that Chamber since the 10 March 2016. Normally we could also rely on the local councillors to take up the cause to protect these lands. However, as we know, they have been removed by the Government through forced council amalgamations that have silenced community representation.

Today in this Chamber we have noted the devastating effects of floods in Queensland and Northern New South Wales. Yet, only last year in April and June, local residents along the Georges River were left homeless and major roads were closed due to flooding. The Berejiklian Government has by stealth changed the zoning to

allow for 500 homes to be built on these important riverlands. What short memories the members of the Berejiklian Government have.

SYDNEY MARINE PARK

Mr JUSTIN FIELD (16:17): I invite members to imagine next summer diving off the rocks at North Bondi into the crystal-clear water, catching a kingfish off the Heads or a mud crab in the Hawkesbury River, or watching the whales frolicking offshore along Sydney's magnificent coastline knowing that that experience will be enjoyed by future generations because we in this place decided to protect it for the future. A Sydney marine park running from Booti Booti National Park on the Central Coast to the Royal National Park in Sydney's south would be globally iconic. We would be preserving the wonderful coastal lifestyle of our city and region and ensuring a healthy marine environment as well as fish for the future. Importantly, a marine park is also the single best response to build the resilience of our marine environment in the face of the growing threat of climate change.

A Sydney marine park would indeed be something for everyone. It would be a multi-use park where families, fishers, surfers, divers, sailors and marine life would all reap the benefits. It would be a place where commercial and recreational pursuits would coexist with a healthy marine environment. I have campaigned for a Sydney marine park for years. As a surfer, diver, fisher and ocean swimmer, I have a deep personal interest in our marine environment and a love of our coastal lifestyle. I have a renewed passion to see a Sydney marine park become a reality because of the growing threat that climate change presents to marine ecosystems and coastal communities, including those in the Sydney region.

In New South Wales warming ocean temperatures are changing marine species movements and increasing the risks of disease within fisheries. Extreme weather events are causing devastating impacts to marine habitats and coastal zones, impacting not only on nature but also on our settlement and enjoyment of the coast. The Government's analysis acknowledges that marine protected areas—that is marine parks with sufficient fully protected no-take marine sanctuaries—are the best management strategy to build climate resilience and ensure we have fish for the future. So why has this not happened? The community has been pushing for a Sydney marine park for more than a decade. It is The Greens and Labor policy. Even the Coalition Government came close to announcing a Sydney marine park when our city hosted the World Parks Congress in 2014, only to baulk at the last minute.

It is easy to suggest they are cautious not to inflame the recreational fishing lobby and the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, but I can assure Liberal members of Parliament whose electorates are along the Sydney coastline that their communities will back a Sydney marine park. The motivations of the recreational fishing lobby as distinct from most recreational fishers have nothing to do with protecting the interests of nature or even the fish they are trying to catch—and certainly have nothing to do the non-fishing users who make up the bulk of coastal electorates. Some elements of that lobby are blatantly lying when it comes to the idea of a Sydney marine park by saying it will lock out all fishing from the harbour. Do not be fooled.

A Sydney marine park can be designed to have something for everyone. Commercial ventures will continue and thrive, recreational and commercial fishing will continue, families will have access to their favourite beaches, and divers and surfers will continue to enjoy the ocean. The Moreton Bay Marine Park off Brisbane shows that is the truth. From the spectacular Julian Rocks in the Cape Byron Marine Park to swimming with seals off Montague Island in the Batemans Marine Park, our six multi-use parks have the broad support of local communities. Far from being a barrier to recreational fishing, they are holiday fishing hotspots.

There is a critical gap in the marine park network around Sydney. The Government's independent scientific assessment called for this gap to be filled and highlighted the success of existing marine parks. Let us replicate that success in Sydney. Right now all marine parks are facing a review to fit the Government's new threat-and-risk approach to the marine environment. Unsurprisingly, the threat assessments recognise climate change as the biggest single risk to the ongoing enjoyment of the New South Wales coastal environment and to the health of the marine environment. In many cases it is assessed as a high risk. "High risk" means we need to act. A Sydney marine park is critical to ensure the resilience of our marine environment as it responds and adapts to climate change. It also has the added benefit of ensuring impacts from pollution and fishing pressures can be better mitigated. Right now the New South Wales Government is considering ways to enhance biodiversity in the Sydney marine region. Let us start with a Sydney marine park.

BLUE MOUNTAINS RAIL LINE

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD (16:22): On 8 March the residents of the Blue Mountains were confronted with outrageous claims in their local newspaper from their State Labor member who stated that the multibillion dollar new interurban train fleet comprising 500 state-of-the-art carriages had safety concerns and that essential track modifications to the Blue Mountains line were unplanned and not needed. The member then

called on the \$2.3 billion contract with the South Korean consortium Hyundai Rotem to be cancelled. Labor is pretty good at cancelling government contracts.

I am addressing Parliament today to set the record straight on this issue for the alarmed residents and businesses of the Blue Mountains. It is time for a history lesson for Labor. Members opposite do not like history lessons because their history of delivering infrastructure for the taxpayers of New South Wales is pretty woeful. In the late 1980s I caught the Blue Mountains trains to the city. They were the V set silver trains built in the 1970s and early 1980s. The very same V set trains still run today—nearly half a century later—yet the intercity fleet was replaced in Labor's last term with the purchase from China of the outer suburban car [OSCar] H carriages. Let us be clear: They were not for the Blue Mountains stations.

The OSCar trains only service the Wollongong and Newcastle lines, not the long-suffering commuters of the Blue Mountains. The reason is that the Blue Mountains line dates back to the 1860s. A multimillion dollar track and tunnel upgrade would have been required for the Blue Mountains line to carry the OSCars. Labor was not prepared to do that upgrade. As a result, Labor left the people of the Blue Mountains to travel on 50-year-old trains. What was good enough for the Labor areas of Newcastle and Wollongong was too good for the people of the Blue Mountains. They were treated as second class citizens by Labor when it came to public transport. Labor treated that region with contempt for many years.

The Berejiklian Liberal Government is delivering historic levels of infrastructure in New South Wales— heavy rail, light rail, metro rail, roadways like WestConnex, new hospitals, schools, and cultural and social infrastructure across the State. The Government is doing all this without debt and without the support of the Labor Opposition in Parliament, which has voted against every transport project introduced in this Chamber. Part of that investment is the \$2.3 billion contract for a state-of-the-art intercity rail fleet to service all interurban routes, including the Blue Mountains. In addition to delivering this, the Government is committed to investing tens of millions of dollars to upgrade the Blue Mountains line so it can take modern trains—which Labor failed to do. The people of the Blue Mountains deserve the same high standard of rail travel, comfort and safety as the people of Wollongong and Newcastle. Labor should have undertaken these essential upgrade works during its 16 fruitless and wasted years of government in New South Wales, but it did not.

The plans for modifications and upgrades to the Blue Mountains lines are in the process of being finalised. They will then be put on exhibition for community feedback, planning, and heritage and environmental assessments. The Berejiklian Liberal Government is committed to delivering a world-class rail service for the people of the Blue Mountains not only for the next few years but also for over the coming century. That is right: This Government will futureproof and, frankly, Labor-proof the Blue Mountains lines so that in years to come the residents, tourists and businesses of the Blue Mountains always will enjoy first class rail travel in comfort and safety. I turn to the beat-up on safety concerns. I start by noting that the scaremongering in the article I referred to includes comments from the rail union's State secretary. I can think of nothing more irresponsible than for a rail union boss to instil fears in the minds of commuters for political purposes. I remind members that the current interurban fleet of OSCars that cannot service the Blue Mountains was ordered by Labor off the shelf from China. Labor's protectionist One Nation policies ring hollow under scrutiny.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan): I call the Hon. Penny Sharpe to order for the first time.

The Hon. SHAYNE MALLARD: As to safety scaremongering, let me put the record straight. All major infrastructure acquisitions have standard establishment and commissioning contracts that deal with testing and adjustments. The member for Blue Mountains compares the new trains to those supplied to Philadelphia and Boston. I am informed that our trains are not even the same trains and any comparison is outright misleading. Regardless of that inconvenient fact, transport representatives in Boston have ordered another 50 new trains to add to the 75 it already has operating, so concerned were they by the quality of the product. In fact the new intercity fleet is based on the successful OSCars which, as I said, were ordered off the shelf from China by Labor.

The safety of our rail customers is our number one priority. Investing tens of millions of dollars upgrading the train lines through the Blue Mountains is about delivering for the next century a quality world class rail service which has high quality modern comforts and, above all, the highest safety technology. In the coming years the long-suffering people of the Blue Mountains will experience the new state-of-the-art trains delivered by the Berejiklian Liberal Government.

MANGROVE MOUNTAIN LANDFILL WATER CONTAMINATION

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (16:27): I draw to the attention of the House the concerns of the people of the Central Coast who have raised over many years the issue of the Mangrove Mountain landfill site and its impact on the water catchment on the Central Coast. The Mangrove Mountain Landfill site sits on a permanent

watercourse and the groundwater aquifers in the catchment of the Central Coast drinking water supply. This water supply provides clean water to 330, 000 residents. This landfill site has a long history that leaves many questions unanswered from all sides of government about how our regulatory and planning systems operate—questions about how facilities are approved, how facilities are monitored and how initial development consents are modified through changed consent conditions resulting in a development that should never have been allowed in the first place.

In the last two years the Mountain Districts Association applied for and has gone through 15 individual Government Information (Public Access) Act searches of the records of the former Gosford City Council and now Central Coast Council, the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] and the NSW Office of Water to understand how this facility has become a major waste facility on top of the Central Coast water catchment. The history of the Mangrove Mountain Landfill site starts very innocently in 1998 when the former Gosford City Council approved a development consent from the RSL to remodel the Mangrove Mountain golf course, involving a small amount of clean landfill. A limit of 80,000 cubic metres of fill as a waste facility was set in an area regulated by an environmental protection licence to turn the nine-hole golf course into an 18-hole golf course.

Because clean landfill was to be used for a specific purpose there was no need to place a leachate barrier or collection system under the waste. A series of conditions was placed on the development approval and a licence was required from the Environment Protection Authority. The first licence from the EPA was issued in November 2001. The licence was granted to Planet Earth Support Company. The conditions were for the proponent to develop a leachate management plan, including the requirement to install a leachate barrier system and a leachate collection system. This did not occur. A second environmental protection licence was issued in April 2005. A third was issued in July 2003. At this modification there was a new Landfill Environment Management Plan that dropped many of the previous design controls. The licence holder went from Planet Earth Support Company to trading as Central Coast Mangrove Waste. What had started out as community golf course proposal had become a waste facility.

The EPA issued environment protection licence EPL 11395 for the Mangrove Mountain Landfill in 2001 then proceeded to issue variations to the licence on 12 occasions between 2002 and 2012. By 2012, the landfill site had taken more than 10 times the original amount of waste approved to be dumped on it. There is now more than 800,000 cubic metres of waste at this facility. It is a giant mound—not of clean fill, but of a range of waste that never should have been allowed to be there in the first place. This landfill site is producing an estimated three million litres of leachate annually, much of which flows into the catchment of the Ourimbah Creek system and into significant groundwater reserves. Despite all these problems, in 2014 current planning approval was given, won in the Land and Environment Court, that will allow the operator to dump a further 1.3 million cubic metres of waste, meaning the total amount of rubbish will expand to 2.2 million cubic metres, or 25 times what was originally envisaged for this site.

The Mangrove Mountain Landfill has another significant problem. Eighty-five per cent of the existing waste mound is unlined—because, remember, it was supposed to be clean fill for a golf course—and the 15 per cent of the lining that is there is ineffective and does not meet current standards. As I said earlier, all the while, three million litres of leachate produced annually is leaking into the groundwater system. Two years on, these concerns remain unaddressed. I also raise with the House concerns about the management of this site. There have been problems with the management of this site since day one. The EPA has issued the operator, in its various iterations, with cautions and letters for failure to comply with licence conditions. In answers to my recent questions on notice, the EPA confirmed there have been 26 reports of non-compliance on annual returns since 2006, but no fines have been issued to the landfill operator.

The community has had enough. In February 2016 a 163-page submission of documents and photographs was sent to the then Premier and the then Minister for the Environment. After much resistance, I note that the Government established an independent environmental review of the landfill site. This review is welcome and we all await the outcome. We need to pay attention to the words of Dr Stephen Goodwin from the Mangrove Mountains District Association, who said, "The Mangrove Mountain landfill is flagged to be further expanded but it doesn't comply with its development consent, is at odds with the environment guidelines for New South Wales solid waste facilities and, in addition, has failed to comply with its environment protection licence conditions on numerous occasions." [*Time expired.*]

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

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 16:33 until Tuesday 2 May at 14:30.