



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Council**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Sixth Parliament  
First Session**

**Thursday, 18 October 2018**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Bills .....	1
Water NSW Amendment (Warragamba Dam) Bill 2018 .....	1
Returned.....	1
Motions .....	1
Egypt National Day 2018 Reception .....	1
Legacy Week 2018 .....	1
Fair Treatment's Long Walk to Treatment Event .....	2
Clean Up Australia Founder Ian Kiernan, AO.....	2
Fingal Head Public School Tenth Anniversary of Dreamtime Pathway Celebration.....	2
Lennox Head All Girls Surfriders Club .....	3
Alstonville Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans' Association Outreach Centre.....	3
Cape Byron Marine Rescue .....	4
Teven-Tintenbar Public School Athletics .....	4
Alstonville Plateau Historical Society .....	4
Byron Writers Festival Storyboard Project.....	5
Drill Hall Theatre Company .....	5
Byron Breast Cancer Support Group .....	6
Rulings .....	6
Interjections.....	6
Visitors.....	7
Visitors .....	7
Committees .....	7
Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption .....	7
Report: Review of the 2016-2017 Annual Reports of the ICAC and Inspector of the ICAC .....	7
Documents .....	8
Audit Office .....	8
Reports .....	8
Auditor-General's Reports .....	8
Reports .....	8
Petitions.....	8
Petition Received .....	8
Business of the House .....	8
Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business .....	8
Order of Business.....	8
Bills .....	9
National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Tree Thinning Operations) Bill 2018 .....	9
First Reading .....	9
Second Reading Speech.....	9
Business of the House .....	11
Postponement of Business .....	11

## TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing*

Motions .....	11
Go NSW Equity Fund .....	11
Central Coast Food Innovation Initiative .....	26
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on Global Warming .....	27
Visitors .....	30
Visitors .....	30
Questions Without Notice .....	30
Shenhua Watermark Exploration Licence .....	30
Western Sydney Arts, Screen and Culture .....	31
Matthew Fraser Comments .....	32
Crystalline Silica Exposure .....	32
Medical Technology Industry .....	33
Child Prostitution .....	33
Roc Partners .....	34
Early Childhood Teachers .....	34
Waternsw .....	35
Mathematics Education .....	36
Manufactured Stone Industry Safety Standards .....	37
Regional Cultural Fund .....	37
Defence Industries .....	37
NSW Koala Strategy .....	38
Sydney Film Festival Funding .....	38
Aboriginal Languages Education .....	39
Prisoner Escort Duties .....	40
Sydney Film Festival Funding .....	40
Documents .....	41
Tabling of Papers .....	41
Bills .....	41
Gambling Advertising Prohibition Bill 2018 .....	41
First Reading .....	41
Second Reading Speech .....	41
Business of the House .....	43
Notices of Motions .....	43
Bills .....	44
Emergency Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 .....	44
Messages .....	44
Adjournment Debate .....	44
Adjournment .....	44
Coogee Electorate Health Infrastructure .....	44
Death of Ms Mischelle Rhodes .....	44
Shoalhaven City Council .....	45
Government Procurement .....	46

**TABLE OF CONTENTS—*continuing***

Mental Health Month .....47

Police Association of NSW .....48

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

**Thursday, 18 October 2018**

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

**The PRESIDENT** read the prayers.

### *Bills*

#### **WATER NSW AMENDMENT (WARRAGAMBA DAM) BILL 2018**

##### **Returned**

**The PRESIDENT:** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly returning the abovementioned bill without amendment.

### *Motions*

#### **EGYPT NATIONAL DAY 2018 RECEPTION**

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (10:01):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) on Monday 23 July 2018, the Egypt National Day Reception was celebrated at the Egyptian Consulate General in Sydney, hosted by the Consul-General, Mr Yasser Abed; and
  - (b) the event was attended by the following dignitaries:
    - (i) the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, MLC, Government Whip in the Legislative Council;
    - (ii) the Hon. John Ajaka, MLC, President of the Legislative Council;
    - (iii) the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, MLC, Opposition Whip in the Legislative Council;
    - (iv) Mr Jihad Dib, MP, member for Lakemba and shadow Minister for Education.
- (2) That this House extends greetings and best wishes to the Egyptian Australian community on the occasion of its celebration of National Egypt Day.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### **LEGACY WEEK 2018**

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (10:02):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) Legacy Week 2018 took place from Sunday 2 September 2018 to Saturday 8 September 2018;
  - (b) Legacy Week was established in 1942 to raise funds to support the 60,000 widows and young families who are suffering after the injury or death of a spouse or parent, during or after their defence force service;
  - (c) a wreath laying ceremony was held on Monday 3 September at the Cenotaph in Martin Place marking the beginning of Legacy Week 2018; and
  - (d) in attendance at the wreath laying ceremony were:
    - (i) His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley, AC, DSC (Ret'd), Governor of New South Wales, together with Mrs Linda Hurley;
    - (ii) the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, MLC, representing the Premier and the Minister for Veterans Affairs;
    - (iii) Mr Gregory Warren, MP, member for Campbelltown; and
    - (iv) President of Sydney Legacy, Mr Greg Wrate.
- (2) That this House acknowledges:
  - (a) the 5,000 volunteers who worked hard to raise awareness and funds during Legacy Week; and
  - (b) that Legacy is committed to enhancing the lives and opportunities of the widows and families they support.

**Motion agreed to.**

**FAIR TREATMENT'S LONG WALK TO TREATMENT EVENT****Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (10:03):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) every year more than 200,000 Australians are unable to access alcohol and other drug treatment;
  - (b) for every dollar spent on treatment of drug use, society gains seven;
  - (c) every year, illicit drug use costs the Australian economy \$8.2 billion;
  - (d) on Friday 12 October 2018, Uniting Church launched Fair Treatment at Sydney Town Hall with special guests:
    - (i) Sir Richard Branson;
    - (ii) Dr Marianne Jauncey; and
    - (iii) Dr Khalid Tinasti.
  - (e) Fair Treatment's Long Walk to Treatment event begins Friday 19 October 2018, where they will trek 500,000 steps from Dubbo to Sydney; and
  - (f) the Long Walk to Treatment event seeks to highlight the distance a person living with addiction in regional New South Wales may have to travel to receive the drug treatment they need.
- (2) That this House commends the Uniting Church for launching Fair Treatment and for all the work it is doing to save lives and reduce harm caused by drug addiction.
- (3) That this House calls on the Government to support the Long Walk to Treatment event.

**Motion agreed to.****CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA FOUNDER IAN KIERNAN, AO****Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (10:03):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) Ian Kiernan, AO, the founder of Clean Up Australia, has died at the age of 78;
  - (b) Ian Kiernan was an avid environmentalist who launched Clean Up Australia on Sunday 8 January 1989, with 40,000 volunteers turning out to clean up more than 4,000 tonnes of rubbish;
  - (c) the next year in 1990 the first official Clean Up Australia Day occurred with approximately 300,000 volunteers turning out;
  - (d) since then Australians have devoted more than 33 million hours towards the environment through Clean Up Australia Day removing the equivalent of more than 350,000 ute loads of rubbish;
  - (e) in 1993, the first "Clean Up the World" event took place when Ian Kiernan met with the United Nations Environment Plan to discuss a global Clean Up, and by 2007 some 35 million people from 80 nations turned out to Clean Up their world and in 2017 it was estimated 120 nations took part;
  - (f) in 1994, Ian Kiernan was awarded the Australian of the Year; and
  - (g) for more than 30 years Ian Kiernan has been a true champion for the protection of the environment including campaigning for container deposit legislation and for greater action on climate change.
- (2) That this House expresses its deep appreciation for Ian Kiernan's life of public service and environmental activism and extends its condolences to his family.
- (3) That this House calls on the Government to consider honouring Ian Kiernan's incredible legacy with a permanent public memorial on the Sydney Harbour foreshore.

**Motion agreed to.****FINGAL HEAD PUBLIC SCHOOL TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF DREAMTIME PATHWAY CELEBRATION****Ms DAWN WALKER (10:04):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) on Wednesday 17 October 2018, Fingal Head Public School celebrated the tenth anniversary of its Dreamtime Pathway;
  - (b) the Dreamtime Pathway is a cultural walk, providing the opportunity to learn about indigenous plants and cultural history to local schools, the community and visitors;
  - (c) the Dreamtime Pathway was the result of the hard work of the local community, which included thousands of volunteer hours eradicating invasive weeds, seeding and planting native plants endemic to the area, creating interpretive artworks and teaching students about the natural world around them; and

- (d) the Dreamtime Pathway was the result of the hard work of the local community, including:
  - (i) the drivers of the project: Judy Robinson and Ray Kent;
  - (ii) the Dreamtime Pathway Committee;
  - (iii) the artists: Susan Stone, Hannah Cutts, Christine Slabb and Lorraine Abernethy;
  - (iv) the teachers: Linda Cargill, Janelle Kirk and principal Christine Marshall;
  - (v) the Slabb family;
  - (vi) Tanya and Franc Krasna;
  - (vii) Kay and Peter Bolton;
  - (viii) Fingal Head Coastcare;
  - (ix) Tweed Shire Council;
  - (x) Tweed-Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council; and
  - (xi) the students of Fingal Head Primary School.
- (2) That this House congratulates everyone involved in the making of the Dreamtime Pathway and on reaching this milestone.

**Motion agreed to.**

**LENNOX HEAD ALL GIRLS SURFRIDERS CLUB**

**Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (10:06):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes:
  - (a) the All Girls Surfriders Club based in Lennox Head is in its twenty-seventh year;
  - (b) the club holds monthly surfing rounds on the fourth Sunday of every month and caters for girls who are just starting out to those girls that are surfing at a more advanced level; and
  - (c) on 23 September the Soul Surfers competition round was held in perfect weather conditions and beautiful clean two to three foot waves.
- (2) That this House congratulates all of the girls in the club for their ongoing commitment to women's surfing and in particular the September Soul Surfers competitors:
  - (a) Georgia Laddin;
  - (b) Melissa Wright;
  - (c) Cory Whitney;
  - (d) Renee Adamson;
  - (e) Melissa Cook;
  - (f) Berenice Roberts; and
  - (g) Marila Llic.
- (3) That this House recognises the strength and vibrancy of women's surfing on the north coast.

**Motion agreed to.**

**ALSTONVILLE AUSTRALIAN PEACEKEEPERS AND PEACEMAKERS VETERANS' ASSOCIATION OUTREACH CENTRE**

**Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (10:06):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) the establishment of an Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans' Association Outreach Centre in Alstonville in 2015;
  - (b) the role of the centre in providing a free-service for veterans across a range of areas including help dealing with government departments through to assisting with accommodation and finances;
  - (c) before the opening of the centre in Alstonville the nearest veterans support centre for veterans living in the Northern Rivers was Coffs Harbour; and
  - (d) during the period 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2019 volunteers in the Alstonville centre worked 1,334 hours, including responding to 235 enquiries, conducted 82 interviews and made 34 home visits.
- (2) That this House congratulates all of the volunteers who selflessly give up their time to support veterans through the centre and in particular welfare advocate Liz Hill for her determination and tireless work on behalf of veterans on the north coast and for keeping the centre afloat without government support.



- (3) That this House recognises the vital work that the Alstonville Veterans advocacy centre does working with Northern Rivers veterans and their families as they adapt to civilian life.

**Motion agreed to.**

**CAPE BYRON MARINE RESCUE**

**Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (10:07):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) Cape Byron Marine Rescue provides a volunteer marine search and rescue service and radio safety services to persons and vessels operating within the Cape Byron coastal environment, estuaries, rivers and lakes;
  - (b) the service operates in concert with other government and non-government search and rescue and emergency management agencies in New South Wales and other jurisdictions to maximise safety in recreational boating and related activities; and
  - (c) the Cape Byron Marine rescue service started as Cape Byron Coastal patrol in the late 1980s and was formally established in July 2009 when the three State volunteer marine rescue organisations (Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, Volunteer Rescue Association [marine sections] and Australian Volunteer Coast Guard (NSW units)) amalgamated into the one organisation – Volunteer Marine rescue NSW.
- (2) That this House congratulates all of the Cape Byron Marine Rescue volunteers who dedicate their service to our community and visitors, including Unit Commander Terry Sandon who is currently working tirelessly to see much needed renovations undertaken for the base.
- (3) That this House recognises the following four volunteers who were presented with national medals in 2017 in recognition of their long service to the organisation:
- (a) Pam Ditton who started with the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol in October 2000 and is a training officer at Cape Byron Marine Rescue;
  - (b) Rodney (Syl) Reid who joined the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol in 1997 and transferred to Cape Byron Marine Rescue where he is Watch Officer and Rescue Controller;
  - (c) Joy Taylor who began with Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol in April 2000 and who with her husband Ted fundraise every Tuesday and Wednesday and market days for the Service; and
  - (d) Len Hughes who started with the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol in July 2004 and later transferred to the Marine rescue Cape Byron where he retired in late 2015.
- (4) That this House acknowledges the incredible work that our Marine Rescue volunteers do and their commitment and dedication towards ocean and water safety.

**Motion agreed to.**

**TEVEN-TINTENBAR PUBLIC SCHOOL ATHLETICS**

**Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (10:07):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) six Teven-Tintenbar Public School students have qualified for the NSW State Athletic Championships;
  - (b) the State Athletics Championships will be held at Sydney Olympic Park from 31 October to 1 November 2018; and
  - (c) the students qualified at the Regional Championships held in September 2018 which includes schools from Kempsey to the Tweed which is a huge catchment area with a lot of talent.
- (2) That this House congratulates all of the students who competed at the regional level and in particular those who have qualified for the State Championships:
- (a) Lacey Parrington;
  - (b) Isla Gillan;
  - (c) Thomas Mahon;
  - (d) Toby Davies;
  - (e) Zappa Borich; and
  - (f) Tex Kirkland.
- (3) That this House congratulates the fabulous Teven Tintenbar school community and the dedicated leadership of principal Ginny Latta.

**Motion agreed to.**

**ALSTONVILLE PLATEAU HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (10:07):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes:
  - (a) the Alstonville Plateau Historical Society is hosting an exhibition called "Summer at Crawford House" from 21 October 2018 until 27 January 2019;
  - (b) the exhibition seeks to show local memories of summer, through the themes of swimming, sunburn, Santa, salads, school speech nights and storms; and
  - (c) the Society also manages the historic Crawford House in Alstonville.
- (2) That this House recognises the dedication of the volunteer members of the Alstonville Plateau Historical Society who are keeping the local history available for residents and visitors alike.
- (3) That this House thanks the members of the Alstonville Plateau Historical Society including current President John Sim for their work and commitment to the history of the Alstonville Plateau community and the broader Northern Rivers.

**Motion agreed to.**

**BYRON WRITERS FESTIVAL STORYBOARD PROJECT**

**Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (10:08):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes:
  - (a) the tremendous success of the Byron Writers Festival StoryBoard project – a Storyboard bus that gathers a team of authors and storytellers that hits the road and runs Storyboard creative writing workshops in schools and libraries across the New South Wales Northern Rivers;
  - (b) that StoryBoard is a program of the Byron Writers Festival with a vision to foster creativity and literacy in thousands of northern New South Wales kids, creating the next generation of readers and writers – young people who are excited about literature, literacy and creative expression and who are empowered with tools that help create them in the future; and
  - (c) that, in 2017, StoryBoard reached over 7,500 Northern Rivers kids, including 87 school visits, 105 workshops with 2,979 kids and author talks for another 4,064 kids. They conducted 31 master classes with 363 attendances, producing two anthologies and held two author tours, three festival workshops and one school holiday workshop.
- (2) That this House congratulates the StoryBoard team for their amazing work across the Northern Rivers bringing the delight of reading and storytelling to children across the region.
- (3) That this House recognises the work and dedication of the StoryBoard team, including:
  - (a) Coordinator – Gabby Le Brun;
  - (b) Steering Committee – Jesse Blackadder, Chair, Lynda Hawryluk, Southern Cross University representative;
  - (c) Volunteers – Kate Beneke, Sharron Short, Cassandra Bennett, Lenore Cooper, Susie Rosedale, Lisa Warmsley, Lisa Peacock, Leah Cranston and Hayley Katzen; and
  - (d) StoryBoard bus drivers – Maryanne Bragge and "Naughty Andi" Davey.

**Motion agreed to.**

**DRILL HALL THEATRE COMPANY**

**Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (10:08):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes:
  - (a) the recent sell-out theatre sensation presented by the Drill Hall Theatre Company in Mullumbimby and Campfire Collective Project, *Mark Colvin's Kidney*, written by Tommy Murphy and directed by John Radio;
  - (b) this theatre production was only the second showing of this play which premiered at the Belvoir St Theatre in 2017; and
  - (c) the play has had rave reviews and extended its season with an extra three performances by popular demand.
- (2) That this House notes that the play is based on the true story of Colvin, one of Australia's great journalists, who while covering the genocide in Rwanda contracted an infection that left him on dialysis, Colvin met the love of his life Mary Ellen Field, the Australian expat in the United Kingdom who was falsely accused of betraying her client Elle Macpherson to Rupert Murdoch's *News of the World*—exonerated by Colvin, the play explores their relationship against an extraordinary world context and is a true tale of humanity and integrity and friendship.
- (3) That this House congratulates the committee members and volunteers who passionately drive the Drill Hall Theatre Company and deliver such incredible theatre quality for the community, particularly the committee members of the Drill Hall Theatre Company:
  - (a) President – Michael Borenstein;
  - (b) Vice President – Greg Aitken;
  - (c) Treasurer – Alex Benham;
  - (d) Secretary – Sonia Borenstein;

- (e) Artistic director – Mike Russo;
- (f) Theatre manager – Jill Benham; and
- (g) Committee – Sunita Bailey, Jan Blanch, Peter Gough and Alan Raabe.

**Motion agreed to.**

**BYRON BREAST CANCER SUPPORT GROUP**

**Ms DAWN WALKER (10:08):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes:
  - (a) the ongoing work of the Byron Breast Cancer Support Group;
  - (b) the group's focus on relaxation, wellbeing and connection for breast cancer survivors and those currently going through breast cancer treatment or who have recently been diagnosed with breast cancer; and
  - (c) the group meets between noon and 2.00 p.m. every third Wednesday of the month at the New South Wales Cancer Council rooms.
- (2) That this House recognises:
  - (a) the dedication, passion and vision of the founder, Barbara Pinter, who helped the group grow into a wonderful support for the local community, who was herself a breast cancer survivor and single mother of two boys who noticed that there was very little social support for women in her situation, and who reached out to other women who had also been diagnosed with breast cancer, started meeting for coffee and from there the group has grown;
  - (b) Barb started two amazing programs out of the Byron Breast Cancer Support group—the Rainbow Dragons Abreast Club in Lennox Head and the YWCA Encore Program; and
  - (c) under the group leadership of Sarah Sigley, the group focuses its energy on two major events a year: Breast Cancer Awareness Day in October when they take over the Cape Byron Lighthouse and turn it pink for two nights, coined the "Beacon of Hope", it raises awareness of breast cancer and is an opportunity to promote resources like the "My journey kit"; and the second event is a group fundraiser with the wonderful Byron Bay Football Club who auction off pink Rugby League Jerseys, with all funds raised used for group members to access support services from the Petrea King Quest For Life Foundation.
- (3) That this House acknowledges the important role that Breast Cancer Support Groups like the Byron Group play in supporting women with breast cancer and congratulate them on the work they do.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Rulings*

**INTERJECTIONS**

**The PRESIDENT (10:09):** A number of points of order were taken toward the end of question time yesterday. Firstly, I remind members that the rules of debate under the standing orders are intended to ensure that members conduct themselves in a courteous and orderly manner and, consequently, that business is conducted efficiently. The interjections and tit-for-tat points of order taken yesterday were not a good use of question time and did nothing to uphold the dignity of this House.

To the specific points of order: the Hon. Shayne Mallard took a point of order that, in making comments to another member across the Chamber when he was being escorted out of the Chamber by the Usher of the Black Rod, the Hon. Walt Secord disrespected the House. When a member is suspended under the standing orders, the member being removed from the Chamber by the Usher of the Black Rod should be silent. For the member being escorted from the Chamber to continue the argument is disrespectful to the Chair, to members and to the House.

Having now read the *Hansard*, I uphold the Hon. Shayne Mallard's point of order. The Hon. Walt Secord is fortunate that I did not hear his comment at the time, as I may have extended his suspension until the end of the sitting. Further, when a member is suspended under the standing orders and is being removed from the Chamber by the Usher of the Black Rod, all other members should remain silent. Again, it is disrespectful to the Chair, to other members and to the House.

The Hon. Natalie Ward took offence to the comments made by the Hon. Walt Secord, seeing them as a threat. As President Johnson said in 1987:

Whether particular words are offensive or disorderly may often depend on the context in which they are used.

In 1989 President Johnson said:

The Chair should place himself in the place of the member who claims to be offended. If the Chair consequently believes the words to be offensive, they should be then withdrawn.

When considering whether words or comments are disorderly, it is not only the ordinary meaning of words used but also the tone and intent of those words which must be taken into consideration by the Chair. In this case, the words used were not offensive, but I accept that Mrs Ward took them to be so. I now call the Hon. Walt Secord to order for the first time for his conduct while being removed from the Chamber.

The Hon. Catherine Cusack took a point of order that interjections were being repeated in points of order in order to place them on the parliamentary record. I remind members that interjections are disorderly at all times and members must take responsibility for any words said in this Chamber, whether during debate or by way of interjection. It is a longstanding convention in this House, reflected in the custom and practice of *Hansard*, that when an interjection is acknowledged by a speaker, it will become part of the public record. If members do not wish to risk their interjections becoming part of the parliamentary record, they should exercise self-restraint and not make them.

A number of members addressed the question of whether private conversations in this Chamber were wholly outside the domain of the standing orders. In 2009 then President Fazio ruled that a member cannot take a point of order that a member was using an offensive expression if the member was addressing a member privately and not addressing the House at the time the expression was used.

However, to say that in all situations "private conversations" are not subject to the rules of the House is to dismiss the purpose and principles of the rules themselves. If I think that your "private conversation" is intended to detract from the proceedings before the House or to deliberately distract or inhibit the member speaking, then it is my duty to use my authority to uphold the standing orders and restore the orderly conduct of proceedings. That is why earlier this year I ruled that sledging is disorderly. I remind members of that ruling. I will not hesitate to call members to order if they engage in sledging.

Finally, while I do not wish to inhibit robust debate in this Chamber, I take this opportunity to remind members of the ruling of former President Willis on 14 October 1992, when he said:

Members of Parliament occupy a very special and privileged position in our society, and nowhere more so than within the precincts of the Parliament ... the good and orderly conduct of the Parliament depends on the common sense, courtesy and observation of propriety by members. If that were not the case, it would be open to any member to do things which may be found to be excessive by his or her colleagues. This line of propriety is very fine ... It relies ... upon the good sense and courtesy of members.

#### *Visitors*

### **VISITORS**

**The PRESIDENT:** On behalf of all members, I welcome to the public gallery a delegation from Henan Vocational College of Applied Technology and Councillor Andrew Ferguson of Canada Bay Council, who are guests of the Hon. Ernest Wong. They are most welcome.

#### *Committees*

### **COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION**

#### **Report: Review of the 2016-2017 Annual Reports of the ICAC and Inspector of the ICAC**

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN:** I table the report No. 6 of 56 of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption entitled "Review of the 2016-2017 Annual Reports of the ICAC and Inspector of the ICAC", dated October 2018. I move:

That the report be printed.

#### **Motion agreed to.**

**The Hon. TREVOR KHAN (10:16):** I move:

That the House take note of the report.

The Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption has reviewed the annual reports of the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC] and its inspector for the 2016-2017 reporting year. As with the last annual report review it conducted, the committee has examined the ICAC's functioning following the restructure wrought by the Independent Commission Against Corruption (Amendment) Act 2016. The ICAC is clearly operating well under the new model and the three commissioners and the ICAC staff are to be commended for its smooth transition.

It is an exciting time for the ICAC in other ways also, with a recent \$3.6 million funding boost providing it with greater capacity to perform its important work. Additional investigators, strategic data analysts and surveillance and corruption prevention staff have been deployed across the organisation and the ICAC is now able to conduct concurrent public inquiries whilst keeping abreast of its investigative caseload. The increased funding

has enabled the ICAC to establish a strategic intelligence research capacity. In addition, a \$500,000 capital funding boost will allow the upgrade of various information, communication and technological equipment to meet the new unit's operational requirements. This is an area that the committee will continue to monitor with particular interest.

With regard to the inspector's annual report, the committee was pleased to find that arrangements are in place to promote a productive working relationship between the inspector and the ICAC. Further, the committee was satisfied that resourcing levels and arrangements are currently appropriate to enable the inspector to carry out his vital role effectively. In particular, the committee has highlighted the importance of the inspector's audit function and has made a recommendation aimed at addressing an ongoing issue that prevents the inspector accessing telephone intercept material for audit purposes. I take this opportunity on behalf of the committee to thank the commissioners, their executive team and the inspector for their contributions at public hearings for the review. On behalf of myself and my fellow committee members, I thank the committee staff for their assistance in the conduct of the review.

**Debate adjourned.**

#### *Documents*

### **AUDIT OFFICE**

#### **Reports**

**The CLERK:** Pursuant to the Annual Reports (Statutory Bodies) Act 1984, I announce receipt of the annual report of the Audit Office of New South Wales for year ended 30 June 2018.

### **AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS**

#### **Reports**

**The CLERK:** According to the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, I announce receipt of a Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled "Mobile Speed Cameras", dated 18 October 2018, received out of session and authorised to be printed this day.

#### *Petitions*

### **PETITION RECEIVED**

#### **Shark Management Strategy**

Petition calling on the Government to support non-lethal, science-based and community-driven approaches to reducing the risk of shark bites in New South Wales, including programs such as Shark Watch, tagging and monitoring programs, and personal deterrent devices, and to reject the use of shark nets that do not guarantee public safety, received from **Mr Justin Field**.

#### *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 business of the House.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I move:

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

- (1) Private Members' Business item No. 2480 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. Robert Brown relating to the National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Tree Thinning Operations) Bill.
- (2) Private Members' Business item No. 12 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile relating to the Gambling Advertising Prohibition Bill.
- (3) Private Members' Business item No. 2522 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. John Graham relating to the GO NSW Equity Fund.
- (4) Private Members' Business item No. 2142 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. Taylor Martin relating to the Central Coast Food Futures Forum.
- (5) Private Members' Business item No. 2523 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of Mr Jeremy Buckingham relating to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change special report on global warming.

- (6) Private Members' Business item No. 2509 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. Lynda Voltz relating to an order for papers regarding the indoor sports stadium in the Sydney Basin.
- (7) Private Members' Business item No. 2507 outside the Order of Precedence standing in the name of the Hon. Scott Farlow relating to Airds/Bradbury Men's Shed.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Bills*

**NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE AMENDMENT (TREE THINNING OPERATIONS) BILL 2018**

**First Reading**

**Bill introduced, and read a first time and ordered to be printed on motion by the Hon. Robert Brown.**

**Second Reading Speech**

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN (10:38):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I will not take up a great deal of the time of the House because the bill I have presented is very short and simple and is designed to solve a problem that the Government has and to solve a problem—

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** That the forest has.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The Hon. Robert Brown has presented the bill and is now making his second reading speech. The Hon. Robert Brown has the call.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** I am pleased to introduce the National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Tree Thinning Operations) Bill 2018. The bill amends the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 to authorise tree thinning operations to be carried out on land in the Murray Valley National Park and the Pilliga National Park. This operation currently occurs but under difficult circumstances that cause cost to the taxpayer and is a problem for the Government and residents in the area. The bill allows the chief executive to authorise a person or persons to carry out the thinning operations for environmental purposes—that is what this is about—in either the Murray Valley National Park or the Pilliga National Park and also allows for the removal and selling of any timber obtained from the carrying out of those operations.

The problem with the current legislation is that even if the Minister or chief executive wanted to they cannot authorise the use of the material obtained by thinning except by way of a very circuitous route. The attempt to do so from the last major thinning operation was a disaster. It resulted in a 16,000 tonne pile of logs which it was thought could be used by the public for firewood. However, the public are not allowed access to a log pile as it is very dangerous. The chief executive in granting an authority may limit the kinds of trees or timber with respect to which the authority applies. These are thinning operations that were recommended by the Natural Resources Commission [NRC] before these State forests were first turned into national parks. The National Parks and Wildlife Service already has the ability to direct which types of trees and which trees are to be removed as well as the size, area and spacing for the purposes of ecological thinning. Large-scale ecological thinning was a key recommendation of the NRC investigations which were carried out prior to the declaration of the Murray Valley National Park.

In addition, a three-year study conducted by the Department of Primary Industries found that the thinning of cypress pine regrowth in the Pilliga not only improved biodiversity but also helped restore and improve habitat for native species. Thinning operations reduce tree density and allow trees that remain to grow more rapidly and with healthier stems. It also has the advantage of reducing the likelihood and impact of wildfires destroying large tracts of the forest or national park, as the case may be, which present an enormous danger to human life, stock and property. Both types of forests have been included. They have the singular problem that if they are not thinned they lock up.

That is a technical term that means that the rate of growth of stems is so high that the forest cannot grow beyond a certain stage. The stems are so thick that a person cannot walk through the forest. I have looked at both situations and have compared a thinned or managed forest on one side of a road in the middle of the Pilliga to a national park on the other. The comparison is stark. Any member of this House—the Opposition spokesperson for the Environment portfolio or The Greens—who walked through that forest, simply by turning their head could see the difference. It is that stark. When one looks closer, the forest floor of a non-managed forest, particularly cypress pine, is like this table. There is no biodiversity; it is bare.

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** It is a dead zone.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** I acknowledge the interjection: it is a dead zone. In comparison, forests that are properly managed and are thinned are healthy, they have ground cover, forbs and grasses, and they look like a forest should look. I note that both the Pilliga and the river red gum forests are a construct of man. During the long debate on the creation of the Murray Valley National Park, it was made clear from testimony given by traditional owners and members of the land council, and from historical works when white man first came, that the Murray Valley, certainly around the conjunction of the Edward River and Murray River, looked nothing like it does today. The Bangarang people, who are the custodians of the Millewa State Forest, call the river red gums "white man's weeds". I heard stories that have been told down through generations that ancestors could stand on the banks of the Murray River and wave to their colleagues on the banks of the Edward River 12 miles away. That cannot be done today because there are trees everywhere.

These forests are unique. This bill does not attempt to open up the North Coast or South Coast hardwood forests. It is specifically related to a problem that exists for this Government and the taxpayers of this State with these two types of forest. Both river red gums and cypress pines suffer from what is called lock up. I hope I have explained that adequately. The bill is very short and when members come to examine it they will see that it is what it is, there is nothing hidden in it, there is nothing up my sleeves. It is not a Trojan horse to allow reserves to be put back into production. I will deal with that if I return in the next parliament. This bill provides the Minister for the Environment with a way to very simply codify what she should have done, what she tried to do and what could not be done. There are some politics involved in this matter.

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** No!

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Yes. Some members may not recall but when Labor was in government and the forests were declared, the Minister at the time was the Hon. Frank Sartor. Some things happened at about that time. First, the Hon. Ian Cohen, who was a member of The Greens in this House, made it public that if the Government did not declare immediately the Murray Valley National Park, then The Greens would not issue preferences in the forthcoming election. The Hon. Frank Sartor, when he addressed the industries and people of the local five or six towns—

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** Soon to be unemployed.

**The Hon. ROBERT BROWN:** Yes. He said to them, "This is nothing about science. This is all about politics. I am about to give you all a lesson in politics." He got out of that meeting with his scalp, which is a credit to the calmness of the local people. I have to say that at least Frank Sartor had the internal fortitude to tell the local people what it was all about. Approximately 230 families lost their livelihoods. When there is that much unemployment in small towns such as those, there are consequences. First, the properties that those people own may go from a value of let us say \$250,000 at that time to \$50,000 because there are 200 on the market and they cannot be sold. Many of the people involved in the industries were obviously local people who relied on those industries for employment, and they may not get employment elsewhere. In particular, the leaders of the Bangarang people were incensed that the biggest group of people who would be negatively affected were their own young males who worked in the industry.

I do not think there is any argument on the public record that the decision to turn those productive working forests into national parks was political. It was admitted by the then Government representative and it was championed or bugled by the Hon. Ian Cohen. In a similar fashion, I moved several motions to repeal that Act and to change the reference back to State forests. I admit that that was a bit ambitious. More recently, during the by-election campaign, the current member who was vying for the position promised he would do exactly that. I have been around politics for a long time and I know that The Nationals do not have a lot of say about what this Government does. There was no way that the Hon. Gabrielle Upton would agree.

This bill provides the Minister with an easy way to solve that little problem—although it is not a little problem for the people of Deniliquin and the surrounding towns. This bill will sit on the table for five days, and I may be able to negotiate with the Whips to run with it. I hope that if that happens the Government will support the bill because it will not embarrass or hurt it. In fact, it will help the Government. I also ask members of the Opposition to read the bill and to see it for what it is. I give them my personal assurance that it is not a wedge and that it is the simple bill I say it is. I urge them to support these changes. If The Greens were in the House, I would be making the same request of them. I also ask the member representing the Animal Justice Party to support the bill. As I said, this is a very simple bill. If the Government does not adopt something as simple as this, which fixes an obvious problem, it will not be the Opposition that will suffer the political consequences in the electorate of Murray, it will be The Nationals. I assure the Government of that. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

*Business of the House***POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS**

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** On behalf of Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile: I move:

That Private Members' Business item No. 12 outside the Order of Precedence be postponed until a later hour.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Motions***GO NSW EQUITY FUND**

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (10:52):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) in relation to the GO NSW Equity Fund, the Deputy Premier, the Hon. Barilaro, MP, during the 2018-2019 budget estimates, stated nine times that the process was decided at arm's length from Government;
  - (b) when asked, "Does it go for ministerial sign-off or not?" the Deputy Premier replied, "No, everything is arm's length from the Government.";
  - (c) when asked whether he would be notified beforehand the Deputy Premier replied, "No, not at all.";
  - (d) yesterday in another place the Deputy Premier stated that "the New South Wales Government ... has those decisions made at arm's length. The process is at arm's length from the Minister.";
  - (e) on 25 May 2018, the Government announced a \$20 million equity investment into Australia's Oyster Coast;
  - (f) a month and a half earlier on 5 April 2018, the Deputy Premier had signed a Ministerial brief that said in part, "The Jobs for NSW Board has made recommendations for the Deputy Premier's approval ...";
  - (g) the first recommendation in that briefing read, "1. Approve making an equity investment in Australia's Oyster Coast [AOC] of which Jobs for NSW represents \$3,333,333."; and
  - (h) the second recommendation read "2. Note the Venture Capital Limited Partnership will execute all related documents for the transaction, once endorsed by the Deputy Premier."
- (2) That this House calls on the Deputy Premier to:
  - (a) apologise to these small South Coast family businesses, oyster farmers who are now worried about being driven out of business as they compete against public funds;
  - (b) apologise for the administration of the GO NSW Equity Fund; and
  - (c) apologise for misleading the Parliament and to resign.

The tragedy of this motion is that it deals with a genuine issue, that is, access to finance for New South Wales small businesses that would like to do better and to grow bigger. That is a genuine need. Small business operators, particularly those in the bush, sometimes need to mortgage their home to access finance. The GO NSW Equity Fund program is an attempt to address that. However, this motion deals with the administration of the fund.

I will set out some basic facts about this \$150 million fund—\$100 million of which was invested by First State Super and \$50 million by the New South Wales Government through Jobs for NSW. The fund was first announced on 17 October 2017. As I said, one of its goals is to overcome the barrier to accessing finance for New South Wales firms. Roc Partners advises the fund, but it has not provided any capital. It does the preliminary work to identify opportunities for investment. The fact sheet describes its role as supporting the "origination, assessment and execution of investments for the fund". Roc Partners is a private equity firm with \$4 billion or \$5 billion under management that spun out of Macquarie Group in a management buyout. It was previously the Macquarie private equity department known as "Macquarie Investment Management Private Markets".

The fund has made two investments: one in Stone Axe Pastoral and one in Australia's Oyster Coast. We have taken to describing them as the "surf and turf" investments—one in beef and one in oysters. I will first deal with the Australia's Oyster Coast investment. The nature of that investment and its circumstances are spelled out in the motion. These matters are already on the record, but I will run through them for the purposes of the debate. During the estimates hearings, the Deputy Premier stated nine times that decisions were made at arm's length from the Government. When he was asked whether they were subject to ministerial sign-off, he replied, "No. Everything is at arm's length from the Government." Then when asked whether he would in the ordinary course of events be notified beforehand, he replied, "No, not at all." This week in another place he stated:

... the New South Wales Government ... has those decisions made at arm's length. The process is at arm's length from the Minister.

That is on the record and in the motion. However, I will add extra points to indicate how far the Deputy Premier has gone to distance himself from any involvement and any sign-off. The Minister for Primary Industries spelled out in this House an eight-point, step-by-step sign-off process. The Deputy Premier had already gone through that



process and spelled out a similar process—not exactly the same—during the estimates hearing. He spelled out a seven-step sign-off process—one fewer step than the Minister for Primary Industries spelled out. Do members have any clue which step he omitted? It was the step in which he was involved, that is, when the Deputy Premier receives a ministerial brief and signs it to approve the investment of funds. That was the step missing in the seven-point process that the Deputy Premier explained during the hearing.

I do not want members to think it was only members of the Opposition who got excited during the hearing. The Hon. Mick Veitch and I occasionally get excited; that is not out of the question. To illustrate the impression created by the Deputy Premier, I will refer to some of the points of order taken by Government members. I will not name them because they were doing their job and doing it well by trying to intercede for the Deputy Premier. One stated:

Point of order: The Minister has already said that those decisions are not made by him. He is not part of those investment decisions.

Point of order: This question has already been answered. The Minister has stated that he is at arm's length from the investment decisions. Point of order: He has said he does not make the decisions. This was not the Opposition's view; this was the view of Government members on the committee and it was the impression the Deputy Premier created. He went on to spell out the motive; he was clear about why he had stepped back from spelling out his distance from involvement. If I said that we had involvement you would be criticising that the Government was making decisions and were getting involved and picking—

I assume he was about to say "winners"—although, to be fair to the Deputy Premier, we did interrupt him at that point. That is what is on the record; that is the Deputy Premier's view. That is what he spelt out. I will now talk about the decision made to approve these funds—I am returning to reality. First, a month and a half earlier, when this decision was announced on 5 April, the Deputy Premier signed a ministerial brief that said, in part:

The Jobs for NSW Board has made recommendations for the Deputy Premier's approval ...

The first recommendation in that briefing read:

- 1 **Approve** making an equity investment in Australia's Oyster Coast (AOC) ... of which Jobs for NSW represents \$3,333,333

The second recommendation read:

- 2 **Note** the Venture Capital Limited Partnership will execute all related documents for the transaction, once endorsed by the Deputy Premier.

That means if it is not endorsed, this will not go anywhere. If it is not approved, this will not go anywhere. If the Minister's signature is not there, the investment will not happen. It is crystal clear that the Minister has misled the Parliament. He has refused to admit it, and the Opposition argues that this Parliament should sanction him for that. If we do not do so, the Opposition argues that this Parliament will be weaker for it.

There are other issues with this investment. I will talk about the fund criteria. There are very few criteria for this fund. The GO NSW Equity Fund's "guiding criteria" said two things: that successful companies should have an enterprise value of at least \$20 million, and that the companies should have an "established, proven and successful business model". Reportedly, Australia's Oyster Coast [AOC] met neither of those criteria. It is certain that the firm lost money—\$241,000 last year and \$265,000 the year before. That is far from meeting one of the few criteria: an "established, proven and successful business model". If it did not meet the criteria, how did it get the money?

How did the company respond? Australia's Oyster Coast, which was the recipient of tens of millions of dollars in public funds and superannuation funds, took down all the key financial information from its website, which then read, "File not found." That is how the company responded. That is how the company dealt with the transparency required in this situation. Farmers on the South Coast have said their worry is that this public money will be used to compete against them, to buy out leases and to drive takeovers in the industry. The media reports say:

Rival farmers say AOC's sales and job growth is happening by acquisition, and not by increasing the overall number of oysters produced.

The ministerial briefing agrees. It says:

The capital will also be used to acquire oyster leases ...

It continues:

A condition precedent to the transaction is that AOC secure, either by contract or options [certain redacted] leases [redacted].

So it requires leases to be purchased. The briefing goes on to say:

Any new institutional entrants are likely to consider AOC an attractive acquisition target ...

That is the strategy spelt out in this memo. It is classic corporate raider culture, classic ex-Mac Bank advice. First, buy out the small farmers; second, get taken over. That is what is going on here, and it is spelt out in the strategy in the memorandum signed by the Deputy Premier. That is the model. The Opposition has referred publicly to the chair of that company, David Trebeck. He headed up the policy unit in the Federal Liberal secretariat. He is an alumnus of the HR Nicholls Society and he played a role in the 1998 waterfront dispute. He is referred to in the memorandum.

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** Payback.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM:** There is a "never heard of him" routine going on in the Government ranks on the matter of David Trebeck. I am not sure that that is true of all members of the Government. I invite any Government member to speak later in the debate and deny that they know him. There is the matter of misleading the Parliament and there are issues with the investment. That is why I have moved this motion calling on the House to call on the Deputy Premier to apologise to these small South Coast family businesses—oyster farmers who are now worried about being driven out of business by public funds—and for the Deputy Premier to apologise for misleading the Parliament.

I also want to talk about the "turf" investment. I have spoken about the surf aspect of this issue; I now turn to the turf. The first investment from this fund was in Stone Axe Pastoral, and the amount invested was \$10 million. It was announced on around 21 February this year. I will list the characters involved in Stone Axe Pastoral. The Managing Director of Stone Axe Pastoral Company is Scott Richardson, who joined the company from Gina Rinehart's Hancock Agriculture. The directors include Matthew Walker, who is the original owner; Brad Mytton, who is the Investment Director for Roc Partners; and Michael Lukin, who is the managing partner of Roc Partners. Why are Roc Partners already at the scene of the crime? That is because Roc Partners was a majority shareholder in Stone Axe Pastoral Company from on or around 9 May 2017—10 months prior to the announcement on 21 February 2018.

So let us take a step back and look at this issue. There are around 680,000 small businesses in New South Wales, and many of them struggle to access finance. Many of them would love to benefit from having tens of millions of dollars in public and superannuation funds tipped into them. The Government's investment adviser scoured all of New South Wales and turned up one company—a company in which it already had the majority shareholding—and recommended tipping millions of dollars in public funds and superannuation funds into it. In other words, Roc Partners has recommended its own firm. What a coincidence!

There was no public declaration of that conflict of interest until it was revealed at the estimates hearings. Think about the three things that are going on here. First, Roc Partners owns a majority shareholding in the company—and stands to benefit from any growth in the company as a result of access to capital and investment. Secondly, any money invested on behalf of others—presumably it gets a fee for that—has this massive advantage: It is being invested side by side with millions of triple-A rated, Government-backed, crisp, new dollar bills and all the financial and reputational advantages that brings with it for prospects for growth. Thirdly, Roc Partners was paid, on top of this, by the Government.

**The Hon. Mick Veitch:** For the advice?

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM:** It was paid for the advice. The answer to a supplementary question during budget estimates hearings was:

ROC Partners receive a set management fee for managing the GO NSW Equity Fund.

How much? We do not know, because the Government will not tell us. There were three advantages, one of which was a clear conflict of interest. Who knew about that clear conflict of interest? The Secretary of the Department of Industry knew about it at the time. He was a member of the Jobs for NSW board and this was declared to him. The Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet know about it. He was a member of the Jobs for NSW board. But we do not know whether the Deputy Premier knew and we do not know which Ministers knew. I invite the Minister to respond to that point.

The conflict of interest was declared to the Government's most senior officials. Did the Ministers know? Here is a clue. When a photo was taken at the announcement, everyone was there—Minister Barilaro and Minister Marshall and representatives of First State Super and Stone Axe Pastoral Company. They are all in the photo. Minister Barilaro has admitted that Roc Partners—the investment adviser—was also there, but its representatives are not in the photo. So the only player who is not in the shot is the most important one: the majority shareholder of the company receiving the public money—the same firm that recommended the investment. It looks as if it knew that this was an issue, but the public was never told. That is wrong.

There are other issues with this investment. Let us consider the criteria. The GO NSW Equity Fund's "guiding criteria" said that successful companies would have an enterprise value of at least \$20 million. Did

Stone Axe Pastoral Company fit the bill? We do not know because the Government will not tell us, so I invite the Government to respond. Think about it, Mr Deputy President: You are, I am and each of us is a shareholder in this company. Every citizen of New South Wales has bought into this company. How much is the company worth? How much of a share do we own? What is the revenue of this company? We simply do not know because the Government will not reveal it. This program meets a real need but has been administered appallingly. Farmers on the South Coast are concerned about the competitive neutrality implications. They say:

Our tax dollars are now being used against us—basically we're funding a big corporation to take business away from us.

A farmer has highlighted that one potential conflict arises from the fact that the Department of Industry runs the tender process for oyster leases. She said:

The tender will go to the person who puts up the most money. You now have a company that has millions behind it that can outprice everybody.

That is the concern, and the House should be concerned that such an investment is in breach of the New South Wales Government's competitive neutrality policy. I welcome the Premier's commitment at estimates that she is happy to have the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal take a look at that. That is a very welcome approach. But the concern is that public funds are driving small businesses out of business. That is what is happening on the South Coast.

Small businesses around the State now have an additional worry on top of trying to stay afloat, and it is that the Deputy Premier might turn up in their community in the next few months, looming out of the electoral undergrowth, bearing a large novelty cheque for their competitors and driving them out of business. They will be terrified to open the local paper, worried that the Deputy Premier has visited their electorate bearing public funds for some other business and sending them out the back door. That is the concern about the way this process is being administered.

It begs the question: What is this Government's philosophy? As my colleague the Hon. Mick Veitch said earlier in the week, the Government is selling the buses and the ferries but buying oysters and Wagyu beef. That is what is going on here: The Government is selling the things that matter to ordinary citizens and buying into boutique agriculture; selling the Land and Property Information service, which is fundamental to the housing market, but investing public funds to put small businesses out of work—the Premier is privatising and the Deputy Premier is nationalising industries.

**The Hon. Mick Veitch:** He has found socialism.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM:** Indeed—I acknowledge the interjection. I say specifically to members of the Liberal Party: Do not come in here and talk about economic freedom if you sit silently today and do not object to this investment. Do not think you can talk to your preselectors about small government if you do not object to this. It raises the question: What is the Government's philosophy? It also raises this question: Are there more investments, grants or loans where financial interests or political connections have not been declared? Of the two companies this fund has invested in, one is chaired by a long-term Liberal operative and the other is chaired by the managing partner of the Government's investment adviser. Is that not a message to 680,000 small businesses that if they want to access this fund it is not what you know but who you know? [*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. NIAL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (11:12):** I speak on behalf of the Government to oppose this motion. Given that this matter has been extensively covered in this House and in the other place, that should surprise no-one. In a moment I will address some of the specifics of the motion, starting with the part that deals with the New South Wales oyster industry—an industry that the member opposite just described as a boutique industry and not something the people of New South Wales care about. I think that was a very poor choice of words. I will also talk about some substantive issues that do not appear in the motion—particularly parts of the full *Hansard* transcript from estimates that do not appear. The Hon. John Graham has simply cherry-picked information for his convenience. However, I will come back to that.

It is a fantastic time to invest in the New South Wales oyster industry. Last year the New South Wales oyster industry was worth more than \$47 million, growing 8 per cent in value from the previous year. It is expected that the oyster industry will have another good return this coming year. A study published in 2016 by Kate Barclay entitled "Social and Economic Evaluation of NSW Coastal Aquaculture" showed that coastal aquaculture provided 1,758 jobs, \$226 million in output, \$134 million in added value and \$69 million in household income. The study found that 94 per cent of New South Wales residents believe it is important that we produce our own seafood in New South Wales, 84 per cent agreed aquaculture is important for employment and 75 per cent of tourist operators agreed it was part of the local tourism product.

The study also found that there are many benefits from the aquaculture industry, such as community health. We know that Australian food authorities recommend eating seafood at least twice week. Another benefit is a healthy environment, practising sustainable and environmentally friendly aquaculture. The industry encourages education and knowledge, building skill sets and passing knowledge from one generation to the next. It also encourages leisure and recreation for visitors and locals. The industry can also contribute to cultural heritage and community identity.

New South Wales has some of the best seafood in the world, and our New South Wales oysters are no exception. The New South Wales Government has been working closely with the oyster industry for a number of years. In fact, it is safe to say that there would not be an oyster industry in New South Wales without the assistance of the Department of Primary Industries [DPI]. We intend to continue this close relationship because we want to see our oyster industry go from strength to strength. As members will be aware, the oyster industry can be quite vulnerable to natural disasters and disease events. Part of the role of DPI is to provide support during these times.

For example, in the past two weeks DPI and the NSW Food Authority have been working with oyster growers and other emergency response agencies to deal with a diesel spill in Pambula Lake and a sunken trawler in the Shoalhaven. DPI also supports industry to protect water quality in the marine estate. A healthy marine estate with good water quality is absolutely essential for growing oysters. Development applications that may impact oyster harvest water quality, such as onsite sewage management systems or subdivisions, are referred to DPI and the NSW Food Authority for assessment. Sewage pollution, sediment run-off and loss of riparian vegetation can impact the oyster industry, as oysters are the "canaries of the estuaries".

DPI has just released a Healthy Estuaries for Healthy Oysters Guidelines document to help developers, consultants and local government better understand the need for maintaining healthy waterways. DPI has developed a whole-of-State Oyster Industry Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy to outline best industry practice, water quality protection measures and streamlined approval pathways to give industry and the community greater surety about this important regional sector. In addition to this, the New South Wales Government recently released the Marine Estate Management Strategy whereby \$45.7 million will go towards the first two years, which will focus on improving water quality across the whole State. We know how much this will benefit all users of our coastal waters but it will be particularly good for oyster farmers.

DPI is helping to implement priorities from an industry strategy developed in 2015 to focus on production systems, markets, environments and disease, industry structure, and governance and policy. As I have said previously, this strategy identified sourcing finance as being one of the top priorities for the oyster industry. It stated, "The oyster industry clearly needs additional capital to develop," since banks can be unreliable in lending against oyster leases. As such, the New South Wales Government's investment aligns with the oyster industry's own priorities.

DPI is also investigating the development of an ebusiness platform so that oyster farmers can undertake transactions online. Through the ministerial Shellfish Committee, DPI will be reviewing permits/leases/bonds and tenure of leases relating to the New South Wales oyster industry in early 2019. DPI supports the Royal Agricultural Society at the annual aquaculture judging awards to promote sustainable farming practices and quality standards. DPI worked with OceanWatch and Roads and Maritime Services to develop advisory material about safe boating and protecting water quality around oyster leases—this was distributed using social media, particularly to the recreational fishing sector.

DPI supports industry with social licence initiatives such as the clean-up of a sanctuary zone in Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park, where 200 kilograms of litter were removed with the local oyster industry, Local Land Services and OceanWatch. Extension work is important for the industry. DPI and the New South Wales oyster industry recently worked together to source funds to continue a three-year, part-time Oyster Extension Officer position to support the industry. Key roles include improving communication with industry via a website, regular updates and a blog site; promoting risk management within industry; developing estuary workshops and supporting an industry conference; and extending research information.

One of the most significant roles the DPI plays is through research and development. The DPI has developed one of the most advanced breeding programs for oysters in the world. We have selected family lines of Sydney rock oysters that grow up to 35 per cent faster than normal oysters. There are lines that are resistant to the major diseases that affect oysters and there are lines that are selected for marketability. Since the oyster industry can be vulnerable to natural events, we are looking ahead to future issues the industry will face to ensure that we are as well prepared as possible. For example, to prepare the industry for climate change, we have lines that are now capable of growing just as quickly under the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2100 worst-case scenarios for ocean acidification as normal oysters grow now. The New South Wales Government is futureproofing the oyster industry. To allow for these oysters to be available to industry, the DPI developed the hatchery technology for large-scale production.

DPI supports industry diversification by producing flat oyster and pearl oyster spat for commercial production. This week we have distributed one million flat oyster spat to farmers on the South Coast. DPI is currently running commercial-scale trials with farmers in the Hawkesbury and Northern Rivers to test disease-resistant triploid oysters and new lines of oysters developed from stocks that have survived major disease events in the Northern Rivers. A part of this includes an 18-month commercial trial of selectively bred Sydney rock oysters in the Hawkesbury. DPI has provided more than 600,000 spat to support this initiative. Some 50,000 spat were provided to each grower free of charge. The objective is to increase industry confidence in selectively bred lines. The Hawkesbury growers are also able to sell the stock at the end of the trial.

In addition, the New South Wales Food Agility CRC Environmental Sensor Project is underway. Partners in the project include the NSW Food Authority, DPI, the University of Technology Sydney, Hunter Local Land Services and Yield Technology Solutions. The project aims to undertake research and development in 12 estuaries in the following areas: research and development to establish salinity models to improve the precision of harvest area management plans; modelling to predict the prevalence and intensity of harmful algal blooms and key oyster diseases, including QX and winter mortality; and assessing the business case to use real-time salinity monitoring to manage harvest area openings and closures.

The Deputy Premier, Minister Constance and I recently met with some oyster growers who raised their concerns regarding the Australia's Oyster Coast investment. However, they agreed that the investment by the GO NSW Equity Fund should not be undone, as has been suggested by Labor. We had a productive discussion and, as a result, the Department of Primary Industries is looking into extension officers, lease arrangements, cleaning up derelict oyster leases, reviewing the Select Oyster Company and giving farmers access to capital to build their businesses. That illustrates the Government is doing a lot to ensure the industry as a whole benefits. Anyone who wants to suggest that we are picking favourites, particularly through the work of DPI, is false. We do that work on behalf of everyone.

As I have said, there has been a decision-making process that involved: a deal identified by Roc, which undertook internal assessments and review; a summary prepared; the deal circulated to the investment committee for consideration; the investment committee meeting and agreeing or not agreeing to commence due diligence; a risk assessment undertaken; Roc undertaking due diligence; Jobs for NSW undertaking some of that, consistent with the project assessment framework; Jobs for NSW chief executive and board approval paper being circulated to the board for approval; the final deal memo going to the Deputy Premier if it is above certain amount; the investment committee meeting and agreeing or not agreeing to execute deal; Roc executing the deal; and ongoing performance monitoring.

This motion fails to acknowledge that process; it has cherrypicked excerpts from the budget estimates transcript and does not present the full picture. On page 16 of the budget estimates hearing transcript, when asked about the process, the Deputy Premier stated, "We have the ability to accept or reject the decision." That statement is not included in the motion we see here today. He added, "The brief would come, we would sign it off on the brief and then we would organise to make the announcement." That statement also failed to make its way into this motion. In his contribution to debate on this motion, the Hon. John Graham also talked about one of the other investments and asked some questions about the announcement of that investment and who was going to be there and why they were or were not in a picture. That picture was taken when I was in Dubai on a trade delegation with New South Wales producers looking at how we can expand their opportunities not only domestically but also internationally at the Gulfood expo.

I then travelled from there with a delegation to Jakarta, where we had some very specific meetings about how we can get more New South Wales produce into some of those markets. That is where I was when that photo was taken. I was very proud to work with those New South Wales producers. A decision has been made and questions have been asked and the Deputy Premier has answered those questions, particularly during budget estimates. Not all of his answers have made their way into this motion. The one thing we will not allow is for any sort of message to be spread that we should not invest in our New South Wales producers and in our oyster industry. We do not want our message to be skewed simply because the Opposition moves a motion such as this. The oyster industry in this State is worth investing in.

As I have said, the oyster industry in this State only exists because of the great work that has been done by the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries under the former Labor Government and this Government. It is disappointing that that great work is being overshadowed by playing politics over this investment. As the Minister responsible for primary industries, it is my duty to ensure that we clearly highlight the good work that is being done for all in the sector. Right here in New South Wales we have some of the world's best oyster scientists working on some of the biggest challenges that our growers face. As I said, the industry has been almost been wiped out in parts of the State, whether through Pacific oyster mortality or through QX disease. But the research we are doing has got those areas back on track. This motion is more about what it does not say

than what it does. The Opposition has cherry-picked. This issue has been investigated many times, particularly during budget estimates. That is why the Government opposes the motion.

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD (11:27):** The Greens support the motion moved by the Opposition. I have listened to the contributions to this debate. First, the Hon. John Graham spelt out in some detail the concerns of the Opposition and The Greens with the testimony that was given during budget estimates and how that account cuts across the decision-making process of the Government on this particular investment. I have not heard the Opposition suggest that the Government does not support the oyster industry or that the Department of Primary Industries does not invest in and support the oyster industry in this State. I heard questions being raised about a very specific investment in a specific company. I share the Opposition's concerns.

I sat in the budget estimates hearing and listened to the questions asked by Opposition members and the answers given by the Deputy Premier. Having listened to the exchange, I would describe it as contortionist at best. It was very clear that the Deputy Premier went to some lengths to give the impression that he was not directly involved in the decision and did not take any direct action with regard to the approval process for that investment. This is not a question about whether the Government invests in primary industries in this State—we know it does. This is about ministerial accountability.

If this decision was signed off on by the Minister, if the Minister and the Government think it is a good decision, why did the Deputy Premier not just own that decision in budget estimates? Why go to some length in multiple answers over a significant period of time to give the impression that he was not involved? Clearly he was; he signed the document that made the ultimate decision.

About 1½ years ago, I sat in the commercial fishing inquiry and heard from fishers who were consistently calling for more support to help them through the reform process. They did not think that the level of government investment in the reform was sufficient to buy out those who wanted to leave the industry. Those reforms were not about the oyster industry, but the contrast here is concerning. This is a direct Government investment in one business and there are consequences for other businesses in that area. The Minister went to some length to talk in detail about the investment that supports the overall industry. Why not put the \$3.3 million into more extension officers, more research and development, and cleaning up waterways to improve water quality for all users? Over the past month, we have had a big debate in this State about the importance of water quality for all types of water users: recreational fishers, commercial fishers and environmental uses. Why not put that investment into something that supports all water users, including commercial fishers? Why invest in one company?

The Greens support this motion. We thank the Opposition for its advocacy on this issue and for bringing the motion to the House. We support the call for the Deputy Premier to apologise to South Coast businesses who have raised concerns about this direct investment. We support the call for the Deputy Premier to apologise for misleading the Parliament and to resign.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (11:31):** I speak against this motion in the strongest possible terms. Before I do so, I thank those opposite for drawing attention to this fantastic fund. The GO NSW Equity Fund is fabulous. I am not sure that they had one. I do not remember the Labor GO NSW Equity Fund. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery; clearly they would like to understand it so we are here to help. In doing so, I put on record my utter disappointment that those opposite have misled the public and this House in relation to the Deputy Premier's comments at the budget estimates hearing. I was there so I remember. It was a great day. Let it be made abundantly clear: in budget estimates the Deputy Premier clarified the process in relation to the GO NSW Equity Fund. Let us talk about what he said. He said the brief would come; we would sign off on it. We would sign off on the brief. But instead of listening to the budget estimates process, those opposite decided to get fixated on a term used by the Deputy Premier to describe the process in its entirety. They decided to cherry-pick.

What a sad week it has been for the New South Wales Labor Party. Rather than use this place to debate ideas, Labor members are using it as their personal Google service, forcing the Government to continually explain to them what an equity fund is and how investment firms work. Let us help out. We understand that those opposite have no financial credibility and no clue about driving investment and jobs growth, but surely they could take some lessons on their own time rather than on the Parliament's. For the benefit of the House, I once again outline the process for the GO NSW Equity Fund. I hope that those in this place who have so far failed to understand this process are listening carefully. The breathtaking hypocrisy of those opposite—

**The Hon. John Graham:** Is this the seven- or the eight-step process?

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Let me explain it. Step 1: A deal is identified by Roc Partners. Roc Partners undertakes internal assessment and review and a summary is prepared—so it identifies the deal. Step 2: That deal is circulated to the investment committee for consideration: "Have a look at this. What do you think?" Step 3: The investment committee meets and agrees or does not agree to commence due diligence. Step 4:

Roc Partners undertakes due diligence. Step 5: The Jobs for NSW chief executive officer and the board provide approval. A paper is circulated to the board for approval. It is a process. Step 6: A final deal memo goes to the Deputy Premier, or it goes to the Cabinet Standing Committee on Expenditure [ERC] if it is above \$5 million. In a previous life, I had the privilege of sitting around the table with the ERC; clearly those opposite have not had much experience of that because in their time there was not much money to argue over. The ERC meetings were pretty short. "Any money in the tin?" "No." "Okay, move on."

**The Hon. Bronnie Taylor:** That's what happens when you can't manage the economy.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** I thank the Hon. Bronnie Taylor for her interjection. Step 7: The investment committee meets and agrees or not to execute the deal. A lot of experienced, qualified people sit around a table and assess it properly through our process: "Do we do the deal?" Step 8: Roc Partners executes the deal. Step 9: There is ongoing performance monitoring. That is how we do the proper process. It is a simple process to understand; yet here we are in our third sitting day this week, with the Opposition taking up more time because of its lack of ability to comprehend the process. "Process" is a boring word but it works.

It is a disgrace that this House has been subjected to the cherrypicking of comments by those opposite, who hate investment of any kind, in order to justify their blatant inability to understand this process. We are arguing about the New South Wales Government and Roc Partners making an investment into the oyster farming industry. We are putting money in. But we are in trouble for that too; you cannot do that. Those opposite never did. Further, it is Opposition members who sat on the very budget estimates committee that we are discussing who actually made misleading statements. I will highlight a couple for the record. During the estimates hearing, the Hon. Mick Veitch claimed that Australia's Oyster Coast had pulled down its website ahead of budget estimates. This was false, yet the Hon. Mick Veitch has offered no apology.

The Hon. Mick Veitch also claimed that Oyster Coast had gone broke. In my experience as a recovering insolvency lawyer, that means that it has to declare bankruptcy or go through the liquidation process. It has not done that. It may have had some trading losses but as far as I remember—it is a long time since I was at law school—trading losses are not bankruptcy. Labor should know that because it had many losses year on year in New South Wales. It always ran with losses—something it is very familiar with and experienced at.

Not only have Labor members made misleading statements during the budget estimates process; they have failed to retract or apologise for those comments. This double standard from the Labor Party is the behaviour that we expect, but we will not accept it. Small businesses in New South Wales are fully aware that under a Labor government, they would be worse off. The breathtaking hypocrisy of those opposite in feigning interest in small business is a disgrace. We see straight through it. The Hon. John Graham drew attention to, as he said, the 680 small businesses in New South Wales.

**The Hon. John Graham:** It was 680,000.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** I apologise. I acknowledge the interjection and thank the member for clarifying. There are 680,000 small businesses, he said, in New South Wales. But again those opposite demonstrate their incompetence with numbers. There are, in fact, 760,000 small businesses in New South Wales. Don't worry; it is only 80,000 businesses. We will just leave them; 100,000 or 700,000 is neither here nor there. This Government has done the hard work to ensure that we have a strong economy that backs us to make bold new decisions and revolutionise the way Government assists the business community.

It is what we are here to do, whether it is raising the payroll tax threshold—the opposite of what Labor does; whether it is cutting red tape for small businesses—the opposite of what Labor does; whether it is having members of Parliament with the knowledge and expertise to execute their portfolios—the opposite of what Labor does. Small businesses across New South Wales can be assured that this Government understands what it takes to drive growth in their communities and in turn build their businesses. I urge the House to reject this double-standard circus trick from Labor and vote against this embarrassing motion from the Labor Party.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH (11:38):** I support the motion of the Hon. John Graham. I have been here a while and have been lectured by many people, including the Hon. Natalie Ward's former boss in this place. I am happy to sit here and be lectured again. I will make a couple of comments about this motion and the way the debate has been cast. Members should be careful what they say in this place because they are not only speaking to members in the Chamber; people in other places will listen to and read the words. I caution honourable members. For example, I know some oyster growers on the South Coast who are watching this on livestream. Some of those people are not in a good place mentally. On reflection, some members may regret things they said in this debate.

We have a heavy burden of responsibility in this place; this is the House of review. Both sides have differing views about how the House of review should conduct its business. When some of those honourable

members opposite were on this side of the Chamber they went about their role of opposition in a certain way. I learnt some lessons from a couple of crafty characters—the Hon. Mike Gallacher and the Hon. Duncan Gay—about how to be a front bench Opposition member. I observed some members on my side of the Chamber when we were in government take umbrage at being challenged. If members take umbrage at being challenged, they probably should not be in the job, because if they cannot stand and justify their position, it is probably time to get out.

Listening to some of the speeches from the other side, one would think that the Opposition is attacking the oyster industry as a whole. That is not the case. It is scrutinising the expenditure of taxpayer funds. I do not think there is anyone on the other side of the Chamber who would disagree that that is the role of the Opposition. During the debate I heard some "hear, hears" and "well done". I challenge those members who are part of an exclusive club, approximately 690 people who have had the honour and privilege to walk into this Chamber and exercise their right as a member of Parliament to have a say. Sometimes "hear, hear" does not cut it. Sometimes coming to the lectern and putting your views on the record is what cuts it.

The oyster industry is not what the Opposition is attacking. It is scrutinising the expenditure of taxpayer funds. The Hon. John Graham said that it supports the concept of the fund but it is how it is being spent that is of concern. It concerns the people in the oyster industry and the people involved in beef production. In his contribution, the Minister for Primary Industries set a great contrast. At no point did anyone in the Opposition disagree with anything that the Minister said about the money being spent and the investment made in sustaining, maintaining, developing and growing the oyster industry in this State. That is not what the Opposition is doing. The Minister has clearly shown a passion for his portfolio area. He clearly has a passion for ensuring the growth of the oyster industry in New South Wales. I will back the Minister 100 per cent, because that is what we should be doing. Money should be spent on every participant in the oyster industry, not picking winners. Should \$3.3 million of taxpayer funds be spent on one oyster company as opposed to all oyster growers? That is what the Government has done: spent money on one company. That is the point of the debate the Opposition is making.

To extrapolate the process, if it is not oysters, why not buy a barista? That is a small business. Why not buy a trucking company? That is a small business. If the members think of how the fund has been applied, that is the problem. It is not that there is a fund and it is not that there is the oyster or beef industry. That is not being challenged by the Opposition at all. What is being challenged is where the money was allocated and spent. The oyster growers on the South Coast want to know why the Government would buy a business and then go into competition with them, making their life harder? That does not make sense. That \$3.3 million would have been better spent in research or development for the whole industry. If people listened to the Minister's speech, that is what he said. The Department of Primary Industries across both sides of government has been doing just that. This is not challenging the Department of Industry and its role.

There is a process issue. When talking about being investigated and scrutinised, it has been my experience—it is one of the lessons I have learnt—that when someone says, "There's nothing to see here, don't worry" or "you don't understand", I get a little worried. I find in politics that tends to be the coverall for "Stop looking here, I do not want you to look here, you are looking too closely." The House of review should look closer when that is said. I say to the Government members to put themselves on this side of the Chamber and think about this: the Opposition does not have access to all the information the Government has. That is the way the Westminster system works.

This is the scenario that was presented to the Opposition. On 9 May 2017 or thereabouts, Roc Partners becomes the majority shareholder in Stone Axe Pastoral Company. Nothing to see here because there is no point to that. A few months later, on 17 October 2017, the Government establishes the GO NSW Equity Fund. On 21 February 2018 the GO NSW Equity Fund invests in Stone Axe Pastoral Company, a company that 10 months earlier Roc Partners purchased the major shareholding in. Roc Partners is the organisation providing advice to the GO NSW Equity Fund. Roc Partners is the group that scours the State to find investment opportunities for the GO NSW Equity Fund. Roc Partners is paid for that advice by the Government. Roc Partners makes a recommendation for one company—the one it owns.

Does that not sound shoddy to members? In Opposition, members may think there is something not right here and should look at this. It cannot be said, "That's okay, it's government, it has got to be okay because the government is doing it." There is something uneasy about that process. Spending time dwelling upon that is a critical part of what is done in this Chamber. If members think it is okay, do not ask any questions. What is surprising is the scrutiny within the Government benches of this exercise. Roc Partners is a spin-off of Macquarie Bank. This was the first investment made by the GO NSW Equity Fund. It does not look or sound right. It may well be that it is. But until the process is investigated, reviewed and scrutinised it is unknown. In his contribution, the Minister had an opportunity to answer a question on notice from me yesterday concerning who advised him



of the investment and on what date that occurred. The Minister spoke about the fact that he was in Dubai. I was listening intently and thinking how I would have reacted if I had been in his shoes.

Let us think this through. I do not want to misquote the Minister for Primary Industries, but I think he said he took a delegation of Wagyu beef producers. Certainly it was a delegation of beef producers. The Minister for Primary Industries took a delegation of beef producers to Dubai. When the Minister is in Dubai, he finds out that New South Wales has invested in a Wagyu beef enterprise that he did not know about. I dare say that the Wagyu beef or beef producers accompanying the Minister on the delegation did not know about it. How would the Minister for Primary Industries have felt? Is that good practice? Is that the way government operates?

A Minister—and not just any Minister but the Deputy Premier—is about to make an announcement on something that impacts upon another Minister's portfolio, and that other Minister happens to be overseas with a delegation from that industry. Surely that is not how government works in New South Wales at this point in time. Surely there would have been a conversation and the Deputy Premier would have said, "By the way, while you are away on that trade delegation, we're going to announce this." Is it just me? I just think that is not the way it should be done. As I was listening to the Minister for Primary Industries I thought, "If that had been me, I would have been reapeable. He must have been embarrassed in the presence of the beef producers delegation."

The Minister for Primary Industries was doing the right thing. He was overseas trying to sell New South Wales beef produce overseas, and the announcement of this investment was trotted out while he was away. Come on! At the very least the Deputy Premier should be apologising to the Minister for Primary Industries in this State: I emphasise "at the very least". If Government members think, "Hear, hear, that's good"—I notice all the hear, hears suddenly have dried up—they should go to the Deputy Premier and say, "Why did you do that? You just left your ministerial mate like the proverbial shag on a rock."

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** Or an oyster on a rock.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** I acknowledge that interjection. Surely, that is not how to govern New South Wales. I will not lecture Government members about government because Labor got turfed out in 2011, and rightly so. I have said publicly before, "When you get it wrong, you get turfed out." But that does not mean that there is an inherent right to lecture the other side in Parliament. Whether the motion is passed by the House today or not, to my mind that does not matter, but it does raise some questions. First, why did the Deputy Premier treat his ministerial colleague in the manner in which he did? It was not good form. Secondly, if Government members think that a company presenting advice on investment in the manner in which it did is okay, that does not augur well.

If Government members think it is okay for taxpayer funds to be spent on investing in individuals, not an industry as a whole, I can only say that that does not make sense. Labor is not arguing about investment in the industry as a whole, but Labor has a problem with government investing in individual businesses within an industry because that is picking winners and losers. It is the losers who emerge from that type of process that members of Parliament have to think about. Oyster growers on the South Coast have publicly expressed that they are quite concerned about this investment. As parliamentarians, we need to think about that. Someone said that it is like a "tsunami in a small pond". It is not a ripple in a pond: It is a tsunami in a pond. What has been done is not the way in which to spend public money.

The Deputy Premier has not been up-front about this investment. He has spoken about process. He has been cute with words. But the reality is that he signed off on the deal. If members of this House think that does not make sense, just reverse it. If the Deputy Premier had not signed the brief, it would not have proceeded. That is the power of the signature. It is not that the Deputy Premier signed the brief but, rather, that he arrived at the decision-making point and, if he had not signed the brief, the money would not have been expended. I think the money is better spent on the whole industry, not one enterprise in that industry. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr SCOT MacDONALD (11:53):** My comments in response to the motion moved by the Hon. John Graham will be brief. In 2015 when the Jobs for NSW Bill was debated, my recollection is that I spoke during the debate and that the bill was passed with the support of the Labor Party. My notes indicate that the Hon. Adam Searle spoke in favour of the bill, as did a number of other members. Amendments were proposed but were not agreed to. The GO NSW Equity Fund sits under the Jobs for NSW Act 2015, which is pretty explicit about the process. In part 2, section 6 states in part:

- (1) Jobs for NSW has the following functions:
  - (a) to advise the Minister on opportunities for developing the New South Wales economy,
  - (b) to identify opportunities to attract new businesses to New South Wales,

- (c) to advise the Minister on impediments to, and opportunities for, improving and expanding competitive advantage in New South Wales,
- (d) to develop a strategy to deliver cost-effective and strategically targeted support for economic development in New South Wales,
- (e) to call for proposals for which jobs creation incentives may be granted under this Act, to assess proposals and to make recommendations to the Minister about proposals,
- (f) to prepare and recommend to the Minister for approval criteria for eligibility for jobs creation incentives and for assessment of proposals for which the incentives may be granted,
- (g) to assess any such proposals according to the eligibility and assessment criteria approved from time to time for that purpose by the Minister and to make recommendations to the Minister about the proposals and approval of jobs creation incentives,

Section 6 also refers to business advisory services. On my reading of what the Deputy Premier has said, how he acted and the process he followed is exactly in line with the law. He followed it precisely, and that was the information that he relayed to budget estimates hearings and subsequently. As members of this House discussed in 2015, Jobs for NSW was an innovative package that stepped outside the norm to identify impediments and opportunities for growth and assisting in different ways, such as equity, loans, or by other means. The legislation set out a very clear process about the role of the Deputy Premier and when the Deputy Premier could step in at an approval level.

I believe the Deputy Premier has behaved exactly as the Jobs for NSW Act 2015 intended him to behave and in accordance with the manner in which the legislation has developed and was formulated. In 2015, that legislation had largely bipartisan support. The Leader of the Opposition spoke in support of it, and that support would include the functions of Jobs for NSW. I suggest that this motion has a touch of the Don Quixote style about it. The Jobs for NSW Act has been working exactly as the Government foresaw three years ago that it would work. I was proud to support it then and I continue to support it. I believe the Deputy Premier behaved exactly as he is supposed to.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (11:57):** I support the motion moved by the Hon. John Graham. When I was first elected as a member of this House, I prepared all of my speeches carefully. The idea that Hansard was recording every word I said for all time was incredibly daunting to me. To be honest, I still find it somewhat daunting. However, I am comforted by the fact that Hansard has a special skill of making members a little more eloquent and a little more polished than perhaps we are. But with the great privilege of having our words recorded for all time comes a responsibility to tell the truth. The Deputy Premier has flouted that responsibility, thinking he can just ride it out. But let us be honest: That is how he has operated for years under the radar in Monaro.

Let us examine what the Deputy Premier has told his local community. Just before the most recent State election, which was held on 28 March 2015, the Deputy Premier promised a new police station for Queanbeyan. He spoke about the terrible conditions under which police were forced to work. He spoke about the need to rebuild the Queanbeyan police station is a matter of urgency. After it did not appear in the 2015 budget, I was concerned about the progress. In 2016 a mere \$2.4 million was allocated for the project—an allocation that would barely cover the blowout in the estimated costs of this important project. I spoke about it at the time to the local media. Today, with 155 days to go to the election, there is still not a shovel in the ground. He will do and say anything to get elected.

Let us look at the promised upgrade to the Cooma Hospital—again, promised in the final weeks of the 2015 campaign. I was concerned when the project did not appear again in the budget papers in 2015 or 2016, so I asked questions of the then Minister in budget estimates hearings in 2016. She dodged them, and now this year's budget papers reveal it will not be completed until at least June 2021, more than halfway into the next term of government. I congratulate the Hon. John Graham on bringing this excellent motion before the House. Today, the Minister said in his response that this was an attack by the Labor Party on the oyster industry. As other speakers have said, nothing could be further from the truth.

Members would be aware that I grew up in Forster and I know firsthand the quality of Wallis Lake oysters and the value of the industry to local communities. Indeed, in my previous role as Country Labor organiser, on my first trips to the South Coast I was struck by the similarities in geography—it looked very familiar—and I can see too that the value of the oyster industry along both the South Coast and the North Coast is incredibly important to these communities. The important question we raise today for this Chamber's consideration is that the specific investment in one company has undermined other oyster growers on the South Coast. Much of what we do in this place is codified, from the Constitution Act 1902 that gives us the power to make laws, through to the standing and sessional orders that guide our activities and actions in this place. But much of how we operate is through custom.

Some of that custom has been codified in some excellent books, and I consulted Lovelock and Evans before the debate today. I looked at what the penalties for false and misleading evidence from a witness to an upper House committee were: a charge of perjury and punishment of five years imprisonment. The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps may be disappointed, but no-one has ever been prosecuted. Because part of that was an understanding that a member of Parliament, let alone a Minister, would see that to mislead this place would make his role untenable. I appreciate that after 7½ long years in opposition that we on this side of the House may consider a lower burden of proof for a Minister to resign. But surely we can all accept that if one misleads this Parliament, if one lies on the record, that that is grounds to resign. If they do not, they are more out of touch than I thought.

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS (12:02):** I speak on behalf of the Government to strongly oppose the motion put forward by the Hon. John Graham regarding the GO NSW Equity Fund. This is an absolute absurd use of parliamentary time. I have seen the claims made about this issue and the responses, not only of the Deputy Premier but also from other members of this House. It is embarrassing that those opposite continue to question this matter. As has already been mentioned, those opposite have cherry-picked information and made misleading comments on the record and in the media. Labor's attempt at slander is nothing short of cowardly, hiding behind parliamentary privilege and trying to discredit the good work we are doing on this side of the House.

Anyone who has half an inkling for business knows access to finance is one of the biggest issues for businesses starting up. There are significant barriers and gaps in financial support available to businesses seeking to grow their operations. Jobs for NSW has partnered with First State Super to support businesses that miss out on that traditional capital funding. Government-backed equity is working successfully around the globe in places such as Singapore and Canada, and the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is making sure that New South Wales has the same opportunities for that type of funding. Unlike those opposite, we are not going to be leaving New South Wales behind when it comes to this sort of investment.

For those opposite to attack this program shows that they have no idea of how an equity fund works. They were never in a position to develop a fund of this nature. They left New South Wales in a budget black hole and First State Super would not have dared come near their debt. This is an equity fund. It is not a grant. It is not a loan. We are not spending money, we are investing it. Returns are threefold. A successful New South Wales-based business means more jobs and a financial dividend. It is a great investment for the taxpayer. Those opposite want the New South Wales Government to pull out the funding invested; they want to take away the jobs from the people of New South Wales. Once again, those opposite are voting against business and against jobs creation.

We are not going to apologise for providing businesses with access to finance. We are not going to apologise for creating jobs in New South Wales. What we will apologise for is the lack of initiative and intellectual capability of those opposite. Those opposite are behaving like a bull in a china shop, throwing around accusations and slander about businesses they do not know and a fund they do not understand. These issues have already been addressed on the record by the Deputy Premier and members in both places. The Deputy Premier has clarified multiple times, including in question time and the budget estimates transcripts, that he is the responsible Minister and he has the ability to accept or reject investment decisions and sign off on a brief once the independent investment decision is made at arm's length. The process has already been explained.

The deal is identified by the Roc Partners. Roc undertakes internal assessment and review and the summary is prepared. The second step is the deal is circulated to the investment committee for consideration. The third step is that the investment committee meets and they agree or disagree to commence the due diligence. The fourth step is that Roc undertakes due diligence and Jobs for NSW undertakes the cost-benefit analysis consistent with the project assessment framework. The fifth step is the Jobs for NSW chief executive officer circulates the paper to the board for approval. The sixth step is the final deal memo goes to the Deputy Premier, or if it is in excess of \$5 million it goes to the Expenditure Review Committee. The seventh step is that the investment committee meets and agrees or disagrees to execute the deal. At that stage Roc executes the deal and then there is the ongoing performance monitoring.

Jobs for NSW has a rigorous and transparent investment process, including investment experts and highly reputable Jobs for NSW and First State Super board members. To question this investment is to question those experts. I am trying to understand what those opposite stand for. It has been publicly announced that the Australian Labor Party supports equity investments. In 2015 Bill Shorten promised a \$1 billion Australian manufacturing fund as part of an innovation investment partnership to support businesses building new investment alliances with the superannuation sector and co-investing with private sector investors in venture capital funds to grow early-stage companies to commercialise Australian research. Would Labor say that the policy of their Federal counterparts is dodgy? This would not be the first time those opposite have been at odds with their Federal counterparts. In 2008 the then Labor Prime Minister called on the New South Wales Labor Government to do better for the people of New South Wales after endless debt and no plans. I quote Kevin Rudd in the *Sun Herald*

in 2008: On the state of NSW, I will say it in loud and clear terms: the Government of NSW has to radically lift its game. Radically lift his game ... not just for the people of NSW but for the national economy. To question these investments is to question the integrity of the Jobs for NSW board, the fund manager Roc Partners, our equity partner First State Super, and the businesses that are working hard to grow and to create jobs. I can say with confidence that there is more expertise and business acumen in that group of people than the Labor Party ever saw.

New South Wales is topping the nation in jobs creation. This Government has created 554,700 new jobs since the 2011 election, and almost 100,000 of them have been created in regional New South Wales. That is more than three times the Government's commitment to create 150,000 jobs. We know that the Labor Party does not like jobs creation and New South Wales was dead when members opposite were in charge. They have proved that they do not understand equity. They cannot run a party and they cannot run this State. They should stop wasting everyone's time so that we can get on with the job we should be doing.

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (12:10):** I intended to commence my brief contribution to this very important debate by saying, "New South Wales Nationals, here we go again!" However, the member for Bega, the Hon. Andrew Constance, is a member of the Liberal Party. Therefore, I must amend that statement by saying, "New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Coalition, here we go again!" I must be accurate. We are dealing with yet another issue involving an absence of due process and unfairness. That absence and unfairness has been mentioned by a number of members, but the mover of the motion dealt with it point by point. Having heard the contributions of members opposite, it would be worthwhile examining the motion. It states:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) in relation to the GO NSW Equity Fund, the Deputy Premier, the Hon. Barilaro, MP, during the 2018-2019 budget estimates, stated nine times that the process was decided at arm's length from Government;
  - (b) when asked, "Does it go for ministerial sign-off or not?", the Deputy Premier replied, "No, everything is arm's length from the Government.";
  - (c) when asked whether he would be notified beforehand the Deputy Premier replied, "No, not at all.";
  - (d) yesterday in another place the Deputy Premier stated that "the New South Wales Government ... has those decisions made at arm's length. The process is at arm's length from the Minister.";
  - (e) on 25 May 2018, the Government announced a \$20 million equity investment into Australia's Oyster Coast;
  - (f) a month and a half earlier on 5 April 2018, the Deputy Premier had signed a Ministerial brief that said in part: "The Jobs for NSW Board has a made recommendations for the Deputy Premier's approval ...";
  - (g) the first recommendation in that briefing read, "1. Approve making an equity investment in Australia's Oyster Coast [AOC] of which Jobs for NSW represents \$3,333,333.";
  - (h) the second recommendation read, "2. Note the Venture Capital Limited Partnership will execute all related documents for the transaction, once endorsed by the Deputy Premier."
- (2) That this House calls on the Deputy Premier to:
  - (a) apologise to these small South Coast family businesses, oyster farmers who are now worried about being driven out of business as they compete against public funds;
  - (b) apologise for the administration of the GO NSW Equity Fund; and
  - (c) apologise for misleading the Parliament and to resign.

I listened to the contributions made by members opposite to this debate. When ministerial staffers give them prepared speeches, I urge them to examine before they read them out in this place because they will have to stand behind the statements they make publicly and forever more, given that they are being transcribed by the excellent people in Hansard. I offer a word to the wise: before members opposite read out something they have been given by a staffer, they should read it themselves because they will be held accountable for every statement they make. I have the transcript of the estimates hearing that dealt with this issue. I attended the hearing and witnessed the questioning and the Deputy Premier's answers. The transcript reports:

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** Speaking of talking to your colleagues, with regard to Australia's Oyster Coast, has Minister Constance in his role as the member for Bega made any representations to you lately around concerns being raised by other oyster growers?

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Absolutely. Minister Constance has spoken to me about that investment, remembering he was there for the investment. He saw this as a very good investment in a sector—

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** He supports it?

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** Remembering if you go back to the shellfish committee report, which the industry put forward, one of the key recommendations at issue was about improving access to finance and capability building for groups or individual growers.

**The Hon. MICK VEITCH:** So Minister Constance in his role as the member for Bega supports the investment?

**Mr JOHN BARILARO:** He was there for the announcement and of course he supported the investment.

That is the reason for my statement that it is not only The Nationals who up to their armpits in this; the Liberal Party is also involved. I am sure that in due course this will come back to bite them, as it already has in Bega. The member for Bega rarely visits his electorate. He behaves like an absentee landlord. If he were there, there is no way that anyone would be able to say they had heard the local oyster growers saying they strongly support this decision. They do not.

One person who has been consulting on this issue is the Labor Party candidate for the electorate of Bega. Leanne Atkinson is there all the time; she does not treat it like a fiefdom that she visits occasionally. She does not drop in, talk to a couple of people and return to Sydney. She lives in Bega and talks to the oyster growers and everyone else in the community because she treats it as her real home. She is not an absentee landlord. If the Hon. Andrew Constance had done that instead of putting up his hand and saying that he thinks it is a marvellous idea, he would have heard Andy Baker from Pambula Rock Oysters say that it was not clear why the State Government had taken a stake in one oyster company over others. An article in the local media reports him as stating:

It appears to me that they are either giving this money to their mates or that they decided to pick a winner.

And from a conservative government that sounds like pretty unusual behaviour, and there's a lot of farmers down here that are pretty disappointed about it.

He went on to say that it was the scale of the investment in proportion to the industry that concerned him. He stated:

I'm a bit concerned about this particular one given it's such a lot of cash money for a company to actually start up, buy leases and processing facilities.

I know my colleagues, oyster farmers up and down the coast, processors in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane and freight companies, are all outraged at the fact that it seems like the Government has picked a winner.

If the Hon. Andrew Constance had visited his electorate more often, he would have heard Brandon Armstrong, one of the largest Sydney rock oyster producers in New South Wales, say that the intervention by the State Government would distort the market for leases and baby oysters. He was reported as stating:

My first reaction was a total shock. That's a lot of money to be handed out to any one company or organisation. I thought, "Well, that's good for them" but I thought maybe that could have gone directly into the industry and maybe something that could have benefited all farmers along the coast of NSW. That is precisely the point made by the Hon. Mick Veitch and those involved in the industry who do not like the Government picking winners and giving public money to some people and not others in that industry. Under the heading "Small family farms under threat," ABC News reported:

New South Wales Farmers oyster committee chairwoman Caroline Henry said small-time farmers would not be able to compete.

"With one entity having so much money, it could spell the end of the small oyster farmer," she said.

"When we look to secure spat [baby oysters] or tender for leases through the Department of Primary Industries, we won't be able to compete with a company with that kind of cash flow.

"I'm really concerned about the state of the oyster industry at the moment, that we will have one or two players dictate to the industry, and that is a really sad indictment for this state."

It is a sad indictment for this State. It is sad that those opposite do not understand. It is sad that the Deputy Premier does not understand. It is particularly sad for me and for the people I have spoken to in Bega. I know that the many more people that Labor candidate Leanne Atkinson has spoken to find it sad that the local member for Bega, the Hon. Andrew Constance, does not understand either. He keeps putting his hand up to say that this is a great deal. His constituents disagree with him.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (12:21):** In reply: I thank the members who contributed to the debate: the Hon. Mick Veitch, the Hon. Niall Blair, the Hon. Natalie Ward, Mr Justin Field, the Hon. Courtney Houssos, the Hon. Peter Primrose and the Hon. Rick Colless. I will start by correcting the record on a couple of issues. I want to indicate, as I did in my first statement to the House in this debate, that the Opposition acknowledges that there is a need here. Labor supports the idea of this fund and access to finance. Labor supported the fund and would like to continue to support the fund. The Opposition supports our industries, including the oyster industry and the work that the Department of Primary Industries does for that industry. I place that on the record. Members on this side of the Chamber support the idea of equity investments. But, as we have learned from this sorry episode, they have to be done properly and carefully.

I want to deal with the claim by Minister Blair that I was quoting selectively. Reference was made by the Minister at the estimates hearings to a brief that went to him. It was a brief about an announcement, not about a decision. He was very clear about that distinction in the estimates hearings, although I acknowledge that he referred to a "brief". If I have been quoting selectively, then the eight-step process, which was outlined repeatedly in this debate, would have been the same eight-step process that the Deputy Premier ran through at the estimates

hearings. It was not. There was one step missing, as I indicated. That step was the involvement of the Deputy Premier. If Opposition members had been selectively quoting, the Government members at the estimates hearings would not have taken points of order and stated that the Minister was not involved. I put those matters on the record.

The claim was made that this matter has been heavily investigated, but we had only 80 minutes with the Deputy Premier of the State at estimates. Minister Blair spent a lot more time in front of the estimates committee than the Deputy Premier did on this issue. We believe, as the Premier has indicated, that the Independent Price and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] should look at this issue. That would do the State of New South Wales great credit. I reiterate the Opposition's concerns about this specific investment and this specific deal. The Opposition has raised concerns, not for political reasons but because oyster farmers and small businesses have raised concerns. Opposition members have raised concerns that the criteria for this fund have not been met.

Key financial information has gone missing. It has disappeared from the website of Australia's Oyster Coast. The public does not know how much either of the companies is worth. We collectively own them but we are not told how much they are worth. The Government will not tell us and Government members have not told us during the debate today. We do not know how much the fund adviser, ROC Partners, has been paid. The Government has not revealed that in this debate. But the clincher is that of the multiple speakers in this debate—I have referred to them—Government members expressed strong disagreement with aspects of the Opposition's concerns and heavily defended, on the record, the investment in the oyster company but no-one defended the investment in Stone Axe Pastoral and no-one defended the fund manager for the State investing in its own company. It sidestepped hundreds of thousands of small businesses and took the rolled gold, triple-A backed Treasury dollar bills to invest in its own company. No-one defended that, and that is a real sign that there is an issue here.

That conflict of interest was declared in the process. It was declared to the most senior bureaucrats in the State. But the public never knew and we do not know today, and it was not made clear by the Government, whether the Ministers knew and whether the most senior bureaucrats told them. Government members have not cleared that up. The Opposition will pursue that issue until these Ministers are clear about what they knew, when they knew it and why the public was not told about this investment which was not defended today.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Courtney Houssos):** The question is that the motion of the Hon. John Graham be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....18

Noes .....21

Majority.....3

**AYES**

Buckingham, Mr J  
Field, Mr J  
Mookhey, Mr D

Primrose, Mr P  
Sharpe, Ms P  
Voltz, Ms L

Donnelly, Mr G (teller)  
Graham, Mr J  
Moselmane, Mr S  
(teller)

Searle, Mr A  
Shoebridge, Mr D  
Walker, Ms D

Faehrmann, Ms C  
Houssos, Mrs C  
Pearson, Mr M

Secord, Mr W  
Veitch, Mr M  
Wong, Mr E

**NOES**

Amato, Mr L  
Colless, Mr R  
Farlow, Mr S  
Harwin, Mr D  
Maclaren-Jones, Mrs  
(teller)  
Mason-Cox, Mr M  
Phelps, Dr P

Blair, Mr  
Cusack, Ms C  
Franklin, Mr B  
Khan, Mr T  
Mallard, Mr S

Mitchell, Mrs  
Taylor, Mrs

Clarke, Mr D  
Fang, Mr W (teller)  
Green, Mr P  
MacDonald, Mr S  
Martin, Mr T

Nile, Revd Mr  
Ward, Mrs N

**Motion negatived.**

**CENTRAL COAST FOOD INNOVATION INITIATIVE**

**Debate resumed from 21 June 2018.**

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (12:33):** I speak in support of this motion, and I commend my colleague the Hon. Taylor Martin for raising this important issue of the growing food industry in New South Wales. In January 2018 a formal partnership between the University of Newcastle, Regional Development Australia [RDA] Central Coast, Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources [NIER] and Central Coast Industry Connect [CCIC] was established to build the Central Coast's reputation as an internationally renowned centre of excellence in food innovation. The partnership with the University of Newcastle and NIER will allow the Central Coast to leverage expertise from the recently implemented Global Impact Cluster for Energy, Resources, Food and Water, which is aimed at accelerating innovation in the food and agriculture sectors.

Regional New South Wales is known for its safe, high-quality food products as well as an innovation-fuelled agribusiness sector that benefits from optimal growing conditions. The Central Coast is made up of successful food producers, manufacturers and restaurants, supplying local and export customers with high-quality produce. Just last month, 12 of the State's top food and beverages companies served up a range of new products to the world on the New South Wales Government's "Flavours of NSW" stand at the Southern Hemisphere's largest food industry trade expo. The companies who attended the expo represented the current cream of the crop when it comes to producing new and innovative products of the highest quality. The Fine Food Australia expo gave these businesses the opportunity to export orders around the globe.

On a recent visit to the Central Coast, I was fortunate to visit one of the companies that attended the expo. Little Creek Cheese of Wyong produces award-winning artisan cheese for the people of New South Wales. It is a small, family-run business that has been experiencing great success and will continue to flourish under the Central Coast Food Innovation Initiative. The Central Coast Food Innovation Initiative is about leveraging the region's underlying existing strengths and realising economic benefits through growing and innovating the local food industry. The aim is to position the Central Coast as a centre of excellence in food and agricultural innovation in Australia.

The premium food, food security and food innovation movement is gaining momentum around the world and gradually being embraced on the Central Coast. International research has shown that innovating the food value chain is integral to enhancing regional economic development. This initiative provides the opportunity to grow jobs, build regional business competitiveness, and encourage national and international trade. This will be achieved through the development of a united vision, unprecedented regional collaboration, innovation, education and research.

The food industry in New South Wales contributes \$113 billion to the economy, representing 24 per cent of the gross State product last year and comprising approximately 55,000 businesses across New South Wales. The initiative will be a catalyst for ensuring that the Central Coast can claim its fair share of the food industry in New South Wales while contributing greatly to the region's strengths. Growing the local food industry on the Central Coast will see the industry take control as the significant driver of the local economy. The industry's economic growth will be achieved through the initiative by attracting new businesses to the area, increasing research and development capability, growing the food manufacturing base in the region through relocations and growth of existing manufacturers, and encouraging start-ups and food entrepreneurs. It is important also to note that New South Wales is leading the way in start-ups nationally.

The Central Coast has a lot to offer tourists to the region, with the area contributing \$880 million a year to the local economy. The kilometres of ocean foreshore, coastal lakes, rivers, estuaries, lagoons, valleys and mountains attract tourists to the region, with 9 per cent of total tourism expenditure in regional New South Wales occurring on the Central Coast. Tourism in the region is vital to keeping our local businesses growing as we work towards our 2036 plan. We want to increase tourism on the Central Coast and across New South Wales and the Central Coast Food Innovation Initiative plays a vital role in that. The Central Coast Regional Plan 2036 is the New South Wales Government's strategy for guiding land use planning decisions for the Central Coast region. The regional plan sets out four goals for the Central Coast: a prosperous Central Coast with more jobs close to home; the protection of the natural environment and management of the use of agricultural and resource lands; well-connected communities and attractive lifestyles; and a variety of housing choices to suit the needs and lifestyles of the local community.

The goals of the New South Wales Government's Central Coast Regional Plan 2036 align with those of the Central Coast Food Innovation Initiative. I thank the Central Coast Food Innovation Initiative for creating jobs in the region, with more to come, and for accommodating the increasing population. The region has an estimated 116,730 local jobs and this number is projected to increase to 141,404 by 2036. In 2011 almost one-quarter of the population—or more than 30,400 people—travelled out of the region for work each day, with employment on the

Central Coast concentrated in areas with infrastructure that had the capacity to support future growth, potentially above current projections. The New South Wales Government aims to reduce these figures in the 2036 plan, minimising the number of people who travel outside the region each day for work. The Central Coast Food Innovation Initiative will create local jobs that will complement the plan's objectives by allowing people to work from home or run small businesses in local areas.

A proposed food innovation centre has been shortlisted as a priority project for the region. In 2017 RDA Central Coast and CCIC partnered to deliver a sustainable food innovation manufacturing model. CCIC and RDA Central Coast have held a number of high-level meetings and have gained support from all levels of government as well as from the University of Newcastle, Monash University, RMIT University, the CSIRO and a number of regional business leaders, who are working together to deliver the industry, technical, educational, innovation, entrepreneurial and advanced manufacturing components of the Food Innovation Region Initiative. In addition to its core academic and research functions, the Central Coast food innovation centre will serve as the central hub for strategy deployment and collaboration that will be essential in delivering the strategic outcomes required of the Central Coast regional food innovation precinct.

Developing a Central Coast food innovation precinct will also embed businesses in a specialised food and related industries research and technology precinct, designed to advance industrial innovation by connecting experts on common ground to facilitate the exchange of ideas, solutions and discovery. The Central Coast economy is supported by efficient freight and passenger connections to adjoining regions. Proximity to Greater Sydney and Newcastle, bolstered by investment in transport infrastructure, has made it possible for residents to access a wider variety of jobs and services both within and beyond the region. The world-class food innovation precinct on the Central Coast would be stationed between the airport and freight port hubs of Sydney and Newcastle.

The area would take advantage of the current upgrades of the M1 and the delivery of NorthConnex. Available industry land adjacent to the M1 would allow the Central Coast to promote the region to food-related businesses as an ideal location to establish or expand their businesses to one of the most logistically efficient transport regions in the world. I congratulate the Hon. Taylor Martin on moving this motion and commend him for the significant work he is doing across the Central Coast, the Hunter and Newcastle.

**Debate adjourned.**

#### **INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE SPECIAL REPORT ON GLOBAL WARMING**

**Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (12:44):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change special report on global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius noted that the use of coal to generate electricity must be reduced to 0 - 2 per cent by 2050 in order to limit global warming to less than 1.5 degrees;
  - (b) the Federal Government has abandoned the National Energy Guarantee as a mechanism to limit greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector; and
  - (c) the Government has no credible energy policy or emissions reduction policy.
- (2) That this House calls on the Government to rapidly develop a credible energy policy that will provide a mechanism for New South Wales to reduce its emissions in line with the goal of United Nations Paris Agreement of: "Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change".

At one of the most critical times for the future of the earth's climate and at one of the most transformative times for energy technology, the New South Wales Government has no energy policy and no emissions reduction policy. This represents a massive failure and severe negligence by the Berejiklian Government. For the past few years, the New South Wales Government has hitched its energy policy wagon to the wreck that is the Federal Coalition Government. The hope for a coherent and responsible national energy policy now lies in a smouldering heap. Our great State has absolutely no energy policy, and that is a great shame.

At his final press conference as Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull admitted that the Liberals and The Nationals are unable to agree on a rational energy or climate policy. He said, "The emissions issue and climate policy issues have the same problem within the Coalition—of bitterly entrenched views that are actually sort of more ideological views than views based on engineering and economics." We now have incompetent fools heading the Federal Government, with new Prime Minister Scott Morrison dismissing the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] report on 1.5 degrees as "all that nonsense." He described



the global scientific consensus on climate change as "all that nonsense". In response to the IPCC recommendations, he said, "We are not held to any of them, nor are we bound by them."

Meanwhile, hapless environment Minister Melissa Price stumbled on radio about the IPCC's conclusion that we must phase out coal by 2050 by saying, "So I think, you know, to say that it is good to be phased out by 2050 is drawing a very long bow." Meanwhile, the New South Wales Minister for Energy and Utilities, Don Harwin, is caught up in a fantasy that the National Energy Guarantee is not dead and that somehow the Council of Australian Governments will revive it, even without the Federal Government's support. It would be almost comical if it were not so serious, but that has been Australia's energy policy over the past decade and to date. After John Howard's diabolic deal at Kyoto and inaction domestically, Labor Leader Kevin Rudd declared climate change "the great moral challenge of our time" and drafted up the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme [CPRS].

Labor likes to have a crack at The Greens, claiming that if we had supported the CPRS then everything would be merry. But the truth is that the CPRS locked in low targets, gave massive amounts of compensation to polluters and failed to support renewable energy. In April 2009, Professor Ross Garnaut told a Senate committee hearing that it was a line-ball call whether the CPRS was better than doing nothing. He said, "If there were no changes at all, it would be a line-ball call whether it was better to push ahead or say, 'We'll have another crack at it and do a better one when the time is right.'" Unfortunately, at the time, Labor put all its eggs into a deal with the Liberals and refused to negotiate changes with The Greens. Rudd then dumped action on climate change, Labor dumped Kevin Rudd and the electorate almost dumped Labor.

Luckily, voters elected The Greens a balance of power position in both Houses in 2010 and we negotiated the carbon price, the \$10 billion commercially orientated Clean Energy Finance Corporation, the \$3.2 billion Australian Renewable Energy Agency and the renewable energy target, driving billions of dollars in investment in clean energy and jobs, as well as the Climate Change Authority and other initiatives that worked, drove the economy in the right direction and created a massive industry in this country. The carbon price worked. Government members never go on about it because they know it worked.

Emissions in the electricity sector fell spectacularly by 8.2 per cent over the two-year period it was in place. Surprise, surprise: Emissions rose once the carbon price was repealed. One would think the Coalition would appreciate a market-based mechanism using a price signal to allocate resources efficiently. But no, climate change was crap and playing politics with climate was a short-term successful political strategy. On 17 July 2014 the ill-fated Abbott Government repealed the carbon price and Australia became infamous as the first nation to reverse meaningful action on climate change. Meanwhile in New South Wales, former Liberal energy Minister Chris Hartcher—remember him?—fronted a mining conference and declared New South Wales was a "coal state". Meanwhile, Premier O'Farrell declared himself anti-wind energy on 2GB, telling that idiot Ray Hadley on 16 August 2011:

As I'm told, no new applications have been lodged—  
referring to wind energy—

we haven't approved any applications, and if I had my way we wouldn't.

The Premier of the State was talking about one of the biggest industries in the country. Premier Baird and then energy Minister Anthony Roberts were more interested in flogging off energy assets than developing a coherent energy and emissions reduction strategy. Unfortunately, Premier Berejiklian has also shown ignorance of and almost total lack of interest in energy and climate policy. When asked at budget estimates about the contribution of coal to climate change and how long she thought New South Wales could continue to mine coal in a world facing catastrophic climate change, she quipped:

In 100 years or 200 years? I mean, who knows where technology is taking us.

"Who cares?" says the State Premier—absolutely hapless. I acknowledge that under Minister Harwin the language and tone has changed. Clearly the Minister recognises where technology and the economy is heading in the energy space and realises that emissions should be reduced. However, he has no energy policy. He has done nothing. For the past 1½ years the Minister has urged this House to be patient, saying that the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] would deliver a coherent national energy policy to fill the vacuum. The Finkel review would lead to an emissions intensity scheme or, failing that, a clean energy target or, failing that, the magical National Energy Guarantee [NEG] and, failing that, a Government failing in one of the most critical areas of public policy.

The irresponsible ideology and entrenched views have now scuttled even the NEG, and Barnaby Joyce is back—pro-coal Barnaby will be back by the end of the week. The NEG is dead, Barnaby is back and Australia is a farce. But the New South Wales Government still thinks the NEG can be revived by COAG, therefore we do

not need a State-based energy policy. We have a policy vacuum. We have a Government that is failing New South Wales and failing the climate. We have a Government that is prepared to stand by and watch other States get the lion's share of renewable energy jobs and investment when the Federal renewable energy target finishes in 2020.

The Greens-Labor Government of the Australian Capital Territory, under the responsible leadership of energy Minister Shane Rattenbury, has developed a coherent set of policies that will achieve 100 per cent renewable electricity supply by 2020. The power purchase agreements negotiated to fill the renewable energy supply have not only locked in low electricity prices for Australian Capital Territory consumers, but also led to big wind energy projects being built in New South Wales. The Victorian Labor Government has developed a State-based renewable energy target. Its successful large-scale renewable energy auction attracted six times the 650 megawatts put out to tender. The Victorian energy Minister says that it will attract up to \$1.3 billion of investment and create 1,250 construction jobs over two years and 90 ongoing jobs—mainly in regional Victoria. I hope that the New South Wales Labor Opposition does exactly the same thing when it is in government next year.

Victoria's renewable energy targets of 25 per cent by 2020 and 40 per cent by 2025 give the sector confidence and incentives to invest in building renewable energy assets in that State. Victoria has also implemented a fair price for solar scheme to ensure that the true benefits of solar are recognised in the price paid to households feeding their clean electricity into the grid. Queensland has the ambition of 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030 and right now there are big investments in Queensland. The recent Climate Council scorecard measuring progress on renewable energy puts New South Wales on the bottom rung of States. New South Wales does not have a renewable energy target and has no plan to replace its ageing and unreliable coal power stations.

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** Unreliable coal? Coal is unreliable?

**Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM:** Unreliable. We will see how Liddell Power Station goes this summer. One of the authors of the report, Professor Andrew Stock of the University of Melbourne, says of New South Wales:

They are certainly well and truly late out of the blocks. New South Wales should be doing a lot more to accelerate projects. New South Wales consumers are probably the most exposed in the nation to the risk of old [coal-fired power] plants failing.

If members have been to Liddell, they will know it is a rust bucket that could fall over at any tick of the clock, especially during heatwaves. The Greens have a goal of 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030, positioning our State as a renewable energy powerhouse and taking advantage of our abundant, quality solar and wind resources and our world-class workforce, innovation and industry expertise. We never hear the trade Minister in this place talk about renewable energy. It is a massive industry and trade sector yet he never, ever mentions it in this place. Many jobs are coming out of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation but those opposite did none of it. We did it; we drove the economy, we drove the investment, we drove the jobs.

The Greens is the only party that is willing to face up to the reality that continuing to mine coal is incompatible with a safe climate, with a policy and mechanism to phase out coalmining over 10 years and a just transition strategy for communities and workers. That is what the people of Muswellbrook, Lithgow and the Southern Highlands want, and that is what they will get from The Greens: a responsible policy. That is what I hope we will get. We would ban unconventional gas mining in New South Wales and restrict the expansion of gas infrastructure in the State. The load-based licensing scheme that applies to pollutants from power stations and industry currently does not cover carbon dioxide or methane. The Greens would change that. This scheme—currently under review—could be expanded to ensure that industry paid for greenhouse gas emissions, effectively re-establishing a price on carbon in New South Wales.

The Greens will guarantee a fair price for solar. We will seek to mandate solar power for all new dwellings and commercial buildings. We will develop a hydrogen economy—and I note the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party is behind the work happening in Newcastle on that. The Greens support that. We will provide incentives for landlords, including interest-free loans, to install solar or other energy efficiency measures and programs to allow renters to participate in the clean-energy transition. We need a State-owned retailer with a mandate for clean, affordable energy that could inject real competition into energy markets dominated by a few large corporations, which have exploited their positions to exploit consumers. We need re-regulation in the sector, banning exploitative and manipulative billing practices. We need to break up the stupidity of the vertically integrated gen-tailers and their market power.

It is essential to reform the National Energy Market to ensure that emissions reduction is a key objective of the NEM. We need incentives to electrify the transport sector. A massive revolution is happening in electrical vehicles and transport, and what have we got in New South Wales? We have the Chitty Chitty Bang Bang of transport policies: highways with diesel and petrol while the world electrifies. What absolute idiots—Chitty Chitty Bang Bang driven by the dinosaurs in The Nationals. We would electrify the transport sector and we would

electrify politics and the economy in New South Wales. We would establish a battery target and facilitate pumped hydro opportunities in New South Wales. We are pumped up and we would get behind that. We would install light-emitting diode—LED—street lighting across the State. We would do more with less.

There is enormous opportunity in decarbonisation that must be achieved rapidly. In many ways, decarbonising the energy sector is the easiest and fastest way to rapidly reduce emissions, which the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said we must do to avoid catastrophic climate change. With the right policies, New South Wales could become a centre for renewable energy and advanced energy technologies. We do not hear anything from The Nationals about the trade that we are missing out on: no manufacturing, no great revolution in revitalising manufacturing hubs in New South Wales such as Lithgow—

**The Hon. Niall Blair:** Because power is too expensive.

**Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM:** It is not. It is cheaper than coal, you fool. Lithgow, Newcastle, Wollongong—they should be producing solar and wind but they are not. And here is the chief idiot—

**The Hon. Dr Peter Phelps:** Point of order: I accept that things are getting quite energised, but to describe another member as a "fool" is unparliamentary. Mr Jeremy Buckingham should be asked to withdraw the comment.

**Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM:** To the point of order: I withdraw the comment.

**The Hon. Niall Blair:** Point of order—

**Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM:** I withdraw "chief idiot" as well.

**The Hon. Niall Blair:** Okay, thank you.

**Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM:** I withdraw "fool" and "chief idiot". The current Government has no energy policy, and that is idiocy. That is a fool's mistake. The Government has totally relied on a failing Federal Government—stumbling into electoral oblivion as it changes leaders every week—which we all know is a basket case on energy policy. That is one important reason the voters of New South Wales must change the Government in March 2019. I hope to see a Labor Government and I hope to see The Greens with the balance of power. I hope there is real action on climate change and a renewable energy revolution in this State, so the investment that is happening in Queensland and Victoria happens in the great State of New South Wales and New South Wales does not miss out. The Government should grasp the nettle and act on climate change, drive economic development in the regions and stop listening to the fossil fuel dinosaurs and the Friends of Coal—the fools who will lead us off a climate cliff and into economic oblivion. I commend the motion to the House.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Courtney Houssos):** 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.

*Visitors*

#### VISITORS

**The PRESIDENT:** I welcome to the President's gallery Joanna Quilty, the Chief Executive Officer of the NSW Council of Social Service. I hope Joanna enjoys her time in question time.

*Questions Without Notice*

#### SHENHUA WATERMARK EXPLORATION LICENCE

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE (14:30):** I direct my question to the Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts. Given that on 16 October in this House the Minister stated, "I assure the House that the deed"—being the deed of settlement between the Government and Shenhua—"did not afford Shenhua any special rights or privileges with regard to the consideration of its exploration licence renewal application", why did the ministerial submission, which the Minister signed on 13 July 2018 granting Shenhua's request, say that the deadline, which the Minister missed, for the signing of the submission was "to meet the requirement under the deed of settlement for the Government to renew EL7223 as soon as reasonably practicable"? Did the Minister mislead this House?

**The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (14:31):** I absolutely did not. The Department of Planning and Environment often puts "for approval by" and inserts an optimistic date on documents. That does not always mean that I take it seriously. Ministerial correspondence units put all sorts of aspirational dates on briefs. If the people of New South Wales are unlucky

enough to have the Leader of the Opposition as member of the Cabinet if there is a change of government, he might find that his department also does that to him.

First, the deed requires the renewal application to be determined as soon as reasonably practicable in accordance with the Act and usual departmental procedures. It did not require the exploration licence to be renewed. The reason for the deadline in the briefing note was therefore an incorrect summary of the actual terms of the deed. The deed had no effect on my power to consider the renewal application on its merits under the relevant statutory requirements.

**The Hon. ADAM SEARLE (14:32):** I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate that part of his answer where he said that the deed did not require the renewal, and will he table the deed?

**The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (14:32):** I am unable to table the deed because it is commercial-in-confidence. My comment was clear; that is, it requires the renewal application to be determined as soon as reasonably practicable in accordance with the Act and usual departmental procedures. In line with the Government Information (Public Access) Act, the Leader of the Opposition has the entire six-page brief. Page 4 and page 5 of the brief outline in some detail the procedures that the department went through and show that what I said was correct. That reflects what happened. The reason for the deadline is not a factual statement reflecting what is in the deed.

#### WESTERN SYDNEY ARTS, SCREEN AND CULTURE

**The Hon. LOU AMATO (14:34):** I address my question to the Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is supporting arts, screen and culture in Western Sydney. Are there any alternative policies?

**The Hon. Walt Secord:** How many calls am I on?

**The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (14:34):** Not enough. I thank the honourable member for his question. This Government supports Western Sydney. Arts and culture are the lifeblood of any local economy and it is essential that we continue to invest in the creative infrastructure required to meet the demands of our growing communities. I am delighted to inform the House that this Government is investing an additional 40 per cent in Western Sydney's arts, music and culture scene over the course of this term, including an extra \$2 million this year. This new funding brings the total investment in the industry in Western Sydney to more than \$20 million, which will provide more opportunities for local artists, musicians and practitioners. The Western Sydney Strategic Programs funding for 2018-19 will create three new programs and a third year of the Making Spaces initiative, which to date has activated 17 spaces to support local creative industry projects.

Applications are now open for three of these exciting programs: Western Sydney Arts and Cultural Projects, a program that supports professional arts and cultural projects delivered in Western Sydney by artists and arts and cultural workers living in the region at any stage of the creative process; Western Sydney Strategic Partnerships, which supports significant and long-term partnerships across and beyond the arts and cultural sectors, including local government authorities and public, private or community organisations; and Western Sydney Making Spaces, which is highly successful and now in its third year. This program encourages arts, screen and cultural organisations to partner with property owners to activate new spaces for studios, rehearsals and residencies across the region.

A new funding round is also being developed in consultation with local councils, the Live Music Office and Music NSW for the new Western Sydney Contemporary Music Program. These initiatives will help to further grow the strong cultural identity of Western Sydney. Of course, that is in addition to other important contributions the Government makes to a range of significant organisations across Western Sydney, like the National Theatre of Parramatta.

**The Hon. Walt Secord:** I like that.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** So do I. Are you going on Saturday night?

**The Hon. Walt Secord:** I have to check my diary.

**The PRESIDENT:** I remind the Minister that he should not respond to interjections.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** I know the Hon. Walt Secord is being genuine about liking the National Theatre of Parramatta. The Government's investments in the theatre are in addition to its landmark \$645 million investment in relocating the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta. [*Time expired.*]

**MATTHEW FRASER COMMENTS**

**The Hon. WALT SECORD (14:38):** I direct my question to the Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry, representing the Minister for Health and in his capacity as the Minister for Primary Industries. What is the Government's response to community concerns about public comments made by senior North Coast Nationals identity Matthew Fraser, who on 5 October described farmers and their families campaigning to protect State significant Cudgen farmland as the "great unwashed" in a Facebook live broadcast, and will the Government apologise to them?

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (14:39):** I thank the honourable member for his question—a question directed to me and also to the Minister for Health, who I represent in this House. I am not aware of the comments. The member is referencing a social media site. I will take the question on notice and see if I can find the comments before I make any comment.

**CRYSTALLINE SILICA EXPOSURE**

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN (14:40):** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries representing the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. I was recently contacted by a constituent, who raised concerns for workers exposed to silica dust—crystalline silica. The Cancer Council has stated that exposure to silica dust can lead to development of lung cancer, silicosis, and irreversible scarring and stiffening of the lungs, kidney disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Can the Minister report to the House what work health and safety regulations are in place for workers exposed to crystalline silica and how these regulations are being enforced to save workers' lives.

**The Hon. Walt Secord:** Point of order: With the indulgence of the House, I would like to answer this question.

**The PRESIDENT:** I remind the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that he is on two calls to order. At times I would like to answer questions but I restrain myself.

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (14:41):** I thank the honourable member for asking a question of me, representing the Minister for Health. It is a question about the exposure of workers to crystalline silica, which can lead to things like silicosis. He also asked what regulations are in place to protect workers. That question is probably better directed to the Minister responsible for SafeWork NSW.

I will take the question on notice and come back to the member with some substantive information so that I can give him a fuller response, but this is an area that I have learnt quite a lot about in my previous careers. I started my working career as an apprentice electrician in a limestone mine. That mine produced cement powder. One of the biggest risks for the workers there was exposure to crystalline silica. During the hydration process and the process of putting the limestone into powdered form and then putting it into bags of cement we were exposed to the particulates of crystalline silica.

There is information on the bags of cement and in the material safety data sheets, which provide the relevant information to anyone who is using these products so that they can follow the correct procedures. Work health and safety legislation in this State is in place to make sure that anyone who is in control of a workplace must make sure that they identify any hazards to any of their workers or anyone else at that place of work, and put in appropriate control measures which would provide a possible hierarchy of control to make sure that anyone who is exposed to those hazardous substances is kept as safe as possible, and hopefully to eliminate, at all times, the hazard to those workers. Crystalline silica is definitely one of those substances that needs that level of management.

Although I started my career in that mine, I only lasted there just over three months because I gained successful entry into university. After I left school, because I had not spent a lot of time studying, I was worried that I would not get university entrance marks. After three months of exposure, even though I was wearing the correct personal protective equipment, I had a dry cough probably for the next 12 months as a result of the level of dust in the air.

It is a hazard. All employers and controllers of such substances must make information, training and protective equipment available. They must provide a safe working environment and, where possible, they must eliminate the hazard presented by the exposure of workers. When I did my masters in occupational and safety and was a Work Cover trainer, we spent a lot of time—particularly when we were doing the general induction for construction training—making sure that anyone exposed to crystalline silica, usually through cement powder, was not placed in harm's way. I am sure that I can get more up-to-date information from the Minister. The question

was specifically directed to the Minister for Health. Although it has taken me a little bit of time to get there, I am happy to take the question on notice and come back to the member in due course.

### MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY

**The Hon. RICK COLLESS (14:45):** 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 how the Government is supporting the future of the medical technology industry in New South Wales?

**The Hon. NIAL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (14:45):** As a Minister, I get the privilege of being involved with some of the most exciting industries in New South Wales, and none is more exciting than the medical technology industry. The industry deserves the support of the New South Wales Government. Having witnessed firsthand the advances that can be made, I know that it deserves all the support we can give it, as we seek to improve people's lives. I have spoken in this place before about the impact of seeing New South Wales technology in action. For example, when I was in Jakarta I met a two-year-old girl who had received a Cochlear ear implant.

Today I was proud to stand side by side with my colleague the Minister for Health in the other place, and launch the New South Wales Medical Technology Industry Development Strategy. New South Wales is home to 37 per cent of the nation's med tech companies, and those companies generate around \$4.8 billion annually. The sector employs around 7,000 people, all focused on changing the lives of patients here, and across the world. It is also an integral part of the strong start-up culture in the State. It is an industry that operates in a highly regulated environment, and while this can bring frustrations, it can also work to the industry's advantage, as our reputation for excellence precedes us when it comes to promoting these products to export markets. We know we have a world-class industry in New South Wales and a world-leading reputation, particularly through being home to many of the biggest names in the global sector like Cochlear and Resmed.

Perhaps most importantly, the strategy is about making sure we have done everything in our power to ensure the next generation of globally competitive medical technology companies can grow to maturity right here in New South Wales. Our strategy will support better commercialisation, greater exports and investment, skills development, collaboration, and the growth of small to medium enterprises and start-ups. To bring all of this together, we will be launching the Medtech Connect program—a new program that will include networking events, capability-building workshops and collaboration across the medical technology industry with other key industry sectors.

Organisations such as AusBiotech and the Medical Technology Association of Australia, and their individual members all have a role to play in making sure that the initiatives in this strategy come to life. It is my belief that this strategy will increase the international profile of our New South Wales medical technology businesses. It will bring new economic opportunities and prosperity for the people of New South Wales. Most importantly, it will result in a healthier, longer-living population as more and more illnesses are banished to the textbooks.

I continue to look forward to delivering on this strategy, with the support and partnership of the industry. It was fantastic to be there today with representatives of industry, State and Federal governments and research institutions to launch this today. What a fitting time to be talking about med tech when Sydney is playing host to the Invictus Games. Many of those who have had their lives changed through unexpected circumstances are benefiting from the med tech sector so that they can continue to make meaningful contributions not only to their own lives but to the lives of family members and to society as a whole. We know that advances in prosthetics, robotics, 3D technology and research, and advances in the types of materials and procedures that are coming from the med tech sector will change lives. Members know that I have had my own struggles over the last few weeks. I am moving much better now because of the med tech sector—a couple of extra parts that have been developed through this sector. I now know that I will be able to enjoy a better quality of life after having my injury. This is a great sector. New South Wales is a med tech State. We are the best not only in this country but in the world and we want to support this sector.

### CHILD PROSTITUTION

**The Hon. PAUL GREEN (14:49):** My question is directed to the Minister for Resources, representing the Attorney General, in the spirit of National Child Protection Week, which was from 2 September to 8 September. While the act of prostitution is illegal for those under the age of 18, child prostitution still occurs in New South Wales. What initiatives does the New South Wales Government have in place to monitor and regulate the age of prostitutes, identify instances of child prostitution and ensure children are removed from the sex work industry?

**The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (14:50):** It is a very important question, because obviously someone under the age of 18 would be quite often being exploited—never a good situation. The member states the law correctly in terms of the age, but he goes much further and asks a question about initiatives that perhaps may even be wider than the remit of the Attorney General. I am sure there are other portfolios that would be impacted by those sorts of considerations as well. But in the first instance I will refer the question to the Attorney General for a response and make it clear to him that of course it is up to him to answer it but make clear the member's question. I am sure the Attorney General will do his best to provide a comprehensive response.

#### ROC PARTNERS

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (14:51):** My question is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry, as Deputy Leader of the Government. The Government invested public funds in Stone Axe Pastoral, a company majority-owned by your Government's investment advisers, Roc Partners. The board of Jobs for NSW and the secretary of the Department of Industry were advised of a declaration of interest. The public were not advised. Was the Minister advised of this conflict of interest and, if so, when?

**The Hon. NIAL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (14:52):** I thank the member for his question. This is a section of the department that is not under my remit as Minister so I was not advised of this transaction. The Minister responsible, the Deputy Premier, has had many questions in relation to these investments asked of him. He has answered them. It is on the record. Have a look at the *Hansard* and have a look at the budget estimates. That is the part of the Department of Industry that is responsible for that. He has answered those questions.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (14:52):** I ask a supplementary question. I ask the Minister to elucidate that part of the question which related to the advice which did occur. Looking at this now, does the Minister believe the public should have been advised?

**The Hon. NIAL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (14:53):** I am not going to play hypothetical games or look at areas in other parts of government that are not under my responsibility. The member has had plenty of opportunities to ask the Deputy Premier, particularly during estimates. He has answered those questions. The member can continue to look at the *Hansard*.

#### EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (14:53):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education. Will the Minister update the House on the success of the initiatives to support an increase in qualified early childhood teachers in early childhood education?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) (14:53):** I thank the honourable member for her question and the opportunity to speak once again about some of the work we are doing in early childhood education in this State. We on this side of the House understand that quality early childhood education starts at the top, which is why we are continuing to invest in the valued educators who head up our local services. Our Government has implemented a range of scholarship initiatives to increase the number of qualified early childhood teachers, particularly in rural and remote communities. We are also aiming to address the shortage of Aboriginal early education teachers and to build the capacity of early childhood teachers in special education to support children with additional needs. Because it does not matter if you live in Murwillumbah or Mulgoa, we are committed to ensuring all kids get access to the highest level of early childhood education possible.

Speaking of Murwillumbah, I am delighted to say that just last week it was my absolute pleasure to accompany the outstanding member for Lismore, Thomas George, along with the extraordinarily capable NSW Nationals candidate Austin Curtin, to the Murwillumbah Early Education Centre. Austin, as a father who has a young family and whose children are currently attending early childhood services, really understands the importance of early childhood education in this State. I am confident that the future of Lismore is in safe hands with him as our candidate and, I am sure, as our future member for Lismore.

I take the opportunity to thank all of the staff at Murwillumbah Early Education Centre for the work that they do, including the director, Renae, who is a past recipient of one of our early childhood education incentive scholarships. While I was there I also got the chance to meet Kuljit Dhillon. She is one of 38 recipients from around New South Wales who recently received a rural and remote early childhood teaching scholarship. Kuljit was very excited about being a scholarship recipient and told me about how that scholarship will make a big

difference to her for her studies. She is clearly a very dedicated and passionate educator. I wish her all the best as she continues on her career path.

Scholars receive up to \$10,000 to assist with any costs incurred during their study. This can include things like textbooks or other resources, travel costs, technology to support study and course fees. I have had the pleasure of meeting many scholarship recipients during my time as Minister. It is great that the feedback I receive is that this additional funding makes a difference to these educators in helping them to upskill their qualifications. The Rural and Remote Early Childhood Teaching Scholarships build on the early childhood teaching scholarships which were offered in 2013-14 to educators from across New South Wales.

The Government also established the new Incentive Scholarship Program, which is there to assist students who may have already commenced to complete their degree. In December last year 44 Incentive scholarships were offered to rural and remote educators who had already commenced an early childhood degree. Since 2013, 293 scholarships have been awarded from these three programs, including 10 scholarships to Aboriginal educators. I am also pleased to update the House that the information shows these scholars have been attaining high levels of achievement, with many achieving distinctions and high distinctions. As I said, feedback has been very positive. One newly graduated scholar said:

The scholarship has been amazing for me as a single mum and has really helped me to achieve my goal of completing my degree and becoming a centre director so thank you all for the support and the opportunity to apply for and receive this scholarship.

That is what it is about: providing support to women like that who have this opportunity. I am also happy to update the House that 47 scholarship recipients have already graduated from their courses and are bringing their new skills and knowledge back into the services where they are employed. These are great scholarships. I am proud that our Government is offering them to early childhood educators. I once again congratulate the team at Murwillumbah Early Education Centre.

#### WATERNSW

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (14:58):** My question is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry, and Deputy Leader of the Government. What is the Minister's response to community concerns that the WaterNSW website is retrospectively altering reported water flow data? Will the Minister provide a detailed explanation as to why data from water gauges, particularly for the Eastern Macquarie Marshes, has reportedly been changed without explanation?

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (14:58):** I thank the member for her question. It is obviously a question I would like to take on notice and go back and have a look at the substance. There may be a range of explanations. I want to afford WaterNSW the ability to provide that information and advise me on what the member is saying. Obviously we publish a lot of data and a lot of information. We have also been through a whole range of measures to increase our transparency in relation to information in this State, particularly when it comes to water, decisions around water and educating people about those decisions.

On the one hand it is good that the member was able to gain the information because it has been published. As I said, I am more than happy to take the substance of the question in relation to why figures may have been changed—I say "may" and will take the member at her word—and come back to the House with an answer. WaterNSW and the Department of Industry have been making sure that information relating to water in this State is provided in an easily accessible and easy-to-interpret way. As members know, information around water, particularly figures relating to water allocations, dam levels, flows in rivers and so on, is a matter of great interest to a lot of people at the moment, given that we are not only experiencing a drought in New South Wales but also low flow levels in a number of systems.

In relation to the member's question, the marshes have had some flows as a result of environmental water going through which will assist those areas to get through the dry patch. One area where hopefully we are improving is providing information to members of the public on decisions around water and announcements of those decisions. Certainly when I reflect upon issues around water allocations and water storages, once the announcements have been made, it is vital to provide the information because people have concerns and questions about why there are different allocations and flows in different parts of the State. If they look at the information and explanations that have been provided they may see that the water is carry-over water or is water that belongs to the environment account. That is one way to dispel any myths or concerns that people may have. Some people may have been given wrong information as to the reason why they do not have water allocations. I am more than happy to take the question on notice, obtain information from Water NSW and come back to the member with a response in due course.



**MATHEMATICS EDUCATION**

**The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (15:02):** My question is addressed to the Leader of the Government. Will the Minister update the House on what the Government is doing to increase the number of students studying mathematics. Are there any alternative policies?

**The Hon. Mick Veitch:** Taylor told me he needs help with numbers.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:02):** It is funny that you should say that. Earlier this week the Premier and the Minister for Education lodged a new strategy to equip young people with the skills they need to thrive after school. Maths is such an important skill and we want to ensure that our school students have the necessary maths abilities to succeed in life, whether it is managing their own budget or managing the budget of the State. This new strategy has the support of the NSW Maths Ambassador and award-winning maths teacher Eddie Woo, who has highlighted how important maths is throughout our lives. I am sure that the political class generally understands the importance of numbers.

**The Hon. Daniel Mookhey:** Scot's off learning right now.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** What is going on in that corner? We will leave that alone for a minute. We do have a very well read and cerebral Minister for Education in this State and when he was expanding on his strategy in the other place he used a haiku. I note with interest that the Opposition got in on the act and made an attempt to put a haiku on the Opposition's Twitter page. As we all know from high school English, a haiku is a short poem with five syllables in the first line, seven in the second and five in the third. What did we see from the Labor Party's attempt? Seven in the first line, nine in the second and 10 in the third. Where do you take a stuff-up like that? They cannot count and they cannot be trusted with the budget. Why is Luke Foley there? No-one on that side can sort out the numbers to get rid of him. What is going on? The member for Strathfield is worried about her phone number at the bottom of a Federal Government media release after she passed herself off as an adviser to the member for Bega, as we well remember. Then there is the member for Keira, who has always had a problem with numbers and thought that "New South Wales" was two words.

**The Hon. Lynda Voltz:** Point of order: As fascinating as the Minister's contribution is, the question was about high school education and mathematics. Given that it is the first day of the Higher School Certificate exams, I ask the President to bring the Minister back to the question that was asked.

**The PRESIDENT:** I remind the Minister of the ruling of then President Harwin in 2013 that it is out of order for the Minister to respond to interjections when answering a question, which is occurring repeatedly at present. I ask the Minister to cease responding to interjections. I also ask the Minister to be generally relevant to the question asked.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** All this talk of haikus has resulted in a bit of a poetry slam and has sparked the interest of the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps. He may or may not be responsible for a couple of the haikus that have been flowing around the place. I see we now have someone from The Greens in the House. A haiku written specially for The Greens says:

The Reds at the gate  
The Shoe kicks out—

**The Hon. Lynda Voltz:** Point of order—

**The PRESIDENT:** I ask the Minister to be generally relevant to the question. I indicate to all members that pointing out whether members are present in the Chamber or not has no relevance to the subject matter and is disrespectful. I ask members to cease such actions.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** I apologise if I transgressed that ruling. The haiku goes:

The Reds at the gate  
The Shoe kicks out tree Tories  
The battle is lost.

The lines have five, seven and five syllables. I think that haiku might have come from the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps. Another haiku reads:

The stealthy mollusc  
That lives near Maroubra beach  
Waits, ready to pounce.

## MANUFACTURED STONE INDUSTRY SAFETY STANDARDS

**Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE (15:08):** My question without notice is directed to the Leader of the Government, representing the Minister for Industrial Relations. Following recent reports of serious silicosis in workers in the manufactured stone industry and noting recommendation 1 of the first review of the Dust Diseases Care Scheme, which recommended that the Government urgently convene a taskforce of industry, regulatory and workforce representatives to review safety standards in the manufactured stone industry and consider regulatory changes necessary to protect workers in the industry, what has the Minister done to make workers in the industry safe, and when can we expect the Government to propose regulatory changes?

**The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:08):** I thank Mr David Shoebridge for his question on a matter about which he is obviously very concerned. I will refer his question to the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations for a response.

## REGIONAL CULTURAL FUND

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (15:09):** My question is directed to the Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts. Given that the Twyford Theatre project in Merimbula was unsuccessful in round one of the Regional Cultural Fund and given that round two of the Regional Cultural Fund closed on 21 September, how is it possible that the member for Bega and the Deputy Premier announced \$7.4 million in funding for a professional arts and theatre space at Twyford Hall in Merimbula on 25 May?

**The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:09):** It is very simple: there are a number of regional growth funds and the one that is funding the Twyford Hall project is not the Regional Cultural Fund. I suggest the Hon. Courtney Houssos does her research.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (15:10):** I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate his answer to explain what fund that money came from?

**The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:10):** I will be delighted to refer the member's question to the responsible Minister, the Minister for Regional New South Wales, for a response.

**The Hon. Niall Blair:** You are the only people who don't want investment in regional New South Wales.

**The Hon. Walt Secord:** We want proper investment.

**The Hon. Ben Franklin:** Point of order: I was hoping to ask my question but I cannot because of the incessant interjections.

**The PRESIDENT:** I have not given the call to the Hon. Ben Franklin because it would have been unfair and discourteous to him had I attempted to do so. He probably would not have heard me over the continued interjections. If the Hon. Walt Secord and the Hon. Bronnie Taylor wish to have a discussion, they should do so outside the Chamber.

## DEFENCE INDUSTRIES

**The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN (15:11):** 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 how the New South Wales Government is supporting defence firms at home and abroad?

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (15:11):** The Federal Government has set a vision for a defence industry that can supply everything our defence personnel may need now and well into the future. To do this, the industry cannot rely solely on selling to the Australian Defence Force. Our defence industry needs to look to exports to support its growth. That is why the New South Wales Government is helping our defence firms get their outstanding products in front of buyers from around the world at trade shows here and overseas.

Later this month we will be supporting firms taking part in the Euronaval exhibition in Paris, Europe's premier naval technology showcase. In Adelaide last month we supported 12 New South Wales small- and medium-sized enterprises and regional New South Wales networks on the Defence NSW stand at Land Forces 2018, which featured companies involved in manufacturing, systems integration, maintenance and logistics across the full spectrum of land warfare. Exhibiting at Land Forces not only raises the visibility of the New South Wales defence industry with the Australian Army and potential industry partners, it also highlights our industrial potential to the international delegations in attendance. The Federal Minister for Defence toured the Defence NSW stand, accompanied by the New South Wales Defence Advocate and member for Kiama, Gareth Ward, who is a

passionate advocate for the industry. This is proof that our industry strategies do not just sit on a shelf and gather dust. We are as good as our word when it comes to backing in our industry.

Some of our co-exhibitors at Land Forces already play a significant part in global defence supply chains. One great example is Albury-based Australian Target Systems, or ATS, which I visited earlier this year. ATS is Australia's most experienced live-fire target systems business and supplies across Australia and around the world. Another is Thomas Global Systems, based in Regents Park. It is an industry leader in electronic systems and a great example of how New South Wales is the smart State in defence. Sydney-based innovators JAR Aerospace and Advanced Navigation were also on the stand, showcasing advanced products in aerospace, sensing and navigation equipment. These are only a few examples. All of our co-exhibitors are part of the industry base that our Defence and Industry Strategy is supporting.

Building on this, we are helping to ensure that the next generation of defence technology comes to life in New South Wales. On Monday I had the pleasure of launching the New South Wales Defence Innovation Network, which is focused on bringing our universities, industry and defence force together to solve the future problems of our defence force. It was a great honour to hear about the development of customised drones which could be 3D printed for the needs of a mission or technology and would let soldiers recognise an incoming hostile vehicle by its acoustic signature. I am confident that under the watchful eye of our new Chief Scientist and Engineer, Professor Hugh Durrant-Whyte, we will see more and more of these technologies become a commercial reality and see the technology spill over into commercial applications across New South Wales and the world, increasing the prosperity of New South Wales and safeguarding our lives.

This fantastic sector is doing a lot to make sure that we have some of the best ideas and workplaces in New South Wales. Again I highlight to the House that Professor Hugh Durrant-Whyte is now our Chief Scientist and Engineer in New South Wales. Professor Durrant-Whyte was the former Chief Scientist to the United Kingdom's Ministry of Defence. He is a world-leading expert in robotics. His vision, having come from Australia originally and then working around the world, means that New South Wales will be well placed to capitalise on opportunities not just domestically with the defence white paper but also internationally.

#### NSW KOALA STRATEGY

**Ms DAWN WALKER (15:15):** My question is directed to the Minister for Resources, representing the Minister for the Environment in this place. The Office of Environment and Heritage has mapped key koala populations and habitat across New South Wales, known as koala hubs. Why then does the Government's Koala Strategy contain only 0.2 per cent of those koala hubs while protecting areas with no record of koalas?

**The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:16):** I thank Ms Dawn Walker for her question but I think there would be significant contesting of some of the assertions she has made. I will leave it to the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage to respond and give the member an appropriate response as soon as possible.

#### SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL FUNDING

**The Hon. WALT SECORD (15:16):** My question is directed to the Minister for the Arts. When will the next four-year funding agreement for the Sydney Film Festival be finalised? Will the Minister guarantee that the Sydney Film Festival will receive appropriate funding to maintain its international reputation and continue its official competition without reducing the number of films on offer?

**The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:17):** All of the multi-year agreements expired some time ago. They were rolled over for an additional year. The multi-year agreements, including those with the major performing arts companies, are on a different cycle to the Australia Council for the Arts multi-year agreements for the major performing arts companies, which creates some difficulties in terms of the two not aligning. I am currently considering what is the best way to deal with multi-year agreements.

The Sydney Film Festival should rest assured that its funding is secure. I have a great deal of respect for the work it does. The festival has a great board, it is a well run organisation and the patronage of its events has to be seen to be believed. The queues outside some sessions are extraordinary. In this city there is enormous interest in film, and I am not surprised—not just because film is a wonderful medium that excites and inspires people but also because Sydney is the capital of the Australian film industry. Sixty per cent of film production is here in Sydney. Film production is footloose, of course, so that can change. All State governments need to be very focused on the need to continue to get those productions. There should be no concern from the Sydney Film Festival about this matter. The Government is in the process of deciding how to align the funding cycles. That is the only reason I could imagine the festival feels there is uncertainty—but there is not.

**The Hon. WALT SECORD (15:19):** I ask a supplementary question. Would the Minister elucidate his answer as to the timetable? When will he advise cultural organisations when he will begin to negotiate the new multi-year agreements? What other cultural institutions was he referring to when he said there were other cultural institutions?

**The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:19):** Multi-year agreements apply to major performing art scripts, major festivals, State significant organisations, of which there are currently two, and a large number of small-to-medium companies. They have been successful recipients for a number of years of program funding, which then entitles them to apply on a merit basis for multi-year funding. They will be advised relatively soon as to whether the existing funding will be rolled over for 12 months in terms of aligning it with the Australia Council or whether there is going to be a different approach. They can all rest assured that they will know very soon.

#### ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES EDUCATION

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (15:20):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education. Will the Minister update the House on how the Government is supporting Aboriginal students, particularly through the teaching of languages?

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) (15:20):** The Government has a strong commitment to increasing knowledge and understanding of the histories, cultures and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of Australia, in particular the importance of languages. We know the importance of connecting Aboriginal people to their culture through language, and we are starting from the ground up by facilitating the learning of Aboriginal languages in schools. The stronger a student's cultural identity, the better they are able to engage in learning. As well as this, when non-Aboriginal students learn an Aboriginal language they extend their knowledge and enhance their appreciation of the richness of Aboriginal cultures and spirituality.

The Government's Aboriginal Education Policy commits the department to increasing knowledge and understanding of the histories, cultures and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of Australia. Working to implement Aboriginal languages programs in schools is a specific commitment under the policy. In addition, under the Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment [OCHRE] Plan, the Government's community-focused plan for Aboriginal Affairs, the Government has led the establishment of Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests in New South Wales to teach Aboriginal languages in schools. The nests are something I have spoken about in the House before, but, for the benefit of members, a nest is a network of communities bound together by its connection through an Aboriginal language. The structure of a nest is community driven.

Since 2014, the Government has committed \$4.4 million to the language nests, highlighting the commitment to the revitalisation of Aboriginal languages in this State. This has been done in partnership with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. [AECG] and local Aboriginal communities. I acknowledge both Cindy Berwick, President of the AECG, and Anne Dennis, Vice President. Those ladies are known to many in this Chamber and they should be commended for their commitment and passion around Aboriginal education. The Government has also engaged with the NSW AECG to support Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest Community Reference Groups and to facilitate the engagement of Aboriginal language tutors in the nests. The department also works with TAFE NSW, Aboriginal Affairs NSW and the NSW Education Standards Authority on the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests initiative.

As members would be aware, there are five Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests: Wiradjuri, based in Dubbo; Gumbaynggirr, based in Coffs Harbour; Bundjalung, based in Lismore; Paakantji, based in Wilcannia; and Gamilaraay, based in Lightning Ridge. There is also a satellite Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest: Dunghutti, based in Kempsey. A second satellite nest is in the process of being established in the Gamilaroi area in central north-west New South Wales. Schools also have the flexibility and are encouraged to work with their local community to establish and implement Aboriginal language programs using their school budget allocation. In November 2017, it was estimated that 11,900 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students were learning an Aboriginal language in schools within and outside the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests. That is a wonderful achievement and a great figure to provide to the House.

Through their school budget allocation, schools receive an equity loading for Aboriginal students, which can be used for teaching of an Aboriginal language as well as for other purposes. Schools are able to provide specific courses in Aboriginal languages for all students from kindergarten to year 12. As a part of the OCHRE plan, there has also been a curriculum created to support Aboriginal languages education in New South Wales.

This support includes five Aboriginal language-specific K-10 scope and sequences to guide school-based programming. The Government is also implementing the Connected Communities strategy in 15 schools in 11 of the most complex and vulnerable communities in New South Wales. A key feature of the Connected Communities strategy is the teaching of Aboriginal languages and cultures delivered by elders and/or key local community members. The Government is proud of the work being done to support the teaching of Aboriginal languages across the State and will continue to work with Aboriginal people to celebrate and share their culture.

### PRISONER ESCORT DUTIES

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE (15:25):** I direct my question without notice to the Hon. Niall Blair, representing the Minister for Police, the Hon. Troy Grant. Will the Government change the prisoner escort duties to and from court so that they are removed as a duty of the NSW Police Force and taken over by Corrective Services NSW and, where necessary, Juvenile Justice NSW? Will the Government amend section 33 of the Mental Health (Forensic Procedure) Act to provide that a person subject to a section 33 order will remain in the custody of Corrective Services NSW and not the NSW Police Force?

**The Hon. Niall Blair:** Point of order: I did not hear the first part of the question. Was Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile asking the question of me representing the Minister for Police or the Minister for Corrective Services?

**The PRESIDENT:** The question was asked of you representing the Minister for Police.

**The Hon. NIALL BLAIR (Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Regional Water, and Minister for Trade and Industry) (15:26):** The question asked by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile involves operational detail and that is why it is directed to the Minister for Police, whom I represent in this House. Recently the Minister for Police has been actively working with the Commissioner of Police to ensure that the NSW Police Force is allocated adequate resources by the Government. That is why the NSW Police Force has been undertaking a re-engineering program. The Government has every confidence in the Commissioner of Police and deputy commissioners identifying the resources they need for operational activities and the Government has been responsive to their requests.

Metropolitan and regional areas have different operational requirements. The Minister for Police has been working with the Commissioner of Police and Deputy Commissioner Worboys to ensure that regional policing requirements are met and resourced. Prisoner escorts is an issue in regional communities, particularly when those in custody are transferred from one regional centre to another or from a police station to attend a court hearing. As those of us who live in regional communities know, regional areas require specific resources in this regard. I will take this question on notice and refer it to the Minister for Police and the Minister will provide the member with a response.

While I am on my feet, I lend my support to the Commissioner of Police to ensure the operational needs of the metropolitan and regional areas of New South Wales are met. I believe Commissioner Fuller is doing a fantastic job, not only by identifying those resources but also through his ability to work with the Minister for Police to ensure that the Government continues to support the wonderful effort of our entire NSW Police Force. I am very happy to accept the question from Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, take it on notice, and refer it to the Minister for Police, who no doubt will come back to Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile with a detailed response, compiled in consultation with the NSW Police Force, I am sure.

In the remaining time allocated for my answer, on behalf of all members, I wish Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, the Father of the House, a happy birthday. I know that many people will join him in celebrating this wonderful occasion.

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** The time for questions has expired. If honourable members have further questions, I invite them to place them on notice.

### SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL FUNDING

**The Hon. DON HARWIN (Minister for Resources, Minister for Energy and Utilities, and Minister for the Arts) (15:30):** Earlier in question time I received a question from the Hon. Walt Secord. I gave him a precisely accurate answer to a question about funding for the Sydney Festival, but not for the Sydney Film Festival. I apologise for that. I was referring to the rules of the Arts and Cultural Development Program whereas the funding for the Sydney Film Festival comes from the screen Audience Development Fund, which is different. It is negotiated directly. An application from the Sydney Film Festival has been received. It is being considered and I am sure there will be an outcome of the process shortly.

*Documents***TABLING OF PAPERS**

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** I table the following reports:

- (1) Transport Administration Act 1988 and Passenger Transport Act 1990—Report of the Office of Transport Safety Investigations entitled "Bus Safety Investigation Report: School Bus Fire, Saywers Gully, NSW, 6 March 2017".
- (2) Transport Administration Act 1988 and Passenger Transport Act 1990—Report of the Office of Transport Safety Investigations entitled "Ferry Safety Investigation Report: Fantasea 8 Seasons Grounding, Broken Bay, NSW, 27 July 2017".

I move:

That the reports be printed.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Bills***GAMBLING ADVERTISING PROHIBITION BILL 2018****First Reading**

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

**Second Reading Speech**

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE (15:32):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Gambling Advertising Prohibition Bill 2018 because gambling is a major issue of concern to me. Since I was elected as a member of this esteemed House—38 years ago, they tell me—I have raised this issue many times. The bill states:

The object of the Bill is to discourage the proliferation of all forms of gambling:

- (a) by prohibiting advertising of existing forms of gambling and gambling facilities, and
- (b) by prohibiting advertising and other promotional activities aimed at publicising new forms of gambling and new gambling facilities, and
- (c) by prohibiting the use of any form of gambling to support the sponsorship of any government or community activities, including (but not limited to) sporting activities, and
- (d) by requiring studies and assessments to be made of the impact of existing gambling legislation on families and the community.

Members of this House know that in Australia gambling is a major social problem. Eighty per cent of Australian adults engage in gambling of some type. Australia has the highest rate of gambling in the world. I ask members to note that I am saying "gambling", not "gaming". There seems to be a play on words in the community whereby more recently the term "gaming" is being used—even in government publications—instead of "gambling". Gambling also is a significant public health issue. Between 80,000 and 160,000 Australian adults experience significant problems from gambling. Furthermore, between 250,000 and 350,000 people experience risks that may make them vulnerable to problem gambling. Those figures are so high that they cannot be ignored by the State Government.

New research shows that Australians wager more and lose more than the people of any other country in the world. Some people say that is simply because we have the most opportunity to gamble, given the huge number of venues that offer some type of gambling. I interpolate to provide some background to my campaign against gambling. Before I became a Christian, my father was an avid gambler. After he had a taxicab in King's Cross, he purchased a shop at 6 Cook Street, Mascot, that became the main centre for starting price [SP] bookie activities, which were illegal. People would come to the shop and place their bets. The bets would be neatly wrapped and show the person's name, the amount and what the bet was about. Then my father arranged for me to be the bookie's runner.

Before each race, I would transfer all the bets from Cook Street to the main shopping centre at a place everybody in Mascot knew was the location of the main SP bookie in the area. All the bets were delivered to him. That was my Saturday job. I also bet on each race and became an avid gambler. The problem with gambling is that if you study the form you can make money from it. I became very skilful at reading all the reports on horses

and dogs and could work out which animal would win the race. Contrary to what some people may think, it is not that difficult. I would bet on the horses or dogs and actually make money out of it.

**Mr Jeremy Buckingham:** Do you have a tip? What about this Saturday?

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** I will not tell Mr Jeremy Buckingham my secret method because I do not want to tempt him. It was not until I became a Christian and my eyes were opened that I realised this was not the way to go, so I refrained from gambling. For a while I would not even buy a lottery ticket, a raffle ticket or anything else that involved gambling. I became quite strongly opposed to all forms of gambling. As I have said, it is a major social problem for a great number of Australians—between 250,000 and 350,000 people. It exposes people to risks that may make them vulnerable to problem gambling, and we do not want that in our society.

The 2010 Productivity Commission's inquiry into gambling found that in Australia as many as 6,807 hotels, pubs and clubs provide gambling facilities. There are also at least 4,700 lottery outlets. There are now 13 casinos in Australia, with more being planned. I pause to mention that Mr Justin Field's speech yesterday contained many good points about the whole issue of gambling. According to the 2014 statistics, Tabcorp Holdings Ltd offers totalisator and fixed-odds bets on racing and sporting events in approximately 2,800 TAB retail outlets in agencies, hotels, clubs, as well as on-course in Victoria and New South Wales, and via internet, mobile devices, phone and pay television. Sky Racing—also owned by Tabcorp—is available in approximately 2.6 million homes and 5,400 commercial outlets in Australia, covering more than 80,000 races per annum. Anyone would be a fool to say we do not have a gambling problem in Australia. The figures are higher in Australia than in other countries. In addition, there are approximately 3,600 Keno outlets in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, and approximately 6,200 Keno terminals as well. On those figures, all members would admit we do have a problem with gambling in Australia.

All States and Territories in Australia have electronic gaming machines [EGMs], also known as gaming machines, poker machines, or pokies. I prefer the term "poker machines". They are available at licensed venues with the exception of Western Australia, which allows EGMs only at the casino, and the Australian Capital Territory, where Casino Canberra is not licensed to provide EGMs. Some members may remember the debate we had about the resort to be built in Sydney by the Packer corporation. I had meetings with Mr Packer and raised the subject in Parliament. I was not trying to stop the casino—or what he called a "resort"—from going ahead because I felt it would bring good economic benefits to the State, but I was keen to ensure that it did not have poker machines. I must give credit to Mr Packer that he agreed to that provision. When the bill was debated in Parliament I amended it so that the approval did not include poker machines. I compliment Mr Packer on his attitude. I hope he recovers from the mental health problems that he is apparently experiencing. He has my deep concern.

According to the World Count of Gaming Machines 2013, Australia had the sixth highest number of gambling machines in the world. We like to be at the top in sport—cricket, soccer and football—but we do not want to be famous for being the country with the sixth highest number of gambling machines in the world. Australia is estimated to have 198,150 electronic gaming machines, which is 2.5 per cent of the world's legally installed machines. Around 600,000 Australians—4 per cent of the adult population—play the pokies at least weekly. While survey results vary, around 15 per cent of those regular players—95,000—are problem gamblers, and their share of total spending on machines is estimated to range around 40 per cent.

Because of my concerns about poker machines I have regularly visited casinos—without actually betting or gambling on the poker machines—to watch the people who are using them. Sadly, in a number of casinos I have been to, as well as clubs, I have seen a lot of elderly people playing the machines in an almost hypnotised manner, as if they have nothing else to live for and they are captured by these machines. We have a duty to assist them as I believe they have mental health problems and need our support. But the problems experienced by gamblers are as much a consequence of the technology of the games, their accessibility and the nature and conduct of venues as they are a consequence of the traits of the gamblers themselves. New South Wales allows bets of up to \$10,000 at a time. Current machines have up to 25 pay lines. In New South Wales the current market bet is \$10 per spin.

In case some members think this must apply to Victoria also, I inform them that New South Wales has the longest history of gambling in the country. Australia's first official horseracing meeting occurred in 1810 at Hyde Park in Sydney. The first official Australian lottery was held in 1881 at the Sydney Cup. Registered clubs operated the first legal poker machines in Australia in 1956. We like to be winners but not winners in the area of gambling. Approximately 95 per cent of Australia's pokies are in New South Wales—a State total beaten only by Nevada, which operated 181,109 gambling machines in 2014 and of course is home to Las Vegas. I have been to Las Vegas a couple of times and I took time to visit a casino there. I noted the proliferation of poker machines and gambling not just inside the casinos but everywhere. People could gamble in the place where they hired a car, in businesses, shops, railway stations, everywhere.

**Mr Jeremy Buckingham:** You can do it in TAFE in New South Wales.

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE:** This was in Las Vegas but, as members know, it is also happening in Australia. In 2011 the NSW Gambling Prevalence Survey found that the most popular gaming activity undertaken by the New South Wales adult population is: lottery products, 41 per cent; followed by instant scratch tickets, 28 per cent; pokies/gaming machines, 27 per cent; horse/greyhound racing, 24 per cent; Keno, 14 per cent; sport betting, 8 per cent; table games in a casino, 7 per cent; private card games for money, 3 per cent; bingo, 3 per cent; and casino or pokies-style games on the internet, 2 per cent.

My late brother, Jim, was a director and treasurer of the Condell Park trotting club. He rang me one day—a couple of years ago now—and said, "I'm very proud; I've just installed \$2 million worth of new poker machines. I would like you to come to the opening." I said, "Look Jim, I'm campaigning to shut all this down." He said, "I would like you to come; you're my brother." I said, "Okay, I will come"—because I wanted to maintain my family relationship, obviously. It was an interesting experience as I walked around with him looking at all the new poker machines. Most of the people playing them had heard of me and were all very friendly, saying, "Hello Fred", "Hello Fred". They were pleased I was there for the opening of the poker machines. That showed me how much gambling had become part of Australian culture.

There have been surveys about gambling on the Central Coast and in the Hunter, which, according to the experts, seem to have more problem gambling activity than other regions. For example, on the Central Coast use of lottery products is at 48 per cent and in the Hunter it is 45 per cent; for pokies/gaming machines, it is 39 per cent on the Central Coast and 36 per cent in the Hunter; for instant scratchies, 28 per cent for the Central Coast and 32 per cent in the Hunter; and for horse/greyhound racing, 27 per cent on the Central Coast and 28 per cent in the Hunter. I could go on. That indicates the widespread gambling activity and the vulnerability in certain areas.

According to statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the latest figures from the NSW Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, Gosford has approximately 1,928 poker machines spread across 37 venues. That is the equivalent of one poker machine for every 71 adults. In 2010-11 venues in Gosford made approximately \$95,865,000 in profit from poker machines. That equates to \$700 for each adult member of Gosford's population. On average, residents in Gosford are in the richest 25 per cent of Australia's population. Wyong has approximately 2,608 poker machines spread across 35 venues. That is the equivalent of one poker machine for every 47 adults. On average, residents in Wyong are in the poorest 47 per cent of Australia's population. In 2010-11 venues in Wyong made approximately \$123,159,000 in profit from poker machines. That equates to \$1,000 for each adult member of Wyong's population.

The Central Coast has a higher prevalence of problem gambling than the New South Wales average. Young men between the ages of 18 and 24 living on the Central Coast are the most frequent players of poker machines in the State, and are the highest risk group for problem gambling. In 2008 Gambling Solutions carried out a survey of 200 young people aged from 13 to 24 years and found that 96 per cent of 18- to 24-year-olds gambled for money or possessions; 62 per cent of those under 14 years of age and 77 per cent of those aged up to 17 years had gambled for money or items, including mobile phones and MP3 players; 25.5 per cent of 14- to 17-year-olds and 55 per cent of 18- to 24-year-olds had lost more than they had intended; and 6 per cent of those under 18 years of age had played a poker machine. Internet gambling on the Central Coast was the highest in New South Wales. Although nearly invisible in official records, internet gambling appears to have grown rapidly, and spending could amount to about \$800 million in recent times.

The facts and figures I have provided to the House demonstrate that we have a problem with gambling. Of course, we know that we also have problems with alcohol, drugs and so on. We should do all we can to reduce the attractiveness of gambling, especially to young people, fostered by advertising. This bill seeks to prohibit the advertising of gambling and gambling facilities. I think all members agree that the number of gambling advertisements has increased and that they are very enticing. Even I am tempted, although I do not succumb. That pressure on our society, and particularly on our youth, is too much and we must do all we can to reduce it. This bill will help to achieve that. Hopefully it will reduce the incidence of bankruptcies, suicides and so on. I urge all members to support the bill, and I commend it to the House.

**Debate adjourned.**

*Business of the House*

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

**The Hon. Dr PETER PHELPS:** I seek the leave of the House to give notice of a motion under Standing Order 71 (6).

**Leave not granted.**



*Bills***EMERGENCY SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2018****Messages**

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Trevor Khan):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly agreeing to the Legislative Council's amendment to the abovementioned bill.

*Adjournment Debate***ADJOURNMENT**

**The Hon. DON HARWIN:** I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

**COOGEE ELECTORATE HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE**

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (15:55):** I draw the attention of the House to the contribution of the member for Coogee, Mr Bruce Notley-Smith, to the health and wellbeing of his electorate. For more than 160 years, the Prince of Wales Hospital has been providing health services to Randwick and the eastern suburbs. More than 58,000 people present to the emergency department annually, and about 380,000 other health appointments are dealt with at the hospital. This Government has made the largest investment in decades to provide facilities and for our dedicated health professionals. Thanks to the member for Coogee, this Government has allocated \$720 million to redevelop the Prince of Wales Hospital campus, providing research centres, an improved emergency department and new health facilities. Following the member's advocacy on behalf of the electorate of Coogee, the Government is building a new global centre of health excellence in Randwick that will strive for new advances and milestones in the treatment of diseases.

The continued advocacy of the member for Coogee for a united approach to education, infrastructure and health in the area has achieved this once-in-a-lifetime investment. In this term of government, the Coalition has achieved more for health than the Labor Government did in its 16 years in office. For more than 20 years, NSW Health buildings and resources remained neglected and ignored by successive Labor governments. Buildings that are more than 30 years old are now receiving state-of-the-art upgrades. The Government's steadfast economic management has delivered the surplus and funds needed to upgrade ageing hospital buildings and to give our doctors, nurses and allied health professionals the space they need to develop new treatments and medical advances. The Government's budget also provided further support to our health departments, with 200 extra paramedics, 300 doctors and nearly 1,000 new nurses and midwives. This Government is supporting growth in the medical industry with funding for 120 physiotherapists, occupational therapists and pharmacists.

We must give credit to the member for Coogee, who has been an advocate and who has secured funding for the new precinct at Randwick. The Government is supporting these new doctors and nurses, operating theatres, intensive care unit and medical assessment unit with a state-of-the-art virtual care centre. The Randwick precinct already employs 17,000 people and educates 50,000 students, and the new developments will enhance that capacity and capability. New research and education spaces linked with the University of New South Wales Medical School will provide research for clinical treatment.

The Government is continuing to work towards further investment in this health district into 2019, thanks to the member for Coogee. The Randwick campus redevelopment is exciting. The Government is creating one of Australia's premier centres for health and wellbeing and it is committed to the integration of health, research, education and teaching to drive innovation and to create an economic powerhouse for Sydney. The expanded campus will physically connect the hospital with the university, thereby integrating health services with research and teaching facilities. I congratulate the member for Coogee on working so hard on behalf of his electorate to ensure that these health achievements were brought to Coogee.

**DEATH OF MS MISHELLE RHODES**

**The Hon. WALT SECORD (15:58):** As shadow Minister for Health, I draw the attention of the House to the tragic death of Ms Michelle Rhodes, a university student and a beloved member of her community at Chittaway Point on the Central Coast. Michelle died on 29 August 2018 at Gosford Hospital. The day before she presented to Tuggerah Medical Centre with symptoms of high fever, a sore neck and spine, nausea, leg pain and severe headaches. Tuesday would have been her twentieth birthday. The local general practitioner, on seeing her symptoms, immediately arranged for an ambulance to take her to the emergency department. She was accompanied by her loving mother, Anjini Rhodes. Unfortunately, they did not progress past the ambulance bay. Despite all her symptoms and wanting desperately to sleep she was not given a bed. At 9.00 p.m. she was discharged despite showing little or no improvement and despite not being able to walk unassisted.

That night at home her symptoms worsened, and the next day she returned to hospital. She had to use a wheelchair, as she was unable to stand alone. When they arrived at the hospital for a second time she was placed in a room with glass doors, where the medical staff wearing masks took blood. The tests confirmed that she had meningococcal meningitis—a serious illness that causes inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord and/or septicaemia, blood poisoning. Patients with meningococcal disease can become extremely unwell very quickly. In Mischelle's case, it is unclear when antibiotics were first administered, but they were too late, and she died from multi-organ failure and severe septic shock. Between 5 per cent and 10 per cent of patients with meningococcal disease die, even despite rapid treatment. Last year, there were 91 confirmed meningococcal cases in New South Wales and so far this year, as of today, there have been 55 cases. In 2018, there have been two deaths on the Central Coast from meningococcal.

This has been an absolute tragedy. The Rhodes family deserve answers. It is a situation that they do not want to see repeated. They do not want the pain they are experiencing to be felt by any other New South Wales family. On 28 September, the shadow Minister for the Central Coast, Wyong Labor member David Harris and I met with Mrs Rhodes. She wanted support for an independent external inquiry to her daughter's death and her treatment at Gosford Hospital. She does not accept that New South Wales Health should investigate itself and, in these circumstances, I tend to agree with her. Even the Central Coast Local Health District recognised that an internal review may not be impartial. In correspondence to Mrs Rhodes, it wrote that "given the history of meningococcal disease cases on the Central Coast, the community perception is likely to be that any internal review will not be objective". The Central Coast Local Health District's investigation shows that Mrs Rhodes' concerns are warranted. The report raised more questions than it answered.

It also recommended "all emergency department medical and nursing staff should receive repeated education on the early recognition of meningococemia". Given that the local health district itself acknowledges the high number of fatal instances of meningococcal in the last two years, I believe that the community is right to expect that all hospital staff should, at the very least, be aware of the early warning signs of this deadly disease. The community has a right to know why hospital staff did not have the appropriate training to identify meningococcal; hence, an independent inquiry is also in the interests of restoring community confidence in Central Coast health care. This is why after our meeting Mr Harris and I wrote a joint letter in support of Mrs Rhodes to the Minister for Health, Brad Hazzard.

I acknowledge that in emergency departments, mistakes happen and that doctors, nurses and allied health staff are under extreme pressure. But families of patients have a right to know how their loved ones have been treated, and whether that treatment meets an acceptable standard of care. This family, and their community, deserve answers. I note that on Friday, 12 October, after Channel Seven's political correspondent Sean Berry interviewed Mrs Rhodes, the Berejiklian Government agreed, in principle, to an independent external examination by a two-person team of a Brisbane-based doctor and a clinical nurse consultant.

This is welcome, and I understand interviews are scheduled to commence on 29 October, but we know that this was only due to the media attention and media inquiries, which forced the Minister for Health to respond. For the sake of the Rhodes family, I hope that the inquiry is thorough. No parent wants to bury their child. We all want to leave this place well before them. We hope that Mischelle's death might at least provide some serious lessons that mean other bright, young lives are saved in future. I extend my deepest condolences to the Rhodes family and those who loved Mischelle. I also thank the House for its consideration.

### SHOALHAVEN CITY COUNCIL

**Mr JUSTIN FIELD (16:02):** Today I express my gratitude to those councillors, council staff and community members of the Shoalhaven who have invested their time and energy in developing ideas for a sustainable future for the region. I am sure that these efforts have been appreciated by many in the community and I do not doubt many share my dismay at the recent efforts of some members of the council—in particular, Liberal aligned councillors—to undermine that work.

The recent decision to disband the Sustainable Futures Committee is short sighted and speaks more to the internal fighting within the local Liberal Party and the obsession by some with partisan retribution than any desire to streamline council work. The Sustainable Futures Committee was a strategic advisory committee that was formed to advocate for a sustainable future in the Shoalhaven, including action on climate change, energy renewal and waste. It was set up to inform council's decision-making processes related to energy efficiency, security and renewable energy generation as well as other climate change issues that encompass sustainable futures for the Shoalhaven. And it was getting on with the job.

On 25 September Shoalhaven Council disbanded this committee along with the Natural Resources and Floodplain Management Committee, and sacked their volunteer community members without reason or consultation. A change.org petition of almost 700 has called for the restoration of those committees. Many of the

regions community consultative bodies have made the same call. This week a rescission motion to restore the committees was considered by council but the Sustainable Futures Committee was not restored.

The Shoalhaven is on the front line when it comes to the risks from climate change. We saw tragedy in late winter as unprecedented early and extreme fires destroyed property and national park land. Sadly a firefighter's life was lost in a tragic accident while that person was fighting the fire. Despite recent rains, the region has been experiencing extreme drought, and many farmers are struggling to continue. Water flows into local catchments are at all-time lows. Many coastal properties are at risk of inundation from rising sea levels and increasingly extreme storm events.

Now is not the time to be walking away from projects that plan for our future. These sorts of committees brought together council and the community to work on positive actions for a sustainable region. But the Liberals and Liberal-aligned Independents could not abide the success of these forums. They could not handle the fact that issues associated with climate change, renewable energy, waste management and sustainability were building consensus for local change. Shame on them.

One of the key arguments put forward by Councillor Mitchell Pakes against the Sustainable Futures Committee was that it was costing ratepayers too much money and duplicating services already provided by the State Government. Well, that is nonsense. We, in this place, know full well about the ongoing failure of the State Government to implement a credible renewable energy program for this State. The Government is 18 months behind on its Climate Change Strategic Plan implementation, and \$400 million underspent from its already insufficient climate change fund. The council was leading where State and Federal governments were failing.

But one has to wonder whether yesterday's announcement by the member for Kiama, Gareth Ward, of a new solar program aimed at saving low-income households has something to do with the push by Councillor Pakes. Perhaps the Sustainable Futures Committee was showing up, too much, the failures of the State Government by advocating for local renewable power and a renewable strategy for the council's power needs. I say to those who have worked so hard on that committee that they should chalk that announcement up as their success. They have embarrassed the Liberal local members and Liberal-aligned councillors into action. It is a shame that they could not work with the committee; instead they worked to shut it down to claim the win. Imagine what could have been achieved by working together.

The community and the environment does not have time for those Liberal Party games. It destroys community good will and trust in political processes and is particularly damaging at the local level. I would like to personally thank the chair of the Sustainable Futures Committee, Kaye Gartner, for her work and leadership on the committee. I also acknowledge that other councillors—including some who ultimately voted to disband the committee—have made valuable contributions. I would especially like to acknowledge the community representatives and the community members who have worked with the committee to progress positive ideas for the sustainability of our region.

As the petition noted, disbanding these committees will not make the issues of climate change or sea-level rise go away. It will just reduce Shoalhaven Council capacity to plan and adapt to climate change. I say to all those who have contributed—regardless of the status of the committee—that their work is needed more than ever. I thank them for their efforts.

## GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (16:07):** Consumers are not shy in exercising their purchasing power, because they understand that how they spend their money wields influence. From farmer-friendly milk and free-range eggs to exploitation-free fashion and ethical super, the public understands that, if you can afford it, simply pursuing the lowest unit cost, does not lead to the best societal outcomes. It amazes me, then, that this Liberal-Nationals Government continues with its ideological offshoring of jobs and government contracts, when the purchasing power it wields is so great.

When it comes to trains, instead of building the new intercity fleet or Waratah replacements, the Government has sent 1,200 jobs overseas. Instead of supporting the 161 workers in Villawood, this Government opted to go to Malaysia for the construction of 38 double-decker B-line buses. The Government was caught out abandoning a Norco milk contract for North Coast hospitals and even here in this House, the Minister for Primary Industries was asked a question during our last sitting week about why Griffith Hospital had outsourced its kitchen, meaning patients received pre-packaged meals, despite the abundance of high-quality local produce in the Murrumbidgee region.

In addition to those local jobs, the valuable multiplier effects of the expenditure of these taxpayer funds is being lost to local communities. But during the parliamentary break, it was revealed that this Liberal-Nationals Government had taken this to a whole new level. As a condition of the \$100 million RMS IT contract, the seven

companies bidding were told they must locate 30 per cent of their workforce overseas. These are skilled jobs. At a time when the Western Suburbs of Sydney face a jobs deficit in the hundreds of thousands this Government is reaching new depths to compel companies to send jobs offshore. It used to be that we would put social and environmental conditions on government contracts to encourage best practice behaviour. This instead shows just how out of touch this Government is. Those on the other side of the House like to chirp that they are the true friends of the workers. As the saying goes, with friends like these, New South Wales workers hardly need enemies.

One of the most bitterly fought debates over the course of this Government has been the introduction of the draconian changes to workers compensation in 2012, and rightly so. This is a system that instead of rehabilitating workers and supporting them to get back to work is forcing them into poverty. Every union official I speak to has another story of a worker injured at work or on their journey to work and the pernicious effects the cuts to the workers compensation scheme have had on them and their families. Indeed, earlier this year on my visit to Foodbank, the largest provider of food relief in the country, I heard the story of a family who were donors to Foodbank but after an injury at work the family was forced to seek food relief themselves. This is clearly a system that is not working.

Consider this: A retail worker with two children who was injured in 1926—when the first workers compensation legislation was introduced—was proportionally in a better financial position than a similar retail worker would be if injured today in New South Wales. But what should we expect? The nastiness of this Government knows no bounds. Those opposite sought to push workers off the workers compensation scheme and onto unemployment benefits—at Christmas time, no less. But when these changes were introduced in 2012, they were under the false premise that the scheme was in significant debt. This is plainly incorrect. This was based on 100 per cent of the claimants making a 100 per cent maximum claim in the immediate weeks. While the scheme suffered a temporarily poorer financial position, as many investors did as a result of the global financial crisis, the Australia Institute recently found:

The supposedly dire deficit which justified the cutbacks disappeared entirely within one year, and by mid-2013 the fund was already back in surplus. The system's total surplus now exceeds \$4 billion.

I congratulate Unions NSW and the many trade unions that commissioned this excellent report. Its key finding was this: Over five years the original scheme could be restored without going into deficit. This would also maintain the appropriate "risk cushion". It is time for a more humane approach for our injured workers in New South Wales.

### MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

**The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN (16:12):** October is Mental Health Month in New South Wales. It is a time for all of us to stop and think about our own wellbeing and the mental health of our friends, our families and ourselves. It is an opportunity for us to make good mental health a priority for our society. It is also a time to acknowledge that it is okay to seek help when it is needed. This year the theme for Mental Health Month is "Share the Journey". That theme is aimed at encouraging everyone to tell their friends, family or colleagues when things are a bit tough. It is through sharing our own journey that we discover people who are going through or have been through a similar experience to our own.

Unfortunately, isolation has a huge impact on people's wellbeing and mental health. Being able to share our journey creates an opportunity to connect with others and help those around us realise they are not alone. It is often the smallest things that can make the biggest difference in people's lives, and that is what Mental Health Month is about. Communities across New South Wales have genuinely embraced Mental Health Month, with an array of different events including walks, Pilates classes, workshops and high teas.

I make mention of a few events held recently on the North Coast. During October members of the Byron Youth Theatre, with the support of WayAhead, performed their play *Mind Made Me*. The performance explores the issues of depression, anxiety and negative body image through slam poetry, dance, dark comedy and stylised scenes. Members of the Byron Youth Theatre have been sharing *Mind Made Me* with local schools and the wider community since 2014. The impacts of this production have been remarkable.

At the time of the production, members of the 2014 original cast were experiencing firsthand some of the issues explored in *Mind Made Me*. Their involvement with Byron Youth Theatre and the *Mind Made Me* performance was a positive catalyst for change and helped them through the tough time they were experiencing. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the staff of Byron Youth Theatre, particularly Lisa Apostolides, the founder of the extraordinary Byron Youth Theatre. Lisa has been instrumental in changing the lives of so many young people on the North Coast. For this the New South Wales Government cannot thank Lisa enough. She is an outstanding role model and leader for the young people in our community.

In the coming weeks, the Byron community will come together for their Share the Journey Picnic in the Park, put on by the Byron Bay Rugby Club. The day will include health workshops, family entertainment, live

music, sport and of course the opportunity to connect, meet new people, and hear and share stories. The picnic was supposed to have been held a week ago but unfortunately bad weather meant it had to be postponed. I thank the hardworking committee members who have worked tirelessly to bring this event together. I particularly thank Craig Wallace. I look forward to joining with the North Coast community for this celebration.

On Wednesday 10 October we also celebrated World Mental Health Day. World Mental Health Day is an international day for mental health education, awareness and advocacy. The Lennox Head community embraced this day with the Do You See What I See? event hosted by the Lennox Legends at the Lennox Head Community Centre. The story behind this event is incredible. It was established by the Lennox Legends, Trent Chapman and Steve Craig. The value these men provide not just to this event but in the broad support they give to the North Coast community in educating and informing people on the importance of strong mental health is outstanding, and they walk their talk. Trent shares his lived experience of bipolar disorder and Steve regularly relates his years of experience as a mental health nurse regularly. They show by their example how the path back to strong mental health is achievable.

The event included pop-up stalls from Lifeline, headspace, Mental Health First Aid Australia, Rural Adversity Mental Health Program and MindSpot. It also included talks, particularly from those with lived experiences with mental health issues; information on the Mental Health First Aid action plan; healthy food and beverages; and music. Do You See What I See? focused on educating, informing entertaining and inspiring the Lennox Head community. We all have a responsibility to shine a positive light on mental health and help break down the stigma it is often associated with. This is exactly what this event has done.

I extend my sincere thanks to the Lennox Legends for developing and organising this event. The leadership, courage, and compassion displayed by Trent Chapman, Steve Craig and Braden Walters is a beacon of hope for our whole community. Events like the Picnic in the Park and Do You See What I See? and the work of the Byron Youth Theatre are helping break down this stigma and create good mental health for our community. There can be no more important work to be done across New South Wales, especially regional New South Wales, than this.

### **POLICE ASSOCIATION OF NSW**

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE (16:18):** Today at lunchtime I met with the Police Association of NSW. It presented me with a booklet on its objectives for the 2019 election commitments entitled "What police need to keep NSW safe", with the slogan "Back the Blue". The Christian Democratic Party has always backed the blue and worked closely with the NSW Police Force. Some members will say, "I know why you do that. You are biased because you have two sons in the NSW Police Force." Well, the answer is, "Yes, I am biased."

When you have two sons in the Police Force it makes policing a very real issue in your family. My eldest son came home one night and said that he was sent to a break and entry with another police officer. One of them went to the front door of the factory and the other went to the back, and the person inside came out with a shotgun. My son said, "He pointed it at me and fired it and it just clicked; it did not fire." If it had fired my eldest son Stephen would be dead. That shows the life and death situations that police officers face, which we often do not hear much about, except for when there is an assault where a police officer dies. Sadly, we have had too many of those in recent years.

There has been a change in the climate. Police were always highly respected. I know that they are still highly respected by a lot of people, but there are others who do not have any respect and there have been a lot more bashings and attacks on police and paramedics than we have ever experienced before. That is a tragedy and we need to educate our society and our youth to respect those who are serving the community, such as police officers, paramedics and so on. I emphasise some of the objectives for the forthcoming election from the police point of view. Their first objective—and they want the Government to respond to it—is to increase the NSW Police Force by 2,500 officers over the next four-year term of government. They said that it is essential that they have that extra staffing. They stated:

Police officers are understaffed and overworked. Years of underinvestment in the NSW Police Force must be rectified. The Police Association has consulted with local and specialised police officers all over New South Wales to determine how many staff are needed to meet the high standard of service expected of police officers.

After adding up all the demands, the Police Association came to the conclusion that the NSW Police Force needs to be increased by 2,500 police officers over the next four-year term of government. I know that it is a big impost on the budget, but I urge the Government to pay the salaries of an extra 2,500 police officers. I believe that our society needs it and deserves it. I also believe that the police we have serving us need to be adequately staffed when they go out on a particular challenge that they have been asked to undertake, such as a robbery, murder, people fighting and bashing each other in the street, and things such as that. Police are expected to break those

fighters up and often have to get involved in the fighting themselves—not willingly, but they get attacked by the participants.

The police are concerned also about the need to improve their equipment and infrastructure to respond to high-risk incidents. Police officers need further infrastructure and equipment to do their job. In each region the Government has to build training facilities capable of meeting current and future needs, including funds to purchase property at appropriate sites. There needs to be new mobile command vehicles for all police area command districts and relevant specialist units, ensuring the new vehicles are fit for purpose and utilise modern technologies that will assist police in responding to high-risk incidents. It is important for the Government to protect places where people gather using counter-terrorism-through-design measures. The Government must provide police with the equipment they need to do their job effectively. They are the matters I would put on the agenda for the New South Wales State Government to look to for the forthcoming State election.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**The House adjourned at 16:23 until Tuesday 23 October 2018 at 14:30.**