



New South Wales

Legislative Council

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Eighth Parliament
First Session**

Thursday 11 May 2023

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday 11 May 2023

The PRESIDENT (The Hon. Benjamin Cameron Franklin) took the chair at 10:00.

The PRESIDENT read the prayers and acknowledged the Gadigal clan of the Eora nation and its Elders and thanked them for their custodianship of this land.

Motions

DEATH OF MR REX WILLIAM MOLLER

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources)
(10:01): I move:

- (1) That this House notes with sadness the death of Mr Rex William Moller on 21 April 2023, at the age of 72, which was also the International Day of Mourning for those who are killed or injured at work.
- (2) That this House further notes that:
 - (a) Mr Moller died while working at his opal claim near Lightning Ridge;
 - (b) Mr Moller's death is being investigated by the New South Wales Resource Regulator and the New South Wales Coroner;
 - (c) Rex was a committed opal miner but was willing to have a go at anything, including plumbing and electrical work and more recently had started silver smithing; and
 - (d) Rex and his wife Wendy would have celebrated their 37th wedding anniversary last week.
- (3) That this Houses extends its sincere condolences to Mr Rex William Moller's family, friends, colleagues, and the community.

Motion agreed to.

Documents

GET WILD PTY LTD

Tabling of Documents Reported to be Privileged

The Hon. EMMA HURST (10:01): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on 13 May 2020, this House ordered the production of documents in the possession, custody or control of the Department of Regional New South Wales and the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales relating to Get Wild Pty Ltd;
 - (b) in response to the order, documents were returned on 17 June 2020 and additional documents returned on 4 August 2020;
 - (c) on 30 January 2023, the Clerk received correspondence disputing the claim of privilege over certain documents received on 17 June 2020 and the Hon. Joseph Campbell was appointed as Independent Legal Arbitrator;
 - (d) on 6 February 2023, the Clerk received further correspondence disputing the claims of privilege over certain documents received on 4 August 2020 and the Hon. Alan Robertson, SC, was appointed as Independent Legal Arbitrator;
 - (e) according to Standing Order 54, the reports of the Independent Legal Arbitrators, dated 8 February 2023 and 27 February 2023, were referred to Privileges Committee and the committee resolved to publish the reports on 10 February 2023 and 28 February 2023 respectively;
 - (f) on 28 February 2023 and 2 March 2023, the Privileges Committee further resolved that the recommendations of the arbiters in reports dated 8 February 2023 and 27 February 2023 respectively be implemented, including the publication of documents considered not to be privileged, and ordering the production of redacted documents within 7 days;
 - (g) on 3 March 2023, the business of the Legislative Council was suspended under section 22F of the Constitution Act 1902;
 - (h) on 7 March 2023, the Clerk received correspondence from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, stating that the Department is currently considering its response to resolutions of the Privileges Committee ordering for the production of redacted documents in light of the operation of section 22F of the Constitution Act 1902, and seeking clarification regarding the timeline of disputes and the Governor's approval of new standing rules and orders;

- (i) on 16 March 2023, correspondence was sent from the Acting Clerk to the Department of Premier and Cabinet in response to the letter dated 7 March 2023, indicating that in his view the production of redacted documents by the Department of Premier and Cabinet would not be in breach of section 22F; and
 - (j) other than to acknowledge that the correspondence had been received and will be considered, there has been no further formal response from the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the documents have not been provided voluntarily.
- (2) That this House orders that:
- (a) the Department of Premier and Cabinet produce, within 7 days of the passing of this resolution, the redacted versions of documents referred to in the resolutions of the Privileges Committee of 28 February 2023 and 2 March 2023; and
 - (b) on tabling, the redacted documents are authorised to be published.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY WEEK

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (10:02): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) National Road Safety Week commences on Mother's Day, Sunday 14 May 2023;
 - (b) National Road Safety Week was founded by the Safer Australian Roads and Highways [SARAH] Group that was set up by Sarah Frazer's father to ensure more lives are not lost through preventable and clearly foreseeable situations like the one that took Sarah's life;
 - (c) Sarah's father, Peter Frazer, worked tirelessly to establish the Yellow Ribbon Road Safety Week in May 2013;
 - (d) the SARAH Group's yellow ribbon pins remind us to Drive So Others Survive; and
 - (e) the SARAH Group pledge is "to drive as if my loved ones are on the road ahead. I will remove all distractions and never use my mobile phone while driving. I will not put other people at risk by speeding, driving while tired or under the influence of alcohol/drugs. I will protect all vulnerable road users, especially those whose job places them in harm's way, by slowing down and giving them the space they need to be safe".
- (2) That this House recognises and thanks Peter Frazer and the SARAH Group for making New South Wales roads safer and users more aware of safety issues.

Motion agreed to.

Business of the House

PRECEDENCE OF BUSINESS

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: By leave: I move:

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the standing and sessional orders, private members' business take precedence of Government business at the conclusion of Government business notices of motions this day.

Motion agreed to.

Notices

PRESENTATION

[During the giving of notices of motions]

The PRESIDENT: Order! There is too much chatter in the Chamber.

Later,

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Point of order: You earlier raised the issue of chatter in the House. Perhaps those who want to have a conference should do so outside.

The PRESIDENT: I uphold the point of order. I would appreciate it if members standing at the back of the Chamber having a conversation did so either in the members' lounge or quietly while seated.

Later,

The PRESIDENT: I advise new members that if their notice of motion is lengthy it is within their purview to say that they will not read it in its entirety and that a copy will be available from the Clerk.

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

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I move:

That Government business notice of motion No. 1 be postponed until a later hour of the sitting.

Motion agreed to.

*Documents***TABLING OF PAPERS**

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I table the following paper:

- (1) Document prepared by NSW Treasury and Transport for NSW entitled *Toll Review: Terms of Reference*, dated 8 May 2023.

*Bills***GOVERNMENT SECTOR FINANCE AMENDMENT (GRANTS) BILL 2023****First Reading**

Bill introduced, read a first time and ordered to be published on motion by the Hon. John Graham.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: According to standing order, I table a statement of public interest.

Statement of public interest tabled.

Second Reading Speech

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (10:18): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

NSW Labor made an election commitment in opposition to bring integrity back into the grants system, and I am pleased to be able to do that in this first week of Parliament by introducing the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023. Despite mounting evidence—indeed, damning evidence—that the administration of grants in New South Wales was broken, the former Government persistently refused to legislate to restore faith in the system. I recognise the steps it took, but it refused to take the step that Labor will now take to legislate those protections. We are fixing that system now.

Every year the New South Wales Government typically spends around \$4 billion on grants. When it is done correctly, grants can be a highly effective mechanism for providing government support to people across New South Wales, including individuals, organisations and local communities. As all members know, the grant programs provide significant benefits for people right across this State. That makes it even more critical that a strong framework for regulating grants is in place, ensuring they are administered fairly and achieving value for money. It is essential that taxpayer money—public money—spent on grants is money spent wisely. The grants are not a plaything of a political party and they are not in the gift of the government of the day. It is essential that they are directed towards enriching the lives of everyone in New South Wales. The bill before the House is directed at this very cause. The integrity and transparency enhancements will be mandatory; they will be entrenched in the law.

Under the Government Sector Finance Amendment (Grants) Bill 2023, amongst other integrity measures, a Minister must not approve a grant unless satisfied that its expenditure is efficient, effective, economical, ethical, and that it would be value for money for the people of New South Wales. The bill will build on the existing framework for regulating government grants to help ensure that we deliver effective, efficient and ethical grants for the people of New South Wales. The framework was forged from much scrutiny from this Chamber and it is bolstered by the bill today. The *Grants Administration Guide*, issued in September 2022, contains overarching principles that apply to all government grants and imposes specific requirements that must be complied with when administering grants. The guide is issued under a Premier's memorandum, making it legally enforceable and binding on Ministers and officials. Compliance with the mandatory requirements of the guide is necessary by law under the Government Sector Finance Act 2018. The bill will not replace the framework for the regulation of government grants in New South Wales. That framework and its definitions will continue. However, the bill will make amendments that bolster the existing framework, strengthening the integrity of government grants.

On behalf of the Government, I place on record our appreciation for the careful work of Auditor-General Margaret Crawford and her team. They have done outstanding work in this area—none more outstanding than the work they did examining the administration of the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery program, which led to the

report that was released in February this year. The Auditor-General's report found that the fast-tracked stream of the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Program was not effectively administered. It stated:

The administration process lacked integrity ... and the assessment process for projects lacked transparency and consistency.

Further, it found that the then Deputy Premier's office set a threshold that resulted in the exclusion of all shortlisted projects located in Labor Party electorates. No-one could deny that the issues of transparency and integrity in public officials were key parts of the recent New South Wales election and last year's Federal election. They are matters of genuine concern to the public. The former Premier infamously took a very relaxed attitude to the historic levels of pork-barrelling her Government was engaged in, saying it was just something everyone expected. The electorates said otherwise at those State and Federal elections.

The public did not expect that bushfire recovery grants would be calibrated in the Deputy Premier's office—one of the highest offices in the land—to exclude electorates not held by the Government. The public did not expect that a skydiving park would receive \$11 million in those grants while an entire local government area, the Blue Mountains—half of which was burnt by those devastating bushfires—would receive nothing. Other areas in the Central Coast, and Tenterfield in the Lismore electorate, also received nothing, despite the fact that the Central Coast Local Government Area suffered more than \$163 million in economic impact. The public does not expect that to occur and was horrified by it. That is partly why those issues were so prominent in the two recent elections.

During a disaster the Government should be asking people how it can help, not who they voted for. I could not introduce the bill without referring to the long debates that were had in this House in the last term of Parliament on the Stronger Communities Fund, 96 per cent of which went to Coalition electorates. When this House chased the approvals paperwork it was told not only that the paperwork was not there in the first place but also that it had been destroyed. It was the good work of the committees of this House that discovered the documents were shredded and the electronic backups were deleted. That is the only reason why that approvals paperwork was not available. That is the history that we move away from today as this bill comes before the Parliament.

It is a serious matter for all members, whatever side of politics we are on, when the cynical administration of funds erodes people's faith in government. That loss of faith has a flow-on effect across society that is bad for all of us. It weakens community ties and increases the susceptibility to fringe views. I call on all members of the House to back this improvement; back the changes that were made by the former Government and that are being strengthened by this Government. One thing we can do to turn the tide on that cynicism is support the provisions of the bill.

I turn now to the specifics of the bill. The bill will make two amendments to the Government Sector Finance Act. The first amendment, new section 10.3A (2), will require that a Minister must not approve a grant unless satisfied that the expenditure would be an efficient, effective, economic and ethical use of money, and that it achieves value for money. That will import into the Government Sector Finance Act a modified version of section 71 of the Commonwealth Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013, applying specifically to grants expenditure. That provision aligns with the key principles in the guide relating to accountability, transparency and value for money. In relation to grants expenditure specifically, the amendment will also implement recommendation No. 2 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption's report on its investigation into pork-barrelling in New South Wales—known as Operation Jersey. In that report ICAC recommended that the amendment of the Government Sector Finance Act include a provision that reflects section 71 of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act and also that consideration be given to whether the expenditure represents value for money.

The second amendment to the Government Sector Finance Act, new section 10.3A (3), will require the decision-maker for a grant, in approving or declining a grant, to have regard to the key principles for administering grants set out in the *Grants Administration Guide*. The guide specifies seven principles to be applied in administering grants: robust planning and design, collaboration and partnership, proportionality, an outcomes orientation, achieving value with relevant money, governance and accountability, and probity and transparency. Those principles reflect the government sector's core values and provide a strong foundation for grants administration. In making this amendment, the bill will reinforce the centrality of those concepts and ensure that they guide grant decisions. The procedural aspects of grants administration, which are more susceptible to change, will remain in the guide. They should remain in the guide so that they are flexible and able to change as we learn more about what is required. That will retain the flexibility of the current settings relating to process and procedure. The bill will also transfer the existing duty to comply with the *Grants Administration Guide*—currently in schedule 1 to the Government Sector Finance Act—to the new section 10.3A (1) and make other consequential amendments to the Government Sector Finance Act.

In addition to amending the Government Sector Finance Act, the bill will also amend both the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 and the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018 to make certain grants information "open access information". The object of the Government Information (Public Access) Act is stated in section 3 of that Act as being to "open government information to the public" through various mechanisms. One of those mechanisms is by specifying "open access information" that, under section 6 of the Act, must be made publicly available unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of the information. Part 3 of the Act lists the government information that is "open access information" for the purposes of section 6, and this includes under section 18 (g) "such other government information as may be prescribed by the regulations as open access information".

The bill will amend the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation to include certain grants information as open access information. The grants information that is specified in the bill as open access information includes the information that must be published in accordance with the requirements of the *Grants Administration Guide*. It mirrors those provisions but lifts them up into legislation. The bill will also amend the Government Information (Public Access) Act and the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation to require publication of this information on the website specified in the guide, being the New South Wales Government grants and funding finder website.

Of course, one of the key things we can do here is make this information more public and bring some sunlight to the process. These amendments will work to reinforce the importance of transparency in grants administration and are consistent with existing publication requirements under the guide. I note the bill provides that the amendments will commence on 1 July 2023. This will allow sufficient lead time for agencies to adapt their existing grants administration practices as necessary to bring them into line with the new requirements. These are significant changes coming through and agencies need time to adjust their processes. It is an important culture change across the public service.

The amendments in this bill will deliver on the Government's commitment to strengthen the regulation of grants administration in New South Wales. But we will not be done there. The bill is part of a suite of reforms to improve transparency and integrity in government. We committed that if we formed government, we would ensure that all major natural disaster relief packages are automatically referred to the Auditor-General. All grants will be forwarded for review within three months, and fast-track grants will also be subject to performance reviews. That was a key recommendation from the ICAC. It is informed by the previous bad behaviour in relation to some of these grant programs. It is informed by the good analysis previously done by the Auditor-General. We made that commitment and we will carry it out. The former Premier issued Premier's memorandums on integrity matters, but we have heard the call that the community expects these to be made law—and we do that today. We will continue to look for ways to improve the regulatory framework to ensure that expenditure on grants in New South Wales is money spent well and fairly. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

ELECTORAL FUNDING AMENDMENT (REGISTERED CLUBS) BILL 2023

First Reading

Bill introduced, read a first time and ordered to be published on motion by the Hon. John Graham.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: According to standing order, I table a statement of public interest.

Statement of public interest tabled.

Second Reading Speech

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (10:35): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is introducing the Electoral Funding Amendment (Registered Clubs) Bill 2023 because we made an election commitment to prohibit political donations from clubs that have poker machines, and today we are delivering on that commitment. Clubs are at the heart of community life and provide many social and economic benefits. Every week local clubs across New South Wales host thousands of school formals, wedding receptions, birthdays, anniversaries and wakes. Tonight and every other night, groups of like-minded people will gather around tables or in rooms at the local bowling, RSL, leagues or workers club to connect with each other, socialise and be with friends. There would not be many people in New South Wales who do not have significant memories associated with a celebration or commiseration at a registered club.

Crucially, some money from those clubs flows back into the community. More than \$100 million a year is distributed to many different causes through the ClubGRANTS program. Close to my heart, as Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, is the role registered clubs have played in hosting live music. Clubs might be the only venue that can put on an event of any size, especially in regional and rural areas. We saw that during the former Government's Great Southern Nights program, a program we have committed to continue. Many of those events were held in clubs—venues outside Greater Sydney. From the Broken Hill Musicians Club and from Gunnedah, Glen Innes and Canowindra to Paddington, Cronulla and Marrickville, clubs brought music back to their communities, under this program, with COVID-safe gigs. In bringing this bill to the House, I place on record the Government's wholehearted support—and, I have no doubt, the Chamber's wholehearted support—for the important role registered clubs play in our community.

However, we should acknowledge that there are concerns about the influence donations have on the political system. This reform will close gaps in the existing law that have allowed clubs with substantial interests in poker machines to donate to politics in New South Wales, even though other liquor and gambling industry entities were banned from doing so. One such gap is the need for an entity to be engaged in a business undertaking "for the ultimate purpose of making a profit" in order to be captured. Closing those gaps is consistent with the existing policy taken in this House of prohibiting liquor or gambling industry business entities from making political donations. In the view of the Government, the distinction was not justified by any strong policy rationale.

Currently the Electoral Funding Act 2018 provides for three categories of prohibited donors who cannot make political donations. These are property developers, tobacco industry business entities, and liquor or gambling industry business entities. The bill will amend the definition of the latter category to close those gaps. In putting that position, I recognise that New South Wales does have a leading regulation in this area of donations and electoral expenditure, something I think all sides of politics should be proud of as part of our political tradition in this State.

The final report of the Panel of Experts – Political Donations, chaired by Dr Kerry Schott, dated December 2014, recommended that the ban on political donations from the prohibited donors that I referred to be retained subject to the, at the time, pending High Court decision in *McCloy v New South Wales* [2015] HCA 34 and the introduction of caps on political donations for local government. The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquiry into the Final Report of the Expert Panel – Political Donations and the Government's Response, dated June 2016, recommended that the New South Wales Government review the effectiveness of the prohibited donor provisions in the context of the comprehensive review of the now repealed Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 and introduce caps on political donations and expenditure for local government. As you will recall, Mr President, that did occur. The then Government's response to the committee report accepted that recommendation and noted that:

The Government will consider whether the policy objectives of the prohibited donor provisions are still valid in light of these developments, consistent with Recommendation 3 of the Committee and Recommendation 7 of the Panel.

Recommendations of the expert panel and the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters were implemented by the introduction of the Electoral Funding Act in 2018, which retained the three categories of prohibited donor. The Government has considered the policy objectives of the prohibited donor provisions and consider that they remain valid and will be more effectively advanced by the amendments that the bill will make to the Electoral Funding Act. Premier Nathan Rees' prohibition on donations from property developers was challenged in the High Court and upheld as valid in the case of *McCloy v New South Wales* [2015] HCA 34. Tobacco, liquor and gambling industry business entities were added in around 2013.

The Government accepts that the bill will burden the implied freedom of political communication under the Commonwealth Constitution because it restricts the funds available to political parties and candidates to meet the costs of political communication. However, the Government considers that the bill is reasonably appropriate and adapted to serve a legitimate end in a manner that is compatible with the system of representative and responsible government established by the Constitution for exactly the same reasons that saw the prohibition on property developer donations upheld by the High Court in the *McCloy* case. The ABC has reported that organisations and individuals linked to the gambling industry have given at least \$18 million in political donations into the States and Territories in recent years. The Commonwealth Senate Select Committee into the Political Influence of Donations report *Political Influence of Donations*, dated 2018, noted:

... strong indications of undue influence are provided by patterns between political donations over time and their proximity to key policy decisions.

The report referenced a submission arguing that:

... [t]he Australian gambling industry has utilised political donations as a mechanism to exert considerable influence over relevant public policy ...

It is clear that there is a perception amongst the community that these donations have an influence on government decision-making. I do not think anyone in the Chamber would dispute that community fear. The liquor and gambling industry is, properly, highly regulated. Its financial position is dependent on government policy and decision-making. That is one of the reasons why we need to pay close attention to that community perception.

The ABC has reported that in New South Wales gambling-related organisations have donated more than a million dollars in the decade since donations became banned, with many of those donations coming from registered clubs. However, the effectiveness of the ban in New South Wales, despite those gaps, was reflected favourably in the fact that in Queensland gambling-related groups donated more than twice as much in half the time. The Government intends to build on the success of the existing policy by introducing the bill to ensure that registered clubs are brought within the scope of the prohibition and cannot be perceived to exercise influence through political donations because of gaps in the law. This will ensure that the provisions of the Act are achieving their object of helping prevent corruption and undue influence, or the perception of corruption or undue influence, in the government of the State or in local government.

The Electoral Funding Act already contains a power for regulations to be made to exempt certain persons or Acts, matters or things from all or any of the provisions of the Act. The bill includes an amendment to the Electoral Funding Regulation to create one such exemption for an existing practice that is considered worthy of preservation and compatible with the policy aim of the bill. Currently some registered clubs provide venues for elected members, parties, groups or candidates to carry out activities such as holding meetings or meeting with community members. This is of particular benefit to communities in areas with limited facilities; that is, sometimes in the bush or in many of the suburbs of Sydney. To the extent that the bill would prohibit registered clubs from continuing to provide this service, the bill will exempt it from the definition of "political donation" for the purpose of the prohibition and allow it to continue to occur.

The provision of premises by a registered club will still be subject to the rest of the Electoral Funding Act. That includes the rules around the disclosure of reportable political donations and relevant caps. In effect this means that, should a meeting occur that would qualify as an in-kind donation, it is subject to the rules around reportable donations and caps. That is an important exemption that I think all members understand to ensure that clubs can remain places where the community can gather, including the political community and including allowing interaction between the political community and the rest of the community. These measures, taken together, are an important step in maintaining public trust in the political system in New South Wales. That is why the Government moves the bill today as one of the first bills in its program. There is nothing as important as maintaining public trust in the political system. We accept that this measure is required; that is why it was committed to in the election campaign. That is why it is one of the first bills we bring before the House today.

In this State we have a highly regulated political donations system. It is something which we should be proud of. We would not be here without the decisions taken over decades by people on all sides of politics to deal with ensuring that money is not influencing politics and that that perception is not a part of politics in New South Wales. For me, it is impossible to reflect on a bill like this without acknowledging one of those people, my friend Bruce Childs, who we lost last week. I know that the Hon. Peter Primrose has a notice of motion on the *Notice Paper* to honour him, but I recognise his influence, certainly in the ranks of the Labor Party, in raising these issues over the years. I recognise former Premier Nathan Rees, who took that first step to ban property development donations in 2009. He made that commitment and, shortly after, the Election Funding and Disclosures Amendment (Property Developers Prohibition) Bill was introduced. It was made illegal for property developers to donate to political parties and for political parties to accept donations from property developers.

That is now an accepted fact in New South Wales. At the time, it was a very big call. It was not guaranteed to succeed. In fact, many said it would be impossible to define and impossible to implement. It is now accepted not just by this Chamber and not just by the population but also by the High Court. We should be realistic; these laws are unlikely to deter all bad actors in New South Wales from seeking to improperly influence public officials and distort our democratic system. But there is no question that laws like this and the system we have evolved provide a barrier to that action. There is no doubt that laws like this go a long way to restoring trust in the political system in New South Wales. We build on that legacy today with this bill.

I turn to the provisions of the bill. Schedule 1 to the bill amends section 53 (4) (b) of the Electoral Funding Act 2018. This is the definition of "liquor or gambling industry business entity", which is one of the categories of prohibited donor under section 51 of the Act. It adds to this definition two paragraphs. New paragraph (c) provides that the definition will include a registered club within the meaning of the Registered Clubs Act 1976, if the business undertaken by the registered club includes wagering, betting or other gambling. New paragraph (d) provides that the definition will also include a person who is, for a registered club that is captured by new paragraph (c), either the secretary of the registered club, a member of the governing body of the registered club,

or the spouse of the secretary or a member of the governing body. It is noted that under section 51 of the Act, an industry representative organisation is also a prohibited donor if the majority of its members are prohibited donors.

Schedule 2 to the bill amends the Electoral Funding Regulation 2018. It inserts new clause 36A, relying on the power under section 156 (3) (f) of the Act for the regulations to create exemptions. New clause 36A will provide that permitting the use of part of the premises of a registered club is not a political donation for the purposes of the Act, part 3, division 7—that is the division that bans donations from prohibited donors—if the use is by or on behalf of either an elected member, a candidate for election, a party or a group, and is associated with either an election or an elected member's duties as an elected member. The bill will commence on 1 July 2023. I am proud to introduce the bill before the House. I indicate to members that the Government is open to discussions around how the bill would work in practice. We are keen to make sure that its provisions are well understood as we ask for the support of both this Chamber and the other place. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Addresses

CORONATION OF KING CHARLES III

Address of Congratulation

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (10:51): Mr Assistant President, I congratulate you on your election. It is good to see you back in the chair. I move:

That the following Address of Congratulation to His Majesty be adopted:

To His Majesty, King Charles the Third, by the Grace of God, King of Australia and His other Realms and Territories, Head of the Commonwealth.

May it please Your Majesty –

We the Members of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, in Parliament assembled, offer our sincere congratulations upon the Coronation of His Majesty, King Charles the Third.

On behalf of the Government I commemorate the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III. This is an historic event, and for many in our community it will be the only time they see a coronation. It is part of our system of government, and it is appropriate that Parliament pauses to reflect on this moment in time. His Majesty's coronation, of course, takes place after the death of Queen Elizabeth II, a figure whom this House has previously commemorated. Again, I place on record our thanks from this side of the House for the stability that she provided and the service that she gave for many, many decades. Her Majesty was deeply admired and respected for her compassion, leadership and service.

His Majesty Charles III will now take on her work in the role that he was born to undertake—one of the few who are guaranteed this job. The world watched as he was crowned alongside Queen Camilla, a woman of intellect, compassion and commitment to public service. The world now is a very different place to what it was at the last coronation. As time goes on, institutions modernise and adapt to the modern world. The royal family is no different. In this coronation we saw greater roles for women, and for people of all faiths and backgrounds. It was a reflection on how far we have come, and also a reminder that we still have a long way to go to create a more equal and fair society.

King Charles III is a strong advocate for protection of our environment. He believes passionately in leaving behind a liveable and healthy planet for future generations so that everyone across our globe has access to clean water, clean air and green space. The Government shares that commitment to our environment. In his role as a prince, King Charles III warned about the dangers of over-pollution and waste and about the need to keep our oceans and rivers healthy. He has done this since his 20s. It has been a lifelong pursuit. Many commentators early on believed that this advocacy for the environment was an oddity, but it is now a necessity for a sustainable world. His Majesty's voice is one of many but it is a very important voice, highlighting the need to protect our environment for generations to come.

Like his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, King Charles III has also championed regenerative agricultural practices. He believes that the health of our soils is an asset that is too easily overlooked, degraded and polluted. King Charles has put his beliefs into action through his work at the Highgrove House estate. He purchased the 380-acre estate in 1980 and transformed a property overgrown with weeds into a functioning property with multiple gardens that focus on wildlife habitat, healthy soils and beekeeping. At COP26 in Glasgow King Charles III delivered a message to world leaders on climate change, which we as a Parliament would do well to take heed of. His Majesty said:

I can only urge you, as the world's decision-makers, to find practical ways of overcoming differences so we can all get down to work together to rescue this precious planet and save the threatened future for our young people.

With record floods, bushfires and droughts facing New South Wales in recent years, I hope that this new Parliament can take this message on board and work together collaboratively to address the climate challenges we face. I take this opportunity to congratulate Sam Kerr and the 20 eminent Australians who represented our country at the coronation. Sam Kerr has already represented Australia with distinction as a Matilda and a gold-medal-winning sportsperson, and her representation of our country is the latest in a long line of achievements that make her a role model both on and off the field.

She was joined by many other eminent Australians, including 2022 Young Australian of the Year Dr Daniel Nour, who founded Street Side Medics, and award-winning speaker, writer and youth advocate Yasmin Poole. Seeing these incredible young people representing Australia can give us great hope that our future is in safe hands. The Government wishes King Charles III well in his reign as King. He comes to his position at a time of great uncertainty. We look forward to his reign and hope that he takes up the invitation from the Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, and visits New South Wales soon. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (10:56): The new members of this House, who were elected by the people of New South Wales in the election on 25 March 2023 and whose term of office starts from that date, nonetheless solemnly and ceremonially made an oath of allegiance or took a pledge of loyalty during the sitting of 9 May 2023. Similarly, His Majesty King Charles III, who has been King since acceding to the Crown on the death of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on 8 September 2023, was solemnly anointed and crowned as King on 6 May 2023. I must say, I was alive for the previous coronation.

The Hon. John Graham: You had to say that.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I worry about it.

The Hon. Mark Latham: What about the one before that?

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: He was there for the abdication.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I hope to be. Section 3 (1) of the Constitution Act 1902 states:

The Legislature means His Majesty the King with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly.

His Majesty's responsibilities for the people of New South Wales are carried out in his name by the Governor, unless he is personally present in New South Wales. The coronation of His Majesty on 6 May 2023 was, therefore, a significant event for the people of New South Wales. The rich ceremonial symbolism of the coronation is worth reflecting upon. It focuses on the role of the King as a servant of the people. As His Majesty was anointed with oil on his hands, breast and head, the choir sang, as it has at every coronation since that of King Edgar in 973, these words from the biblical Book of Kings:

Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anointed Solomon king. And all the people rejoiced.

The oil for the anointing of King Charles III was pressed from olives grown on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem and consecrated by the Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Theophilos III, and the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, the Most Reverend Hosam Naoum. The anointing with oil and presentation of the orb, coronation ring and sceptres, the placing of the crown on His Majesty's head and his sitting on the throne all symbolise his duty to the people he serves under their respective constitutions as monarch, including his duty to the people of New South Wales under our Constitution Act.

The timing of the coronation in the same week as the commencement of this Fifty-Eighth Parliament focuses our minds on the notion of public duty. Having accepted public office, we have the privilege and responsibility of service, seeking to achieve the best for the people of New South Wales. We who have found ourselves after the recent election on this side of the House, unfortunately, have the duty of diligently examining the actions of the Government and holding Ministers to account, as well as carefully considering legislative proposals brought before the House. It is with pleasure that we join with the Government on this occasion to offer His Majesty our sincere congratulations as the people of New South Wales rejoice in the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III.

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

Visitors

VISITORS

The PRESIDENT: I welcome into the public gallery Councillor Jamie Chaffey, the Mayor of Gunnedah Shire Council and chairman of the Country Mayors Association of New South Wales, who is a guest of the Deputy

Leader of the Opposition. I had the privilege of meeting with him yesterday. You are very welcome, Councillor Chaffey.

Rulings

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

The PRESIDENT (11:00): Yesterday members raised questions about the start of question time, as some members felt it started one or two minutes after the time. For the information of members, I will be going by the clock directly in front of me. If and when it is in alignment with the actual time, we will then be in accordance with the actual time. For the benefit of members, in accordance with that clock, we are now 10 seconds past.

Questions Without Notice

DEPARTMENTAL SECRETARIES

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (11:01): My question is directed to the Leader of the Government. What is the total cost to the New South Wales taxpayer of terminating the appointments of Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet Michael Coutts-Trotter, Secretary of Treasury Paul Grimes, Secretary of the Department of Education Georgina Harrison and Secretary of Transport for NSW Rob Sharp? How many \$100 Active Kids vouchers could have been funded from that expenditure?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:02): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I make the point that Michael Coutts-Trotter, a very dedicated and good public servant, is currently the Secretary of Treasury. The second point is that employment arrangements for secretaries are a matter for the acting Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, as the Leader of the Opposition well knows. I will take the rest of the question on notice.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (11:02): I ask a supplementary question. The Minister has answered that she will take parts of that question on notice. To further elucidate the same question, will the Minister inform the House how many other public servants have had their appointments terminated since the election of the Minns Government? What is the total cost of those terminations to the New South Wales taxpayer? How many \$100 Active Kids vouchers could have been funded from that expense?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:03): I will not take a point of order as it is a new question, but I have nothing more to add. I have taken that part of the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition on notice, and I will provide him with an answer.

ICARE

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (11:03): My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Icare provides workers compensation insurance to more than 329,000 public and private sector employers in New South Wales and their 3.2 million employees. Will the Treasurer advise the House on what he has been told about icare's financial sustainability and what the Minns Government is doing in response?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:04): I thank the member for his question and congratulate him on his election to this House. The member is quite right in saying that caring for those who are injured at work is a key part of our social compact, dear to the hearts of members on both sides of the Chamber. Icare provides protection for 3.2 million people in the private sector as well as every public servant who works directly for the people of New South Wales. It does so by collecting insurance premiums from 329,000 public and private sector employers. In order to provide safety and security to almost everyone who works in New South Wales, there is a very real need to balance the cost for business with the ability to meet the needs of those people who are injured at work.

I advise the House that immediately upon becoming Treasurer—in fact, within days of becoming the Treasurer—I was advised about the state of icare's finances. I was equally asked, along with the Minister for Work Health and Safety, to accede to a desperate request to meet the growing cost of coverage, which has been delayed, deferred and denied for years by those who were previously in office. It turns out that under the former Government icare had prepared advice to seek a 22 per cent increase in premiums for 326,000 businesses in one year, which would have increased the premiums of a typical small business in New South Wales by \$650 in one year and would have been the biggest premium bill shock in decades to hurt New South Wales businesses. At the same time, the previous Government's return-to-work rates were continuing to falter. That was the advice that was given to me upon assuming office.

At a time when electricity prices are going up, interest rates are going up and the cost of care is going up, to ask businesses to sustain a 22 per cent increase in one year would have set them to the wall. What is worse is that this increase could have been avoided if the previous Government had actually listened to this House and the Standing Committee on Law and Justice for years and acted on the advice necessary to repair the scheme. That did not happen. We stepped in and limited the premium increase to 8 per cent, and we look forward to bringing an actual reform agenda to this House to clean up the mess that was given to us in the workers compensation scheme.

ACTIVE KIDS PROGRAM

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:07): My question is directed to the Minister for Finance. Representatives from the Sharks Hockey Club in Taree have said that the Active Kids voucher scheme is a wonderful initiative as it provides cost relief to regional families, especially in tough economic times. Taking away the vouchers would drastically reduce the numbers of participants in sport, especially in our area. All kids should have access to sport no matter their circumstances. What will the Minister do to ensure that Active Kids will continue so that the kids of Taree do not miss out?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:08): I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for her question, particularly for the reference to the Sharks Hockey Club in Taree. The House may not be aware, but when I was younger I lived in Forster and participated in the Manning Valley hockey competition, and I wish everyone at the Sharks Hockey Club all the very best for the current season. I am familiar with the fields in Taree, but I digress. An important issue has been raised. However, I seek your guidance on whether it is appropriate to answer questions on the Active Kids voucher. There is a motion about the voucher on the *Notice Paper* to be debated later today, and this question might foreshadow that debate. I seek your guidance, Mr President.

The PRESIDENT: After consultation with the Clerk, I advise that it is generally the view that private members' business items are not part of the gamut of responsibility that the Minister has raised unless they are coming up for debate today. As a motion about the Active Kids voucher program is coming up for debate today, the Minister is correct and the question is ruled out of order.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND EMISSIONS REDUCTION

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (11:10): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Climate Change, concerning her Government's commitment to legislating emissions reduction targets and establishing a net zero commission. The State election and the decimation of the Liberal vote has delivered the Minister to Government, but it is a minority Government. To pass legislation, the Government needs the support of the progressive crossbench in this place and the other place, who were elected as part of a statewide push for stronger action on climate change and more ambitious targets. Will the Government consider going beyond the bare minimum commitment of net zero by 2050, despite that target failing the Liberals and not winning Labor majority Government, or will the Labor Party respond to the science and community wishes to set more ambitious targets?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:11): I thank the honourable member for her question and for her ongoing commitment and knowledge in this area. I look forward to working with her on this important issue as we go forward in this Parliament. At the recent election the New South Wales people voted for strong action on climate change, and our Government is determined to deliver that. We know that climate change presents an urgent challenge for our State. Over the coming years, it is essential that we decarbonise our homes, businesses and industries. In 2020 New South Wales emissions were around 26 per cent of Australia's total emissions. We must get on with it as quickly as possible.

Climate change is an existential threat to us all; strong action is needed. Devastating bushfires and floods in recent years impact on our threatened species and endangered ecological communities. We cannot ignore the impact on our friends in the Pacific and other low-lying nations. The previous Government got there in the end in relation to action on climate change, and we always welcomed that. But our view remains that the commitment to take action on climate change must be legislated to get us to net zero by 2050. Labor will legislate emissions reductions targets. I look forward to bringing a bill before the House in coming months. We will legislate our targets to reach net zero by 2050 and to halve emissions by 2030.

Importantly, those targets will act as a floor—not a ceiling—on action. We are committed to reaching net zero as quickly as possible. The transition will sometimes be bumpy. I am sure I will spend a lot of time in the House talking about some of that. But it is important that the Government seeks to make it as orderly as possible. Legislation of emissions reductions targets is essential for two reasons. First, it gives the very strong signal of the

need to take action. Second, it makes a commitment to community and business that we are serious. People will be able to invest in our State. There are many positives to be taken from acting on climate change.

To keep the Government honest and to make sure that the people of New South Wales know exactly what we are doing and how we are getting to net zero, the New South Wales Government will establish the net zero commission. Sitting alongside the legislative targets, its job will be to advise, monitor, review and report on New South Wales emissions reduction plans and progress across government and industry based on the best available science. Decarbonising our electricity system is fundamental to reaching our net zero targets. Electricity makes up 30 per cent of New South Wales emissions. Replacing the generation of retiring power stations will probably be the single biggest contribution to the 2030 emissions goal. We must do that as quickly as possible. I look forward to working with all members of the House to get our State to net zero by 2050. I look forward to the bipartisanship that we have shown in the past to get it done. I will continue to report to the House our progress.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (11:14): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for her involved answer. Will the Minister please elucidate the part of her answer that referred to halving emissions by 2030? How will the Government offset the five megatons of carbon dioxide that will be emitted by Santos' Narrabri gas project, considering those will take us to an estimated 26 per cent to 44 per cent further away from the less ambitious 35 per cent emissions reduction by 2030 originally planned by the Liberals?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:15): Again, I make the point that that question stretches "elucidation" a little more. The Narrabri gas project is yet to get underway; it has been approved. In relation to the 50 per cent target by 2030, it is unlikely to be part of how we get there. The whole point of legislating our targets is to have a plan to get there. The net zero commission will look at all of those options and take all of those issues into account.

The PRESIDENT: Before I call a member of the Government to ask the next question, for the benefit of members and for those following along at home, I give some specifics about the ruling I gave to Minister Houssos. Standing Order 97 (1) (c) determines that a member may not anticipate the discussion of "items of business given precedence that day including matters of public importance, items of business under Standing Order 42 and private members' business in the order of precedence determined by the Business Committee," which makes it very clear.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: I seek clarification. My understanding is that the Minister had commenced her answer by referencing that she was a member of a hockey organisation in that area. Previous presidents have said that if a Minister takes a point of order or has an issue with the question, they should raise that at the beginning of their address and not commence their answer. The Minister did commence her answer. I note that the time has now passed today, but some guidance on that for future reference would be useful.

The PRESIDENT: Indeed. Obviously, the time to have taken the point of order would have been at that point. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is correct. I intend to uphold that in the future when it is drawn to my attention.

CRITICAL MINERALS AND HIGH-TECHNOLOGY METALS

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (11:17): My question—which is in order—is addressed to the Minister for Natural Resources.

The Hon. Wes Fang: We will be the judge of that.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: How is your question time committee going? Obviously, not so well. You need to reconstitute it on your first day. Will the Minister update the House on the future opportunities for New South Wales in critical minerals and high-technology metals?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:17): I thank my good friend the Hon. Greg Donnelly for his question. I welcome the opportunity to update the House on the future opportunities for New South Wales in critical minerals and high-tech metals. I take seriously the opportunity to put on the parliamentary record an update on some of the work we have been doing since we were elected on 25 March and some of the work that I have been doing since I was sworn in as the Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources 36 days ago.

Members may be aware that this week is Minerals Week. As Minister for Natural Resources, this week I had the opportunity to speak at two different industry forums. On Monday I participated in the Exploration and Tenures Forum and was privileged to give out the award for Explorer of the Year to Alkane Resources. This morning I provided the keynote address at the Sydney Resources Round-up, which is a conference of more than 900 delegates connecting explorers and investors. While coal continues to provide 70 per cent of our power generation and this year will contribute more than half of our merchandise exports—not to mention an estimated

\$4.7 billion this year in royalties to our State—the critical and high-tech minerals being highlighted this week offer huge opportunities for future economic growth and jobs for our State.

Whether it is in the defence and aerospace sectors or the manufacturing of solar panels, electric vehicles or wind turbines, critical minerals and high-tech metals underpin the future of our economy. New South Wales has deposits of 17 of the 24 nationally declared critical minerals. We have incredible resource potential for rare earths, cobalt and scandium, as well as large deposits and producing mines of high-tech metals like copper and silver. Last week I visited the Cadia Valley Operations goldmine outside of Orange, close to the newly approved McPhillarmy's goldmine and not far from Bowdens Silver's mine. It was my first time underground. I heard firsthand about the local jobs that are powering the local community. I have a strong appreciation for the role that well-paid and local jobs have in sustaining local communities.

I understand that the challenges of land use require sophisticated and nuanced solutions. My approach when confronted with a complex problem is to engage with the relevant stakeholders and work together to find solutions. I accept difficult decisions will have to be made, but I chose to get into public life to find solutions to big problems. I congratulate everyone who has participated in Minerals Week. I look forward to working with them in my capacity as the Minister for Natural Resources.

DAM PROJECT BUSINESS CASES

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (11:20): My question is directed to the Minister for Water, the Hon. Rose Jackson. During the last term of Parliament, Labor supported numerous orders for papers and motions in this House calling for the previous Government to release the business cases for the Wyangala, Dungowan and Mole River dam projects. Will the Minister remain committed to that spirit of transparency and release the final business case for the Wyangala Dam project, and commit to making business cases for water infrastructure projects public in the future?

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Are you going to put this on TikTok?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast) (11:21): You can be on my TikTok later if you like. I thank the member for her question. The answer is essentially yes. She is absolutely right that the previous Government really struggled with basic principles of transparency and openness. We only need to recall the number of orders for documents and the number of contempt of the House motions all members had to endure, all of which were avoidable.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Point of order: This subject is also in private members' business later today. Private members' business item No. 25 on water project cancellations will also be debated later today, and that involves exactly the subject matter of this question.

The Hon. John Graham: To the point of order: While private members' business item No. 25 and the question broadly canvas the same projects, they are quite different issues. The issues that will be canvassed later in the day do not deal with the issues that are specifically being raised by Ms Cate Faehrmann about the business cases. The member is entitled to ask the question and the Minister is entitled to answer it.

The Hon. Wes Fang: To the point of order: If we are going to apply the test that the Hon. John Graham has applied, then the ruling that was made prior about the Active Kids vouchers would be the same.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The member will be heard in silence.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Thank you, Mr President. I think it is slightly discourteous of those opposite to interrupt and interject while I am at the podium trying to make a point of order.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Welcome to opposition!

The Hon. Wes Fang: You will be back soon enough, Greg. The scope in which the issue is debated is relevant to this question. The question that the Hon. Sarah Mitchell asked around Active Kids vouchers was in effect about the same relevance and scope as the question asked by Ms Cate Faehrmann relating to private members' business item No. 25 on the *Notice Paper*, which will be debated later today. In general terms, everything can be drawn into items that are in private members' business on private members' business day. I think we need specifics as to what actually links an item or topic in a question to that private members' business, otherwise we are heading down a very dangerous path.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: To the point of order:—

The PRESIDENT: I will not hear any more points of order. I appreciate the argument. I think that there is validity in both sides of the argument. That said, I am strongly of the view that these two cases are quite different.

This question is asking for a very specific piece of information, which is not referred to in private members' business item No. 25. That is my view; it is also the Clerk's view. Therefore, I rule the question in order.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: The question was about the Wyangala business case. The Wyangala Dam wall raising business case is currently in final assessment with Infrastructure NSW. I anticipate that assessment will be completed in June. Once that is done, I have already instructed the department to do everything it can to ensure that as much of that business case as can be made available is. I will always be up-front. The challenge is that because that business case was a document from the previous Government, Cabinet conventions apply. I am fully respectful of those. To the extent that there is information that cannot be released because that document was a business case from the previous Government, I will not be able to release those elements. But we are already looking through the documents. Everything that we can make available, we will.

Those are not just words from this Government. As a sign of the effort that we are making to be committed to openness and transparency, I have instructed the department, for example, to release the section 10 Water Management Act reports that were done in 2007 and 2011, and they are on the website. I encourage members to have a look. We are already identifying documents from the previous administration that we can release. When we can release them, we will. They will be available on the website. I encourage members to have a look. That will not be the case for all documents. Some things were Cabinet documents of the previous Government that we are unable to release.

The Government is committed to openness and transparency. We will do everything we can to ensure that when decisions are made, the bases of those decisions are clear. It is quite obvious that the reason a number of the documents were not released in the past was because they contained information that demonstrated the decisions of the previous Government were not based on fact or evidence. They were deliberately not released because they undermined and undercut the decisions that were being made. This Government will make its decisions on the basis of evidence, clear information and clear advice, and then it will release that evidence, information and advice so that the community can trust in the decisions that this Government will make.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE ILLUMINATION

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (11:27): My question is directed to the Deputy Leader of the Government and Minister for the Arts. The Premier has been reported as stating that the lighting of the sails of the Opera House should be kept for Australia and Australians and moments of sacrifice and heroism for the country or when there is an important international event in Sydney. Under those narrow criteria, will significant independence day anniversaries, similar to the seventy-fifth anniversaries of the independence of India and of Israel or the 200th anniversary of Greek independence or events of international significance such as showing solidarity with the people of Ukraine in the face of invasion by Russia, no longer be eligible for honouring in this way?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (11:28): I thank the member for his question and congratulate him on his election to the position of Opposition Whip. The honourable member's question is a good question. A number of public discussions have occurred about the issue, and the Premier has had some things to say about it. We have been balancing two principles. Firstly, the incredible Opera House on the harbour, an amazing jewel and one of the best-known things about Sydney, is an incredible canvas on which to celebrate certain moments, and the Government wants to ensure it is available and believes it should be used some of the time. There are other things to balance, though, such as the cost and making sure that it is used for our most significant occasions. The Premier has particularly been concerned about the cost and has had some things to say about that. He has dealt with some individual incidents, but has not spelt out an overall Government approach to it, but I will certainly encourage him to spell out balancing exactly the sorts of principles that the member is asking about. I think that would be worth doing.

The Premier has been concerned about the cost because of what we discovered when we turned up to Government and opened the economic cupboard. That is why it is weighing on the Premier's mind, let me assure the member. One of those concerns in those areas is the \$100 million that was cut, for example, out of the Destination NSW funding. It costs \$100,000 to turn on the lights for the Opera House for each of these events—a very important thing to do for the right occasion—but \$100 million was cut out of the events funding and never announced. I was most upset because when \$200 million was tipped into the fund there was a big public fanfare, but when the \$100 million was taken out the back door of the fund—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Because it was COVID-related.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The Treasurer's defence—I can hear the Leader of the Opposition putting the same defence here in the House—was that this was COVID-related. That extended for years to come, well

past COVID, and was cut. If there was a public rationale for removing it, why did the previous Government not announce that? Why the secrecy, buried in the half-yearly statement? All the fanfare—

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: Point of order: This was a really specific question about the thresholds of occasions on which the sails of the Opera House would be able to be lit. The Minister is able to have dixer if he wants to speak about financial implications as he sees them, but the Opposition Whip has asked a very specific question and he should be relevant to that.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: To the point of order: I think that the Minister gave a very directly relevant answer when he talked about the policy. He is now providing additional information to the House, which he is allowed to do. Just because those opposite do not like the answer, it does not mean that he does not get to give it.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order. The Minister may continue.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: Those are the principles that we are balancing as we move towards a general way of dealing with this issue. I think it is an important public question. If there is anything I can add on the specific days that the member has asked about, I am happy to obtain some information for the member and return it to the House.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (11:32): I thank the Minister for his undertaking of more information. I ask a supplementary question. I was wondering how the figure of \$100,000 for each time the Opera House sails are to be lit was come to. Would the Minister be able to table the advice from the department with those costings?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (11:32): I am advised that that is the approximate cost. That is the information that has been supplied to me. I will not be tabling that advice, but if there is anything—

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: If any member wants to cast doubt upon the assurance I have given the House, they are welcome to do so.

The PRESIDENT: I call the Hon. Stephen Lawrence and congratulate him on an excellent first speech last night.

BIOSECURITY

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (11:33): My question is addressed to the Minister for Agriculture. Will the Minister inform the House of the New South Wales Government's commitment to protecting our State against increasing biosecurity threats?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:33): I thank the honourable member for his question. It was a terrific speech last night and it is fantastic to have more regional representatives from Labor on the Government side of the House. As I have said publicly on a number of occasions since taking up the role of agriculture Minister, biosecurity is one of the most important issues in my portfolio. Biosecurity risks present the most significant threat to our primary industry sector as well as our environment and communities, and outbreaks from exotic incursions are rising in volume, complexity and severity.

While the Australian Government has introduced measures to strengthen controls, there has been a 50 per cent increase in detection of biosecurity matter at national borders in the past five years. New South Wales, which receives the lion's share of packages and visitors, bears an elevated share of this risk, which is so significant that the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has rated the overall probability of one of the top five emergency animal diseases occurring in Australia by 2026 at 42 per cent. The risk of diseases that can spread between animals and humans is increasing. Given that at least 75 per cent of emerging human infectious diseases, such as swine flu and even COVID-19, originated from animals, the management and containment of biosecurity threats is a public health as well as an agricultural and economic imperative.

Currently New South Wales is battling several significant biosecurity incursions. These include the ongoing efforts to eradicate varroa mite, following its detection in surveillance hives at the port of Newcastle last year, and white spot disease in prawns, which has been confirmed at three northern New South Wales prawn farms. Both of those responses are ongoing, with control and eradication activities underway, and both are critical for their respective industries in New South Wales and across Australia. I have been to the Department of Primary Industries [DPI] Total Agricultural College and visited the North Coast area to meet with staff working on each of those responses and with some of the affected farmers and businesses, giving me a firsthand appreciation of

the scale of each of the operations in place. The devastation that farmers have faced in these circumstances is heartbreaking, so I want to work with them to rectify it.

In addition to the enormous amount of work to respond to these challenges, there is also a major and increasing threat of foot and mouth disease and lumpy skin disease, which are the closest they have been to Australian borders since the 1980s. The situation for these emergency animal diseases is being closely monitored, with NSW DPI and Local Land Services [LLS] focusing on preparedness activities. Those activities include but are not limited to the development of RNA vaccine, enhanced disease surveillance and diagnostics, as well as training for vets and livestock handlers. Of course, effective biosecurity also means managing the everyday issues that have such profound effect on the running of farms and businesses around the State and on our national environment. I am pleased to have been informed that, as part the Federal Budget this week, more than a billion dollars in extra funding is being committed to biosecurity measures, and I look forward to working with the Federal Government to improve those issues.

ABORTION ACCESS

Dr AMANDA COHN (11:36): My question is directed to the Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources, representing the Minister for Health and Minister for Regional Health. The consensus position of the Royal Australian College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists is that "access to abortion should be on the basis of health care need and should not be limited by age, socioeconomic disadvantage or geographic isolation". Barriers to accessing abortion health care in New South Wales are a known problem, which is serious and worsening. As the Senate inquiry into universal access to reproductive health care tables its recommendations in Federal Parliament today, an inquiry to which myself and many New South Wales organisations made submissions, what strategy will the New South Wales Government put in place to make abortion accessible in New South Wales, specifically in regional areas and in the public health system?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:37): I thank the honourable member for her first question in this House and I congratulate her on her election to this place. I look forward to the contribution that she is going to make, particularly as a regional MP and a former GP. It is a fantastic perspective to bring to the House and we look forward to hearing that. The member has asked the question of me in my capacity representing my good friend Mr Ryan Park, the Minister for Health and Minister for Regional Health, and I will refer it to him and come back to the member with a considered answer.

TIKTOK

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (11:37): My question is directed to the Leader of the Government. The New South Wales Government has moved to prevent the installation of the TikTok application and remove existing instances of it on government-issued devices. As part of this, the New South Wales Premier will discontinue the use of TikTok and delete his account. Given the comprehensive ban on the use of TikTok on all government-issued devices, does the Leader of the Government support the continued use of TikTok by her Ministers, such as the always fascinating posts by the Minister for Youth, Minister for the North Coast, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Housing, Minister for Water, and Minister for Mental Health, or does she fall under the exemption?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:38): I thank the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party and shadow Minister for her question. This issue is pretty clear, and I want to make a few points around it. The Premier has been very clear, and all Ministers have complied with the direction, that no government devices will be used to create, watch or be part of TikTok content. Anyone paying any attention to what is happening in the world will notice that many people, particularly young people but also others, are engaging with TikTok and get a lot of information from that. What the Hon. Rose Jackson is doing is perfectly within the rules. It is also an important form of outreach. I hope the Opposition has checked whether all of its blokes are using TikTok or not.

[Opposition members interjected.]

I meant blokes and women. I meant that collectively. There has been plenty of bad use of TikTok. As a general rule, I would say that most politicians are very bad at TikTok. The Hon. Rose Jackson is not one of them.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: The New South Wales Liberal Party has an account.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: There you go. The New South Wales Liberal Party is there.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Leader of the Government will be heard in silence on this important topic.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The point is that the Hon. Rose Jackson is very good at TikTok. She is going to continue doing that and doing it within the rules. Plenty of others are using TikTok, and I hope they are taking the same care and following the advice that has been given to all members on interacting with it. No doubt there are significant issues, and that is why the rules have been put in place. These things are important and we should take them seriously.

[An Opposition member interjected.]

The Hon. Natalie Ward can let me finish and then she can ask her supplementary question.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: I'm excited.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I know you're excited. Don't be excited. My only other advice to members who use social media is to make it funny, make it something that people will want to share and make it informative.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (11:41): I ask a supplementary question. The exemption for the use of TikTok by New South Wales Government agencies is narrowly limited to circumstances only where vital information can be communicated by TikTok, such as information related to public health and safety. That is the exemption that the Premier set. He has discontinued his account. Clearly, something quite different is happening with the Minister. Apparently train drivers cannot use TikTok and nor can the Premier, but the Minister can. Does the Leader of the Government say that the Minister's social media posts fit this exemption?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:41): I really hope that former Premier Dominic Perrottet has deleted his account, because I understand that he is a very active user of TikTok. I have not reviewed it, but perhaps I will provide an ongoing summary of how we feel about it. The New South Wales Liberal Party is on TikTok too.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: Point of order: We have not asked the Leader of the Government for advice on TikTok. We have asked if the Minister's TikTok fits the exemption.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I was getting there. Yes.

HOUSING AUSTRALIA FUTURE FUND

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (11:42): My question is addressed to the Minister for Housing. Will the Minister provide a report from the ministerial council meeting and update the House on the Housing Australia Future Fund and how it will benefit the people of New South Wales?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast) (11:43): It was a pleasure to go to the Housing and Homelessness Ministerial Council in Canberra last week and meet the Federal Minister, Julie Collins, and all of the housing and homelessness Ministers from across Australia. A couple of important agenda items for this State were discussed. I will give an overview about how I represented our State in those critically important conversations about the national housing crisis, which is particularly acute in New South Wales. The first piece of work discussed was the instructions from the national Cabinet relating to rental reform.

We know that the rental market is incredibly tight right now. Stories from renters doing it tough come through all our offices daily. It was great to have the national Cabinet issue instructions right from the top that we need to do better. That is exactly what we are doing in this State. I informed the national Cabinet that the New South Wales Government is getting on with the job of implementing its election commitments on rental reform, starting with outlawing secret rent bidding and establishing a portable rental bond scheme. The advertisement for the NSW Rental Commissioner is in the paper right now. Maybe that could be the gig for any members opposite who are not particularly interested in being in opposition.

The Hon. Anthony D'Adam: Or John Barilaro.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: Please no. That work is already underway. Another important discussion we had was on planning reform. Again, we know that we need to do better in our planning system, particularly in delivering social and affordable housing in areas where people want to live. The planning Ministers will get together with Minister Catherine King to extend that conversation. We had an excellent conversation about the National Housing Accord and what we can do to attract institutional investors to housing in New South Wales. The pipeline of institutional investment in build-to-rent in Victoria and Queensland is looking pretty good. Unfortunately, our State, which should be leading, is right at the back of the pack. We are keen to have a conversation to see what we can do to drive investment in this State.

The last important topic of conversation was the Housing Australia Future Fund, which is a fantastic piece of leadership from the Federal Government that will deliver 16,000 to 19,000 properties for social and affordable housing for this State over the next five years. We desperately need that housing. I call on members of all parties—those opposite and on the crossbench—to tell their colleagues in the Senate to get on with the job of passing the Housing Australia Future Fund. There should be no more working together to frustrate housing. We should be working together to deliver much-needed investment in housing for our State.

ANIMALS AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

The Hon. EMMA HURST (11:46): My question is directed to the Treasurer. Given the current state of the New South Wales budget, will the Treasurer explain how the Government justifies the ongoing spending of any taxpayer money on the breeding of primates who are then rented out for medical experimentation?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:46): I thank the honourable member for the first question I have received from a member of the crossbench or Opposition benches. Upon becoming Treasurer, perhaps my biggest surprise was that the New South Wales Government is funding a baboon breeding colony in Malaysia. I acknowledge that the member brought that to the attention of the House relentlessly throughout the inquiry that she was a part of. I understand how important this issue is to her and her activism in exposing this particular practice and getting to the bottom of it.

A couple of principles inform our approach when it comes to the funding of baboon breeding for the purposes of medical research. We all have an interest in curing intractable diseases like diabetes, but it is right to say, as the inquiry found, that alternatives are being developed that mean we can reduce reliance on baboon breeding for the purposes of medical research. Equally, there is a growing movement within the scientific community to find other ways to solve intractable disease that do not rely as heavily on animal testing. These are all welcome trends. Any opportunity to save human life without necessarily having to risk the lives of other animals is something we should be supportive of on all sides of the House.

I acknowledge that the former Government was constructive in this respect as well. I have been able to ascertain that there is some money put aside in the budget to assist with that, and I am trying to get to the bottom of precisely how the rollout of that grant expenditure is going. I am happy to work with the member on that. As part of the comprehensive expenditure review that the finance Minister is leading and that I am participating in, I look forward to asking the health department how much money we are spending on breeding baboons and other primates for the purposes of medical research. I am also interested in finding out if NSW Health and other agencies have considered whether there are alternatives and how important that is in the discharge of their responsibilities.

I also make the point that we need the universities to come to the table on this. They are leading this research—and it is world-leading research—and they are doing a good job, but we also need them to be at the forefront of global change here. I am concerned that other countries are getting ahead of us when it comes to replacing baboons, primates and other animals in medical research. Again, I did not expect to be getting to the bottom of this particular issue in my first eight weeks as Treasurer, but I am delighted by the opportunities this job presents to find out things I did not know before.

The Hon. EMMA HURST (11:49): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Treasurer inform the House whether the review will consider the justification for taxpayers' money being used for primate research?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:50): I thank the Hon. Emma Hurst for her supplementary question. In short, the answer is yes. As I am sure the finance Minister will agree, the whole purpose of this review is to ensure that every single dollar of public expenditure aligns with the public's priorities. That means testing the principles that support funding decisions to make sure they align to contemporary standards and are indeed best practice. I stress that as important as that is in determining future expenditure in the area of medical research, those tests will apply across the board, such as in education reform. Other crossbench members have campaigned relentlessly to draw the attention of the House to certain practices in the education space that are not supported by evidence, that are not best practice, and which should not be continuing. The whole point of this comprehensive expenditure review is to deal with the \$7 billion black hole we have been left. We intend to ensure that every single dollar of public spending goes towards programs that work and which we have to fund. In short, yes, we will be looking at that.

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY (11:51): My question is directed to the Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales. Which infrastructure programs in western New South Wales is she taking steps to save from being cancelled by the Albanese Labor Government's infrastructure review?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:51): I thank the Hon. Sam Farraway for the question. I am delighted to be the Minister for Regional New South Wales and Minister for Western New South Wales. As a strong advocate for regional and western New South Wales infrastructure, I take those portfolios very seriously. Members know that regional communities have been doing it tough, particularly over the past few years. Many communities are struggling after COVID, fires and floods. We are working hard to help our regional communities and businesses get back on their feet, to encourage tourism and to deliver the services that they so richly deserve.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: Those members opposite asked the question. They should at least be quiet while the Minister tries to give them the answer.

The PRESIDENT: There has been a lot of chat in the Chamber today. I ask all members to allow the Ministers to give their answers in relative silence.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I will always be an advocate for regional and western New South Wales. I will work with the Federal Government to improve infrastructure across those communities. However, we have just taken office. We have had the opportunity to have a good look at the books we have been left.

The Hon. Sam Farraway: Point of order: We are over a minute into the Minister's answer. Specifically, I asked which projects the New South Wales Labor Government will try to save from the Albanese Labor Government's chopping block. We are nowhere near an answer.

The PRESIDENT: There is some validity in that point of order. I understand the Minister is giving some important context but it is important that she now comes to the specifics of the question.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I will fight for all projects across regional New South Wales, and I will fight anyone who wants to cause regional New South Wales any issues, particularly western New South Wales, which deserves all the attention this Government can give it. I will work with the Federal Government on dealing with each and every one of the projects; that is a specific answer to the member's question. But we have announced a comprehensive expenditure review to get to—

The Hon. Sam Farraway: Point of order—

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Point of order—

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I have just answered your question.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Two points of order have been taken. I will first hear from the Hon. Sam Farraway and then the Hon. Greg Donnelly.

The Hon. Sam Farraway: There are 95 projects under the Albanese Federal Labor Government's review. I have asked the Minister for Western New South Wales which of those projects in western New South Wales she is going to save from the chopping block.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order. The Minister was being directly relevant. Does the Hon. Greg Donnelly still wish to take his point of order?

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Yes. My point of order relates to the wall of noise coming from the opposite side of the Chamber. I was carefully listening to the Minister, who was in fact moving systematically through answering the question. The other side of the Chamber—which is a rabble, I have to say—needs to be brought to order.

The PRESIDENT: I will take that as a comment. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: As I said, I will be an advocate for regional New South Wales through our Government and with the Federal Government. I will continue to do that for the term that I hold this portfolio.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY (11:55): I ask a supplementary question. The Minister referred to western New South Wales in her answer. As the Minister for Western New South Wales, will she update the House on which local government areas in New South Wales she has visited since becoming Minister on 5 April?

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: Point of order: Clearly that is a different question. It is not seeking an elucidation in regards to the answer. It should be ruled out of order.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: To the point of order: In her answer the Minister spoke many times of being a strong advocate for western New South Wales in particular. It is entirely in order for the Hon. Sam Farraway to ask her, as an advocate, which local government areas she has visited.

The PRESIDENT: I think there has been some relief in the Chamber that the Ajaka three-point test has been dispensed with, but there still does have to be a limit. Therefore, I rule that question out of order as it was a very long bow.

KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (11:56): My question is addressed to the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage. Will the Minister update the House on the challenges facing—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Point of order: There is a convention in this House that has been flouted today. On afternoons like this in the previous term of Government there was at least one question answered in a manner which would elicit a response from the Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy. That convention—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Now you're just wasting time.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: That convention has been flouted in this House today. Those opposite should be called back to order to comply with that convention. I note the Clerk is nodding!

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order. The Hon. Peter Primrose has the call.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: This is a very important question. Despite the frivolous point of order, I will ask the question again so it is quite clear. My question is addressed to the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage. Will the Minister update the House on the challenges facing Kosciuszko National Park?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:57): I thank the Hon. Peter Primrose for his question. I make the point for the Leader of the Opposition that I will not be singing in this Chamber because nobody wants to hear that, although after questions today I think I might be doing social media reviews. I note that the member for North Shore has been doing TikToks as members have been speaking today. I was pleased that one of my first visits as Minister was to Kosciuszko National Park, one of our State's largest parks. It is a fragile alpine area that was proudly founded by Bill McKell back in 1947.

The visit was a great opportunity to see firsthand the issues associated with the management of horses, the protection of threatened species and the delivery of the Snowy Hydro 2.0 project. It was an opportunity to meet with dedicated NSW Nationals Parks and Wildlife Service staff. I met them in the field, at the depot and in their offices. Their passion and their commitment to managing the park on behalf of the community is inspiring. I place on record that in recent times those staff members have been on the receiving end of absolutely unacceptable behaviour from a small number of community members. I make it clear that the New South Wales Government has zero tolerance for harassments or threats directed towards any public officials, but as Minister for the Environment I reinforce that we absolutely have zero tolerance for any harm done or threats made to National Parks officers or their families when they are going about the work we ask them to do.

During that visit, I was shown around the park and I was shown the impact that horses are having on that park. There has been a lot of discussion in this place over the past few years in relation to this, but the impact cannot be ignored. The horses are too many and they are causing significant damage, and we need to make sure that it is addressed as soon as possible. The wild horse management plan requires the horse population to be reduced by 3,000 by June 2027. Currently this target is not on track to be met; in fact, horse numbers have been increasing. I note that the National Parks and Wildlife Service staff are doing all they can. They have increased the rate of removal while meeting welfare and safety standards, but achieving the target will be a big challenge in that vast, rugged landscape. The Government is working with the department to see how quickly it can deliver the plan.

I also acknowledge the work that has been done in relation to saving species. I had a fantastic visit with Elders from the Walgalu and Wiradjuri people, who are joint partners in trying to save the southern corroboree frog. This collaboration has successfully averted the complete extinction of Australia's most iconic frog species. I note the previous Government's work in relation to this. It is important. It is a part of Dreaming stories. It is also a species that has been brought back from the brink.

NARRABRI GAS PROJECT AND EMISSIONS REDUCTION

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (12:00): My question is directed to the Minister for Natural Resources. I refer her to the answer earlier in question time by the Minister for Climate Change, and Minister for Energy regarding the Santos natural gas project at Narrabri. The Minister said that while the project has been approved, it has not yet started. She said that it is not part of the Government's plans in trying to meet its climate change targets. The only way you can put Santos natural gas outside the meeting of climate change emission targets is for

the project not to go ahead. Will the Minister for Natural Resources clarify whether the Government supports this project going ahead, recognising its importance for giving New South Wales greater gas self-sufficiency and driving down natural gas prices for consumers, households and businesses? The point was made by Dan Walton from the Australian Workers' Union that increased gas supply in New South Wales is absolutely essential for the future of manufacturing and manufacturing jobs in our State.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: Point of order: The question clearly contained argument. The honourable member included reference to this project driving down gas prices. He did not put it in context. He is clearly putting argument in the question. I ask you, Mr President, to rule the question out of order.

The Hon. Mark Latham: To the point of order: Surely we do not need to prove the point that every year 11 economic student knows: If you increase gas supply, prices come down. These are basic assumptions.

Ms Abigail Boyd: No.

The Hon. Mark Latham: Well, at the end of the magical garden where The Greens live, maybe they have a different argument—that increased supply increases prices.

The PRESIDENT: I have heard enough on the point of order. I have pre-empted that there was likely to be discussion at some point about argument, so I will talk about that briefly. There is a long line of precedent for allowing some preamble when asking a question. Yesterday I made clear my intention to allow some latitude to members asking supplementary questions, in the interests of transparency and accountability. I intend to do the same for questions generally in terms of argument leading into questions. However, I draw members' attention to the ruling of President Willis on 21 September 1995, which reads:

Although it is customary for members to preface questions with a setting for their questions, such prefaces should be contained and not made a feature providing information that is otherwise publicly available.

It may be necessary for a brief preamble to provide some context to the question being asked and assist the Minister in being able to provide an answer that remains directly relevant to the question at hand. To that extent, I am inclined to generally give a degree of latitude to members asking questions. For that reason, I do not uphold the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham's point of order on this occasion.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (12:04): Thank you, Mr President, for that considered ruling. I thank the Hon. Mark Latham for his question about the Narrabri Gas Project. The member may be aware that whilst the extraction of gas lies within my portfolio of Natural Resources, the approval process for that project is governed by the planning Minister. Equally, the resulting gas product is in the purview of the energy Minister. So it is a complex management, but the three of us are working closely together on this issue. I note the member's question in relation to whether I support the project. I note the comments that the member made about Dan Walton, the national secretary of the Australian Workers' Union, a very good man and a very intelligent man whose counsel I rely on and thank him for.

It is useful to say that the Narrabri Gas Project has gone through a careful, considered, independent process. We were very clear during the election campaign that we support an independent assessment process of all resources projects. We think this is the appropriate way to give the natural resources industry security and an understanding of the playing field. We think that is an important way to conduct these assessments. We expect that to be done in a careful, considered and environmentally rigorous way. I understand that the National Native Title Tribunal determination made in December 2022 is under appeal by the local Aboriginal people in the Federal Court. It is expected to be heard in August 2023, so I cannot comment on that particular part of the process while that judicial decision is pending. But what I can say is that the Government is particularly mindful of the cost-of-living pressures that families, households and businesses are facing at the moment. We understand that one of the ways that we can assist is by ensuring that we have local gas production.

We think that should be done carefully. We think that should be done in a way that maintains our focus. But I would make this point: Over the past 12 years, while other States around the country have taken on domestic gas reservation policies that have ensured lower gas prices for their households and families, the previous Liberal-Nationals Government not only failed to pursue a domestic gas reservation policy—

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Federal and State.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I acknowledge that interjection from the Treasurer. It also privatised our electricity assets. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (12:07): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elaborate, with one simple statement, whether she supports the project?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (12:07): I thank the member for his supplementary question. The position of the Government is clear. The project has gone through the independent assessment process, and we await the final outcome of the National Native Title Tribunal determination. But we support an independent assessment of these projects. If that independent assessment concludes that it should go ahead, then we support that project. We support lower prices for households. We support lower prices for businesses. We support lower prices for our families.

[Opposition members interjected.]

I hear the comments of those opposite who are suggesting that we are outsourcing these decisions. And yet, they were the ones that took an independent assessment of projects to the election as well. I will finish my comment that I made earlier. It is the actions of the previous Government that have led to increasing power prices—both electricity and gas prices—for our households and families. It failed to pursue a domestic gas reservation policy, despite it being advocated for by a large number of people, including Dan Walton and many people across the community. The previous Government failed to act at the same time as it privatised our electricity assets. That combination of factors has resulted in higher power prices for families and businesses. I have heard firsthand from businesses that are facing closure because of that inaction. It has threatened jobs and businesses right across this State. The Government will proudly support initiatives that reduce gas and electricity prices for New South Wales households.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (12:09): Mr President, I ask a second supplementary question.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The time for questions has well and truly expired. If members have further questions, I suggest they place them on notice.

The PRESIDENT: I note Ms Sue Higginson had a second supplementary question to ask. It is at the discretion of the President to allow it. We have had 70 minutes of question time today, so I think that is a good run.

Supplementary Questions for Written Answers

TIKTOK

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (12:10): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Leader of the Government. Given she assured the House today that the Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast's use of her TikTok account falls within the exemption to the New South Wales Government ban on use of the TikTok application on all government-issued devices, which of Minister Jackson's last 10 posts have been for the purpose of public health and safety messages? Did she complete a risk assessment in consultation with the Chief Information Security Officer or the Chief Cyber Security Officer, as required? Is her TikTok account not accessible from her government-issued device?

NARRABRI GAS PROJECT AND EMISSIONS REDUCTION

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (12:11): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for Natural Resources. In referring to the independent planning process that the Narrabri Gas Project apparently went through, does the Minister acknowledge that the former Minister for Planning, Rob Stokes, politically interfered with that independent planning process by referring the project to a public hearing, which then extinguished the merits appeal rights for all the communities that opposed that project? What does the Minister intend to do about that?

The Hon. Wes Fang: Point of order: The supplementary question for written answer clearly contains argument. I ask that the question be ruled out of order.

The PRESIDENT: As I made quite clear in my earlier ruling about the use of argument, I will draw quite wide latitude at this point. I hear the concerns of the Deputy Opposition Whip. I will keep a close eye on it, but at the moment it is my intention to keep latitude quite broad on argument.

NARRABRI GAS PROJECT AND EMISSIONS REDUCTION

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (12:12): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for Climate Change and Minister for Energy. Given the answer provided by the Minister for Natural Resources, will the Minister include in the meeting of New South Wales climate change targets the Narrabri Santos natural gas project?

*Questions Without Notice: Take Note***TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: I move:

That the House take note of answers to questions.

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY (12:13): I take note of the answer from the Minister for Western New South Wales about State infrastructure. I must admit that I am not at all filled with confidence by the answer. Ninety-five projects worth \$1.6 billion across New South Wales are set for the chopping block. It is widely reported; Federal Minister King has been out there doing plenty of media on it. Many of those projects are in regional and western New South Wales, which is part of the Minister's remit relating to her portfolio. The Minister says she is going to support all the projects. How is that possible when many of them are co-funded between the New South Wales and Commonwealth governments? We are talking about a lot of money that was committed by the former Commonwealth Coalition Government to New South Wales that the current Federal Labor Government is putting on the chopping block—specifically the new Dubbo Bridge and the Great Western Highway. What about the New England bypasses? The Minister for Regional Transport and Roads said one thing on radio in the Hunter Valley but then the Federal Labor Government, when asked about this, gave a completely different answer.

What about supporting the grade separating road interfaces? Will the Minister make sure that funding remains? Is she going to look at the Tooraweenah Road upgrade? Will she look at the Warren Road to Coonamble Road upgrade, which will connect those two western New South Wales communities? The Minister probably does not know where Tooraweenah, Warren or Coonamble are, because she dodged the question about which local government areas in western New South Wales she has visited. Those communities said they have not seen her. This is a very serious and important junction, and it is a very important time for regional New South Wales. Those legacy-building projects will open up communities in those areas.

We need this infrastructure built for tomorrow, not just today. The Minister's answer today showed that she is clearly not across her brief. She does not know where those communities are and she does not know what the projects are. I ask her to do a bit more research and actually fight for those projects to make sure that New South Wales is not put on the chopping block by the Federal Labor Party in power in Canberra. The Minister has the ability to lobby to save those projects for rural and regional New South Wales, and I urge her to do so.

NARRABRI GAS PROJECT AND EMISSIONS REDUCTION

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (12:15): I take note of the answers provided by the Minister for Climate Change and Minister for Energy, and the Minister for Natural Resources. I will explain the extensive process that has led to the approval of the Santos approval at Narrabri. By way of background, New South Wales has virtually no self-sufficiency in gas. When Santos is up and running—and we all hope it will be—surely, by any measure of common sense, it will be the only natural gas project in the entire State. Some people say our self-sufficiency is down to 5 per cent. It is hard to believe that the largest State in the Commonwealth has such a paucity of gas.

The process and application went through the Independent Planning Commission, which has a long track record—I think disgracefully so—of being against fossil fuel projects. Look at the decision it made at Ravensworth in the Hunter Valley, where an old, decrepit building has been allowed to stop the extension of a coalmine that would have provided many tens of thousands of jobs into the future. If a fossil fuel project can get through the Independent Planning Commission, it is doing really well, indicating the strength and credibility of the Narrabri project.

It then went on appeal to the Land and Environment Court, where the appeal was unsuccessful. It has been through the National Native Title Tribunal and was ticked off, with conditions, to the benefit of the local Indigenous people. It would not be hard for this Government to say that—for reasons of increasing New South Wales gas self-sufficiency, increasing supply, bringing down prices during the cost-of-living crisis, and providing gas certainty for manufacturing and other businesses in our State—it wants the project to go ahead. It has passed through so many barriers and so many hoops that obviously it is of great merit and necessity to New South Wales.

It was shocking to hear the Minister for Climate Change say, without any reason, that the project is not and would not be part of the Government's attempt to meet climate change emission targets in New South Wales. Burning natural gas of course creates carbon emissions. The only reason the Government is putting it outside its plans is because it is working on the assumption that it is not going ahead. The Leader of the Government, and Minister for Climate Change, and Minister for Energy said she does not want it to go ahead because the Government has put it outside its plans on the question of climate change. In her answer, the Minister for Natural Resources was not able to say in three minutes that she supported the project. She said maybe it has something to

do with the planning Minister or Minister Sharpe. Finally, she said it would be supported if it got through the process at the end of this year. It is absolutely essential. The Government should have backed this in, and the Minister for Climate Change needs to put it in the plans on the assumption and the necessity that it goes ahead.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE ILLUMINATION

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (12:19): I take note of the answer given today by the Deputy Leader of the Government. At first, I was encouraged by the Minister's answer that he would provide more detail to this House about the lighting of the Opera House sails for the coronation. However, when we pressed further, we realised that there were no real criteria for the decision to not light up the Opera House sails and that the Minister was not willing to table in this Chamber any costings for it. We assume it is \$100,000, but he did not commit to tabling that advice. An incongruous situation has developed. On the one hand, the Government has basically said that the coronation of the monarch of Australia is not a significant event.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: I look forward to your speech this afternoon.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: I am sure you do. On the other hand, the coronation is important enough that the Governor of this State should go to London for it rather than be part of the opening of this Parliament. So which one is it? Is the coronation so important that the Governor needs to attend, or is it so unimportant that the Opera House sails do not deserve to be lit up for it? Not lighting the sails is typical of the cancel culture of members opposite. The coronation probably triggered some of them, if not most. But, at end of the day, King Charles III is the monarch of Australia, whether they like it or not, and the Opera House sails should have been lit up.

Let us look at some past examples. In 2021 the Hon. Courtney Houssos and the Hon. Mark Buttigieg expressed their support for the Opera House displaying the Greek flag for Greek Independence Day, which is of course a very important event. The Opera House sails should have been lit up for it. So too should the sails have been lit up for the coronation of the monarch of Australia. Based on previous statements made by members in this House, I would have assumed that all members would support the Opera House being lit up to mark an international event as significant as the coronation. All of the other woke Labor States lit up significant monuments. [*Time expired.*]

CRITICAL MINERALS AND HIGH-TECHNOLOGY METALS

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (12:22): I take note of answers given this day by the Hon. Courtney Houssos in her role as the Minister for Natural Resources. Firstly, I put on record my alarm at the continual environmental degradation occurring in the Central West of this State caused by the absolute behemoth that is the Cadia gold and copper mine. There is absolutely no doubt that the Cadia copper mine, in its various iterations as an open-cut underground mine and now the Cadia East mine, has delivered significant profits to its operating company, and it certainly has supported jobs in the Orange region. But the associated cost, measured on a geological timescale, will be borne by the people of New South Wales. If members bother to visit Cadia Hill, as I have, they will see—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Point of order: I am wondering which question and answer this goes to.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: The one about Cadia Hill. To the point of order—

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order. The member will continue.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: The honourable member may have been snoozing, but a question was asked about Cadia Hill. He might not know where that is. It is in Orange in the Central West. You can see the hole in the ground at Cadia literally from space. Get on Google Maps and have a look at it.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: Point of order: My first point is that the purpose of the take-note debate is to take note of answers given by Ministers in this House during question time. Secondly, for some reason, the honourable member is directing his comments to this side of the Chamber. Comments should be directed through you, Mr President, and not across the table. I ask that you draw the member's attention to those practices in this House, which he might recall from his former time in this place.

The PRESIDENT: They are similar points of order. For the benefit of new members, the Hon. Natalie Ward is quite right: All comments should be directed through the Chair rather than to specific members on the other side of the Chamber.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: Thank you for your ruling, Mr President. I will direct my comments through you and not respond to interjections. The Cadia Hill gold mine will leave a legacy of environmental damage and remediation that will be borne by generations in this State. The unlined tailings dam that has been approved is an absolute ticking timebomb. It will pollute the Belubula River and the Lachlan River

for a generation. This House and the taxpayers of New South Wales will have to deal with it, and the environment will suffer from it, for generations.

TIKTOK

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (12:25): I take note of an answer given by the Leader of the Government to a question that may seem to be fun but is in fact a serious question about cybersecurity and the banning of the TikTok application on government-issued devices. It is of concern to me that the answer was somewhat frivolous and dismissive regarding members' TikTok accounts. The question was very specific. The Government has issued the ban and has been specific about the requirement to seek advice from the Chief Cyber Security Officer. But the Leader of the Government does not seem to be taking the Premier's ban of his account quite as seriously in this House.

I am concerned that the priority of the Minns Government is to ban TikTok and assert that members should not be using TikTok, yet it seems to be silent when it comes to advocating for important infrastructure projects in New South Wales. Ninety-five projects are under threat and yet there seems to be absolute silence. It seems to me, as former roads Minister, that Premier Minns is asleep at the wheel. We have not heard from the Minister for Western Sydney or the Premier about specific steps they have taken to safeguard those projects. I draw the attention of the House to one of them, the regional road safety project. Today members are wearing pins for SARAH, standing for Safer Australian Roads and Highways, which is a very important project. Those projects are important to our communities. In my humble opinion, it is not for this place to be frivolous about them or not answer related questions.

We are entitled to ask questions about what steps the Minns Government and this Minister are taking to seek meetings with Anthony Albanese and Catherine King, as I did when I was Minister, to see what can be done to safeguard projects that save lives. They are not frivolous budget line items; they matter to communities. The Mount Ousley interchange, the M1 up to Raymond Terrace and regional road safety programs all matter because lives are at risk. I expected a serious and comprehensive answer about the representations made, the dates on which they were made, and the occasions when the honourable Minister and the Premier took the time to ring Anthony Albanese to advocate for the projects or took other steps to safeguard important projects in New South Wales that matter to communities, to road safety, and to lives and livelihoods. One of those projects, the new Richmond bridge, came about because of the floods. Flood-affected communities in the Hawkesbury had no escape route. Processes were put in place by the former Government, in conjunction with the Federal Government, to build a new bridge because it would save lives. I ask that those members take that into consideration when answering our serious questions.

KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (12:28): I take note of the answer given by the Minister for the Environment regarding feral horses. It is important to note that the Federal Government's own independent advisory body, the Threatened Species Scientific Committee, has described feral horses as an imminent threat to the prevention of new extinctions of plants and animals. The committee has stated that feral horses may be the crucial factor that causes the final extinction of at least 12 native species in the Australian Alps.

That matter is of utmost priority and significance for the new Government. It has the full support of The Greens in the pursuit to undo the chronic and unreasonable damage that the former Government did to the important, wild Kosciuszko, the place we all love and must protect. It is a place of global significance. This is it for us: This is our last chance to right the wrong of the last mob, which introduced legislation to destroy some of Australia's most important and globally significant biodiversity. I thank the Minister for her efforts and her answer. We stand together with all Australians and global citizens who know that this is one of the challenges of our time. This Government, along with the crossbench, has the chance to get this right. This is our last chance.

ICARE

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (12:30): I take note of the answer that the Treasurer gave to a question on the state of icare. The answer displayed an appalling approach to the administration of his portfolio. To suggest that he would review that portfolio by only involving the issue of premiums is, quite frankly, an absolute diminution of his responsibility as Treasurer. Where was his answer on the repeal of the provision in the Act that provided for a presumption about COVID and its impact on the scheme? Where was his analysis of the viability of the scheme in respect of the rising mental health claims? He cannot possibly say that the icare scheme is in trouble, in the manner that he articulated today, because of a decision that was made on premium increases.

Decisions on premium increases were made at a time when many small businesses were impacted by COVID and the period coming out of the pandemic. Increasing premiums to the extent that was recommended by the insurer was only a small part of the problem faced by it. After discussions with the board about that, certain decisions were made on the manner in which and the extent to which premiums should be increased. The Treasurer's answer demonstrated that he is the cheerleader for businesses going broke. When a Treasurer adopts that as his primary mantle in terms of the way that he would fix the scheme—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: A 20 per cent increase.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: A 20 per cent increase, which was sought by the insurer. When he becomes an advocate for imposing that on small businesses, and he sees them go broke as a result, in that case he is responsible for every single job loss that occurs, and he will wear it. While he is administering this economy, he is responsible for every one of those small businesses that goes broke.

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. WES FANG (12:33): We have had two question times in this Parliament—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Isn't it awesome?

The Hon. WES FANG: It is awesome, and it will be even more awesome when the people of regional New South Wales have the opportunity to hear the answers from the Government on its plans—or lack of plans, as the case may be—for rural and regional Australia. The Government's answers today and yesterday should strike fear into the hearts of rural and regional communities for its absolute lack of consideration and support for policies, infrastructure and programs for communities west of the Great Dividing Range. We keep hearing from members opposite how wonderful it is to have more members from regional New South Wales in the Chamber. They should not be saying that, but that is the case. Regional members are so rare that it has been made note of. That is what defines the Government right now. The Government is also defined by the fact that it said nothing to the Opposition's question on what it would do to support communities given the 95 projects that are on the Federal Government's chopping block. The question was asked multiple times.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: You can ask the question; you don't have to like the answer.

The Hon. WES FANG: To the Leader of the Government, there was no answer. You have not provided us with any idea of the programs that you will fight for.

The Hon. Anthony D'Adam: Point of order: Earlier in question time the Hon. Natalie Ward raised the issue of members not speaking through the chair. The Hon. Wes Fang is clearly engaging in a dialogue across the Chamber. It is disorderly. He must be brought to order.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: To the point of order—

The PRESIDENT: I uphold the point of order. Both interjections and responses to interjections are disorderly. Members must speak through the chair.

The Hon. WES FANG: I should not respond to interjections. I apologise. All we want to know is who the Government will fight for and where it has been. It has not answered those questions today.

ICARE

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE ILLUMINATION

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (12:36): I take note of the issue raised by the Leader of the Opposition on the Treasurer's response to a question about icare. After 12 years in government, the Opposition had the gall to deny that it left icare in a mess. The Treasurer was simply responding to the historical fact of the chronic underfunding of that institution, which was exposed ad nauseam in this House when Labor was in Opposition. The reason that icare has asked for a 22 per cent increase in premiums is that the former Government took no action to fix that funding shortfall. The idea that the Opposition, which ruined that institution, would blame the Treasurer is unbelievably galling. He was pointing out that the funding mismatch is a fundamental problem with the scheme. The Opposition blamed the victims. The poor old people at the demand end of the scheme, those who are injured and are supposed to benefit from the scheme, are being blamed, instead of the Opposition admitting that it mismanaged the scheme when in government. It has created a mess that we must now fix, and the Treasurer is setting his mind to doing that.

On the subject of the projection of images onto the Opera House sails, the Premier made an eminently sensible decision. He will look at what is appropriate because the reality is that it has become a Rafferty's rules

situation. Personally, I do not think a monarch should be projected onto our national symbol. It should be preserved for our own nation and for the remembrance and recognition of our own nation's significance, sacrifices and results. It is typical that the conservative side of politics would back it in at a cost of \$100,000 after leaving the budget in a total mess, with the biggest debt in the history of this State. Our Premier is trying to claw that back with sensible decisions. The doyens of economic management and fiscal rectitude, who are now in Opposition, want to lecture the Government on how to fix up their mess with sensible decisions like that.

My colleague the Hon. Tara Moriarty's response was eminently sensible. Heaven forbid that she talks to her department and seeks measured advice on how to manage these projects in respect of the Federal Government's announcement. Members opposite expected her to stand in the Chamber and say, "I'm going to support X, Y and Z and cancel X, Y and Z," when she is waiting for advice from the department. That is exactly what they would have done if they were still in government and were not comprehensibly rejected by the people of New South Wales. [*Time expired.*]

TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (12:39): I comment on a number of issues that were raised in the debate today. The first point I make is about comments made by the Hon. Mark Latham, who over-egged the pudding and perhaps even verbalised me about my answer. I made it clear during question time today that this Government is absolutely committed to climate plans and reducing emissions to net zero. We are going to legislate for it. We will achieve that through an independent net zero commission. That is how it will be measured.

The second point I make is about comments made about the coronation. I look forward to the Opposition, of which there are many monarchists, speaking on the motion after lunch. I look forward to their contributions, unless they find that they are perhaps unable to contribute. Many members of the House are deep monarchists. I pay attention to the way in which members are sworn in and I respect the choices that they make. The monarchy is important.

I go back to the TikTok issue. I am extremely fond of the Hon. Natalie Ward. I am pleased that she has moved into positions that she was owed. She is meritoriously ready for them and will make an enormous contribution to the Liberal Party. But her contribution today was a joke. As we go through the disastrous budget left by the former Government we have discovered that not one dollar was left for Cyber Security NSW after next year. It is basically about to be defunded. There is no money in it even after all the huff and puff by those opposite saying, "It's a very serious matter. It's very important." Let me be clear: Former Government members did not allocate a cent in the budget for cybersecurity next year. They question our priorities, and we have made those clear. We are already taking action. We spoke about that at length in the address-in-reply yesterday.

For members who forget: We are going to stop privatisation; work through a workable wages policy for public sector workers to pay them fairly and ensure that they continue to provide the services needed by the State; employ 10,000 teachers on permanent contracts, not casual contracts; and employ additional nurses. Members opposite like to talk about the budget, but 1,200 nurses were not funded in their budget. It is an interesting time. All members are adjusting to the way that they manage the take-note debate and the questions that they ask. But if the priority from Opposition members today was TikTok, their priorities are way off.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Written Answers to Supplementary Questions

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

In reply to **the Hon. NATALIE WARD** (10 May 2023).

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer)—The Minister provided the following response:

I refer to my previous answer given during Question Time on 10 May 2023.

The PRESIDENT: I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.00 p.m.

Addresses

CORONATION OF KING CHARLES III

Address of Congratulation

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (14:00): I congratulate King Charles III on his coronation on Saturday 6 May when he received St Edward's Crown and was anointed King of the United Kingdom, Australia and the other Commonwealth realms. At times, events such as the coronation can stir political commentary from all sides. That occurred in the Chamber during questions without notice and the take-note debate today when members were discussing the lighting of the Opera House sails. Today I instead choose to focus on the coronation's many wonderful meanings and its ability to serve as a tangible bringing together of dozens of countries across the globe in jubilant celebration. It was the first historic English coronation rite, which still follow the format used when King Edgar was crowned at Bath Abbey in 973 AD where one of the youngest members of the congregation, a chapel royal chorister, greeted the new King. King Charles then proclaimed, "In his name and after his example, I come not to be served but to serve."

Who does the King mean to serve in God's example? All 15 Commonwealth realms, of which Australia is included. There are few examples of such selfless commitment, solemnly sworn before God for life, among the leaders of our world today. This is the crown's ultimate weight, the inescapable toll of dedicating one's entire remaining existence on earth to the service of more than 150 million people worldwide. Like many Australians, I am stirred by the pledge and thankful for the due honour King Charles' late mother, Queen Elizabeth II, gave to it. I am confident the new King will do the same. And though British in flavour, the coronation was one for Australia too. Those watching would undoubtedly have seen the Australian flag flying on the approach to Buckingham Palace, complemented by members of our Australian Defence Force forming part of the ceremonies and marching procession from Westminster Abbey. It is important to note that over three million Australians watched the coronation on Saturday evening.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: I watched it very closely.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: The Leader of the Government watched the coronation. I celebrated by going to St Paul's College for the coronation concert. I know that is particularly special to Mr President as his alma mater. Mr President will be glad to know that at St Paul's coronation concert and dinner fantastic English hymns were sung, ranging from those composed by Henry Purcell to *Zadok the Priest* by Handel, which was definitely a crowd favourite, and many others like *I was glad*, which is another crowd favourite. On the Sunday, I also celebrated by going to Solemn Evensong at Christ Church St Laurence. The Hon. Don Harwin, who is in the gallery today, is a parishioner of Christ Church St Laurence. I pay tribute to my predecessor, Don Harwin, a former President of the Legislative Council and Leader of the Government. He did not come to Parliament specially today just to hear my coronation speech. I am sure he was in the building for important meetings, but he is in the gallery regardless.

It was also a coronation for the other 14 Commonwealth realms, each themselves uniquely participating in the event. Yet to be one flag amidst 15 is part of the value of our Commonwealth inheritance and why we can receive the coronation as a moment of global unity and celebration. The Commonwealth is one of the oldest forms of international organisations, forming today a body of 56 countries working together for prosperity, democracy and peace. It is also safe to say that few organisations have done more to support democracy, government and the rule of law than the Commonwealth of Nations. Following the coronation, we can also take pride in our inherited constitutional monarchy and the stability of government which it provides.

The members in this place know that, despite our differences of opinion when it comes to policy, we enjoy a highly functional Westminster political system free from violence and tyranny. I commented at an Iftar dinner, which members were at a few weeks ago, that the change of State government was an exchange of power seen only two months ago from one party to another without violence, without anyone questioning the results and without anyone saying that it should have been otherwise. It was an orderly transition of power, free from sectarianism and hatred. Regardless of whether one is a constitutional monarchist like me or a republican like so many in this place, I think that goes to the strength of our inherited institutions, in particular Westminster parliamentary democracy.

I sincerely hope that the reign of King Charles III will involve a continuation of his lifelong advocacy for heritage and environmental protection, which the Leader of the Government remarked on. Should we receive His Majesty in Australia within the coming years, I look forward to the messages he will share in that regard. Until then, we should be proud as a nation for having participated in the King's coronation last Saturday. God save the King!

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:07): In reply: I thank honourable members for their contributions. I am a little surprised that the other side of the House, which has many monarchists, has chosen not to use the motion to say the words they wish to say to King Charles III. I thank everyone for their contributions and look forward to passing the motion to the King.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Visitors

VISITORS

The PRESIDENT: I welcome to the President's gallery the Hon. Don Harwin, a former esteemed President of this place who is equally respected across all sides of Parliament. He is extremely welcome on any occasion.

Bills

FORESTRY AMENDMENT (KOALA HABITATS) BILL 2023

First Reading

Bill introduced, read a first time and ordered to be published on motion by Ms Sue Higginson.

Second Reading Speech

The PRESIDENT: I remind members that when they are seeking the call they need to say, "Mr President". They will then be called on.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (14:08): Mr President, I apologise. I am still actually quite new—no, it has been 12 months now. I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

It is with great hope and anticipation—and positivity—that I introduce the Forestry Amendment (Koala Habitats) Bill 2023. For the keen-eyed members of this place, this is indeed the same bill that I introduced in the dying days of the Fifty-Seventh Parliament. Not coincidentally, during the dying days of the former Coalition Government it spent much time and energy tearing itself apart over the issue of the parlous state of koalas in New South Wales. By virtue of the way and time that I came into this place, I was not able to bring the bill on for debate last year and perhaps that was for the best. But I am hopeful that this new Government and other members of this Parliament will consider the bill in a favourable light, and take on board the continuing peril that native forest logging causes for the iconic and threatened koala.

To put it bluntly, and in the clearest possible terms, koalas are going extinct right now. At this moment, koala populations are having their last remaining habitat bulldozed, cut down, sawn up and shredded to fire overseas power plants and for toilet and printer paper. The year 2050 is shaping up to be a tragic one. It will mark net zero carbon emissions reached 10 years too late and it will be the year that koalas become extinct in the wild in New South Wales. It is worth noting and remembering that those issues are connected. Koala habitat and climate action revolve around the same essential thing: mature, healthy and interconnected forests, forests that are resilient and resistant to natural and human-driven processes.

The bill seeks to resolve the single biggest threat to koalas—the destruction of their habitat—which will have a positive impact on the single most significant compounding influence on threats to koalas: climate change and subsequent extreme bushfires and droughts. Before the Black Summer fires, koala populations had declined by 50 per cent over the last 20 years. Then an estimated 61,000 koalas were severely impacted during those horrific fires in 2019 and 2020. They are estimates because the scale of those climate-driven fires was so immense that some three billion animals were impacted by those events. Those 61,000 koalas made up between 80 and 85 per cent of entire populations in some areas, and yet logging recommenced in those same areas just a few short months after those fires tore through them. This was contrary to the then and former Government's own expert advice. The former Government completely failed to respond appropriately to the imminent extinction of koalas. It failed to acknowledge the findings of the inquiry into koala populations and habitat, and it failed to recognise that its flippant commitments to doubling koala numbers did more harm than good because it took over from the real work of protecting habitat.

The former Government put forward that the NSW Koala Strategy came with a \$192 million price tag and that it would have only directly protected an additional 22,000 hectares of koala habitat. I am absolutely supportive of government funding of conservation programs, but we know that keeping koalas alive today means keeping the adult trees standing in native forests. It cannot be achieved by just planting new trees that will not mature for another 30 to 40 years. It cannot be achieved by just reducing the number of koalas hit by vehicles. It is about habitat protection. We know that koalas out there today, the mums and dads of tomorrow's koalas, need habitat. It is my hope that this new minority Government will take action based on the evidence, especially as it applies to protecting native forests. Our public native forest estate is around 2.4 per cent of the whole of New South

Wales. It is not a whole lot of land, but for biodiversity, carbon sequestration, clean water, landscape resilience and our koalas, it is the most important 2.4 per cent of New South Wales that is exposed to serious impact and harm.

The bill before us now refers to koala habitat on the public forest estate and it seeks to protect only around 287,000 hectares of existing medium- to high-quality koala habitat, which would encompass around 20,000 hectares of koala hubs. The Department of Planning and Environment has undertaken the work and identified the areas of regional koala significance—the ARKS—and the koala hubs. A koala hub is referred to as:

Presence of an interconnected area of high-quality Preferred Koala Habitat sufficiently large in size so as to be capable of independently sustaining one or more breeding aggregations/resident populations, the minimum size of which is that necessary to produce 5 female koalas annum.

Despite this clear and inarguable information, taxpayers are subsidising the industrial-scale logging of our public forest estate and koala habitat to the tune of \$417 per hectare per annum. In the past financial year, it has also received lump sum subsidies of almost \$100 million. The public native hardwood division of the Forestry Corporation of NSW is running at a loss to the economy of around \$20 million per year.

When we compare this massive cost to the benefits to be gained by protecting native forests, any fiscal argument goes clear out the window. The recent Blueprint Institute's *Branching Out* report found that an immediate end to native forest logging in the north-east forests alone would see a net benefit of \$45 million by 2040, including the estimated cost of providing transitional packages to the industry as it closes down, as well as the cost of breaking wood supply agreements that extend to 2028. When compared to alternative land uses for native forest, ceasing logging immediately blows the net benefit out to \$260 million.

Whether it is the alleged free market, workers that need a planned transition, urgently needed climate action or the precious and threatened koalas, they all demand that native forest logging come to an end—now. Not in 2040 when the North East Regional Forest Agreement expires, not in 2027 when wood supply agreements expire, but now. If passed, the bill will mitigate climate change; protect some of our native forests, which are a vital part of the life support system in this State and on this earth; and increase the possibility that we will in fact save our iconic koalas from extinction.

The bill also seeks to empower citizen science, qualified ecologists and other suitably qualified persons to bring to the attention of the Minister real-time evidence of koala habitat and the critical statistics on koala populations required to prevent their extinction. It is only through real-time reporting on koala habitat that we can ensure its protection. The reality is that, in New South Wales right now, we are paying for the destruction of the natural world, reducing our access to clean water and air, and driving species to extinction—and we are using public money to do this. It is undeniable that the only appropriate response to native forest logging is to end it without delay. An industry that does not benefit the people, the economy or the environment is not an industry that should continue to exist. The industry is coming to an end across the country. Western Australia will end operations at the start of next year and Victoria has committed to a phase-out. It is clear to all who look that our forests are worth more standing.

The bill will ensure that forestry operations do not occur in areas of regional koala significance or areas declared by the Minister as koala habitat. The bill will ensure that the Minister declares koala habitat and arranges for the assessment to be tabled in each House of Parliament as soon as practicable, if the Minister receives an assessment by a suitably qualified person. I urge members to consider the bill in light of the real economic and environmental consequences. I urge members to consider the bill for future generations and what we decide to leave them.

Debate adjourned.

Motions

ACTIVE KIDS PROGRAM

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (14:19): I move:

(1) That this House notes that:

- (a) since its launch by the Liberal-Nationals Government in 2018 to the end of 2022, the Active Kids program has resulted in the creation of 5,822,082 \$100 vouchers helping parents offset the cost of participation of their school-enrolled children aged between 4½ and 18 years in sport and active recreation;
- (b) the top five activities for which girls redeemed the vouchers in 2022 were swimming, dance, netball, soccer and gymnastics and the top five activities for which boys redeemed the vouchers in 2022 were soccer, swimming, rugby league, basketball and martial arts;

- (c) with 44 per cent of children spending more than two hours a day on sedentary leisure activities, the Active Kids program plays a crucial role in shifting physical activity behaviours of children and instilling healthy lifestyle habits; and
 - (d) without the support of the \$100 Active Kids vouchers many families in New South Wales would be unable to afford to continue meeting the costs of their children's participation in sport and active recreation, resulting in harms to children's physical and mental health and wellbeing and in the closure of many local and community sport and active recreation groups due to unviability.
- (2) That this House calls on the New South Wales Government to immediately assure parents and the community sports and active recreation sector that the \$100 Active Kids voucher program will not be cancelled.

The Active Kids program is an important measure that the former Government put in place to address mental health and assist with the cost of living. The basic measure of the success of a government program is the take-up rate. The Liberal-Nationals Government introduced the voucher program in 2018 with an initial take-up rate of 53 per cent of eligible children throughout New South Wales. The take-up rate has increased every year since. It was 63 per cent in 2019, 65 per cent in 2020, 69 per cent in 2021 and a massive 72 per cent in 2022. In 2022 a total 1,373,787 vouchers were claimed by parents. The 2023 data is not yet showing on the Active Kids dashboard. Apparently there is a technical problem, but the Treasurer has probably removed it. It might be a savings measure for him.

Children aged five to 17 years should engage in a daily average of at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity through play, games, sports, transportation, chores, recreation or planned exercise. A key barrier to children's participation in organised sport and active recreation is the cost of registration and membership fees, which includes insurance. For many families subject to cost-of-living pressures, choices need to be made between paying for a child's sport or other pressing expenses. The \$100 Active Kids voucher for each child is a significant enabler and encourager for parents to choose to support their children's participation in sport and active recreation. For many local community sports and active recreation providers the Active Kids vouchers are helping lift the participation rate. Without the support of the vouchers, participation rates will inevitably decline, leaving some local groups no longer viable and resulting in children missing out.

A fantastic aspect of the program is the range of activities offered by eligible providers. The motion notes that the top five activities for which girls redeemed the vouchers in 2022 were swimming, dance, netball, soccer and gymnastics. The top five activities for which boys redeemed the vouchers in 2022 were soccer, swimming, rugby league, basketball and martial arts. Other activities making the top 10 for one or other genders were tennis, athletics, cricket, rugby union and Oztag. Rather than axing the program, the Government should focus on increasing its uptake even further, especially by identifying local government areas that have a lower participation rate and working with statewide sporting bodies to foster local providers in those areas. The motion calls on the New South Wales Government to immediately assure parents and the community sports and active recreation sector that the \$100 Active Kids voucher program will not be cancelled.

The current vouchers are available for use until 30 June 2023. Parents need to be able to assure their children that they will be able to continue their participation in their favourite sports and active recreation in the second half of this year. The Liberals and Nationals gave that guarantee during the election. The now Premier and his Labor colleagues gave no indication to parents that this successful program would face the chop. Parents, children and sporting groups should not be left anxious and wondering while the Minister for Finance conducts her line-by-line expenditure review in concert with the Treasurer. The \$100 Active Kids vouchers are value for money. Increasing children's participation in healthy sports and physical activity has immediate benefits to their physical and mental health, personal and social skills and general wellbeing, which will flow on as they grow into young people. A healthier, happier population is a guaranteed plus for the budget bottom line from savings in health, mental health, youth justice and social welfare expenditure. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (14:25): The shadow Treasurer so loved the Active Kids program that he cut it himself when he was in government. The shadow Treasurer does not need to move a motion calling on the Government to reverse a decision it has not made. He should instead make a personal explanation as to why, when he was the finance Minister sitting on the Expenditure Review Committee, he did not once say that a program that hundreds of thousands of parents depend on was not in the budget. If the shadow Treasurer could give us that explanation it would relieve me of the obligation of trying to get the bottom of how the former Government failed to fund this program it says it so loves.

The finance Minister and I have made initial inquiries into how it was possible that the Perrottet Government failed to fund the program. We have been advised that the former Minister for Tourism and Sport never put in a bid to continue the funding. Not only did members opposite cut the program but they did not even try to save it, even with all the powers available to them as the Government. All they had to do was put a bid into the Expenditure Review Committee and then make a decision. They could not even do that. We have active

kids in this in this State but we have inactive former Ministers on the other side of the House. That is the situation we find ourselves in.

The culpable Minister was Stuart Ayres. I inquired into what he was doing in June, around the budget period last year. He managed to find himself able to appoint John Barilaro to a position in New York, but he could not put a bid in to save the Active Kids program. That is the record that members opposite leave us. Let's not excuse his successor as sports Minister, Mr Henskens in the other place. He could have come to the rescue in the half-year review. He could have rocked up in February and done it—after they extended the review from December. But even then he could not find the time to say, "Here's the money." Government members will get to the bottom of this mess like we are getting to the bottom of the \$7 billion mess we have been left on the operating side of the budget and the billion-dollar mess we have been left on the capital budget. We look forward to coming up with a solution.

I seek a short extension of time.

Leave granted.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: I move:

That the question be amended by omitting paragraph (2) and inserting instead "(2) That this House notes that no budget submissions were made to the last budget by any former Ministers to fund the Active Kids voucher program beyond 30 June 2023".

They are the facts, and they are what this House should be considering. What we should hear in reply from the shadow Treasurer is an explanation as to how he let this one slip by.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (14:28): The Greens have listened with interest to the contributions from the former finance Minister and from the now Treasurer. I wonder how many more accusations we will hear from the former Government that the new Government is going to cancel or cut something that the former Government had already cancelled or cut. I know that certain members of the former Government are not keen on us looking backwards and unravelling the mess they created over the past 12 years. However, when it comes to matters like this, we are going to see more and more blaming of the new Government for things the old Government did. For that reason, The Greens wholeheartedly support the amendment moved by the Government as an actual reflection of the facts as opposed to the mudslinging and ridiculousness of members on the other side of the Chamber.

The Hon. WES FANG (14:30): I contribute to debate on this very important motion. It is important for a number of reasons. Members know that rural and regional kids in particular are really taking up the Active Kids program vouchers. I only need to look down a list of the Active Kids vouchers redeemed in electorates we sought to represent at the last election: Over 750,000 vouchers have been redeemed by those kids. Why is it important that this program continue? Sport is an equaliser for so many in our community. No matter what your background, your upbringing or the advantage you may or may not have, everybody is equal on the field. That is important for our communities. Sport provides assistance with mental health for so many kids. It assists them with confidence. It provides health and wellbeing advantages. Often it is something they look forward to, something they can aim for. It is a shining light in their lives. This Government does not recognise that. What members are seeing from those opposite is absolute obfuscation.

I note that the Premier has said he is looking to commit to the program for another year. Well, he needs to do better than that. Today he needs to say that Active Kids will continue. Many people in rural and regional communities are looking to this Government and this Premier to save the program. Today in question time members heard about the hockey team from Taree that wants this program saved. There are members opposite who well know the value of hockey in the Myall Lakes region. In fact, there are members opposite who participate in the very competition that team is involved in. It should be those opposite who are making the case for the program in this Chamber, not us—and it is a real tragedy they are not.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (14:33): I welcome the opportunity to make a contribution to this important debate. I was shocked by the Treasurer's revelations that indeed there was not even a single budget bid put in by the previous Government in relation to the Active Kids voucher program. It is worthwhile recapping that the only decision to cut the Active Kids program was that made by the previous Treasurer and the previous Minister for Finance, who is now shadow Treasurer. The only decision to cut this program was that taken last year by the Liberals and Nationals and then Treasurer Matt Kean in the preparation of his 2022-23 budget. That is the only decision that has been made.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: So make a decision today. Be a government.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I acknowledge the interjection across the table from the shadow Treasurer, and former finance Minister, who is calling on us to be a government. I assure members—and the community of New South Wales—that is exactly what we are doing. We are taking a calm, careful and methodical

approach to this Government's finances. We were deeply shocked by the state of the books we were presented upon being sworn into government. We knew we needed to be careful during the election campaign. We were prudent with our promises. We took a disciplined and careful approach because we knew the State was already projected to go into \$187.5 billion of government debt—the most ever—because of the decisions taken by the previous Government and the situation it had got us into.

But we did not know about the \$7 billion of additional pressures we would be facing over the forward estimates. Some 1,112 nursing positions, which were promised by the previous Treasurer in his budget speech as part of an expansion of the health workforce, were made temporary contracts instead of permanent positions. In the aftermath of the pandemic, those important nursing positions were put on as temporary positions. The other unfunded item in the budget was the decision to stop funding the office of Cyber Security NSW next year. The out-of-home care system is on track for hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of blowouts. We are going to be prudent. We are going to be open. We are going to be accountable as we work through this process. But we for sure will not be dictated to by those opposite, who already made the decision to cut the budget. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (14:36): There is a very easy answer here today that could save all members some time. Those opposite just need to say, "We will back in Active Kids." As a former Minister for Sport, I backed it. We created it. This is a serious issue, and I do not understand why this Government has such disdain for our children and their physical activity that it would look to cut this program. It is disingenuous of those opposite to have gone to an election with Chris Minns out in front of the cameras kicking a ball around with his boys. Those opposite got elected—guess what? They're now on that side of the Chamber. The power is in their hands to back this in right now. Looking backwards and blaming members on this side of the House will only get them so far. At some point they have to be answerable to those sporting communities, those kids and those volunteers. But guess what their first priority is? It is to pay the unions. The black hole is here because those opposite have to pay the ferryman. They have to pay the unions first before they can do anything else. They say, "How about we just cut the money to the kids?"

Active Kids vouchers are absolutely vital. There is a very simple answer here: Back it in and say, "Yes, we will do it. We will back in our families and our kids." Active Kids vouchers and other vital cost-of-living relief measures are under threat because we know it is the same old Labor. They cannot manage the budget. They cannot meet the demands of their union bosses at the same time as looking after families in New South Wales. We know how successful this program has been. As former Minister for Sport, I absolutely backed this in. Why? Because it makes a difference to families.

The PRESIDENT: Order! There is too much chatter in the Chamber. The member will be heard in silence.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: After the impacts of the pandemic, we know how important sport is. It is not just a line item in the budget. Those opposite can laugh and giggle, but this is important to families. After the pandemic we know the importance of mental health, social inclusion and volunteering. Involvement in a community sporting club teaches our kids how to turn up on a Saturday and be part of a team—part of something that matters. More than 4.85 million vouchers had been redeemed by the start of this year. They saved families \$481 million. This is a program that families need. More than half a million children in New South Wales use the Active Kids program introduced by our Government. We do not understand why those opposite are slashing it. Why are you taking a knife to this program?

Sporting pursuits allow our kids to play across the State. BMC Public Health reviewed the Active Kids program in 2021 and found that it led to increased physical activity across all sociodemographic population groups. Voucher-specific activity made up 42.2 per cent of the total time that children participated in structured physical activities outside of school. They increased or maintained that activity. It was good for them. They could be the future Sam Kerr, the future Ash Barty, the future Ellyse Perry, Cathy Freeman, Lauren Jackson—the people of our future. This is a sporting country and sporting capital, and the Government is letting down the State.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (14:39): It's a bit rich, isn't it? The hypocrisy is breathtaking. The shadow Treasurer refers to razor gangs. The only razor gang that was in operation was the gang that he was a member of, which cut this program. If this program is so good, why didn't the former Government give it long-term funding? Why wasn't it in the forward estimates with long-term commitments from the former Government? That's on them. Members can all agree that the objects of the program are laudable. We all agree that kids should be active. But the question is: Is this the best way? I readily admit that I accessed the Active Kids vouchers, and I am not someone who needs the kind of cost-of-living support that the Opposition is suggesting this program delivers. In a situation where we should be looking for a targeted approach to reverse the inequity in our society, perhaps we should look at the equity implications of this program. That is something for this side of the House to evaluate. It is our time in government.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: It's our time!

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I know it smarts, Damien. You lost. You're on the Opposition benches. It hurts. I can understand it. It is now our turn to be in Government. It is our turn to make these decisions. We will make them as we choose—

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Calmly and methodically.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: —methodically, with a process, not at the timing set by the Opposition.

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (14:41): I support the motion of the Leader of the Opposition regarding the Active Kids vouchers. It is an absolute disgrace that the Labor Party, in its first few months in government, will take the axe to such a worthwhile program in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. Members know the reason the Government will not be up-front with kids and parents about cutting this program: It needs the money. How else is it going to pay for its secret promises of large pay rises for public servants that it made to union officials prior to the election? Members know that the Government intends to remove the public sector wages cap. It did not budget for it prior to the election. The removal of the cap will cost billions and billions of dollars.

Now that Labor members are in government, they are responsible for balancing the budget and they have to accept those consequences. First in their sights to pay for their unfunded promises are the kids, the parents and the grassroots sporting organisations of New South Wales. As the Leader of the Opposition said, since it was launched by the Coalition in 2018 until the end of 2022, the Active Kids program has resulted in the creation of more than 5.8 million \$100 vouchers, helping parents offset the cost of participation for their school-enrolled children aged between four and 18 years. It is baffling that the Government would cancel this program as one of its first steps coming into government. The program not only benefits families but also provides much-needed revenue boost to local, volunteer-run sporting organisations.

The most recent data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare on physical activity and limiting sedentary behaviour found that among children aged five to 14, less than a quarter undertook the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity every day and less than a third met the screen-based activity guidelines. The Active Kids voucher was part of the solution to both of those problems. The Government needs to be up-front with kids and parents and tell them why it is cancelling this program and adding to cost-of-living pressures.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (14:44): I do not know if I am living in some parallel universe here. The Opposition side of the House is trying to tell us that we need to fund a program—which we are actively considering—that they cut. Let us understand what has happened here. From 1 July 2023—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: It doesn't finish until 30 June 2023.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Have you read the budget papers? Presumably you had a read of them, because you are the ones who supported the cut.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Point of order—

The PRESIDENT: I assume the point of order is that the member should direct his remarks through the Chair.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Through you, Mr President, the former Government—I do not know how many weeks you have been in opposition now. Six?—actually cut this program. Now they are on that side of the House, they are trying to tell us that we cut the program. There are these things called the budget and the forward estimates. You projected a wafer-thin surplus on the back of cutting future programs, and you won't even be decent and honest enough to front up to the electorate and admit what you were doing. During the election campaign—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The member will direct his comments through the Chair.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: My apologies. I was very busy campaigning, but I do not ever recall hearing that the then Government was cutting this program during the campaign. Now they come into this Chamber and want to lecture us about cutting a laudable program. Our kids do need to be active. We do need to encourage it. But we have to try to find the money now. In the little time I have, I remind members of the litany of debt that we have been left with. There were \$72 billion of public assets sold.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: It was \$93 billion, actually.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: It was \$93 billion. The infrastructure program that those opposite are so proud of is 80 per cent debt funded. They left us with a record high level of debt. The interest alone that we pay has risen from \$2.5 billion to \$7 billion. We now pay more interest than we have since 1996, and they want to criticise us for coming in here and thinking about where we are going to get the money for a program that they cut. The gall is unbelievable.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (14:47): The average New South Wales voter and parent might not be able to list every Government policy, or which policies they felt had a direct impact on their lives, but I bet Active Kids vouchers would be one very familiar to every parent of school-aged children—and a welcome policy, too. Not only do those vouchers have a direct relief effect on the wallets of mums and dads, but they also incentivise the essential active play that kids need for healthy physical, emotional and psychological development. Not only that, playing a sport knits both kids and parents into a community's social fabric as sporting teams and clubs are a major part of Australian community participation. Playing sport teaches children so many valuable lessons in resilience, sportsmanship, perseverance and determination, and it also gives them a social outlet and a way of making new friends.

For those living in rural and regional areas, the benefits of these vouchers are even more apparent. Because of practical issues of geographical distance, playing sport often comes with heavy additional travel costs, either to attend training to get to games in another town—sometimes over 100 kilometres or more away. During the lunch break, I spoke to an Armidale resident and father of four sons, who told me that the cancellation of the Active Kids vouchers would impact his decision about his sons continuing with their current sporting participation. The vouchers have been an immense help to him. As members can imagine, the cost of four children playing sport is significant. He mentioned to me that, with the cost of living increasing, expenses such as sport have to be considered carefully.

What a terrible shame it would be for our State if our youth were further encouraged to lead sedentary lifestyles thanks to decisions of the Labor Party, which prioritises its own pet social causes over the health and wellbeing of our State's future—our children. I sincerely hope that this will not be the case and call on the New South Wales Government to rule out the cancellation of this important voucher program. I support the motion because, as the Premier has been known to say, it is the right thing to do.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Where is your explanation?

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (14:50): In reply: The explanation is this: This motion was a real opportunity for members opposite to say, "We won't cut it."

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Six weeks ago you could have saved it yourself.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Six weeks ago—before the election, in fact—the Premier announced that the program would continue. This was your chance to say to every family in this State, "We will back your kids participating in sport. We will back your kids participating in a way that gets them off iPads and electronic devices." This motion was your chance as the Treasurer, your chance as the Minister for Finance to—

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: Point of order—

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Through you, Mr President.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: Mr President, you made an erudite ruling just moments ago about directing comments through the Chair.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Thank you, Mr Buckingham.

The PRESIDENT: The Leader of the Opposition has observed your point of order.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: This was the Treasurer's chance to show that this Government will make decisions for the benefit of the people of this State. Nothing could be more important than backing what the previous Government committed to do. We committed to this program before the election and we told the people of this State. But today members opposite—the Hon. Anthony D'Adam and the Hon. Mark Buttigieg, who lives in a parallel universe—

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Point of order: The Leader of the Opposition knows well that it is not parliamentary or orderly to point directly at members in an aggressive manner. Given that this is the first week of the new Parliament, we should set the standards that all members should follow.

The PRESIDENT: We will move on. There is only one minute left of this excellent speech in reply.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: From here on, whenever we hear that we must have budget repair and that there is a budget black hole, it is an excuse to cut something. This Government is committed to being a government of no vision and no delivery for the people of this State. This Government reflects previous Labor governments, which benefitted their mates on a regular basis but cut the future of the people of this State, including that of our kids. Nothing could be sorrier than the Government not backing this motion.

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Damien Tudehope has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Daniel Mookhey has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes24
 Noes11
 Majority.....13

AYES

Banasiak	Faehrmann	Moriarty
Borsak	Graham	Murphy (teller)
Boyd	Higginson	Nanva (teller)
Buckingham	Houssos	Primrose
Buttigieg	Hurst	Roberts
Cohn	Jackson	Ruddick
D'Adam	Latham	Sharpe
Donnelly	Mookhey	Suvaal

NOES

Carter	Maclaren-Jones	Rath (teller)
Fang (teller)	Martin	Tudehope
Farroway	Merton	Ward
MacDonald	Munro	

PAIRS

Kaine
Lawrence

Taylor
Mitchell

Amendment agreed to.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the motion as amended be agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.*Business of the House***WITHDRAWAL OF BUSINESS**

The Hon. EMMA HURST: I withdraw private member's business item No. 12 standing in my name.

*Motions***WATER SECURITY**

The Hon. WES FANG (15:04): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that the Commonwealth and New South Wales Labor Governments have cancelled projects designed to ensure water security for the families and farmers of regional New South Wales, including the raising of the Wyangala Dam wall and the construction of the Dungowan Dam.
- (2) That this House:
 - (a) condemns this reckless disregard for the welfare of people in regional New South Wales and for the viability of agriculture in regional New South Wales; and
 - (b) calls on the New South Wales Government to take all steps necessary to ensure water security for the families and farmers of regional New South Wales, including those in Tamworth and Forbes and the surrounding regions.

People of rural and regional New South Wales have great concerns that the Government has no consideration for the issues that exist in our communities west of the Great Dividing Range. We know that because we have seen what members opposite have done to the former Government's water security plans. We must realise that in this country we have flooding rains.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Order! I am having trouble hearing the member. I understand conversations need to take place, but I ask members to keep the volume down. The Hon. Wes Fang has the call.

The Hon. WES FANG: Members opposite do not want to hear what rural and regional communities are concerned about, and that is water security.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Point of order—

The Hon. WES FANG: Is there a point of order? Are you going to shut down the debate?

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: We have a new MLC from Dubbo, west of the divide. Don't you know where Dubbo is?

The Hon. WES FANG: Where is your MLC from Dubbo?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Order! I remind the Hon. Wes Fang of the limited time he has remaining. I ask members to refrain from interjecting, including the Hon. Greg Donnelly. The Hon. Wes Fang has the call.

The Hon. WES FANG: I apologise, but this is an issue that I am very passionate about. The communities that I represent in this place want to know that we have their back when it comes to water security, droughts and flooding rain. We must ensure that we have appropriate and stable water supplies for communities in the New England and that we have the ability to manage floods across the State.

Ms Cate Faehrmann: How has that gone for you?

The Hon. WES FANG: Perhaps Ms Cate Faehrmann likes to treat these topics as a bit of a joke, but members on this side of the House look at the issues and formulate a plan. That is what we did for Dungowan Dam and Wyangala Dam. The Labor Federal and State governments have cancelled those projects. The communities that are affected want to know what the Government will do to ensure that they have a secure water supply and how it will manage flooding events. Raising the dam walls would have ensured that we had the capacity to manage inflows and that the water could be discharged in a stable way. We would have ensured that there was enough water for irrigation and drinking—all the things that we need dams for. But the Government members have disregarded all that and have ensured that the communities experience great angst about their future water supplies and flood management. We asked questions about this, but we received no answers about how the Government will manage the situation. What they have done—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Better than you.

The Hon. WES FANG: I acknowledge the interjection of the Leader of the Government, who thinks she is managing it better than us. If she thinks that cancelling projects that were going to assist the supply of water to New England is handling it better than we did, then we will wear that with a badge of honour. Those words will come back to haunt her if she thinks that cancelling projects and infrastructure related to water in rural and regional communities is a better way of handling it than we did. I call on members opposite to tell those communities what they are going to do to ensure the water supply for New England and how they are going to manage flood events into the future with those projects being cancelled. I know that the communities that I represent are waiting for those answers.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast) (15:10): The Government will be opposing the motion because it is nonsense and factually inaccurate. On the Dungowan Dam, we have been absolutely clear with the Tamworth community that the project that the previous Government was pursuing was never an answer to their genuine water security concerns. For 12 years the Tamworth community expressed legitimate anxiety about their water security in the context of their thriving industrial base and their growing population. Let us remember the original sin of Chaffey Dam. The water Minister, Duncan Gay, stood up in Parliament and said, "Increasing the size of the Chaffey Dam is going to deliver on Tamworth's water security." The size was increased, but zero litres of additional water was allocated to Tamworth's town drinking water.

Then there is Dungowan Dam, a project that would take billions of dollars and 10 years to build and fill. We are entering the drying period right now. Members opposite were never going to deliver the Dungowan Dam. We have delivered certainty to the Tamworth community and we will deliver them the Namoi Regional Water Strategy, which should have been delivered years ago. It is late because members opposite could not get their heads around the actual work that needed to be done to deliver Tamworth's water security.

We are going to do advanced water treatment, water purification for industry, and pipeline upgrades. In fact, we will be handing over stage one of the Dungowan pipeline to the Tamworth Regional Council imminently. We will be doing off-farm storage and a range of infrastructure and non-infrastructure options. Those options are set out clearly in the Namoi Regional Water Strategy, which I will deliver in a matter of weeks and which will chart a clear path forward for the Tamworth community. It is not complicated.

The Tamworth community were sick and tired of having their time and money wasted on projects that were never going to happen. We are delivering real solutions to their real problems. I spoke to the Mayor of

Tamworth, Russell Webb, yesterday. Whilst he was disappointed that the dam was not proceeding, he was equally as disappointed at the time that has been wasted on this project. He was enthusiastic to meet with me next week to discuss a practical path forward. That is what we are doing for the Tamworth community.

The Wyangala Dam project is in final business case assessment with Infrastructure NSW and I await that advice. But, to be very clear, the idea that the Wyangala Dam was ever a flood mitigation dam for the Central West is completely misleading. It was only intended to deliver additional water for agriculture. Communities like Eugowra, which were devastated last year, are upstream of the dam. It would have made no difference. Members opposite should get the facts right. We have a clear path forward. We will be delivering proper water strategies for our regions. There will be no more time and money wasted on pie-in-the-sky projects that will never happen.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (15:13): It is extraordinary to be in the House on the first day of the Liberals' and Nationals' time in opposition. It is the first day that they are able to put forward private members' business and they move a motion that is trying to congratulate themselves, in some ways, about how great those ridiculous dam proposals were. That is despite Infrastructure Australia, the Productivity Commission, Infrastructure NSW and even Treasury, when it was asked various questions about those proposals and the funding of them during budget estimates, all hinted at the fact that those projects were not only unnecessary but were also based on no business cases and would be an obscene waste of taxpayer dollars.

The motion also suggests that the Labor Government and the Commonwealth Government have reckless disregard for the welfare of people in regional New South Wales and for the viability of agriculture in regional New South Wales. The upper House inquiry into dams travelled and spoke with representatives, people from the lower Lachlan Valley and members of the Australian Floodplain Association. Landholders across New South Wales spoke to us about what they said was reckless disregard of their interests by The Nationals. They said that the dams were really just about shoring up Barnaby Joyce's seat, Kevin Anderson's seat and seats for The Nationals, and at what expense? Hundreds of millions of dollars were announced at the time, but we later found out that billions of dollars of taxpayer money was going towards something to prop up a candidate in an election. That is what we are talking about with those dams.

I acknowledge the contribution by the water Minister about the wasted years. That is what the community should be angry about: the reckless disregard and the wasted years pursuing a ridiculous proposal that was never going to get off the ground. What disrespect that was, not just to the people of regional New South Wales but also to the people right across the State. Without a considered business case saying it stacks up, The Nationals spent years pursuing the Dungowan Dam and the Wyangala Dam. They suspended—

The Hon. Natalie Ward: Point of order: I ask that the member, as passionate as she is about the matter, directs her comments through you, Mr Deputy President, and not directly across the table to the member who moved the motion. He is entitled to move the motion. I ask that her comments are confined to the motion itself and through the chair.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): I thank the member. Ms Cate Faehrmann has the call.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: In my last 10 seconds, I will finish with this: They wasted the Government's ability to come up with a genuine water security strategy for the people of Tamworth. They wasted all those years pursuing dodgy projects. [*Time expired.*]

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Before I call another member, I note the point of order taken by the Hon. Natalie Ward. I did not want to drag it out because it would have wasted Ms Cate Faehrmann's time, but this is week one of what will be another four years in Parliament. All members know what we should do and what we have to do. Let us please get on with the job as civilly as we can.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (15:17): As I have often found, when the Hon. Wes Fang speaks in this Chamber he provokes me into saying something. I am pleased that a motion about water has been moved in the first private members' session of the new Parliament. Water is one of the most, if not the most, precious resources that we have. I am pleased to be part of a Government that has recognised that. One of the Government's first acts will be to protect our water supply by ensuring it is not privatised. I point out the astonishment that I bring to the table when debating the motion. Members opposite had been in government for 12 years—that is three election cycles. They had promised a variety of dams. It went like this: At every election, particularly during the drought when it was tough for people across New South Wales and we were desperate to find solutions to a decreasing volume of water, The Nationals would turn up to Tamworth with the member for Tamworth and people such as the Hon. Wes Fang and the Hon. John Barilaro and say, "We've got a fix for the problem. We're going to build a dam."

Because water policy is complicated and requires much tougher decisions than members opposite have ever chosen to make, they tried to get away with that fallacy—the fallacy has been proven true by the change of government. After 12 years, not a single dollar was put into dealing with Dungowan Dam or Wyangala Dam. There was no money in the budget. For all the carrying on about what Labor may or may not do with the mess that we have been left because of the former Government's failure to act for 12 years, let us get to the truth. The former Government talked about it. They talked a big game, promised communities change, promised them water security, and delivered not one extra litre of water and not one dollar to even try to build the projects they said they would.

Every single time they tried to continue this fallacy that they cared about people in regional New South Wales, that they understood the difficulties those communities were having with water security, and that they were prepared to plan with and listen to those communities to make sure that they genuinely had water security. The amount of money that was tagged for this project could make Tamworth water secure with about a third of the money that is required if they were prepared to do the work. But, no, the project was a smoke-and-mirrors exercise that has been completely shown up, finally, after 12 years. Honestly, the Hon. Wes Fang should be embarrassed that he tried to say "tut-tut" to the Government.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (15:20): We knew it would be coming, and so soon. The cost of a Labor government is too high a price to pay for the people of New South Wales, especially those in rural New South Wales. The State Government pulling its share of funding following the decision of the Federal Government not to fund the Dungowan Dam project is most disappointing. Water is the most critical of resources and not one that farmers can take lightly. Their whole lives and livelihoods depend upon its reliability. The cancellation of the Dungowan Dam will be felt in real and concrete ways for the people of Tamworth and the region. The pulling of funding of this project means less water for the people of Tamworth, and that fact will have real consequences. Some of the intended benefits of the dam included diversifying water sources, increasing the town water security for Tamworth, maintaining the reliability of water for agriculture in the Peel Valley and maximising local job opportunities which would in turn inject millions of dollars into the local economy and unlock new investment opportunities for the region. Now all those promised benefits will be taken away from regional New South Wales once again.

A troubling but unsurprising aspect of this slashed project is that we are already well underway with the construction of the dam, with stage one being completed with the 55 kilometres of underground pipeline installed running from the Calala Water Treatment Plant at Tamworth to the Dungowan showgrounds. I know that because when I drive to Sydney, I drive past that pipeline. The environmental impact statement has been completed, with the New South Wales State authority on track to assess all public submissions of the statement by the end of 2023. To grind to a halt in the middle of such a crucial project for the people of New England and Tamworth is disappointing to say the least. We need to ensure that our regional communities have water security, especially those families and farmers in Tamworth and surrounding communities. I have lived experience of the 2017 to 2019 drought when in my community we had less than 100 days of water before it rained. I support the motion of my colleague the Hon. Wes Fang.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (15:23): I contribute to the debate on the motion from the Hon. Wes Fang. A couple of things need to be noted. The former Government had quite a lot of time to get on with the dam project. They were pursuing the project for a decade, pushing it forward. They cannot blame anyone but themselves when nothing, or very little, has been done. I often raised questions to both water Ministers throughout the last term of the Parliament about the project. I asked who would be paying for this project in the long run. I was insinuating that it would be the end-user who would cop or bear the brunt of the cost of the project. I could not get a firm commitment from either of those water Ministers that that would not be the case.

The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party is very supportive of dams and water infrastructure, but we take each project on a case-by-case basis, and they have to stack up. Labor should not necessarily pooh-pooh any large infrastructure project simply because it costs a lot, because the cheapest time to build something is today and the next cheapest time to build something is tomorrow. Sometimes one needs to bite the bullet and start. It is unfortunate that Barnaby Joyce and Kevin Anderson could not start the project in 12 years. Unfortunately, that is where we are. In terms of Labor's plans for the Namoi and its water strategies, I await further detail. Regarding the Minister's comments the other day on water recycling, I urge a bit of caution. I think she should be mindful of her comments. She should get some advice because some industries in Tamworth are not suited to water recycling, such as the red meat abattoirs. Water recycling is suitable for white meat abattoirs. I flag that. The motion from the member is possibly well intended but—

The Hon. Wes Fang: It is very well intended.

The Hon. MARK BANASIAK: I would not go that far. It might be well intended, but some blame can be put on Opposition members for not getting on with the project and getting it done. The Shooters, Fishers and

Farmers Party supports water infrastructure projects, but when governments drag the chain, they only have themselves to blame.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (15:26): I contribute to the debate on the motion from the Hon. Wes Fang and dissociate from the Opposition's motion. The National Party, of all entities in this country, have form on ridiculous water infrastructure projects. The list goes on and on and goes back into the mists of time. One water infrastructure project in particular comes to mind, and that is the Cranky Rock dam. Who can forget the Cranky Rock dam? It was announced and announced and announced and announced. I remember the Hon. Duncan Gay—

The Hon. Wes Fang: Good man.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: Good man. He was standing in a paddock being asked a very pointed question by a journalist about the Cranky Rock dam. He was asked, "Who is going to use the water from the dam?" Duncan looked at the ground, toed the grass and could not come up with anybody. He said, "By building the dam, we will create jobs." That was clearly a project that did not have a good business case or return on investment. He could not point to an irrigation industry that would be sustained. After some time, he was asked whether it would be used by miners, and he said, "Yes, possibly." The miners in that valley said, "No, we're not interested at all." That was a massive waste of time. Who knows how much money was spent by various departments investigating it?

The Dungowan Dam is another back of the beer coaster idea from Barnaby Joyce, who again and again has proposed the stupidest water infrastructure projects. Another one of my favourites from Barnaby Joyce was the Oxley Wild Rivers dam, which is probably one of the most inaccessible, remote and, because of that, pristine areas in this State. It is a national park. I remember him proposing it as one of the big six water infrastructure projects that would be nation-building. Another idea was damming the Clarence River to pump the water—I note the reaction from the Hon. Wes Fang. He is intimating that he thinks that damming the Clarence River might be an idea. Has he been there? Has he had a look at it? They wanted to pump the water over the Northern Tablelands to create this new Kununurra nirvana. All of them are ridiculous water projects that should never have been put on the table and were always just announcements made— [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. WES FANG (15:29): In reply: I thank all honourable members for their contributions, including the Minister, Ms Cate Faehrmann and the Hon. Penny Sharpe. I note the comments of the Hon. Penny Sharpe about my ability to inspire, or incite. I thought it was "inspire", but it might have been "incite".

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Incite.

The Hon. WES FANG: I thought I was inspiring you to make a contribution.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: No, provoking.

Ms Sue Higginson: Point of order—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): I anticipate the point of order. The Hon. Wes Fang, as a former Deputy President, should know that all comments should be directed through the Chair and not across the table to the Leader of the Government.

The Hon. WES FANG: I think I did say at one point, "Do as I say, not as I do." I thank other members who made a contribution: the Hon. Aileen MacDonald, the Hon. Mark Buttigieg and the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham. However, I note the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Western New South Wales, did not make a contribution, which is quite disappointing given that those areas would probably have benefitted had those projects gone ahead.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: If you really want to play the game of verballing people who are not in the Chamber, we can do that too.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Wes Fang may continue.

The Hon. WES FANG: The Hon. Penny Sharpe obviously felt inspired then, Mr Deputy President.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: Point of order: Members opposite are taking up the honourable member's time. You have just ruled and called for order, and members immediately spoke across the table and interjected again. I ask that they be directed to listen to the member, that he be heard in silence and that he have another minute to complete his reply.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): I uphold the point of order.

The Hon. WES FANG: There were extraordinary contributions, particularly from members opposite. I moved the motion so that those members could provide the people of rural and regional New South Wales with some confidence and reassurance that they would fight for them and for the projects that are on the chopping block because of decisions made with the Federal Government. But what we have seen from those opposite is an absolute disregard for the needs of rural and regional communities in relation to water proposals. I note that one member said that it is great to debate a motion about water because they could speak about the non-privatisation of Sydney Water. The complete focus of the Government has been on metropolitan water issues with no regard whatsoever to what is happening in rural and regional communities. When we have an issue again, it will be on the Government's head. [*Time expired.*]

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

The House divided.

Ayes 14
Noes 19
Majority..... 5

AYES

Banasiak
Borsak
Carter
Fang (teller)
Farraway

Latham
MacDonald
Maclaren-Jones
Martin
Merton

Munro
Rath (teller)
Tudehope
Ward

NOES

Boyd
Buckingham
Buttigieg
Cohn
D'Adam
Faehrmann
Graham

Higginson
Houssos
Hurst
Jackson
Kaine
Lawrence

Mookhey
Moriarty
Murphy (teller)
Nanva (teller)
Primrose
Sharpe

PAIRS

Mitchell
Taylor

Donnelly
Suvaal

Motion negatived.

Condolences

BRUCE CHILDS

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (15:42): I move:

- (1) That this House notes with sadness the death of former Senator Bruce Childs who passed away in Sydney on 4 May 2023, aged 88 years.
- (2) That this House further notes that Bruce Childs:
 - (a) was NSW Secretary of the Printing and Kindred Industries Union and Assistant General Secretary of NSW Labor;
 - (b) was elected to the Australian Senate in 1980 and served until 1997; and
 - (c) was a longstanding advocate for peace and nuclear disarmament and continued to be a mentor to many activists and unionists.
- (3) That this House sends its sincere condolences to Bruce Childs' family, friends and comrades.
- (4) That this resolution be communicated by the President to the family of Bruce Childs.

Over the past few months, the Labor Party has lost a number of true believers and great local representatives. I felt great sadness at the passing of my colleagues Alison Megarrity and John Kerin. So it was with great dismay that we learned of the passing on 4 May of another giant of our movement, Bruce Childs. Bruce was known as a person of great energy, commitment and principle. He will be sorely missed. I was privileged to have attended many rallies and meetings with Bruce, to have worked with him when he was a senator and I was a ministerial adviser,

to have served with him on the Evatt Foundation, to have been involved in many election campaigns with him and to have been signed up by him in the printing division of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union while working with lithographic offset printers as a community worker in the days before desktop publishing and photocopiers.

Bruce was born in Sydney in August 1934 and after leaving school he served a printing apprenticeship in etching. At meetings of apprentices convened by the Amalgamated Printing Trades Union of Australia in 1951, the 17-year-old Bruce moved a motion condemning the Federal Coalition's horror budget and was subsequently invited to attend the union's board of management. He joined the Australian Labor Party, became clerk of the chapel and led his first strike in 1953. After completing his apprenticeship, Bruce became a full-time organiser in 1957, eventually becoming the joint secretary of the New South Wales branch of the Printing and Kindred Industries Union and federal vice-president. Bruce was also actively engaged in many progressive political issues, as he would be throughout his whole life. He opposed the war in Vietnam, opposed nuclear testing in the Pacific, supported the women's liberation movement and convened Palm Sunday peace marches.

Bruce was elected as an assistant general secretary of the New South Wales Labor Party in 1971. He was subsequently elected to the Australian Senate in October 1980, where he worked effectively on many committees, including chairing key inquiries into matters ranging from fishing to casinos. He also championed key reforms to the Senate's committee system. Bruce resigned from the Senate in September 1997. In his last speech, Bruce said, "I have never identified with being a politician, but I really do identify with being a parliamentarian." The valedictory speeches that followed were warm and effusive across party lines for his impressive contributions as a parliamentarian. Bruce excelled as a parliamentarian. That is where he saw his role: in the Senate. That is where he worked most effectively. Many across party lines acknowledged the work that Bruce had done to improve the Senate committee structure, which is still there to this day as a consequence of his efforts, his work, and the time, energy and quiet resolve that he put in.

In retirement, Bruce turned his inexhaustible energy and patience to reconvening the Palm Sunday committee in opposition to Australia's involvement in the Iraq War. As always, his commitment to promoting equality, social justice, democracy and human rights was always clear. Bruce never promoted his own self-interests; rather, he elevated those around him who he believed would create positive change for the working class. Bruce will be missed by all of us who knew him. Our thoughts are with his wife, Yola, his family, friends and all others who had the honour of knowing this patient and tireless champion of the working class.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (15:47): Bruce Childs was a leader. He was humble, he was modest and he was gentle. For those reasons, people did not always think of him as a leader. He did not always lead from the front, but he really was a leader in the movements that the Hon. Peter Primrose described. He was a leader in the Vietnam war movement, the women's liberation movement, the antinuclear movement and, above all, in one of his continuing passions over generations, the peace movement generally. Bruce Childs really was a leader in the Senate and in the Labor Party. Part of the reason he led in that way was due to his views about how people change the world. His model of change was that people have to be engaged in parliamentary politics; if they are not, it is impossible to change the world. But people also have to be working with protest and community movements to really drive change. In the era he grew up in, that was an incredibly effective way to drive political change.

Bruce was a leader. He was a mentor. We all know people who leave Parliament and are never seen again inside the political system or political parties. Bruce Childs kept turning up as a mentor to the generations that followed. The issues he pursued were particularly about peace, economic justice for working-class people and integrity. It is reported that, at his first meeting of the New South Wales Labor Council, he was advised by older officials in his union delegation, "That's the leadership up there," they said, pointing to the front table. They said, "If you have any doubts on an issue, always vote against the bastards."

Bruce took that cue. It was a clue to the technique he applied, especially inside the New South Wales branch of the Labor Party. In 1971 he was the first left assistant secretary. He was followed by John Faulkner, Anthony Albanese, Damian O'Connor, Luke Foley, myself, the Hon. Rose Jackson and now George Simon—eight of us in 52 years. Losing Bruce is a real break in that continuous chain of people who have worked together on those issues since 1971. It represents a break in another chain, though. One of the most remarkable discussions I had with Bruce was when he spoke of a delegate in the printing industry who mentored him and who was there at the birth of the Labor Party in 1891. That is where Bruce learnt his politics from. Bruce Childs, through that delegate, was a link to those very early days of the oldest political party in the country. Now that chain is broken as we lose Bruce.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast) (15:50): I add my voice

of condolence and deep sadness at the loss of Bruce Childs. I first met Bruce well after he had retired from his parliamentary career when I joined the Labor Party in the early 2000s and became active in the anti-Iraq War movement. As has been mentioned by the Hon. Peter Primrose—and I thank him for bringing this motion to the House—as well as by the Hon. John Graham, Bruce was a man whose passion for the issues that drove him was far more important than any of the prestigious positions that he held. He held many prestigious and important positions within the labour movement and the Labor Party, but none of that mattered more to him than the issues he cared about, of which the peace movement was of course one of the most prominent. When I met him he had dedicated his life—as he continued to do for the many years that we worked together—to progressing the causes of peace, nuclear disarmament and the rights of working people.

As a young woman joining the Labor Party in the early 2000s, it looked better than it had historically but not as good as it does now. There were still not a lot of women in leadership roles. For a young woman like me, particularly, who worked through the machine of the Labor Party—the notorious Sussex Street operation—it was without question the mentorship of a number of men that really helped me to understand that I was supported and valued. Bruce was foremost amongst those men. Obviously the Hon. John Graham, Anthony Albanese and others who held that position of left-wing assistant secretary were incredibly important as well. But Bruce—as the first person who had stepped into that role in an at times deeply toxic, conflictual and very masculine environment—was never someone who made young female activists feel anything other than welcome and valued.

I know that there are a number of women now in the Labor Party—and some of them are working in this building, like Anna York, Tamsin Lloyd and many other women of my generation—for whom Bruce and his leadership of the peace movement, and his work in the Evatt Foundation, was such a model of support and mentorship. He was never anything other than the most inclusive and supportive of role models. It cannot be underestimated that it takes time, energy and effort to make cultural change in the Labor Party. The leadership of men like Bruce Childs created space for women like myself. I express my deepest thanks to him for that and for his work over so many years on issues that are important to people like me in the Labor Party. I send my deepest condolences to his family. We owe him so much and we will always remember him as our first leader of the left in the Labor Party.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (15:53): I too thank the Hon. Peter Primrose for moving this motion and note the contributions of my colleagues. As members of the House probably realise, Bruce Childs was important to us for all the reasons that members have talked about. Bruce Childs was a gentle, kind intellect and a man of principle. I reflect on a couple of things in relation to Bruce and the great fortune I had as a woman in the Labor Party to have worked with him. More than anything else, one of the things I learnt from Bruce was that, yes, change happens inside Parliament but it also happens through the community. You work with a range of different people on the things that you agree with. There will be things that you disagree with all the time, but actually building a force for change and that long-lasting commitment means that people of faith and of no faith—people who have different views about a range of things—can still come together on the things that they care about and see that change.

That was seen particularly through the peace movement but also his work through the Evatt Foundation. I think a few members in the Chamber have been president or secretary of the Evatt Foundation over the years. At various points Bruce probably made us all become part of that foundation, which is quite a small think tank but a very influential one. It has led discussions about economic justice and the importance of data in understanding Australia and Labor's role in it, as well as the role of the party with an international focus based on the work of Doc Evatt. That was incredibly important. I was a young activist who had not heard of Doc Evatt when I joined the Labor Party. I joined because I cared about a lot of issues; they happened to be all the same that Bruce cared about, in the end.

Many of us were fortunate to benefit from that learned approach and those gatherings that he and Yola would have at their house. You were a very lucky young person if you got to go to his house for an evening. We would have an interesting speaker talking at great depth and with great intellect about the big questions: Where to for democracy? What is important within a principled democracy? Where are we heading with that? What are we doing in relation to international relations? Do we really need more nuclear proliferation? Of course, the answer would be no to that, but Bruce took time not just to chant the words and turn up to the rallies—although he definitely made us do that as well—but to teach us and to share that information. One of the great traditions within working-class movements and unions was that education function for members of those organisations, of which the Evatt Foundation was one for us, but it also occurred within his own union. It was the idea that we can share knowledge and empower each other to make change. I pass on my deep condolences. Labor members are really sad today. Vale Bruce Childs.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (15:56): In reply: I thank all honourable members who participated in the debate. To echo the words of us all, we will really miss Bruce Childs.

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

Motion agreed to.

Motions

CANNABIS LAW REFORM

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (15:57): I seek leave to amend private members' business item No. 26 by omitting "commends the Premier for his" and inserting instead "notes the Premier's".

Leave granted.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: Accordingly, I move:

- (1) That this House notes the comments of the Premier the Hon. Chris Minns, MP, in 2019 who, in reference to cannabis, told a gathering of party members in favour of sensible drug law reform that:
 - (a) it was "time for Labor to have a big debate that includes a commitment to legalise this drug";
 - (b) "while legalisation would make it easier to control, decriminalisation would not allow the state to regulate and control its manufacturing or distribution"; and
 - (c) "the bottom line is that we can't make it go away, but we can make it safer, less potent and less criminal. Without rewarding bikies, and organised crime groups that feed off the black market nature of the drug."
- (2) That this House notes the Premier's courageous commitment to cannabis law reform in 2019.
- (3) That this House notes the Government's proposal for a drug summit and calls on the Premier to inform the New South Wales community at the earliest opportunity when and how the drug summit will proceed.

I speak on the issue of cannabis prohibition and how we as a society, and particularly as legislators and governments, respond to the issue of the use of substances broadly referred to as "illicit drugs" that has long vexed us. From the outset of this debate—and from the outset of the Legalise Cannabis Party's involvement in public discourse—I want to be clear on two points regarding both this motion and the issue of cannabis and drug law reform more generally. Firstly, the Legalise Cannabis Party and I intend to bring a value system to this House, to this issue and to the debates and discussions that follow based on compassion, freedom, consensus and reason. Secondly, we are not interested in gotcha political manoeuvring intended to embarrass, wedge or isolate participants in this discourse.

This motion is not intended to embarrass the Premier—quite the opposite. I clearly commended the Premier for his comments but then amended the motion. I commend the Premier for his considered views and the attention he has given to the issue. I agree with almost everything the Premier has said. It is clear from his comment—that it is "time for Labor to have a big debate that includes a commitment to legalising this drug"—that the Premier has thought deeply on the issue. Many people in the Government and the Labor Party have turned their attention to this issue and settled upon a policy position that is not dissimilar to mine and the Legalise Cannabis Party, namely that the prohibition of illicit drugs and cannabis has spectacularly failed. In fact, its failure and the belligerent adherence to it by generations of lawmakers doggedly pursuing the war on drugs may well have been one of the most costly, damaging and counterproductive social policies ever enacted in human history.

Australia first responded to the issue of cannabis use in the 1920s, acting as a signatory to the 1925 Geneva Convention on opium and other drugs, which saw the use of cannabis restricted to medicinal and scientific purposes only. Cannabis was grouped with morphine, cocaine and heroin, despite the widespread use of cannabis as a medicine in Australia at the time. New South Wales outlawed cannabis in 1935. We are closing in on 90 years of failed prohibitionist policy in this country, and it is clear that the Premier knows this. We—and it is my hope the new Government—are not interested in the failed, adversarial model of policy development that has led to law-and-order auctions, or in the ridiculous "head in the sand" model of the Opposition before the last election that responds to the issue by saying, "There is no place for drugs in our society," despite the evidence of tens of thousands of years of human use of multitudes of substances for stimulation and medicine.

Alcohol, caffeine, opiates and cannabis are part of everyday use. We must recognise that and act to regulate all of them to reduce harm and the cost to society. Turning to what is probably the most important aspect of the Premier's comments, I quote him as reported:

While legalisation would make it easier to control, decriminalisation would not allow the state to regulate and control its manufacturing or distribution ...

Further, he stated:

The bottom line is that we can't make it go away, but we can make it safer, less potent and less criminal. Without rewarding bikies, and organised crime groups that feed off the black market nature of the drug.

The Premier has identified the crux of the legalisation issue. Decriminalisation does not solve the supply issue or create safe regulation. This is experienced in reality in the ACT, and it is this aspect of the legalisation issue that we must turn our minds to, as our Premier already has. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (16:02): Mr Deputy President, I congratulate you on your unanimous election to the position. I too congratulate the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham on his election to this place. I served with him during the first four years in this place and we worked really well together on a number of things, including an inquiry into underdosing chemotherapy at St Vincent's Hospital. I can see that he has already made a learned contribution to the House, and I look forward to working with him. I lead for the Government on this motion and indicate that it will support the motion.

In New South Wales cannabis medicines are regulated under a medical framework to ensure patient safety. Any doctor can prescribe a cannabis medicine if they believe it is an appropriate treatment option for their patient and have obtained the relevant approval from the Therapeutic Goods Administration. However, compared to other prescribed medicines, the evidence base to provide doctors with confidence to prescribe cannabis medicines is still lacking, as is the availability of medicines registered with the Therapeutic Goods Administration that have been assessed for quality and safety. The Labor Government remains committed to hold a drug summit, bringing together experts, law enforcement and other stakeholders. It is important that we allow that process to occur. Indeed, it was the last Labor Government that held a drug summit in 1999, as I understand it.

Ms Sue Higginson: It was.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you. I acknowledge the interjection. New South Wales has invested significantly in research to understand the efficacy of cannabis-derived medicines as treatment options for various health conditions. The evidence gathered from clinical trials can help enable doctors to appropriately prescribe cannabis medicines. Four clinical research areas have been explored under the medicinal cannabis program from 2016 to 2019: children with severe epilepsy, chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting, appetite-related symptoms in palliative care patients and controlling symptoms in patients with advanced cancer. Funding has been provided also to investigate the use of cannabinoids for people with spinal cord injury.

As I stated earlier, the New South Wales Government is committed to holding a drug summit that will bring together experts, law enforcement and other stakeholders. It is important that we allow that process to occur. We want to get it right to ensure that we achieve the best possible outcome for the broader community. I acknowledge that the Government supports the motion as amended by the member. I thank the member for his contribution and look forward to working with him to deliver for the people of New South Wales.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (16:05): On behalf of the Greens, I support the motion put forward by the member. We have a history of advocating for drug law reform and cannabis law reform in this place. Last year The Greens introduced a bill to this place that would have taxed and regulated cannabis. We have given notice of the same bill again to see if we can get it done in this term of Parliament. The motion congratulates the Premier for his comments before he was Premier, comments that were very much in favour of not just decriminalising cannabis but legalising cannabis.

It is a strange thing, politics. Politicians always seem to have the courage to speak the truth about the failed war on drugs before they are in positions of power or after they have been in positions of power. Quite a few politicians are strong advocates for drug law reform, the decriminalisation of all drugs and a legal cannabis market—people like Bob Carr, former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark and former WA Premier Geoff Gallop. I wonder whether we will see anyone from this latest cohort doing the same thing in a few years' time. What a pity we do not see that courage while those people are in office.

I note that Labor has committed to a drug summit. Labor members have been saying since the 2019 election that they would have a drug summit that year if they were elected. This time they have committed to it again, but we remain in the dark about when that drug summit will be. I note that this is what the motion is trying to get to. We need details on the proposed drug summit. It is time for the Premier to let the community know when that can be expected to take place. It needs a lot of work. It needs a lot of input. I am sure there were many months of preparation for the 1999 Drug Summit, which was extremely important and led to that most incredible of outcomes: the Kings Cross Medically Supervised Injecting Centre. I note that there are many other recommendations from experts in the drug harm reduction space about where New South Wales needs to go, including opening more medically supervised injecting centres. The Greens support the motion. I was hoping for a bit more clarity from the Government about where the drug summit is up to; let us hope it is soon. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (16:08): This is an unusual motion in that it articulates a view which was put by the Premier on a previous occasion and welcomes the concept of a drug summit. On a personal note, the legalisation of cannabis is not something that I support. I know that the member who moved the motion was elected on that premise, and I respect him for his advocacy on that position. The more important issue is that he should not hold his breath. Let me tell him, the Premier flip-flops like he has never seen before. When the Premier was elected to Parliament in 2019, he wanted to disaffiliate with the union movement. Guess what? The Hon. Bob Nanva is now sitting in the Chamber.

The Hon. Courtney Houssos: Point of order: We have had an excellent debate on this important issue so far. The Leader of Opposition's comments are straying far from the motion. I ask that he be brought back to the substance of the motion.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): There is no point of order.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: The motion is predicated on believing things that the Premier has said in the past, but his track record shows that not a word of what he says can be believed. Even as recently as 2 May he was telling everyone that he would not deal with One Nation members. Guess what?

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Careful.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: The Deputy President and I have shared our views on this, and it is no reflection on him. What the Premier says in one space, he flip-flops on in another to suit his ends. The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham readily articulates what the Premier said on a former occasion, but he should not rely on it because his word cannot be relied upon. He has a track record of saying one thing and doing another. He promised to establish a drug summit, and today was the perfect opportunity for the Government to give the date on which that would occur. That would give some comfort to Ms Cate Faehrmann, who is calling for some articulation on that. This Premier's word cannot be relied upon. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. WES FANG (16:12): I note that when I stood up, I heard a gasp of excitement in the Chamber because members were wondering what my contribution would be. I can tell them that it will mirror that of the Leader of the Opposition and go to the part of the motion that congratulates the Premier and notes his comments from 2019. As the Leader of the Opposition so eloquently pointed out, I say to the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham that he cannot trust and believe what the man says. We know the hypocrisy of the Premier, who says one thing at one time and then says something else to somebody else. This Premier runs with the hares and hunts with the hounds. The Opposition is committed to looking at the issue and formulating a response that does not just suit the audience who we are speaking to at the time. The Premier says one thing at one time and then switches his views later.

We will have four years of a flip-flopping Premier who will not mean what he says and will change how he feels to suit his convenience at the time. That is really the substance of the motion before us. I urge members opposite to say to the Premier, "Let us stick to a position on things. Let us stick to a position on whether or not we are going to make deals in the upper House. Let us stick to one position on whether or not we are going to support cannabis and whether or not we are going to have a drug summit." If the Government is going to have a drug summit, it should give us the details. As with everything else, it has been government by obfuscation. There will be a review of this—

The Hon. Courtney Houssos: We've been here for six weeks.

The Hon. WES FANG: Six weeks is plenty of time to make some decisions, and so far this Government has made none. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (16:15): In reply: I thank the Hon. Courtney Houssos, Ms Cate Faehrmann, the Leader of the Opposition and the Hon. Wes Fang for their contributions to what is an important debate. There is no perfidy in what I said regarding the Legalise Cannabis Party's view on this important political issue, and I hope reform will be carried out in good faith. The Government has said that it will have a drug summit. A major ice inquiry was announced in 2018 and reported on in 2020. However, its great recommendations were not acted on. I hope this Government will consider them. I understand that a drug summit is a major undertaking and the proposed reform is very serious. But we have a new Government with new Ministers, and there is a limitless amount of information that can be gathered so that they can be well informed to create the reform that I hope will change our criminal justice and health systems, and which will have implications for most areas of our society. The legalisation of cannabis is a vexed issue that has been on the table for so long because it is incredibly important and will have ramifications on society.

I will hasten the issue slowly. As my grandmother used to say, the reward for patience is patience. No-one is demanding that this is resolved overnight. What they are demanding is that it is resolved properly. There are great models that can be learnt from that can inform the drug summit. In the past few weeks in the European

Union, Germany has moved to legalise cannabis. Other places are also moving in that area, including Thailand in the past few months. There is lots to learn. I understand that for a very long time the Opposition has had the Nancy Reagan "just say no, just say it's not happening" attitude to create a mythology about drug use that has been effective but also incredibly damaging to the social fabric of this country. It has cost people their lives, cost the Treasury billions of dollars and created a criminal class that has made trillions of dollars. Prohibition failed with alcohol; prohibition has always failed. The Premier knew it and his comments should be commended. I hope that, in time, we will resolve this issue to the benefit of all the people of New South Wales.

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

Motion agreed to.

ENERGY TRANSITION AUTHORITY

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (16:18): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) it is necessary to reduce the use of coal for energy production in order to meet emissions reduction targets set at State, Federal and international levels;
 - (b) Australia is one of the top five coal-producing countries in the world, and is the world's biggest exporter of metallurgical coal and second biggest for thermal coal;
 - (c) thermal coal mined in New South Wales contributes the vast majority of all thermal coal exported from Australia; and
 - (d) thermal coal still currently contributes around two-thirds of all energy generation in New South Wales.
- (2) That this House notes that:
 - (a) the necessarily urgent reduction in coal production and use will result in industrial restructuring and a reallocation of labour, workforces and investment; and
 - (b) the geographic clustering of the coal industry means these economic and industrial shifts will be experienced most acutely in certain regions (notably, the Hunter Valley) more than others.
- (3) That this House extends our profound thanks and appreciation to coal workers and their families, communities and unions for their invaluable contribution to the economic prosperity of this State by providing the energy we all use every day, and commits to repaying this debt of gratitude by having an honest conversation about the future of coal in New South Wales and working collaboratively with them to chart an optimistic path through this transition and to empower workers and communities to seize the exciting economic and social opportunities of a decarbonising economy.
- (4) That this House notes and congratulates the ongoing work of the Hunter Jobs Alliance, who have been leading advocates for a structural change authority for the Hunter region and coal-reliant communities, and recognises the suggested design principles laid out in the alliance's 2021 report Building for the Future: A 'Hunter Valley Authority' to Secure Our Region's Prosperity, which sets out the following principles for delivering an effective structural change coordinating body for the Hunter, namely that it be:
 - (a) mission focused (on structural change);
 - (b) independent;
 - (c) representative;
 - (d) durable;
 - (e) transparent;
 - (f) sufficient coordination and delivery capacity for key activities;
 - (g) a defined geographic scope; and
 - (h) sustainable and inclusive economic outcomes.
- (5) That this House notes the commitment from the Federal Government to develop a federal national net zero authority.
- (6) That this House commits to establishing a New South Wales energy transition authority that is:
 - (a) independent;
 - (b) fully funded;
 - (c) statutorily constituted;
 - (d) designed to interface and coordinate with its Federal counterpart, and enables the construction of regional structural change authorities underneath it;
 - (e) collaborative with and responsive to affected workers, their unions and communities; and
 - (f) designed to foreground and advocate for the interests of affected workers as its first priority.

Less than two week ago, the final turbine of the Liddell Power Station stopped turning, marking the end of a 52-year history of generating power for the people of New South Wales. The closure of Liddell is the first of what will soon become many coal-fired generator closures over the coming years. It is an exciting time in the history of our energy system, with new renewable generation coming online every day. The pace of coal closures is accelerating. The market is finally groaning into much-delayed action and billions of dollars of private investment are beginning to be funnelled into new renewable energy generation. It is undeniably good for the planet if we are to have any chance of avoiding the very worst effects of climate change. But left to the whims and profit motives of the market, the future does not necessarily look so bright for the workers.

In New South Wales our workers are particularly vulnerable, thanks to the shockingly ideological, bankrupt decision to privatise our energy network. We are now left with a situation where workers wake up each day in fear of an overnight announcement on the stock exchange that their workplace could close down years earlier than expected, or that their workplace is now owned by some faceless multinational billionaire type who could slash their pay or destroy their conditions. Because of the former Government's ideological obsession with privatisation, workers are left in the lurch with a government divorced from the levers of power. In Queensland, where power generators remain in public hands, the Government has been able to set clear dates and time lines for each station and has already begun putting in place plans for transitioning the workforce. Wouldn't that be nice?

This motion is calling for the New South Wales Government to finally face this issue head-on, to assume the responsibility of its role and manage this exciting decarbonisation in a fair and equitable way. Honesty, transparency and accountability are key values for The Greens and should be the foundational principles of any responsible government or political party. Unfortunately, for decades workers and communities in coal-reliant communities have been sold a myth that the good times are going to keep on rolling and that the coal boom will last forever. Working towards a just transition is so exciting. My Greens colleagues and I are passionate about it because in this arena we can demonstrate a better way for our politics and economy to operate. We can build a politics where a government works directly, enthusiastically and responsibly with workers, through their union representatives, to direct and plan our economy in a socially and environmentally just direction. We need a transition authority that is fully funded, fully independent and constituted with the interests of workers at its core.

Federally, the new Labor Government has finally announced what it is calling its transition authority. While better than nothing, we have some concerns with some of the principles and objectives that the Minister has been describing in the media. There is a lot of talk about attracting investors and industries while providing advice for workers on how to find a new job. That is too hands-off in our opinion, and that is why this motion makes it clear what our expectations of the New South Wales authority would be. It should be hands-on in advocating for the interests of workers and funded in a way that can really make a difference. It should not just function as a source of cheap loans and tax breaks for billionaire investors, with a frequently-asked-questions page—the industry I worked in has closed down, so what do I do now?—tacked onto its site.

For better or for worse, the fossil fuel industries of the past have shaped and sculpted our society, with entire towns and regions intrinsically linked to their rise and fall. As a society, we owe the workers who have powered our lives a debt of gratitude. They deserve to be supported and assisted in the transition out of their industry either into retirement, if that is appropriate for them, or into new and reliable high-quality employment if they so desire. It might be an unfamiliar concept to some members in this House, but we must work with unions and workers to ensure that no-one is left behind by delivering a job-for-job transition, early retirement and compensation options, and free and relevant reskilling and retraining for those who seek it.

The communities in which those workers live must be empowered to remain vibrant and desirable places to live, with ongoing funding for education, health, public transport and other vital and leisure facilities. We must end coal and gas by 2030 if we are to have any hope of avoiding the worst outcomes from a rapidly changing climate. We must embrace reality and commit to working hand in hand with communities to acknowledge the change and seize the opportunity it presents to deliver a brighter, diversified future for regions like the Hunter Valley. We do not have to choose between taking urgent climate action and supporting coal communities; we can do both. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (16:23): In his maiden speech in this place, the Hon. Anthony D'Adam said that whenever politicians talk about economic restructuring, working people cop it in the neck. They were the truest words he will probably ever say in this place. It is the whole history of politicians who in the abstract talk about working people losing their jobs with no viable replacement and no comparable set of skills. The most absurd part of the motion moved by The Greens is in paragraph (3), where they thank the coal workers. The thank-you note says, "We are closing down your industry and you are out of work." That is not thanks. It is a barbaric policy to throw people out on the scrap heap. The growth industry in the Hunter Valley would be new Centrelink offices.

The motion is misconstrued and misunderstands the nature of economic restructuring. Paragraph (4) refers to the work of the Hunter Jobs Alliance. Let's understand what that is about. The Hunter Valley has 60,000 workers reliant on coal—15,000 directly and the rest indirectly. The proposal by the Hunter Jobs Alliance—it is all on its website—is to close down the 60,000 jobs and replace them with floating windmills, and to fill in the mining pits with water for water sports. For coalminers whose fathers and grandfathers were coalminers or workers in the ancillary industries of transport, coalmining support or other employment sectors that feed off the income produced by coal in places like Singleton and Muswellbrook, it is an insult to be told that they have a future in water sports on filled-in coal pits or that they will get a job on a floating windmill.

Those windmills are quite popular in the Northern Hemisphere. Has anyone ever seen a worker anywhere near a floating windmill? They have some minimal employment generation, but the truth is that all the windmills and solar panels are made in China. China gets the income and jobs, as well as the freight and transport benefits. We do not even transport them here with Australian-owned freight companies. It is an export policy beneficial to China, which, ironically enough, is the great carbon emitter and—for those whose believe in the climate change cause—the great problem. Why they would want to help China, the villain of climate change, just beggars belief.

The other aspect that is compelling in this argument is what Paul Broad said recently. The transition can be made—no economic reality would prevent it—but it must be done over many decades, not rushed in over one decade. In our long debate about the future of electricity in New South Wales, we said, "If you rush it over a decade, it will close down the coal-fired power stations early." That is happening with Eraring; even the Minister said it must be kept open to keep the lights on. We will not have any back-up power in place because we cut the gas peaking plants. We know what is happening with Snowy 2.0. Those compelling arguments lead One Nation to vote against the motion.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (16:27): I embrace some of the concepts put forward by the Hon. Mark Latham because this is an anti-job motion.

Ms Abigail Boyd: It is literally a pro-job motion.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: It is a motion predicated on people losing their employment. I must say that if the Government votes for this motion and accepts advice and fairyland ideas from The Greens about what energy policies should look like, the people of this State will be the ultimate losers because of how that energy policy is managed. In fact, the Minister acknowledges the importance of keeping the lights on and maintaining power supply to this State. This motion says the sooner people start to lose power in their homes the better because that means we are getting rid of coal. All the arguments and all the policy positions that the Minister has articulated on this issue about making sure that we continue to have reliable power supply run contrary to this motion.

Coal is a large export industry for this country. A consequence of this sort of motion is that that export industry finishes. I am sure that The Greens have been through the books of the previous Government. They know all the things that we have done. They have pored over them—probably in concert with the Treasurer—to find the black holes and the like. If the Government goes down the line of working with The Greens to develop energy policy, I repeat that the ultimate losers are the people of this State and those countries that rely on coal for the basis of their energy. This policy is not thought through. It is not a policy that any government or political party with any semblance of responsibility would embrace. If the Government supports the motion, or an amendment to it, it is getting into bed with The Greens. I must say that that is a very dangerous precedent for this State.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (16:30): I lead for the Government on the motion moved by Ms Abigail Boyd. I move:

That the question be amended as follows:

- (1) In paragraph (2) (a) omit the words "necessarily urgent".
- (2) In paragraph (6) omit "that is:" and insert instead "guided by principles of being:"

I will speak about the first part of the motion, which states:

- (b) Australia is one of the top five coal-producing countries in the world, and is the world's biggest exporter of metallurgical coal and second biggest for thermal coal;
- (c) thermal coal mined in New South Wales contributes the vast majority of all thermal coal exported from Australia; and
- (d) thermal coal still currently contributes around two-thirds of all energy generation in New South Wales.

Indeed, thermal coal is expected to contribute about \$4.7 billion in royalties to our State's budget. In my capacity as Minister for Natural Resources, I thank Mining and Energy Union Secretary Robin Williams for his advocacy and advice. Just after the election I had the opportunity to attend the union awards ceremony in the Hunter Valley

and I met a number of its long-serving local delegates. I pay tribute to the work they have done. They advocate on behalf of their fellow workers to make conditions safer and I pay tribute to that service.

Last year when I first took on the portfolio of Natural Resources as a shadow Minister, the union organised for me to visit the Wambo mine to look firsthand at an open-cut coalmine. It is critical to understand the scale of the operations and their importance to the Hunter Valley not only for energy production and jobs but also for our State budget's bottom line. The coal industry makes a huge contribution. On Monday I will visit Mount Arthur coalmine, which is the largest in the Hunter Valley. Currently, it is projected to close in 2026. The mine employs 2,000 workers, 75 per cent of whom live across Muswellbrook, Singleton and the broader upper Hunter region. We must work out what we and those workers will do in a clear and structured way and provide them with support.

We have already seen the closure of the Liddell Power Station, and Eraring is slated to close next year. The Hon. Mark Latham talked about the emotional connection people have. Generations of people right across the Hunter Valley and this State have worked in the industry. We are serious about engaging with them in a meaningful way as the mines are slated to close. I note the BHP Mount Arthur mine is currently planning an extension to 2030. That will go through the independent planning process. But before the election, part of NSW Labor's platform was that it would commit to collaborating with workers and communities as those coalmines close to find genuine future jobs and an investment plan for them. I welcome the motion from The Greens member. The Government and The Greens will not agree on every part of the motion, but we will work together on it, particularly given the Federal Government's announcement last week. Labor will support the motion as amended.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (16:34): I support the excellent motion moved by my colleague Ms Abigail Boyd. I note from the outset that after 12 long years it is a relief to hear a government in this place acknowledge the fact that coal workers need to be supported as they must necessarily transition out of a declining market and, inevitably, a declining industry. However, as the Minister for Natural Resources indicated, The Greens will not agree with everything the Government does in this space. That is largely because we do not think any new coalmines should be approved in New South Wales. In fact, the licence for the biggest expansion of coal in New South Wales since the Paris Agreement is sitting on the desks of the Government and the Independent Planning Commission awaiting approval. It is quite alarming when one considers that the International Energy Agency and many other learned experts on energy and climate around the world have said that, if we are to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees—or, in fact, even 2 degrees—we must keep coal and gas in the ground.

This Government is committed to meeting the target of net zero by 2050, but that is far too late. The Government said it will establish a net zero commission to look at the path to net zero. It must start with fossil fuel projects that are now before it. If those projects go ahead, they will completely wipe out any gains a net zero commission plan may have. That is a huge concern given that the New South Wales community has faced floods and bushfires. We are literally living through the impact of the climate crisis and an already damaged climate. The Minister for Natural Resources, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, and the Minister for Energy all have a stake in this. I have eight coalmines listed in front of me. The Hunter Valley Operations alone will produce 400 megatons of coal over its life span. We must start by rejecting those coalmines. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (16:37): Regarding the amendment, I am shocked that the Minister for Natural Resources has accepted paragraph (1) of the motion moved by The Greens, which is an attack on coal exports. It is not the policy of the Albanese Labor Government in Canberra to phase out the export of coal on the basis that it is one way of keeping jobs. Importantly, as we have seen in the recent budget, it is also one way of keeping revenue from coal. Is it now the policy of the Minns Labor Government not only to recognise that the coal-fired power stations will close as they come to the end of their natural life but also to place the dead hand of defeat on coal exports and wind back those jobs?

I am also surprised that the Minister for Natural Resources, in effect, has accepted the argument of the Club of Rome that we are running out of coal, that it is depleting and that we are going to run out of it in the Hunter Valley. All of the studies have shown that it lasts indefinitely. The answer to closing down coalmines like Wambo is to open new ones or to extend others, like Ravensworth. There is enough coal in the ground to sustain exports, jobs, viability and national income indefinitely. Why would the Government support The Greens policy that would have closed it all down yesterday? It will destroy communities and their income and prosperity? I am surprised the Minister for Natural Resources is waving the white flag in the resources sector in her first speech in this place on the vital future of the coal industry. It is very disappointing to see that her amendments lead to that outcome.

Ms Abigail Boyd: Point of order: The member is straying well away from the amendment. If he is going to speak a second time, it must be to the amendment.

The PRESIDENT: There is an issue with the clock. The Hon. Mark Latham still has one minute to speak. I draw his attention back to the amendment.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: The amendment fails to acknowledge a vital argument: What are we doing about climate change in terms of global surface temperatures? The reality is that all the effort in New South Wales is for 0.4 per cent of global emissions. The former chief scientist in Australia said that the whole country's emissions are 1.2 per cent of global emissions. Getting rid of it all would have no impact on global surface temperatures. The New South Wales impact is one-third of nothing, which is still nothing. Why are we turning the electricity grid upside down? Why is the Minister for Natural Resources talking about the end of coal by allowing paragraph (1) of the motion to stand? Why don't her amendments deal with reality? For everything New South Wales is doing on the climate change front—from subsidies for electric vehicles to subsidies to billionaires for hydrogen, turning the grid upside down, and billions of dollars of subsidies for renewable energy—the net outcome for New South Wales is nothing. Our office did an analysis— *[Time expired.]*

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (16:41): I make a brief contribution in support of the motion as amended by the Government. It is incumbent on this Government, as I am sure that it knows and as I am sure that it will act, to make sure that the workers in the Hunter Valley affected by a transition out of coal find meaningful employment and are not left behind. In a previous iteration in this place I spent most of my time talking about the need to transition out of domestic coal-fired power and domestic gas-fired power and, most importantly, the need to deal with our coal exports.

The vast majority of our contribution to global warming and climate change is from our coal being burnt overseas, predominantly in Japan. It is not on our books. With the way that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change works, we are externalising the massive contribution that we are making to climate change. We see the impacts of climate change mounting all the time. The Legalise Cannabis Party believes that there will be no cannabis on a dead planet. That is one of the most important matters. Forget about all the other matters. I am in this House representing the cannabis plants too. We are all in this together. All of life has something at stake if we kill the planet.

The Hon. Mark Latham: Where is the smoke?

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: The Hon. Mark Latham is living in a daze and a haze if he believes that we will not act to move towards net zero. He is living in a fool's paradise if he does not believe that climate change will have severe impacts on our economy and way of life. We can and will transition. I am sure that the Minns Government will make rapid steps. I have been inside coal-fired power stations. Liddell Power Station is like an old kettle from the 1920s. It used to give you an electric shock. It is held together with gaffer tape, good will and the work of the people there, but its time is up. Bayswater, Liddell and Eraring—their time is up. We must transition. I commend Ms Abigail Boyd for moving the motion. I hope that the people of the Hunter Valley look forward to economic prosperity beyond coal exports and coal-fired power generation. I hope that the cannabis industry can be a part of that transition.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (16:45): I make a second contribution to speak to the amendment. The amendment pays homage to The Greens in circumstances where Labor, hopefully, will have a policy that would not articulate anything contained in the motion but feels the need to bow to The Greens because they are the Government's little allies and it wants to back them in. The amendment shows how Labor is going to operate in government: It will not have a policy that backs in the workers. Labor was once the party of the workers. It was once the party that supported people in jobs, but this policy supports people losing their jobs. The Government was given the opportunity to oppose the motion—

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: Point of order: The Leader of the Opposition is clearly directing his comments to the honourable members opposite. He is also casting aspersions upon them. Mr Deputy President, I ask you to rule him out of order on both points.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): I am concerned about the clock running down. The Leader of the Opposition will direct his comments through the chair. The Hon. Courtney Houssos will cease encouraging him.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: It shows that Labor members, in their anxiety to make sure that they are seen to be paying due homage to The Greens, will move amendments to try to satisfy The Greens that they are working together, but they could have joined with the Opposition and opposed the motion. Opposing the motion would have said, "We have principles. We will think through good, proper policy about how we will deal with coal and natural resources", but instead they moved an amendment that has national and international implications and has not been thought through. They felt like they had to do something. The Government should have joined with us to oppose the motion.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (16:47): Earlier in the debate the Hon. Mark Latham referred to comments that I made in my inaugural speech. I give some context to that comment because, unlike the Hon. Mark Latham, I have actually been at workplaces when workers have lost their jobs. I have looked them in the eye and seen them losing their jobs. The worst thing one can do when workers are in those situations is give them false hope. That is what the Opposition is doing. The industry is going to transition. It is going to change. We must be forward thinking. We must ensure that when workers are affected by transition to a changed circumstance, the support is there to make sure that the transition is smooth and they are not left behind. That was the context of my comments in my inaugural speech. I would appreciate it if the member would not take them out of context.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (16:48): In reply: I thank all members for their heartfelt and at times entertaining contributions to the debate. I start with the contribution from the New South Wales Leader of Pauline Hanson's One Nation party. If one reads all parts of the motion, it becomes very clear. I encourage the Hon. Damien Tudehope to pay attention because he has also misunderstood the motion. The idea of a just transition is literally giving people jobs instead of leaving them to languish. Describing it as some motion to put people out of work is literally the opposite of what a "just transition" means. It is absurd to assert that this is anything except for actually responsibly helping workers go from old, unsustainable industries, where they are going to lose their jobs, and instead of leaving them to languish, putting them into new sustainable industries where they have—wait for it!—a job. They go from one job to another job; it is not putting them out of jobs.

The former Government's policy was to leave the transition away from coal to the market and private companies. Their policy was that once a person is out of a job, they are out of a job, and the Government does not have a plan and does not have to get involved. We are pleased to now have a responsible Government that is listening to evidence-based policy and following some of the best policies that have been implemented not just in other jurisdictions in Australia but around the world to shepherd people from one industry to another. That is the responsibility of good government. The fact that the previous Government failed to do that and has left so many people in precarious positions should be a mark of shame, not something to smugly go on about.

I would love if we had a fact-check icon on the broadcast footage of the House. I am sure somebody could do it on TikTok and put in a ding-dong noise every time the other side on this debate states misleading facts. They exaggerated the numbers of workers. They said that this motion would cause massive closures, which it clearly does not say. The motion says that when the coal-fired power stations close, this is what we need to do. We heard misstatement after misstatement, and someone fact-checking at home would be a worthwhile thing. I thank the Minister for the amendment. I thank the Government for continuing to give us hope on this issue. The Greens accept the amendment.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Ms Abigail Boyd has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Courtney Houssos has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes19
Noes13
Majority.....6

AYES

Boyd
Buckingham
Buttigieg
Cohn
D'Adam
Donnelly
Faehrmann

Higginson
Houssos
Hurst
Latham
Lawrence
Mookhey

Moriarty
Murphy (teller)
Nanva (teller)
Primrose
Sharpe
Suvaal

NOES

Banasiak
Borsak
Carter
Fang (teller)
Farraway

MacDonald
Martin
Merton
Munro

Rath (teller)
Ruddick
Tudehope
Ward

PAIRS

Graham
Jackson
Kaine

Maclaren-Jones
Mitchell
Taylor

Amendment agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question is that the motion as amended be agreed to. Is leave granted to ring the bells for one minute?

Leave granted.**The House divided.**

Ayes 18
Noes 14
Majority..... 4

AYES

Boyd
Buckingham
Buttigieg
Cohn
D'Adam
Donnelly

Faehrmann
Higginson
Houssos
Hurst
Lawrence
Mookhey

Moriarty
Murphy (teller)
Nanva (teller)
Primrose
Sharpe
Suvaal

NOES

Banasiak
Borsak
Carter
Fang (teller)
Farraway

Latham
MacDonald
Martin
Merton
Munro

Rath (teller)
Ruddick
Tudehope
Ward

PAIRS

Graham
Jackson
Kaine

Taylor
Mitchell
Maclaren-Jones

Motion as amended agreed to.**FIRST HOME BUYER CHOICE SCHEME**

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (17:06): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that as of 2 May 2023, 6,460 first home buyers have been helped to purchase their first home by opting to avoid \$152.26 million in transfer duty on 3,967 properties (including 1,814 in Western Sydney, 157 in the Hunter and 51 in the Northern Rivers), under the fantastic First Home Buyer Choice scheme launched by the previous New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government from 11 November 2022 after it was supported by the House.
- (2) That this House calls on the Government to assure prospective New South Wales first home buyers that the scheme will not be terminated but will be continued in full.

This important motion, which I urge the members opposite to look at, really comes to the question of choice. We on this side of the Chamber, when we were in power, fundamentally believed in the choice of first home buyers to determine their best financial interest. It seems that those opposite believe that the Government should determine what is in home buyers' best financial interest. We believe that the first home buyer market is as complex and sophisticated and well-informed as ever before. We trust individual home buyers, their own judgment, their preferences and their research.

The former New South Wales Liberal Government stood by the important principle of choice in passing significant reforms to stamp duty. The origins of stamp duty can be traced back to our colonial past and it has become economically irrelevant to modern Australia. Stamp duty is an inefficient and distortionary tax that puts in place a large obstacle for first home buyers to jump over. That is why numerous tax reviews, State and Federal,

have said that stamp duty needs to be phased out and replaced with other taxes, like land tax. The Labor Party used to believe in getting rid of inefficient taxes like stamp duty.

The Australian Capital Territory Labor Government should be congratulated on transitioning away from stamp duty. The key difference in the New South Wales model, though, is choice. The Australian Capital Territory model locks properties in to land tax in perpetuity, whereas the New South Wales model offers first home buyers a choice between stamp duty and land tax. Stamp duty, on average, adds 2½ years to the time required for first home buyers to save for a deposit. First home buyers want their foot in the housing market now, not in 2½ years time. That is why, as the motion states, 6,460 first home buyers have already opted into the former Government's scheme, and an average of 6,550 will do so each year. That includes 1,814 first home buyers in Western Sydney, 157 in the Hunter and 51 in the Northern Rivers.

New South Wales Treasury analysis shows that it would take 36 years for a first home buyer to break even between up-front stamp duty and an annual land tax on an average \$800,000 apartment. Nobody is forcing anyone to pay the land tax. People can choose whether they lock in with the land tax or pay the stamp duty up-front. But if it is going to take someone 36 years to break even, why on earth would anybody choose the stamp duty over the annual land tax option? Studies consistently show that first home buyers spend 10 years on average in their first property, meaning that they are considerably better off choosing an annual land tax as opposed to a large up-front fee. We know that a person's first home is rarely their forever home. This policy creates choice, and that is why we will be defending it.

Labor will argue that its policy to provide concessions on stamp duty for first home buyers on properties above \$800,000 is adequate. However, that proposal will limit the type of property first home buyers can acquire without being slugged with large up-front stamp duty fees. If someone wants to purchase an apartment with more than one bedroom, they can forget it—especially in Sydney. Under NSW Labor people will be required to pay significant up-front costs to the Treasury. A property worth \$850,000 will incur \$10,000 in up-front stamp duty while that figure will jump to \$20,000 for a property worth \$900,000. You cannot get a lot in Sydney for \$800,000 anymore. Compare that with the current scheme introduced by the Coalition, where the up-front costs for properties worth less than \$1.5 million is zero dollars.

Many first home buyers would have planned to choose an annual land tax as opposed to a large up-front fee, but now the Labor Government is telling first home buyers that they must go back and save thousands of dollars before they even think about purchasing their first home. That is why we will oppose any attempt to repeal the First Home Buyer Choice policy. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (17:11): I support this sensible motion and thank the Hon. Chris Rath for bringing it to the House. Paragraph (1) is entirely factual. Core to the issues in paragraph (2) are the Liberal values of opportunity, freedom, aspiration and reward, which form the basis of sound government. The Coalition continues to support choice for first home buyers to pay less up-front, cutting the time it takes to save for a deposit. It makes sense. A purchaser of a home worth up to \$1.5 million can avoid up-front stamp duty by paying an annual levy based on land value. Under the Minns Government proposal, however, a family paying the median price for a house in Parramatta will be forced to pay up to an additional \$59,000 in stamp duty. In Rockdale it would be around \$63,000 and in Kogarah more than \$70,000. All they want to do is force people to pay more money. What we want to do is preserve their choice.

Labor's plans to abolish the First Home Buyer Choice scheme and slug young, aspirational people with sizeable additional costs means many families will have their dream of home ownership and economic security cruelly snatched away. Having to pay crippling stamp duty will leave families across Sydney facing more economic stress. Revenue NSW data shows 3,726 home owners have opted in to the scheme since January and more than 2,300 first home buyers signed up in the scheme's first two months. Treasury estimates showed that two-thirds of eligible first home buyers would choose the first home buyer scheme. The scheme is popular: It is wanted by the people of New South Wales and it is wanted by first home buyers. If they want choice, they should be afforded it. If they do not, they do not have to take it up. The scheme means that people are able to get their deposit faster, particularly at a time when families are facing increased cost-of-living pressures. We will always stand up for the rights of families and individuals to choose how they enter the home market.

The bottom line is that we want to preserve choice and give first home buyers the opportunity to achieve the great Australian dream of owning their own house or apartment. We want them to experience the excitement of being in their own home. We know that housing affordability is dire in New South Wales, and we believe people should have maximum choice at this extremely difficult time. Labor says, "We will tell you how to live your life and what's good for you. We will pick winners and losers." We say, "We will get out of the way. We will let first home buyers have their choice." I say congratulations to the young people who signed up to the scheme in time. To the first home buyers and young families still looking to buy in this dire time I say welcome to life under Labor.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (17:14): The First Home Buyer Choice scheme is an aptly named program targeted at an important segment of the community—first home buyers who are transitioning from renting to purchasing their own home. The name of the program includes the word "choice". It is an opt-in program under which each prospective first home buyer can weigh up the relative cost of a large up-front expenditure or a transfer duty with a small annual property tax. Labor wants to remove that choice and force all prospective first home buyers considering the purchase of a property valued between \$1 million and \$1.5 million to pay an up-front transfer duty of between \$40,000 and \$66,000. The current median price of a house in Box Hill is \$1.25 million and in Rouse Hill it is \$1.38 million. It is not surprising that 316 properties have been able to be purchased in postcodes 2765 and 2155 by first home buyers because of this program.

The motion cites data as of 2 May 2023. In the nine days since, a further 733 first home buyers have been helped by the program, with 207 properties purchased in Western Sydney alone. The motion calls on the Government to assure prospective first home buyers that the scheme will not be terminated but continued in full. If the Government stubbornly refuses to do that, then it at least owes it to the people of New South Wales to give advance notice of when it will withdraw support so that they can plan accordingly. Denying prospective first home buyers the popular choice of avoiding tens of thousands of dollars of up-front transfer duty may sadly result in the need for them to give up, for the time being, their dream of buying their first home. They will have to wait for the re-election of a government that actually supports the goal of home ownership. One of the most pressing problems for any government is housing and housing supply. A component of the debate about housing supply has to be affordability, which is impacted by having choice. It is absurd to think that members opposite would take that choice away but they seem committed to it. It is the most retrogressive step this Government will take.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (17:17): The people of New South Wales had a choice between a policy proposed in good faith by the Liberal-Nationals Government and a policy proposed by the Labor Party, and they voted in the Labor Party at the recent election. We have a mandate to remove all first home buyers from this taxation system altogether if they purchase a property for less than \$800,000. We have a mandate to offer a concession to those first home buyers purchasing a property for up to \$1 million. I look forward to Parliament resolving the legislation that will implement that mandate.

I will save my substantial remarks until the Parliament can test the issues properly as part of that legislation. It is disappointing that the immediate step of the Opposition has been simply to deny reality about the outcome of the election. It is not surprising. When we had this debate in the last Parliament, I said that if the Liberal-Nationals won the election, we would recognise its mandate and the debate would be over. It is disappointing that the new Leader of the Opposition has moved the Liberal Party down the Peter Dutton pathway of total opposition and total obstruction, regardless of the will of the people of New South Wales. But who am I to give them political advice? I move:

That the question be amended by omitting all words after "That" and inserting instead:

- (1) this House notes that the Government wants as many people as possible to be able to buy their own first home.
- (2) this House notes the first home buyers policy taken by the Government to the recent New South Wales election.
- (3) this House notes the first home buyers policy taken by the previous Government to the recent New South Wales election.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (17:19): Briefly, I support the amendment to the motion the Treasurer just moved. I express my disappointment again, on behalf of The Greens, that the new Opposition in this place seems determined to rehash old policies and old arguments. We had an election and the Coalition lost. It did not just lose by a little bit; it lost by a lot. We now have a new government in place, and we will be doing things differently. The Greens look forward—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: We? "We will be doing things differently"? Are you the government?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: No, no. For the clarity of the Leader of the Opposition in the House, I was not referring to myself being in government. I have no desire to be in government, thank you very much.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: We have no desire for that, either!

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: We—being the Parliament and the State of New South Wales—are now, on behalf of the people who voted in this Government, doing things differently. It is very disappointing that we do not have anything new from the Opposition and instead have this rehashing. For that reason The Greens will be supporting the amendment from the Treasurer, which makes it clear that there were two different policies taken to the election when it came to land tax and stamp duty.

When it comes to The Greens' policy on this, we have been very clear from the beginning that we support a broad-based and equitable transition away from stamp duty towards land tax and we support housing affordability measures. But as we made very clear, the so-called "home buyer choice scheme"—or whatever it

was called—that was put forward by the Coalition last year was neither of those things. It did not improve housing affordability. On the evidence, it cannot improve housing affordability; we had an inquiry into the bill to show that. It is also not an equitable and broad-based transition away from stamp duty. The Greens, in government with Labor in the ACT, successfully implemented a broad-based transition away from stamp duty to land tax. We look forward to working with this new Government—once it has cleaned up the old Government's messes—to establish a far more equitable taxation regime in housing and make sure the housing market is not as distorted as it currently is.

The Hon. WES FANG (17:22): I make a contribution to debate on this motion. I acknowledge that, yes, as the Treasurer has indicated, the Labor Party won the election. It did go to that election with a policy that it would abolish the initiative put forward by the Government in the last Parliament. But I think we need to be very careful about framing election wins as a total imprimatur of a policy platform and not perhaps acknowledging the merits of other policies.

On this issue, there is no doubt that while some of the initiatives the Labor Party seek to bring to this place and some of their policy positions on first home buyers are, I will say, welcome, there is a lack of understanding of the reality of what first home buyers face. Maybe that is because members on the opposite side of the Chamber have not ever had to scrape and save in order to get that deposit to buy a home. Maybe they have had well-paid union jobs, or have been union officials and had those well-paid jobs funded by members' dues. I do not think they actually realise what it is like to see house after house taken away from them by bidders who have more money, in circumstances where the stamp duty required to buy that first home is the difference between them being able to purchase or not.

The Coalition policy allowed those buyers to opt in to an annual payment instead of a lump sum stamp duty. It may be that those buyers would only have that property for five or 10 years and would be much better off under the Coalition policy rather than the Labor policy. The last thing I will say before my time expires is that I do not think the increase in the threshold that those opposite propose will really touch the sides. It is just not the reality of what first home buyers face these days.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (17:26): I speak to the amendment moved by the shadow Treasurer. While I note he is reluctant to speak in terms of—

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: I'm the Treasurer. You're the shadow Treasurer.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I know. The State would be a lot better off if it was reversed, let me tell you.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Not for long!

The Hon. Courtney Houssos: It's four long years, my friend.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Oh, it feels like it.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I will just say this: The amendment proposed by the Treasurer is against circumstances where he does not want to articulate the substantive arguments in respect of a bill he will later bring to the House, and I understand that. He will come to this place and no doubt tell members about how important it is for people to pay lump-sum stamp duty. It is going to be an interesting discussion. In fact, the reason The Greens opposed our previous proposal—I think there was a quasi-admission made by Ms Abigail Boyd—was that in fact it did not go far enough. The inconsistency is—

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Point of order: If the Leader of the Opposition wishes to speak on the amendment, he should speak on the amendment—not in reply to a contribution made by another speaker. It is a discretionary choice—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): I will rudely interrupt you, Treasurer. I hear your point of order, but I am watching the clock tick down. I inform the Leader of the Opposition that he must address the amendment.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: While motherhood statements have been offered by way of amendment, the third of those statements is this: "That the House supports measures to address housing affordability and all people of New South Wales have adequate shelter". That is eminently supportable, but if the Treasurer wanted to go down the route of addressing housing affordability, he would stick with what is a profoundly good policy to give people a choice not to pay lump sums at the time they purchase a property. That is a profoundly appropriate reaction to increasing housing affordability. The Treasurer should be supporting this motion and the people who have already embraced this scheme. He should be supporting the people who tomorrow will go out and buy a property and use this scheme because they see the benefit in doing so. The Treasurer should

be encouraging people to get out there and buy a house tomorrow—"Because if you don't, I might bring in legislation which will make it a hell of a lot more difficult for you to do so."

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (17:29): I speak in support of the amendment proposed by the Treasurer and I commend him for it. It outlines a very reasonable position, which Labor took to the election on 25 March and which the people of New South Wales endorsed and voted for. It is an interesting strategic choice for the former Government to come into this place and continue to try to defend its legacy. We have seen those opposite defend their legacy today on first home buyers. We have seen them try to defend their legacy on their decision to cut the Active Kids voucher. We have seen them defend their legacy on a range of other issues. I do feel sorry for them. I understand. On this side of the House, we understand that being in opposition is really hard. I look forward to those opposite spending many, many years discovering exactly how hard it is.

We went to the election with a clear policy to help more people buy their first home. Our policy was clearly targeted at people who are purchasing a home worth less than \$1 million. Housing affordability is a huge issue across Sydney. Whether they are renters or first home buyers, it is incredibly difficult for people across the city—indeed, across the State—to find affordable housing. That is why we have a clear and costed plan to allow people who are purchasing a property costing up to \$800,000 not to pay any stamp duty and to introduce a graduated system for properties costing up to \$1 million, when they start paying stamp duty. We think it is important that those concessions are in place. It was a careful, considered and well-costed policy that was crafted in opposition by the now Treasurer. It went through the Parliamentary Budget Office process and was costed, and now we are seeking to implement it.

Labor members want as many people as possible to be able to buy a place to call home, but we think that this is a careful and considered way for first home buyers to avoid a forever property tax, which is exactly what the former Government outlined before the election. That was its intention; that was its plan. That is what it took to the election, and it lost. Instead of accepting the loss, taking it on the chin, moving forward and trying to find a new policy platform, those opposite have come into the Chamber today to waste our valuable time defending their former policy position. That is why we are moving the amendment today. That is why we are saying no. First home buyers should not have to pay stamp duty on property costing up to \$800,000. They should not have to pay a forever tax on their home. We should give them a discount that will allow them to get into the property market for the very first time. I commend the amendment to the House.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (17:32): The motion moved by the Hon. Chris Rath is ridiculous. The proposition that the Opposition is advancing, if the House were to accept this motion, is for the Government to immediately walk away from its election commitment. Is that actually what he is proposing we sign up to—breaking an election commitment made to the people? It seems that the Opposition does not understand the fundamentals of the Westminster democratic system. Competing parties put forward their policy positions to the people. The people get to decide. The people have decided; they voted for Labor. They voted for our policy offering, not that of those opposite. Theirs was rejected—and, interestingly, rejected in all the places where first home buyers are likely to be. In electorates like Leppington, Camden and Riverstone, their policy was rejected not slightly but overwhelmingly. There were massive swings against the former Government. It was total rejection. Then those opposite come into this place and want us to sign up to a policy proposition rejected by the people. That is fundamentally anti-democratic and it should be rejected.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (17:34): Please do not feel sorry for those on the Opposition benches; feel sorry for the people of New South Wales. The First Home Buyer Choice scheme has already helped thousands of first home buyers jump into that elusive category of "home owner". It only takes a little imagination to realise just how much that means to the more than 6,000 participants in the new scheme. The ability to own a home is something that should not be out of reach for the average Australian worker, but for so many it has felt like an impossibility. Home ownership is, after all, the cornerstone of any civilisation, and with that home ownership comes confidence and security, alongside many additional benefits to the community. Home ownership means that residents are more willing to put down roots, to invest in their local communities, to take on civic responsibility and to raise a family. All of that is important because it builds community.

The rising house prices in our State have undoubtably caused stress for potential home owners, alongside rising mortgage rates, with the median value of residential houses in Sydney in 2021 the highest compared to any other major Australian city. But the roadblock is that transfer duty has caused further consternation and, in many cases, has made home ownership impossible—that is, until the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government introduced choice for buyers in New South Wales. Who are the people who have been able to benefit from the First Home Buyer Choice scheme? It is mums and dads just starting out. It is tradies, entrepreneurs and small business owners. It is my niece, her husband and their newborn son, who would not have otherwise been able to

afford their home but picked up the keys last Friday and, in her words, were so excited to start the journey of adulthood with a mortgage and a home.

The scheme has given those who have already participated the chance to get a foot in the market and has provided hope for so many others who are looking to buy in the next few years. It is imperative that this choice continues—*[Time expired.]*

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (17:36): In reply: I acknowledge all of the contributions from speakers in favour of and against the motion. I particularly acknowledge the contribution from Ms Abigail Boyd. I was almost looking forward to an amendment aiming for the complete abolition of stamp duty, given her longstanding commitment to a broad-based land tax and the abolition of stamp duty, but unfortunately that amendment was not forthcoming. I acknowledge that, ideally, if we were creating a tax system from scratch today, we certainly would not have stamp duty on property. That is an important starting point. But it is important also that we transition away from stamp duty, and the best way of doing that is by preserving the First Home Buyer Choice scheme.

The Opposition will not support the amendment—if you can call it an amendment. It is more of a motherhood statement. It is saying, "We trust the vibe of housing affordability," but there is absolutely no detail in there at all. In terms of the election and the so-called mandate that the Government has on this, with a minority in the other place and a minority in this place, it is important that it looks at the crossbench in both places when it is putting its housing policy together. I think what it will find is that the vast majority of the crossbench in both Houses voted in favour of the First Home Buyer Choice policy, which is why it passed Parliament in the first instance. On the so-called mandate that it has on the policy to repeal the First Home Buyer Choice scheme, we know that elections are a choice about a whole range of different policies. They are not about a single policy in particular.

But a very good indication of whether people want the First Home Buyer Choice program is how they choose to spend their money. When you give them the choice, they do not choose stamp duty. I would like to know how many people have chosen stamp duty and how many have chosen the land tax since we left government. When people are given the choice they do not choose stamp duty; they choose the annual land tax. If the previous Government's policy was so unpopular and if people hated the land tax so much, why are approximately three-quarters of people choosing to opt for the land tax over stamp duty? That is how unpopular it is. People are choosing the land tax, not the stamp duty. This Government wants to take away their choice, which is why the Opposition will oppose the repeal of the First Home Buyer Choice program.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The Hon. Chris Rath has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Daniel Mookhey has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes20
Noes13
Majority.....7

AYES

Banasiak
Borsak
Boyd
Buckingham
Cohn
D'Adam
Donnelly

Faehrmann
Graham
Higginson
Houssos
Hurst
Jackson
Lawrence

Mookhey
Murphy (teller)
Nanva (teller)
Primrose
Sharpe
Suvaal

NOES

Carter
Fang (teller)
Farraway
Latham
MacDonald

Martin
Merton
Munro
Rath (teller)

Roberts
Ruddick
Tudehope
Ward

PAIRS

Buttigieg
Kaine

Mitchell
Maclaren-Jones

PAIRS

Moriarty

Taylor

Amendment agreed to.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that the motion as amended be agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

SPECIAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE DRUG "ICE"

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (17:48): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug "Ice", which reported in March 2020, conducted 47 days of hearings and round tables at a total cost of \$10.85 million;
 - (b) the inquiry heard from experts in the field, service providers, people with lived experience, community members and many others;
 - (c) among the inquiry's key recommendations are that the Government:
 - (i) establish a whole-of-government alcohol and other drug [AOD] treatment policy that recognises drug use is a health and social issue;
 - (ii) appoint a dedicated Minister with a drug and alcohol portfolio to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the special commission of inquiry's recommendations;
 - (iii) remove all criminal offences of use and possession for the personal use of prohibited drugs;
 - (iv) establish a statewide clinically supervised substance testing, education and information service, with branches at appropriate fixed-site locations, and that in addition, with a view to establishing an outreach capacity of the service to settings where there is a high risk of harm, a trial be undertaken onsite at a music festival, and independently evaluated;
 - (v) expand the availability of drug consumption services like the medically supervised injecting centre; and
 - (vi) end the use of drug detection dogs at music festivals.
 - (d) the inquiry's report is a comprehensive, evidence-based document that provides a road map for the new Minns Government to reduce drug-related harm.
- (2) That this House acknowledges that:
 - (a) on 12 April 2023, in an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* the ice inquiry commissioner, Professor Dan Howard, SC, urged the Minns Government to not "reinvent the wheel" with another summit and further delay implementing the inquiry's recommendations, and Gabrielle Bashir, SC, President of the NSW Bar Association, stated that a drug summit would be "a superfluous and unnecessary public expense in light of the ice inquiry's clear road map for reform"; and
 - (b) the Government's proposed drug summit represents a costly replication of the ice inquiry and will see the same experts provide the same evidence resulting in the same conclusions.
- (3) That this House calls on the Government to take urgent action on all 109 recommendations of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug "Ice". The motion calls on the Government to get on with the very important job of looking at the 109 recommendations of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug "Ice" and take urgent action on them. Four and a half years ago former Premier of New South Wales Gladys Berejiklian established an inquiry into the drug "ice". At the time, she said:

Ice is a destructive drug that is ruining too many lives across NSW, especially in our regional centres.

We are establishing a powerful Special Commission of Inquiry because we want every option on the table to bolster our existing efforts to combat the evolving threat of this dangerous, illegal drug—and to get help for those who need it.

That was four and half years ago. That inquiry made 109 recommendations. The inquiry heard from over 160 witnesses that included first responders, nurses, doctors, lawyers, teachers, other experts and, very importantly, loved ones and family members and people with lived experience themselves. The inquiry was extremely extensive. It received more than 250 submissions and held six hearings in regional areas and eight private roundtable discussions with Aboriginal community members. After all that work and effort, the inquiry produced an incredibly comprehensive 1,200-page report and came up with 109 recommendations.

The motion before the House—I understand an amendment has been foreshadowed—also criticises the proposed drug summit of the Labor Government, essentially saying that the work has already been done. We have heard the former commissioner of the "ice" inquiry, Dan Howard, SC, say that the same experts and the same evidence will come together once again. If a drug summit happens, it will be over in two or three days. The inquiry

into "ice" was called for and established four and half years ago and reported on its findings more than two years ago. Many of those key recommendations have been sitting there and not responded to.

The proposed drug summit will potentially be held early next year. That is still 12 months away. After the drug summit, recommendations being made and then implementing those recommendations—that is five, six or seven years after the former Government acknowledged the urgent need to do something about reducing the harm from drugs. Along with the coronial inquest into music festival-related deaths, the report of the inquiry into "ice" made key recommendations to reduce the harm from drugs, such as pill testing, removing drug detection dogs from music festivals, and removing criminal penalties for personal use and possession of drugs. Various other measures were also strongly recommended, including things like expanding the successful Medically Supervised Injecting Centre that came about in 1999 at the first Drug Summit, which was held by then Labor Premier Bob Carr.

We call on the Government to look at those recommendations and take urgent action. The recommendations are there. We do not have to wait another year, possibly two or more years, before those important recommendations are enacted. It is not a political decision. I pre-empt what the Government will say in response about getting everybody together to get consensus by saying that that has happened with all the experts, loved ones and families and the police in the same room, giving evidence at the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug "Ice". I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (17:53): On behalf of the Legalise Cannabis Party, I speak in support of the motion moved by Ms Cate Faehrmann. It is an important motion. It is a central part of the work that the Legalise Cannabis Party will do to push for progressive drug law reform in this State to reduce harm. Before I continue my contribution, I move:

That the question be amended as follows:

- (1) omit paragraph (2) (b).
- (2) omit paragraph (3) and insert instead:
 - (3) That this House calls on the Government to continue to work in response to the recommendations of the Special Commission.

As I said in my previous contribution, it is incredibly important that this House works on this issue and that we do it in good faith. The Government took a policy to the people of New South Wales to have a drug summit, and we should welcome that. We should work with the Government to make sure that it is a comprehensive drug summit and that it produces policies to reduce harm from not only "ice" but all drugs. So many drugs are being consumed in this State in a harmful way. We only have to look at the emerging issue of vaping. The Federal Government is dealing with the issue of high levels of nicotine and its addictive nature and its impact on children. There are so many more aspects to this issue. We are particularly aware of emerging issues relating to medicinal cannabis, and that is a new proposition.

It is important to note that the commissioner of the inquiry into "ice", Professor Howard, said that the lack of a formal drug policy in New South Wales is "like a car hurtling down a highway without a driver". We now have a new driver. I hope that the Government will work in this area and establish a comprehensive drug summit, act on the recommendations of the "ice" inquiry and bring together as broad and deep a level of stakeholders as it can to make sure that we get drug policy reform in this State right. It is absolutely important. I want to work with the Government to bring about this reform to end the war on drugs. I commend Ms Cate Faehrmann for moving this motion. I hope that the Government will also support the motion.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (17:56): Noting the time and the important business to conduct at 6 o'clock, I speak briefly to indicate that the Government will be supporting the amendment to the motion and the motion if amended. I spoke earlier about the Labor Government's commitment to hold another drug summit because it has been over 20 years since we held the last Drug Summit. I place on the record the fact that the former Government took absolutely too long to respond to the "ice" inquiry. Even the new Opposition leader, the then Attorney General, shared his frustration at his own Government's failure to respond to this report. We are committed to holding a drug summit. I thank the member for bringing forward the motion. I look forward to supporting the amendment and the amended motion.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (17:57): This motion demonstrates that The Greens think that they are in government. The manner in which that they have drafted this motion directs the Government about how they think the drug policy in this State should be implemented. The response to the drug inquiry was considered by the previous Government—I am sure you recall, Mr President, the torturous deliberations to make sure that we got the responses right for that report.

The Greens are now asking the Government to just implement the recommendations. That is what they have told the Government to do. The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham has suggested a sensible amendment; it might be the first and only time he will say something sensible, which is fine. This motion is emblematic of how The Greens think that they are in a position to tell this new Government how to conduct business in this place and how to conduct the Government.

In fact, we saw it in relation to the previous motion before the House, in which The Greens wanted to destroy the coal industry and were telling the Government how to run its natural resources policy. That was their previous direction to the Government. With this policy The Greens are telling the Government to adopt all of the recommendations of the ice inquiry. A responsible government will take each and every one of those recommendations very seriously and consider them at a Cabinet level. I am sure there will be divergences of opinion on some of the issues raised by those recommendations—as you well know, Mr President.

The motions that have been moved today are emblematic of the fact that The Greens think they have the Government where they want it. They think they can dictate to the Government how to administer the policies of this State. There is a really bad feeling about the way the Government is acting in deference to The Greens. The Greens are telling the Government how to run not only natural resources policy but now also drug policy. It is dangerous for the people because The Greens are not the elected Government. We expect the elected Government to seriously consider those recommendations. [*Time expired.*]

The PRESIDENT: It being 6.00 p.m., according to the resolution of the House this day, proceedings are now interrupted to enable the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine, MLC, to make her first speech without any question before the Chair.

Members

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

The PRESIDENT: I welcome into my gallery the family and friends of the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine, in particular her mother and father, Helen and Tony Kaine, and her husband and children.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (18:01): I begin by recognising the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and pay my respects to their Elders both past and present. I also acknowledge the damage to the people, country, language and culture of those traditional owners and other Aboriginal people in New South Wales, inflicted through the exercise of powers by this institution and others controlled by the State. I commit to learning more about Aboriginal history and culture, and about how my actions in this place can contribute to processes of recognition, representation and healing. It is a great honour to join the very privileged group of people who have had the opportunity to serve in this position on behalf of the people of New South Wales. It is of particular pride for me today, with my family here, to be part of a Labor Government.

It has been a great experience so far—interesting, but great—due to the staff at Parliament House, who have graciously assisted in settling me in to this place over the past few weeks. I thank them. I particularly thank Simon and Tony, the sound guys—who I think have been replaced—for letting me sneak in to practise this morning. If you could pass on my thanks to them, that would be great. I sincerely congratulate the other members elected to the Legislative Council in March and, in particular, the other women. Regardless of political affiliation, I am genuinely pleased that you are here and I look forward to the experienced perspectives you will bring.

I am very proud that this election saw an evenly balanced Labor ticket of men and women because, despite the progress we have made, this is never a given. I acknowledge the tireless work of Labor women elected to this Chamber before me, to whom we owe much credit for this result, such as ex-presidents Meredith Burgmann and Amanda Fazio and many others, including our current leader, Penny Sharpe. While we are nearly at 50 per cent, we haven't reached the symbolic threshold yet. Progress towards equal representation has not been linear. It was this Chamber that delayed the franchise for women longer than necessary in New South Wales. On 28 November 1900, almost a full decade after the Womanhood Suffrage League was founded in New South Wales, in voting against the Women's Franchise Bill the Hon. Alexander Brown—and I quote from *Hansard*—remarked:

I am absolutely opposed to petticoat government in every sense. I am somewhat like Dr. Johnson, who made use of that figurative expression in regard to ladies taking part in public meetings. When he saw a lady on a platform, or in a pulpit, or outside the domestic sphere it always reminded him of a dog walking on its hind legs, and the question with him was not whether the dog performed that duty well or badly; but that it was able to perform it at all.

Not content with comparing women to dogs, Alexander Brown had some more thoughts—and he felt the need to share them—about the kind of woman who would want to vote or, indeed, even more scandalously, take part in politics. He listed the types of women who were agitating for the franchise as ladies who had probably "driven their husbands into public houses", nagging aunts—that's for my nieces and nephews—and, my personal favourite, "gushing young girls who like to make a bit of a splash and who are getting a bit long in the tooth". The vote was

lost that day 22 to 19, and a second debate on the bill nearly a year later was also lost. But third time lucky. After winning the vote federally and in other jurisdictions, New South Wales women did get the vote in 1902, but they were forbidden from standing for election to the Legislative Assembly until 1918 and were not allowed admittance into this esteemed Chamber until 1926.

Thank you, Maybanke Wolstenholme; thank you, Rose Scott; thank you, Dora Montefiore, May Manning, Mary Windeyer and Louisa Lawson—the founding members of the New South Wales Womanhood Suffrage League. I would like to add to the efforts of City of Sydney councillor Linda Scott, whom I note is here tonight, in recognising civic contributions beyond our founding fathers. How about we have one less statue of Governor Macquarie and replace it with any one of these women—or, even better, all of these women? I need to make a confession: I began preparing for today based on entirely the wrong premise. Completely giving in to my inner nerd, I consulted weighty tomes of great thinkers, undertook frenzied rereading of books that had previously impressed me and, if I'm honest, bought others that remain unopened on my desk and, let's face it, will probably remain there until the next wave of imposter syndrome hits. I was searching for a way to transcend the established tropes of this genre of speech whilst respecting its conventions. I wanted to impress with my wit, my gravitas. But to carve out my difference I needed to know how others had approached it. What have they said when in this position?

I started reading the inaugural speeches of all the current representatives in this Chamber. That provoked some realisations. First of all, and rather obviously, when you come from a party as big and as old as Labor, there are many that have come before you. Much of what I wanted to reflect about my commitment to Labor values had been said in a more elegant way than I could articulate, including by my colleagues here in this Chamber. They spoke of justice, equality, protecting the rights to decent work and to organise to achieve it. They spoke of addressing the injustices to Indigenous Australians, and in his inaugural speech last night my colleague the Hon. Stephen Lawrence spoke so well about that and his contributions to the fight. They spoke about gender equity, inclusion and the defence of democratic principles.

As I continued reading beyond my party colleagues I made a second discovery: Even for those within this Chamber from whom I diverge wildly on some issues, there was some commonality. I was often touched by personal stories, moved by accounts of individual histories—support of friends, love of family—and there was also evident a common desire to make change for good. Clearly, how we each define good and the means to achieving that are quite different. But most of us share that desire, that urge, and the appropriate reverence for the responsibility we have been gifted.

Ruminating on where I would fit into this place brought me to my final discovery: that I am uncomfortable in attempting to do what I cannot avoid, which is outline the individual contribution that I seek to make here and why. I am acutely conscious that in so doing I reinforce the great myth of our time: that what matters is me, my identity and my journey. It is a myth that has permeated every part of our lives. It is fostered by technology and media that atomises us and reinforces our singular interests over our common experience. It exploits efforts to recognise and honour various aspects of identity, instead creating a grotesque competition between individuals and issues for legitimacy. Back in 2010, in his impassioned plea for a reimagined social democracy, Tony Judt wrote:

However legitimate the claims of individuals and the importance of their rights, emphasizing these carries an unavoidable cost: the decline of a shared sense of purpose.

The loss of a shared sense of purpose sees its worst manifestations economically. The mantra of individual effort, individual achievement, and opportunity and reward creates an environment of ambient neoliberalism, to adapt a phrase of Thomas Piketty's. It creates an environment that deifies the private sector and demonises the State, and labels economically progressive sentiments as radical. Just think of the response to Jim Chalmers' essay earlier this year. It is an environment that until recently has remained unchallenged.

As an academic, my main area of research focused on parts of the labour market in which the cult of individualism, as facilitated by the dismantling of or opposition to regulation, has resulted rather ironically in bad outcomes for individuals and also dire consequences for society. My PhD research was on labour management in aged care and so it did not surprise me when the royal commission noted that the general approach to aged care has "been that the market will take care of itself without the need for active management or monitoring by the Government". Nowhere do we see more starkly the societal impact of that approach than in the appalling stories of neglect of our elders and the mistreatment of those attempting to provide care. It is that misunderstanding of the role that governments should play that I have fought hard to counter through the evidence-based, peer-reviewed rigour of academic inquiry.

I am an advocate for governments using their economic weight in publicly funded supply chains. We should not have a situation in which companies that attract public funding do not adhere to accepted legal and

moral standards of fairness to their workers and customers. We should not have the situation, which has recently been revealed, in which a bus company that was found to have engaged in wage theft, deliberately withholding a minimum pay increase to its staff to the tune of \$3.5 million, was awarded another contract worth \$564 million not even a year later. It is not radical, old-fashioned, anti-competitive or anti-market to demand accountability. It is rational and responsible to ensure that the public money we spend provides the services we need, in line with the laws that we make. Procurement of publicly funded goods and services should factor in the overall impact and the overall cost on our community, not just the ticketed price.

After finishing my PhD, I spent some years as an associate professor at the University of Technology Sydney. That gave me the opportunity to teach undergraduate and postgraduate students and supervise doctoral students. I am particularly proud that one of my doctoral students, Associate Professor Martijn Boersma, who is in the gallery today, has become the recognised Australian academic expert on issues related to modern slavery. Like any good doctoral supervisor, I am still trying to take the credit for that.

One research project that had a particular impact on me was a five-year study in which we followed the lived experience of Vietnamese workers who were trafficked from Vietnam, facilitated by the Vietnamese state, to work in Malaysia and Thailand. When we visited the workers, they were living in shipping containers, had had their passports confiscated and were often detained by the authorities as a result. Those among them who were trying to organise for better conditions were hounded by internationally based members of the Vietnamese police. The bravery of those workers remains an inspiration. That research, leading to a prize-winning paper, focused on the gaps in formal labour regulation and, importantly, what those gaps mean for workers.

That was a theme that I explored more deeply in my research examining the growth of the gig economy. Despite early commentaries romanticising its disruptive effect, what has been revealed over the past decade or so of the growth of gig work is again a negative societal impact. It represented and represents a headlong assault on one of our most hard-fought social safety nets: the ability of workers to earn a decent day's pay for a decent day's work. Arguably, the growth of the gig economy is the high-water mark of that ambient neoliberalism and the logical conclusion to decades-long efforts to disaggregate everything—our work, our time and our communities.

Thankfully, we can feel that atmosphere changing. We felt it during the COVID pandemic that called for a collective, united response. We felt it in the election of the Federal Labor Government last year. We felt it again on 25 March when the people of New South Wales endorsed a different direction, tired of the impacts of privatisation, the neoliberal playmate of individualism. We feel it in the moves being made to reintroduce fairness to our labour market, with progress by the Federal Labor Government to ensure workers of any status can enjoy dignity at work. That is a move that we should mirror at a State level, using whatever levers are available to us. We feel it in a move to more compassionate politics in which we hear politicians speaking with respect to the marginalised and the vulnerable, to the electorate at large, and most of the time to each other. It is a source of great pride that Labor is leading on that.

We feel it most in the voting pattern of the young and their heavy leaning towards the progressive. That group, quickly overtaking others as the majority, has made it clear that they will not tolerate selfishness masked by a thin veil of economic conservatism. There is too much at stake. They are haunted by the ghosts of a future that they see as being shadowed by prospects of cataclysmic environmental degradation, driven by corporate greed and propelled by the apathy of generations that have come before them. While we may cling to outdated theories and solutions, the young are demanding more. They require us to be open to new approaches and new points of view and experiences that take us beyond our comfort zone. They know that the big issues of our time—the climate crises and its geopolitical consequences, the exponential growth of artificial intelligence and its ethical implications, gender diversity and inclusivity, and the need to provide a society in which we all can flourish—cannot be adequately tackled by a politics that is devoid of heart and pretends that these collective challenges can be addressed through fetishising the individual.

It is not an accident that our national anthem contains the line "with courage let us all combine". Before I get any puzzled looks, it is in the second verse. By that stage we have all started humming, but it is there. That line recognises that advancements are made through collective efforts. Such efforts require resolution and commitment. Working together is not always easy, compromise is not glamorous and is open to misinterpretation. Nevertheless, it is to that type of effort that I wish to contribute. It is also the type of effort that I saw day in and day out in my most recent experience as a senior executive in the Department of Premier and Cabinet, where I worked with dedicated and capable public servants who have the important but often invisible task of keeping the machinery of government going.

People who know me well and are listening today may be a little surprised by the tone of my comments. I am not known for always adopting a conciliatory approach. I am certainly not conflict averse and love nothing better than a heated discussion. As my husband could no doubt attest, I am the queen of the cheap shot, the sharp tongue and the frustratingly fallacious argument. While I will always be a fierce advocate for the causes I hold

dear, the weight of this position requires a solemnity that reaches above my more base political instincts, and I promise to keep that in mind.

I did not reach this place by sheer determination or application alone. I also stand here as a product of the support and love of my family, friends and colleagues. I have been shaped by the selfless example of my parents, Tony and Helen Kaine, who arrived at a migrant hostel in Marrickville in 1974 having traversed two other continents, responsible not only for their two children—my brother and sister—but also for my maternal grandmother and my two young uncles following the premature death of my grandfather. Those early years in Australia were tough for mum and dad, despite the obvious joy of my birth in December 1974.

Dad was a public school teacher, and he got a job in the Blue Mountains where we grew up. He was soon the Teachers Federation rep with a bit of a reputation for rebellion that followed him throughout his career. His stories of confronting various principals have become family lore. In fact, I think we could probably tell them better than dad at this stage. Mum was, and still is, always there for us. She is the creator of family tradition and the provider of solace and advice, working tirelessly at home and outside of it to provide for our needs. Both of them were influenced by the best traditions of Catholic social justice, if learnt in very different parts of the world—my dad in the midlands of England and my mum in outback East Africa. They have handed that down to us. They taught me and my siblings, and now our children, that heroism is in the everyday acts, in the doing things for others when you do not feel like it, and that sacrifice engaged in with grace is never bitter but is a sacred gift. They are heroes, both.

Likewise, I have been guided by the rest of my family: my uncle, who is in the Chamber tonight after catching the red eye from Perth; my sister; my brother; siblings-in-law; nieces and nephews. They have offered unconditional love tinged with the right amount of truth-telling that only a family can provide. I was also lucky to have the input of wonderful teachers, in particular at St Ursula's College Kingsgrove where Ursuline values and feminist principles morphed into my English teachers Sister Deirdrie O'Sullivan, who we knew as Sister Dos, and Libby Denny. They were wonderful women and wonderful teachers. I have also been supported by many colleagues and good friends who continue to provide so much day-to-day encouragement, many of whom are in the Chamber tonight, and others who I know are watching from home.

My time as vice-president of the Labor Party also made its mark. During that time I actively opposed those in the party and the Parliament who were advocating for privatisation, the opposition to which I am pleased has since become a key policy commitment of NSW Labor. I am also unashamedly a product of the industrial wing of the labour movement. I began work at the Australian Workers Union [AWU] in 1995 where, as an organiser, I was exposed to the realities of workplaces that I would never otherwise have understood. I particularly recall the impact of getting to know a group of migrant women working in a commercial laundry. They were warm and welcoming and kind, despite the brutally physical work which saw them handling putrid linen on the way in and then the burning hot linen on the way out which left their hands chapped and bleeding. They generously overlooked my missteps and youthful naivety as we worked towards getting them classified to a higher grade. It was at that time at the AWU that I also met Matthew Thistlethwaite and Richard Olson, both of whom provided much appreciated support in my efforts to get here today.

A big part of my more recent union experience was as president of the NSW Division of the National Tertiary Education Union. In that role and during my time with the University of Technology Sydney branch, I was lucky enough to work with a group of people who were particularly committed to grassroots involvement and providing a robust voice of opposition to the seemingly relentless commodification of higher education and the casualisation of the workforce. The then division secretary Michael Thomson is in the Chamber tonight. We were the most unusual of running mates but a good team, although I suspect we were the bane of everyone's existence at national office. Vince Caughley is also in the Chamber. I am thrilled that you are now the secretary of the NSW Division. It will only benefit from your ideas and enthusiasm, and I look forward to working with you in this capacity. Along with the Transport Workers' Union, especially Michael and Richard, I especially thank Tony Callinan and Dan Walton, who is in the Chamber tonight, and everyone at the AWU for being so steadfast during what can only be described as some nailbiting moments. That was a bit of a Labor Party in-house joke.

I thank Bernie Smith from the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Union; Alex Claassens from the Rail, Tram, and Bus Union; and Graeme Kelly from the United Services Union for their support. I am thrilled that Alex and Graeme are in the Chamber tonight. I know better than most the sacrifices that they all make to improve the lives of their members, and I thank them and their families for that. Finally, I thank those tasked with the ongoing and relentless role of contributing to my development; my husband, Emmanuel; and my children, Liam and Lily and stepdaughter Rose. Each of you have faced incredible challenges over the past few years and each of you have tackled them and continue to tackle them with courage, maintaining your curiosity, creativity and sense of fun. I could not be more proud, and I love you.

To conclude, and in the spirit of that line in the second verse of the national anthem, "with courage let us all combine", I pledge allegiance and friendship to those within the Labor Party, union movement, community and this Chamber who place the welfare of the people of New South Wales, its workers, its vulnerable and its excluded above personal ambition and grandiosity. I pledge to work constructively with anyone in this Chamber who in good faith and with courage also works towards a fairer, more just New South Wales. I thank the President for the opportunity to address the Chamber.

Members and officers stood and applauded.

Adjournment Debate

ADJOURNMENT

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

LIBERAL PARTY CANDIDATES AND VOLUNTEERS

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (18:31): Tonight I pay tribute to the candidates, members and supporters of the Liberal Party who, during the recent election campaign, donated their time to our party and our cause at a time when we needed it most. For the Liberal Party, this was our hardest election campaign in over a decade and a half, but that did not stop our party faithful from getting on the hustings across the Central Coast and in the Hunter to campaign for our united vision. As I have said before, the Liberal Party is a grassroots party of Australian politics. We do not rely on a seemingly endless number of paid union officials to campaign for us. Rather, we rely on volunteers—real people with real jobs, real responsibilities and an extraordinary passion to help us fly the flag.

The electorates across the Hunter and Central Coast were almost entirely held by incumbent Labor Party members, with the exception of my friend the member for Terrigal, the member for Upper Hunter and our new Speaker Mr Greg Piper, the member for Lake Macquarie. We knew the campaign was going to be, as always, a tough one. I thank each and every Liberal Party supporter who contributed. In Newcastle we had an excellent candidate in Thomas Triebsees. Thomas is a senior executive and a dedicated local. He grew up in East Germany and he knows the benefit of free-market thinking firsthand. He campaigned very hard, working to speak to as many locals as possible, and selling his vision for a stronger and more diversified Newcastle. I thank his partner, Katrin, and daughter, Katerina, for their support during the campaign with organising and logistics, and of course the excellent Newcastle branch headed by Susie Evans, OAM, Dr Allan White, ably supported by Karen Howard, Lisa Tierney, Brendan Tate, and a whole host of others—too many to name.

In Charlestown our candidate was local councillor and small business owner, Jack Antcliff. Jack is the former chairperson of the Lake Macquarie Youth Advisory Council and was a founding member of the mental health awareness initiative, the Bright Minds Project. I note, Mr President, you are no stranger to Mr Antcliff. We were very lucky to have Jack as a candidate, and I thank him for his hard work—and his partner Siobhan for putting up with him. In The Entrance our candidate was former Australian cricketer, Nathan Bracken. Nathan was a first-class cricketer and an integral part of the 2003 and 2007 World Cup winning teams. Just like his great fast bowling back in the day, he would have been an outstanding member for The Entrance, especially compared to some of the spinners who now make up the Labor Party caucus. I also want to acknowledge two of the hardest working Liberal Party members that I know, Stephen Kirkham and Brian Perrem, for their significant effort assisting Nathan Bracken in The Entrance.

At Gosford we had Dee Bocking put up her hand to be our candidate, and she did an excellent job. Deanna is an NDIS and aged-care worker, a former small business owner and former Gosford city councillor. I thank Dee and the Gosford campaign manager, Sue Dengate, our previous candidate, for their hard work. I also acknowledge the Gosford campaign team for their support of Dee on the campaign trail. In Maitland our candidate was Michael Cooper, a well-known community and youth advocate. Michael decided to put up his hand for the Liberal Party in order to ease pressure on family budgets in Maitland and deliver on our economic plan for that region. While Michael was unsuccessful this time around, I congratulate Michael and his campaign manager, Councillor Ben Mitchell, on their efforts throughout the campaign.

In Port Stephens our candidate was Nathan Errington. As a family man with deep community ties, Nathan ran a great campaign focused on delivering the Coalition's infrastructure agenda and advocating particularly for sporting clubs in the area. I thank Nathan and the campaign manager, Ian Robb, for their hard work. In Swansea, our candidate was Megan Anderson. Megan is a passionate and active community member who drew on her community ties to be a voice for the Swansea community and her family. I thank her for standing for what she believes in and being a strong voice for Swansea. In Wallsend, our candidate was local Newcastle councillor, Callum Pull. It was always going to be a tough fight in Labor's strongest seat against Sonia Hornery, a well-known and loved local, but I thank Callum for his hard work and the Young Liberals that ably assisted him there. I also

thank Joshua Beer for standing in Lake Macquarie, which was always going to be a tough ask against someone as locally popular and respected as Greg Piper, but I acknowledge Josh's candidacy.

Finally, I congratulate my friend, the member for Terrigal Adam Crouch, on his re-election for a third term. It was a very close fight against young Samuel—too close for comfort, to be frank, leaving me to scrutineer for over a week afterwards. Adam's advocacy for his electorate has been rewarded and the voters there have given him another four years, and rightfully so. I thank every supporter and volunteer who helped us in that campaign.

FASCISM

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (18:36): I am not alone among the left of politics in becoming increasingly concerned about the rise of fascism, not as something just to observe with detached alarm as it gains an increasing foothold in other countries, but something that we are now being confronted with daily in Australia—on the streets, in our social media feeds and in the halls of our democratic institutions. Fascism is the enemy of the people, the enemy of equality, and the enemy of all those who seek justice in this world. The fascists that walk among us and who espouse their dangerous ideology of division know that their politics are unpopular, even among those who they would describe as their base, so they rely on diversion, misdirection, fearmongering and hatred. There is an ideology that thrives on division and hatred, fuelled by toxic masculinity and misogyny.

We cannot afford to be passive. We should be vigilant in recognising and resisting the far right in all its forms, from the seemingly innocuous to the overtly violent. We have to promote a culture of resistance that is unapologetic in its defence of justice, equality and dignity. The fight against fascism is inextricably linked to the fight against patriarchy and misogyny. Contemporary global feminism is the most important location and lens for anti-fascist struggle. Rather than still separating feminism as some "other politics", we should be actively working to situate it at the core of our political movement's contemporary political struggles.

Fascism is a form of authoritarianism that seeks to control every aspect of society. It is a system built on the oppression of marginalised groups, particularly women and gender-diverse people. That is why we need a feminist anti-fascism that centres the experiences of those who have been most impacted by the patriarchy and misogyny that fuels fascist ideology. We must recognise the ways in which fascism and patriarchy reinforce each other, and work to dismantle them both. The rise of far right movements has led to a surge in transphobic and anti-gender-diverse rhetoric and violence. Trans and gender-diverse people are held up as a danger to women.

There is a confected hysterical obsession with bathrooms and women's spaces as being under attack or invaded by transwomen who present a threat to the safety of women. This misinformation is deliberately invoked to obscure the fact that we know that the most dangerous place for women is in the heterosexual nuclear family where women experience a brutal and daily onslaught of gendered violence and murder. The anti-trans ideologues seek, through smoke and mirrors, through dog whistles and increasingly explicit rhetoric and action, to obscure this reality in pursuit of their political ends, offering up alluring promises of protectionism while reinforcing the very structures of gendered oppression. These gender critical conspiracy theories serve as a mask to hide what the real oppressor of women is, which is the patriarchy. All of this is in service of protecting the status quo.

Recently, far right groups have taken to our streets to intimidate and harass queer people, marching down the streets of Newtown in the middle of WorldPride and violently assaulting peaceful LGBTQIA+ protesters in Belfield. Explicitly Neo-Nazi groups are targeting libraries and community spaces that are hosting family-friendly queer or drag events. Neo-Nazis have begun storming council meetings in Victoria, and a group of Neo-Nazis stood on the steps of the Victorian Parliament and performed fascist salutes with impunity. The far right is more than just creeping here in Australia; it is surging. It is incumbent upon all of us to challenge it in whatever ways we can. We must unequivocally defend the rights and dignity of trans and gender-diverse people and reject any attempts to marginalise or exclude them from our movements.

I hope we are able to come together in this new term of Parliament to create structures and reinforce our democratic institution in a way that is explicitly feminist, and I pledge my commitment to doing what I can to ensure that happens. This is as important for the people working within these walls of power as it is to those upholding our liberties through their work outside Parliament and on the streets. A feminist Parliament is just a Parliament that upholds the rights and dignities of all people and can be a bulwark against dangerous political ideologies that seek to degrade and undermine our democracy and our rights. I encourage all members to be active participants in the struggle to build a feminist anti-fascist movement and to create a world where everyone can live free from oppression and fear.

FIRE AND RESCUE NSW

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (18:40): St Florian's Day is on 4 May and is named after the patron saint of firefighters. It is traditionally the day Fire and Rescue NSW formally recognises employees and community members who have played a special role in protecting our communities. In my capacity as

Parliamentary Secretary for Emergency Services, I was pleased to attend City of Sydney Fire Station for the annual St Florian's Day awards ceremony. During the event, Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW Paul Baxter and I presented over 120 awards to firefighters, employees and community members to acknowledge their bravery and efforts across a broad sweep of capabilities. Award recipients included two firefighters who risked their lives when they entered a swollen river to save a teenage girl in Denman. Despite not being trained in swiftwater rescue, the firefighters were aware that if they did not act the child would be swept under. After carefully assessing the situation and developing a plan, they put their own lives at risk to successfully rescue the child.

Fire and Rescue NSW crews from the Berry, Nowra and Shoalhaven fire stations were recognised for saving the life of one of their colleagues who collapsed while battling a fire on the South Coast. The team dragged him from the fire and commenced CPR until an ambulance arrived, which saved his life. Firefighters from Katoomba responded to major bushfires impacting the Blue Mountains in December 2019. Their extraordinary actions saved dozens of homes, factory units, sheds and vehicles. A member of the public who rescued his elderly neighbour and her pet dog from a burning house in Lake Haven in August 2022 was also recognised. So too were crews from Beecroft and Riverwood who provided critical life-saving assistance to a member of the public, Mr Tony Danaskos, who was suffering a cardiac arrest. Mr Danaskos attended the event with his wife, Irene, to thank the firefighters in an emotional reunion.

The Fire and Rescue NSW fire safety infrastructure team successfully completed a two-year project delivering a significant increase in public and firefighter safety within the Sydney Metro tunnel network. The purpose of Fire and Rescue NSW is to protect the irreplaceable. It was a privilege to join the leadership group, firefighters, employees, families and members of the community gathered to celebrate the extraordinary courage and commitment shown by the award recipients. For many of us, the worst day we could possibly imagine is the everyday for firefighters. Day in and day out, firefighters place themselves in hazardous situations to rescue victims of incidents like house fires and vehicle accidents. They demonstrate true courage and they run towards danger.

While the choice to become a firefighter often stems from a passion for helping others and wanting to make a difference, being constantly exposed to death, injury and suffering comes with a cost. The mental and physical toll on firefighters and their families is high. Research shows our first responders are more likely to be diagnosed with a mental health condition than the overall Australian population. As a result of high-level stress and long work hours, some firefighters develop post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation. Today's tragic death of a 16-year-old girl who became trapped under a tram in Haymarket is an example of the trauma that Fire and Rescue NSW crews face when undertaking their duties. As Superintendent Adam Dewberry noted today, we need to make sure we are putting in place the right mechanisms to look after the health and psychological wellbeing of our firefighters.

No-one can forget the images of the terrible destruction wrought by deadly bushfires in recent years. It is important that we continue to provide support to communities that have experienced such tragedy so that they are able to rebuild and recover. It is also important that we continue to support the first responders who work tirelessly in times of need. Fire and Rescue NSW is having its open day this Saturday 13 May from 10.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. Firefighters will be opening the doors to Fire and Rescue NSW stations across the State, with a chance to meet local firefighters plus take part in a range of free activities, including firefighting demonstrations, station tours and safety presentations. I encourage everyone to attend their local fire station and thank those on the front lines who protect our communities and constituents.

FEDERAL BUDGET

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY (18:45): I speak about the negative effects that the Albanese Labor Government's budget will have on rural and regional communities. The Federal budget is nothing more than a typical big-spending, big-taxing Labor budget. It makes it clear that Labor has no plan to help Australians struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. After less than a year in office, the Federal Government's spending will increase by \$185 billion, which shows that Labor has no plan to address inflation and rein in spending to combat the cost-of-living crisis facing all Australians. Instead, the budget will make life harder for families, small businesses, self-funded retirees and mortgage holders. Under the Labor Government, a typical Australian family with kids will be around \$25,000 worse off. The budget fails hardworking Australians right across the country when they need a plan to address inflation and the cost of living. Moreover, there is no plan to address the unprecedented increase in net overseas migration that will see 1.5 million new migrants coming to Australia over the next five years.

The Federal budget cuts infrastructure spending and fails to address congestion, the housing and rental crisis, and the liveability and amenity of our regional towns and suburbs. As a representative of rural and regional communities, I can tell members that this budget will hit us the hardest. Our communities are already struggling with the effects of the pandemic, flooding and drought, and this budget will only add to the woes. The Liberals

and Nationals want Australians to do well but, at the moment, we are being held back by a Labor Government with no economic plan for the future. Australians deserve better. The budget confirms that there will be no growth in real wages this year, and the cost of living will continue to rise. Gas and electricity bills will continue to skyrocket, unemployment will rise, inflation will remain stubbornly high and Australians will continue to face higher taxes.

The Labor Government cannot spend its way out of its cost-of-living crisis. Australia needs a budget that reduces inflation and reins in spending to combat it. The budget will not build a stronger economy, and it is not a budget that is fair for all Australians. In regional and rural communities, we need the Federal Government to invest in infrastructure, create jobs and support small businesses. But the budget has cut infrastructure spending, which means our communities will miss out on much-needed improvements to roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure. The budget does nothing to address the housing and rental crisis in our communities. The Federal Government needs to invest in more affordable housing and work with State and Territory governments to reduce red tape and make it easier to build new homes.

The Federal budget fails to address the liveability and amenity of our towns and suburbs. Regional communities face increasing pressure from population growth, and the Government needs to invest in more services, amenities and infrastructure to support our growing regional communities. I believe that the best way to create jobs and build a stronger economy is to invest in our regional and rural communities. That is why the Liberals and Nationals will invest in new infrastructure such as roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure delivered by the former State and Federal Coalition governments that will create jobs and support our small businesses. We will also invest in more services, amenities and infrastructure to support our growing communities. I believe that every Australian, no matter where they live, deserves that infrastructure and that access.

NIMBIN MARDIGRASS

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (18:49): Last weekend I had the immense pleasure to one be of the thousands attending the thirty-first annual MardiGrass festival in Nimbin. It ran from Friday to Sunday and drew a huge, peaceful crowd from across the region, the State, Australia and the world. I met people there from the United States and Israel. Mr President, you will know from your former role as the Minister for Tourism—and probably as a regular attendee—that it is a massive boon to the economy of northern New South Wales through tourism. Dozens of activities were spread throughout the three days, including information sessions, workshops and the colourful cannabis law reform rally and parade. Spectators lined the road as participants made their way along the main street, many dressed in costumes, including the "ganja fairy" dancers with their cannabis leaf fans and entourage of drummers.

Nimbin's MardiGrass Festival has been running since 1993. It was started as a campaign for drug law reform but is now so much more. MardiGrass began as—and continues to be—a peaceful demonstration, following a lengthy police crackdown on cannabis in the region. Organisers have stated they intend to hold the event every year to "protest, educate and celebrate" until the drug cannabis is legalised in Australia. Mr Michael Balderstone, the irrepressible and sage president of the village's Hemp Embassy, said that after 30 years of campaigning for cannabis legalisation and drug law reform the time was right for meaningful change. He says it is hard to believe we are still labelled as criminals as much as ever. He stated:

Giant pharmaceutical companies are the only people allowed to grow nature's best painkilling plants and we can only access them legally via a doctor's approval.

...

Basically we've lost the plot it seems on this issue of enjoying your life and the heaven we are standing in ...

Thirty years of loudly crying out about the mistake of banning the most useful plant in the entire creation, and despite the experts now agreeing with us, there's still no let up on hunting down cannabis users.

People driving to and from Nimbin over the MardiGrass weekend could expect to be drug tested. I was one of those people, and members will be pleased to know I passed the test with flying colours. But I found it intrusive and heavy handed. Clearly it is an extremely expensive approach to the critical issue of road safety. In Australia, prescription-only cannabis was legalised in 2016 but it remains illegal to privately grow or have without a prescription. Even if you have a prescription it is illegal to drive with any cannabis in your system, even if you are not impaired. The roadside drug testing issue is incredibly important to the Nimbin and northern New South Wales communities. Broadly, they feel they are oppressed by a roadside testing regime that is punitive and not actually based on an evidence-based approach to road safety. In essence, governments and their agencies have applied a successful RBT regime for alcohol and a standardised test of .05 blood alcohol for impairment to cannabis. It is not based on impairment but on presence—and it does not work.

This is a matter at the heart of the Legalise Cannabis Party's platform. It is a matter that I am in this place to pursue and resolve in collaboration with the Government. The Legalise Cannabis Party and I, as its

representative, wish to work constructively with the Government and the various agencies, including the Centre for Road Safety and other stakeholders, to resolve the random drug testing problem. This is exactly what my colleagues in Victoria are doing with the Andrews Government. The MardiGrass is a cultural institution. It is a celebration of the plant, cannabis, that has been at the heart of human development for thousands of years, providing food, fibre and recreation and inspiring creativity and peace. It is an overwhelmingly peaceful celebration. Despite thousands of people attending there is no violence and a great vibe. The MardiGrass has been a festival at the heart of the rainbow region for 30 years—and may it continue to be so.

SAFework NSW

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (18:54): Recently I was honoured to be appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Industrial Relations and Work Health and Safety by Premier Chris Minns. This portfolio is incredibly important, and I look forward to working with Minister Sophie Cotsis on reforms that will benefit workers. A key reform needed in the work health and safety area is to SafeWork NSW. SafeWork is the regulator for workplace health and safety in our State. One of SafeWork's key duties is to look into incidents and enforce laws relevant to work health and safety. SafeWork was not taken seriously under the former Liberal-Nationals Government.

Sophie Cotsis, then shadow Minister, along with unions, injured workers and their families, pushed hard for the former Liberal-Nationals Government to initiate an independent review into SafeWork. This push came after issues that manifested under the Liberals and Nationals were revealed, including reports on understaffing and internal culture issues within SafeWork. Historically, there have also been reports of delays in acting on safety alerts for workplaces that, devastatingly, led to fatalities. We must understand these issues so we can better resource SafeWork and the workers it protects by prioritising safety outcomes.

The Hon. Robert McDougall, KC, has been tasked with undertaking the independent review of SafeWork. The review will examine SafeWork's performance of its regulatory functions under the relevant work health and safety legislation. McDougall will deliver an interim report to Minister Cotsis this month and a final report in November this year. Once these reports have been delivered, they will be released publicly. McDougall previously reviewed the icare and State Insurance and Care Governance Act 2015. In this report, McDougall wrote:

40 The terms of my Review did not extend to a review of the operations of SafeWork NSW. However, I have come to the view that such a review is desirable.

This report was delivered in April 2021, but the Liberals and Nationals delayed initiating the review into SafeWork until October 2022, some 18 months later. This delay illustrates just how flippantly the former Liberal-Nationals Government took worker safety. In August last year, then shadow Minister Sophie Cotsis wrote to the Auditor-General requesting an audit of SafeWork's performance under the relevant work health and safety law and regulation. Performance audits by the Auditor-General are an important mechanism to provide insights and improvements for all government agencies. The audit of SafeWork has been added to the forward program of the Audit Office of New South Wales. With the findings of the review and the audit, we will work with SafeWork to ensure SafeWork inspectors are respected for their important role in protecting our workers.

On 28 April, the International Day of Mourning, Minister Cotsis reaffirmed the New South Wales Minns Labor Government's commitment to bettering workplace health and safety in our State. The International Day of Mourning remembers those who lost their lives or have been injured by work-related incidents and illnesses. All workers deserve to work in a safe workplace, and to do this we have to have a safety-first culture that starts at the very top. The previous Liberal-Nationals Government had scant regard for safety culture. As a result, the safety of working people has been horrifically compromised. It did not even have a dedicated Minister for Workplace Health and Safety. The attitude to SafeWork by the Liberals and Nationals was the same. SafeWork is not even a standalone entity; it is part of the Better Regulation division within the Department of Customer Service.

During the election campaign NSW Labor made a number of important commitments which put worker safety front and centre, like creating a register of workers dealing with engineered stone fabrication, setting up a patient support program for those with silicosis and establishing a licensing scheme for work with manufactured stone. We look forward to examining the independent review and audit recommendations and implementing real reform to SafeWork. We must prioritise worker safety. I very much look forward to working with Minister Cotsis on this important task.

The PRESIDENT: The question is that this House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 18:59 until Tuesday 23 May 2023 at 12:30.