



**New South Wales**

# **Legislative Council**

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)**

**Fifty-Eighth Parliament  
First Session**

**Wednesday 28 June 2023**

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales



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# LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday 28 June 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.

## *Announcements*

### **MEMBERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**The PRESIDENT (10:02):** I draw honourable members' attention to the second of our members' development sessions, to be delivered at 1.00 p.m. today in the Preston Stanley Room. Today's session is being presented by the NSW Ombudsman, Mr Paul Miller, PSM. The session will discuss the support that the Ombudsman's office can provide members in their work with constituents, including guidance on complaints handling and information on where to refer constituents if they have complaints that require resolution. It will also discuss the scrutiny role of the Ombudsman and how the Ombudsman's office can support and complement the scrutiny work of members themselves. The session is open to both members and staff. Everyone is most welcome to attend. A light lunch will be provided.

## *Motions*

### **BLIND AND DEAF JURORS**

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (10:03):** I move:

- (1) That this House affirms Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which states that all disabled people have the right to effectively and fully participate in all political and public life, and in the conduct of public affairs, and that deaf people should be awarded their right to sign language interpreters in all areas of life.
- (2) That this House notes all of the recommendations in the NSW Law Reform Commission's report entitled *Report 114 Blind or Deaf Jurors*, published in September 2006, including the recommendations that:
  - (a) the Jury Act 1977 (NSW) should be amended to reflect that people who are blind or deaf should be qualified to serve on juries and not prevented from doing so on the basis of that physical disability alone;
  - (b) interpreters and stenographers allowed by the trial judge to assist the deaf or blind juror should swear an oath to faithfully interpret or transcribe the proceedings or jury deliberations; and
  - (c) all relevant personnel, including judicial officers and court staff, should be given the opportunity to participate in professional awareness activities to facilitate the inclusion of blind or deaf persons as jurors.
- (3) That this House calls on the Government to implement in full the recommendations of the NSW Law Reform Commission, to allow blind or deaf people to exercise their democratic right to perform jury duty by having an interpreter or stenographer with them to interpret or transcribe proceedings or jury deliberations.

**Motion agreed to.**

## *Documents*

### **MINISTER FOR FINANCE**

#### **Production of Documents: Order**

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (10:04):** I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 21 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents, created since 25 March 2023 in the possession, custody or control of the Premier; the Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, Minister for Jobs and Tourism; the Treasurer; the Minister for Finance, Minister for Natural Resources; the Department of Premier and Cabinet; or Treasury relating to the responsibilities of the Hon. Courtney Houssos, MLC, under the *Code of Conduct for Ministers of the Crown*:

- (a) all documents relating to any disclosures made by the Hon. Courtney Houssos, MLC, under the *Code of Conduct for Ministers of the Crown*;
- (b) all documents relating to any rulings made by the Premier in relation to any disclosures made by the Hon. Courtney Houssos in respect of satisfying her obligations under the *Code of Conduct for Ministers of the Crown*; and
- (c) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....12  
 Noes .....23  
 Majority.....11

**AYES**

Carter	Maclaren-Jones	Rath (teller)
Fang (teller)	Merton	Taylor
Farraway	Mitchell	Tudehope
MacDonald	Munro	Ward

**NOES**

Banasiak	Faehrmann	Moriarty
Borsak	Graham	Murphy (teller)
Boyd	Higginson	Nanva (teller)
Buckingham	Houssos	Primrose
Buttigieg	Hurst	Roberts
Cohn	Kaine	Sharpe
D'Adam	Lawrence	Suvaal
Donnelly	Mihailuk	

**PAIRS**

Farlow	Mookhey
Martin	Jackson

**Motion negatived.***Motions***WESTERN NSW TRAINING AWARDS****The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY (10:12):** I move:

That this House:

- (a) notes that the 2023 Western NSW Training Awards were held in Bathurst on 8 June 2023;
- (b) congratulates the following 2023 award winners:
  - (i) Caroline Morris – Apprentice of the Year;
  - (ii) Amy Motley – Trainee of the Year;
  - (iii) Colin Hawthorn – Trainer of the Year;
  - (iv) Georgia Boland – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year;
  - (v) Angus Tomlinson – Vocational Student of the Year; and
  - (vi) Luka Smith – School Based Apprentice – Trainee of the Year.
- (c) acknowledges the 2023 award winners for their dedication and hard work in their workplaces across western New South Wales; and
- (d) extends its congratulations to Judy Doulman and her team for running a successful 2023 Western NSW Training Awards event.

**Motion agreed to.***Committees***PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE****Reference****The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (10:12):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:

- (a) on 10 February 2023, the President referred to the Privileges Committee an inquiry into the status of documents and other things the subject of claims of parliamentary privilege arising from the execution of various search warrants by the Australian Federal Police [AFP] issued on 25 June and 23 July 2020 on Mr John Zhang, then staffer of the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane and any incidental documents of Mr Moselmane relating to the investigation of Mr Zhang, as delivered to the Acting Clerk by the AFP on 3 February 2023; and
  - (b) the committee's report of 2 March 2023 on this matter entitled *Execution of search warrants by the Australian Federal Police No. 4* indicated that in the time available, the committee had been unable to resolve the status of all the documents referred to it and recommended that in the Fifty-Eighth Parliament the House refer a new inquiry to the Privileges Committee in relation to the remaining unresolved documents.
- (2) That the Privileges Committee further inquire into and report on the status of documents and other things the subject of claims of parliamentary privilege arising from the execution of various search warrants by the AFP issued on 25 June and 23 July 2020 on Mr John Zhang, then staffer of the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane and any incidental documents of Mr Moselmane relating to the investigation of Mr Zhang, as delivered to the Acting Clerk by the AFP on 3 February 2023.
  - (3) That the committee recommend to the House which of the disputed material falls within the scope of proceedings in Parliament by no later than Thursday 3 August 2023.
  - (4) That the committee, for the purposes of making its determination, have access to the relevant indexes of documents and other things in dispute prepared by the AFP together with submissions to the previous inquiry regarding the claims of privilege by the Clerk of the Parliaments, Mr Zhang, Mr Moselmane and the AFP.
  - (5) That, in recommending which documents are privileged, the committee apply the test used in the determination of the matters involving documents seized by the Independent Commission Against Corruption from the Hon. Peter Breen in 2003 and 2004, as amended by the Senate Privileges Committee in its report 164, dated March 2017, entitled *Search warrants and the Senate*.
  - (6) That, if a recommendation cannot be made on the basis of the index and submissions received, the committee be given access to the privileged material held in the custody of the Clerk of the Parliaments.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Motions*

**WAGGA SCHOOL LEADERS PROGRAM**

**The Hon. WES FANG (10:13):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) on Friday 23 June 2023, the Committee 4 Wagga held the graduation of the Wagga School Leaders Program for the 2023 participants;
  - (b) this is the eighth occasion that the Wagga School Leaders Program has helped to guide and shape the future leaders for not only the Wagga Wagga community but also the wider State and country; and
  - (c) the seven modules provide the students the opportunity to test themselves and push beyond their comfort zone by challenges, such as rappelling down the rope tower at the Kapooka Army Recruit Training Base, and it also teaches them to better understand their strengths and skills, while also demonstrating skills such as public speaking and communicating effectively.
- (2) That this House congratulates the following graduates of the 2023 course:
  - (a) Tamia Godber and Rylan Mahoney from Mount Austin High School;
  - (b) Jedd Darcy, Emily Pike and Taylor Smyth from Mater Dei Catholic College;
  - (c) Tisha Bahri, Jessie Butler and Zoe Masters from Wagga Wagga High School;
  - (d) Fatemeh Abbasi and Sameen Bashir from Koorinal High School;
  - (e) Isaac Bloor, Ella Menzies and Joshua Sarantakos from The Riverina Anglican College; and
  - (f) Caitlin Cumberlege from Wagga Wagga Christian College.
- (3) That this House commends Committee 4 Wagga, facilitators and presenters, as well as the sponsors, for their continued support of the Wagga Wagga community, through ensuring our next generation of community leaders are given the tools to succeed and the skills to thrive.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Committees*

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS**

**Government Response**

**The CLERK:** According to standing order, I announce receipt of the Government response to report No. 2/57 of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters entitled *Caps on third-party campaigners' electoral expenditure in s 29(11) and s 35 of the Electoral Funding Act 2018*, tabled on 23 November 2022, received out of session and authorised to be published this day.

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS****Government Response**

**The CLERK:** According to standing order, I announce receipt of the Government response to report No. 3/57 of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters entitled *Adequacy of the funding allocation of the NSW Electoral Commission for the 2023 State General Election*, tabled on 23 November 2022, received out of session and authorised to be published this day.

**COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION****Government Response**

**The CLERK:** According to standing order, I announce receipt of the Government response to report No. 5/57 of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption entitled *Review of the 2020-2021 Annual Reports of the ICAC and the Inspector of the ICAC*, tabled on 20 October 2022, received out of session and authorised to be published this day.

**COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION****Government Response**

**The CLERK:** According to standing order, I announce receipt of the Government response to report No. 6/57 of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption entitled *Review of aspects of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988*, tabled on 15 December 2022, received out of session and authorised to be published this day.

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON STATE DEVELOPMENT****Government Response**

**The CLERK:** According to standing order, I announce receipt of the Government response to report No. 49 of the Standing Committee on State Development entitled *Allegations of impropriety against agents of the City of Canterbury Bankstown Council*, tabled on 27 February 2023, received out of session and authorised to be published this day.

**PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 1 - PREMIER AND FINANCE****Reference**

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM:** I inform the House that in accordance with paragraph (6) the resolution establishing portfolio committees, Portfolio Committee No. 1 - Premier and Finance resolved on 27 June 2023 to adopt the following reference:

**Inquiry into Artificial Intelligence (AI) in New South Wales**

That Portfolio Committee No. 1 - Premier and Finance inquire into and report on Artificial Intelligence [AI] in New South Wales, and in particular:

- (a) the current and future extent, nature and impact of AI in New South Wales;
- (b) the social, economic and technical opportunities, risks and challenges presented by AI to the New South Wales community, government, economy and environment;
- (c) current community and industry use of AI and the potential implications for delivery of government services;
- (d) the current and future extent, nature and impact of AI on the New South Wales labour market including potential changes in:
  - (i) earnings;
  - (ii) job security;
  - (iii) employment type;
  - (iv) employment status;
  - (v) working patterns; and
  - (vi) skills and capabilities for the current and future workforce.
- (e) the current and future extent, nature and impact of AI on social inclusion, equity, accessibility, cohesion and the disadvantaged;
- (f) the current and future extent, nature and impact of AI on customer service and frontline service delivery in New South Wales;

- (g) the current and future extent, nature and impact of AI on human rights and democratic institutions and processes in New South Wales;
- (h) the effectiveness and enforcement of Commonwealth and New South Wales laws and regulations regarding AI;
- (i) whether current laws regarding AI in New South Wales that regulate privacy, data security, surveillance, anti-discrimination, consumer, intellectual property and workplace protections, amongst others, are fit for purpose;
- (j) the effectiveness of the Government's policy response to AI including the Artificial Intelligence Strategy, Ethics Policy and Assurance Framework;
- (k) the measures other jurisdictions, both international and domestic, are adopting in regard to the adaption to and regulation of AI;
- (l) the successes and positive precedents experienced by other jurisdictions, both international and domestic, to better understand best practice;
- (m) recommendations to manage the risks, seize the opportunities, and guide the potential use of AI by government; and
- (n) any other related matter.

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON STATE DEVELOPMENT

### Reference

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** According to paragraph (8) of the resolution establishing the standing committees, I inform the House that on 27 June 2023 the Standing Committee on State Development resolved to inquire into the following reference from the Treasurer, the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, MLC:

#### **Inquiry into the Debt Retirement Fund**

- (1) That the Standing Committee on State Development inquire into and report on the Debt Retirement Fund [DRF], with particular reference to:
  - (a) what the longer term purpose of the DRF is, considering the State's fiscal outlook (e.g. operation position, debt levels), including:
    - (i) factors that should be considered when determining the DRF's optimal size;
    - (ii) the appropriate thresholds for further contributions to the DRF; and
    - (iii) the appropriate thresholds for retiring debt using funds from the DRF.
  - (b) what risks and opportunities, to the budget or otherwise, the Government should consider with respect to the DRF.

### *Bills*

## **PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS AMENDMENT (GASSING DEVICES PROHIBITION) BILL 2023**

### **First Reading**

**Bill introduced, read a first time and ordered to be published on motion by the Hon. Emma Hurst.**

### **Second Reading Speech**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST (10:21):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

On behalf of the Animal Justice Party, I introduce the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Gassing Devices Prohibition) Bill 2023. I am not happy to introduce the bill. The proposed legislation is in response to the sick and cruel way that pigs are being treated in this State. The life of a farmed pig in Australia is one of suffering from birth to death. Pigs have their bodies mutilated without pain relief when they are just piglets. Their teeth are clipped and their tails are cut off. Mother pigs are forcibly impregnated and confined in artificial metal cages to give birth. They cannot build a nest for their piglets. They cannot turn around. After a lifetime of suffering, their lives will be ended with a likely slow and painful death through the use of gassing cells. Five million pigs are slaughtered each year in Australia, around 85 per cent of whom will be stunned and killed using gas chambers. The industry claims this process of stunning is a so-called humane shield before death. But in March this year, footage shown on the ABC's *7.30* exposed the truth: There is nothing humane about gas cells.

For those who are surprised or perhaps uncomfortable to hear that we use gas cells in Australia as part of the killing process, they need to know the truth. So I am going to describe how it happens. There are various devices used that all operate in a similar way. Pigs are driven down a chute and forced into a metal gondola in groups of four to six. The gondola gate is closed, and it is lowered down a shaft filled with carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide is heavier than air, so it pools at the bottom of the shaft. Without enough oxygen, the pigs cannot breathe and are eventually paralysed. The gondola is raised and the bodies of the unconscious animals are tipped out. In

the footage exposed by the ABC, we see pigs forced into the gondolas. As they are lowered into the gas chamber, we can hear their screams. They are desperate, agonising screams. We can see the pigs at the bottom of the shaft violently thrashing and frantic to get out. Some are frothing at the mouth. Their bodies are shaking violently. The pigs are still conscious up to 60 seconds after the first signs of suffering are heard. And the horror does not stop there.

A second broadcast of undercover footage on the ABC's *7.30* showed what can happen to the pigs as they are loaded into the gondolas. The gondola may not be properly emptied when the gate opens. Instead, pigs about to enter the chamber are sometimes confronted with the limp body of a pig from the previous group who was left behind. Pigs are extremely intelligent animals. They can hear the screams of the pigs before them. They can smell the fear and they can see in front of them the lifeless body that they are forced to stand next to or climb over to enter the gondola. The machinery itself is blunt and forceful. Pigs who do not fit into the gondola may suffer physical trauma. The footage on the ABC's *7.30* shows a pig's severed foot at the bottom of the chamber, and when another pig is struggling to fit into the gondola, we see the moment his testicle is ripped off as the door closes and the gondola moves downwards. And this is only what happened to be caught on camera over a small period of filming. Imagine how many pigs must be mutilated by these devices while alive and fully conscious.

This should be difficult to hear. This should make us very uncomfortable. Because this is the reality of where our food comes from, and this is standard industry practice in Australia. This should be common knowledge, yet people are shocked to see it. If this is the reality of killing pigs, the industry has a strong incentive to keep this away from the public eye, because, when we see it, we realise that the industry of killing is an exceptionally cruel one. The footage aired on the ABC came from Farm Transparency Project, which filmed inside Victorian gassing facilities. These brave activists took great personal risks to document exactly what happens.

The same thing happens in New South Wales, but no-one can show it. Why? Because New South Wales laws stop the public knowing what cruelty occurs behind closed doors in the animal agribusiness industry. Knowing full well that the public would never support this sort of cruelty, successive governments have worked with industry groups not to fix the cruelty but to hide it from public view so that no-one would know what happens to each of these sentient animals. Ag-gag laws are alive and well in New South Wales, and they serve to specifically target animal activists and protect animal agribusiness. These ag-gag laws include the Right to Farm Act, passed by the Coalition in 2019, which imposed draconian and disproportionate penalties for certain trespass offences on agricultural land, as well as a new offence of inciting trespass, which is incredibly broad and arguably infringes on the constitutionally implied freedom of political communication.

Another problematic law with a gagging effect is the Surveillance Devices Act 2007, which prohibits the installation and use of surveillance devices as well as the publication of a recording or report that was obtained through that surveillance, with serious penalties attached. Unlike most other States and Territories, the New South Wales Surveillance Devices Act has no public interest exemptions, meaning there is no avenue for a journalist to show or even describe what is contained in undercover footage to the public, even if it contains important information in the public interest—unless that journalist wants to risk jail time. These ag-gag laws are having a chilling effect on the ability to expose animal cruelty in New South Wales, and they are stopping consumers from being able to make any sort of informed choice as the cruel reality of pig slaughter is being hidden from them. It is an absurd situation where activists and journalists are being put at greater risk for exposing animal cruelty than those actually committing acts of animal cruelty.

But it is not just the undercover footage that highlights the cruelty of gassing cells. Scientific studies and international precedent have arrived at the same conclusion—that pig gassing is deeply problematic and needs to stop. The science tells us that carbon dioxide causes pain in the respiratory tract and eyes, because overexposure to carbon dioxide can cause acidosis in those sensitive areas of the body. This is when carbon dioxide reacts with water to form carbonic acid, causing a burning sensation and stabbing pain in mucous membranes like the nose, throat and pharynx. Even with smaller doses of carbon dioxide, individuals experience a feeling of breathlessness that naturally leads to panic and distress. You can see this in the gasping, head shaking and escape attempts. This is further compounded by direct stimulation of certain channels within the amygdala, which is associated with triggering a fear response. Studies investigating this very process also consistently observed defensive reactions in almost all animals, including trying to escape, ramming walls and climbing over other animals. It is no surprise that the animals observed in these studies showed all typical signs and vocalisations of acute fear, pain and distress.

Twenty years ago, in 2003, a government advisory body called the Farm Animal Welfare Council told the United Kingdom Government that the use of high concentrations of carbon dioxide to stun pigs is not acceptable and should be phased out in five years. Has that happened in Australia? No. In fact, Australian Pork Limited received over \$50 million in public funding over the past 10 years to invest in research and development but has not invested anything in finding alternatives to carbon dioxide gassing. The lack of investment or effort sends a strong message: Addressing the suffering that these animals experience is not a priority for the industry. A welfare

argument in this case would propose that if the industry feels that this is the most humane way to kill a pig, then there is simply no humane way to kill a pig.

A new scientific opinion published by the European Food Safety Authority in 2020 stated that exposure to carbon dioxide at high concentrations is a serious welfare concern because it is highly aversive and causes pain, fear and respiratory distress. It also stated that there are no preventative or corrective measures to the pain, fear and respiratory distress caused by the exposure to high carbon dioxide concentrations, as this is inherent to the stunning method. In response to the latest footage, RSPCA Australia has reiterated its longstanding calls for the Australian pig industry to move away from carbon dioxide stunning. We have the proof. We have the scientific studies. We have the international agreement. We have the footage of it happening here in Australia. Any person viewing that footage can tell that this process is torture for the pigs.

What is exasperating is that this information is not new. Footage from inside a gas cell for pigs in New South Wales was published back in 2014. Why has nothing been done? Neither industry nor government have sought to address the issues brought to light almost 10 years ago in this State, which is why I have had to resort to introducing my own bill to outlaw the use of gassing devices on pigs. We should not waste time on excuses about research. If the system does not work then the system needs to stop. Subjecting pigs to this horror is not acceptable.

To every single pig who was forced, terrified, into one of these gas cells and who spent her last moments desperately trying to breathe, frothing at the mouth and fighting to end the pain, I bring on this bill for you, to stop the legalised, institutionalised animal abuse that is occurring to you and millions of other pigs across this country. Until this practice is outlawed, I encourage anyone who is shocked by this vile process of killing pigs to remember that we can all fight for a kinder world—in fact, we have to. This cruelty is occurring because there is a demand for pork, bacon and ham. When we do not buy it, the cruelty stops. We all have the power within our wallets to end this.

Given that the process of consumer change can take far too long, and given the issues with gagging legislation to stop consumers knowing the truth, the Animal Justice Party has introduced the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Gassing Devices Prohibition) Bill 2023. The bill is straightforward and to the point. It seeks to amend the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 to make it an offence to use gassing devices on pigs in abattoirs. To that end, the bill inserts new section 16A, which makes it an offence for a person to use, cause or permit the use of a gassing device on a pig in an abattoir. The section defines gassing device to mean a device that exposes a pig to gas or a combination of gases to induce loss of consciousness.

It includes, but is not limited to, the most common kinds of devices: a dip lift system, an oval tunnel system and a paternoster system, each of which functions in a similar way to what I described earlier. The bill makes no exceptions for standard industry practices in abattoirs by making it clear that the usual defences under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act around killing animals for food do not apply to this new offence. It also makes it clear that gassing cannot be performed even if recommended in outdated codes of practice, as those industry-written codes of practice often authorise and legitimise routine acts of cruelty on farmed animals.

While the bill would bring an end to the cruel gassing of farmed pigs in New South Wales, it is only one part of a much larger problem in the animal agribusiness industry and the treatment of farmed animals in this State. At the end of the day, raising and slaughtering sentient animals in the animal agribusiness industry is never humane. It is time to stop buying into that lie. I urge all honourable members to support the bill.

**Debate adjourned.**

#### *Documents*

### **POLICE TASER USE**

#### **Production of Documents: Order**

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (10:35):** I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 14 days of the date of passing of this resolution all documents, created since 17 May 2023, in the possession, custody or control of the Premier, Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Communities and Justice, or NSW Police Force relating to the incident involving the tasing of Clare Nowland in Cooma (whether or not Mrs Nowland is named in that document), including but not limited to:

- (a) text messages, messages sent on other messenger services and any attachments to those messages;
- (b) departmental briefings, documents relating to media releases and talking points;
- (c) emails and attachments;
- (d) documents relating to a request for access to information under the Government Information (Public Access) Act; and

- (e) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

This Standing Order 52 motion is vitally important because there are questions that have yet to be answered about the tragic tasering of Mrs Clare Nowland. We know that a media release was changed to remove any mention of a taser, that the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism was briefed on the incident on 17 May and that the Minister told the Premier's office on 17 May about this tragic incident. But what we do not know is what information was provided to the Minister or to the Premier's office and, crucially, whether anyone in government was involved in the removal of information.

We also do not know why the Minister took six days to say anything publicly about the death of a 95-year-old woman with dementia with a walking frame, and we still do not have an adequate explanation about what caused the delay. All members have been in situations where they have received information that takes time to process and get advice on, and I accept that processes must be undertaken to properly assess a situation and the required response. However, six days is an extraordinarily long time for such an incident and the Opposition wants to know more.

So many questions still need answers because the Minister has refused to be up-front about her involvement and her actions. The Opposition would have been supportive of her had she given the information plainly, but she did not. Most importantly, the public deserves to know what steps were taken. Our purpose as members of the house of review is to ask questions. That is our role. In fact, it is our duty to those who have elected us, so we should take that responsibility very seriously. This incident cannot be swept away. A person has died at the hands of the police. It may well be the case that the Minister had no involvement, but maybe she was heavily involved in the response to this incident. So far the Minister has relied on the "I refer you to what I've said previously" defence. That does not give confidence that the Minister is exercising her responsibilities, obligations and duties as a Minister in a proper manner. The Opposition has moved this motion because it has no assurance or confidence that she is undertaking her role capably and executing her duties in a proper manner.

The requested documents must be released promptly to avoid any accusations of a cover-up. Plainly something very serious has happened here. While charges have been laid—and I acknowledge the proposed amendments by the Hon. Rod Roberts in this regard—nonetheless the motion relates to the conduct of the Minister and the Government and the Government's response. To avoid those accusations, in our view this has been necessary to understand from the documents exactly what happened. It might well be that advice was given and a response was undertaken in the course of that advice that justifies the delay, but we just do not know. We have no information. The documents must be released promptly so that we can understand that. Anything short of that would indicate that the Government has something to hide in relation to this dreadful, tragic incident.

As an opposition we have called on the Premier to consider the position of the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, Yasmin Catley. It is not an easy job. We acknowledge that. But the Minister has, in our view, repeatedly failed in her obligation to be accountable to the Parliament and to the people of New South Wales. Most critically, it took the Minister six days to make herself available in relation to the questions about the tragic death of Clare Nowland. A 95-year-old grandmother has died. There needs to be clear accountability, transparency and clarity from the Minister whenever such a serious matter occurs. This is clearly within her purview and her responsibility. She refuses to answer questions or provide information, which could be very easily, quickly and efficiently done and could answer all of those questions. I commend the motion to the House and to our colleagues because we need further information.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (10:40):** I again share my condolences to Mrs Nowland, her family and everyone involved in the incident. I share the community's concerns over the incident and my foremost thoughts are with her and her family because this is a tragic event. There is no argument about that. The Government has been clear about that. I again say on record that it is appalling that the Opposition wants to play politics with such a serious situation, such a tragic situation. It should think carefully about the politics it is playing with the incident. There is no cover-up here.

The Minister is an outstanding Minister who has done a terrific job and has answered questions repeatedly about this in the other place. The police commissioner has repeatedly answered questions about the incident. As the commissioner has explained in many media appearances, this is being investigated at the highest level as a critical incident investigation by our best homicide detectives and we need to let them do their work. It is paramount that the incident is investigated thoroughly and fairly so we can have the best outcome for both the family and the broader community. That is why a critical incident investigation was launched almost immediately after the event to ensure appropriate oversight.

Any allegations of police misconduct arising from this tragic incident will be thoroughly investigated as part of the critical incident investigation. The Government trusts the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission [LECC] to provide proper oversight and the Minister has repeatedly called on anybody who has any real evidence of a so-called cover-up to provide that evidence to the LECC. The police commissioner has publicly stated the reasons a full media statement has not been released in the first instance, including that the family needed to be fully informed of the situation before the public. That is completely reasonable in the circumstances. There is no cover-up here. The LECC has full oversight. There will be a full coronial inquiry and the officer has been charged and will face court. In relation to the motion today, I move:

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

the draft of the first police media statement in the matter of the Cooma incident involving Clare Nowland, and any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

The Government believes that is an appropriate amendment. We will provide documents in relation to the media statement, which has been questioned numerous times in public and through this process. We are happy to be open about that and provide that information. Anything else needs to be dealt with through the investigation and with sensitivity to the family.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (10:43):** One Nation does not support the original motion as drafted. I too have grave concerns that there has been an extensive cover-up in relation to this matter, not so much from the Minister's office but from the police commissioner's office. We need to get to the bottom of this. I am not saying that we should be investigating what happened at the nursing home in Cooma—far from that. What needs to be investigated is what is happening in police headquarters. The motion that we cannot support delves into the administration of justice and goes very closely to what Standing Order 53 covers, which I have had waved in front of me on numerous occasions. The original motion states:

... or NSW Police relating to the incident involving the tasing of Clare Nowland in Cooma ...

That calls for papers regarding the actual incident. That is something that we should not be doing. The matter is sub judice. I will certainly not become the Lisa Wilkinson of the New South Wales Legislative Council and talk about matters before the court that have yet to be decided. I propose to move an amendment. I move:

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

the drafting of all police media statements or proposed media statements, whether released to the public or otherwise, in the matter of the Cooma incident involving Clare Nowland, including but not limited to:

- (a) all communication with the family or representatives of Clare Nowland prior to the issue or preparation of any proposed or released media statements;
- (b) all text messages, messages sent on any other messenger services and any attachments to those messages;
- (c) all departmental briefings, emails and attachments; and
- (d) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

I know that the Government has concerns about paragraph (a). The Commissioner of Police has tried to defend her position by saying that she did not want to release information because she had not communicated with the family. I do not accept that. My understanding is there was communication. If this information is provided to us as part of the order, I urge the Government to claim privilege on it because it is not for the public to know that. I defended the family in relation to the release of the video. Privilege can be claimed but we need access to that information so we can hold the commissioner to account and do our job regarding transparency. That is where the concerns lie: in the commissioner's office. What information did she provide to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism? For that reason we cannot support the motion in its original form and I urge members to accept my amendment.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (10:47):** By leave: I speak to the amendment. I thank the Hon. Rod Roberts for his amendment and acknowledge the comments that he has made. I know he has a serious interest in these matters. He has worked with all sides of the Parliament to get further information about these kinds of issues in a sensitive and careful way and has managed information in a very careful and proper way, whilst being satisfied that he has got the information that he seeks. However, the Government does not support the amendment moved by the Hon. Rod Roberts for the reason I outlined earlier. We are comfortable, we are committed to providing the information about the media release but anything further than that interferes in the investigation and that needs to run its course. In respect to the Hon. Rod Roberts' position, the Government will offer a briefing on a privilege basis to members of this place who are interested in that information and I am happy

to say that for the record. Perhaps that is something that may be considered. The Government does not support the amendment.

**The PRESIDENT:** As there are no other speakers, the Hon. Natalie Ward may speak to both amendments in her contribution in reply.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (10:48):** In reply: I thank honourable members for their contributions. It behoves us to ensure that the need for transparency is fulfilled. First, I will deal with the Government's amendment, which the Opposition will not support. Effectively it whittles down the request for information to the first police media statement, which we say is an inadequate response when repeated requests have been made for information. We do not think it is onerous to provide information about the processes that occurred and the information that was provided without in any way affecting the investigation or any of the factual matters to do with the police. We will be opposing Labor's amendment for those reasons. The Opposition supports the amendment of the Hon. Rod Roberts. It is important that all versions of the police media statements and of proposed statements are produced and that other information about communications in other formats is provided, including advice and departmental briefings. The issue is about how the Minister handled the information.

In response to the Government's comments, I put on record that the Opposition is in no way politicising this tragic incident. I ask the Hon. Tara Moriarty to please not scoff; I listened carefully and respectfully to her contribution. The motion concerns a very serious incident about which answers have not been provided, which is why we are calling for the production of papers. The motion is not politicising anything. A family has lost a 95-year-old grandmother. That is a tragedy. If it is simple to provide those answers, then the Government can easily do so. However, it has not done so and, as members of this house of review, we find ourselves in the position of doing our jobs. I reject the Government's assertion entirely.

The Opposition supports the Hon. Rod Roberts' amendment. I commend his amendment to the House and urge all honourable members to support the motion. Questions remain unanswered and we need to understand what took place. It might be that those documents are produced and provide those answers very simply—advice was provided and steps were taken because of that advice. But in the absence of that information, we need to understand more about what occurred. The public deserves to know more about it. To scoff is plainly disingenuous and disloyal to this House and to the job of members. I commend the motion, amended as proposed by the Hon. Rod Roberts, to the House.

**The PRESIDENT:** The Hon. Natalie Ward has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Tara Moriarty and the Hon. Rod Roberts have moved amendments. I will first put the question on the Hon. Tara Moriarty's amendment. If that is agreed to, the Hon. Rod Roberts' amendment will lapse. If it is not agreed to, the House will consider the Hon. Rod Roberts' amendment before then considering the substantive motion.

The question is that the amendment of the Hon. Tara Moriarty be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....19  
Noes .....16  
Majority.....3

**AYES**

Boyd	Graham	Moriarty
Buckingham	Higginson	Murphy (teller)
Buttigieg	Hurst	Nanva (teller)
Cohn	Jackson	Primrose
D'Adam	Kaine	Sharpe
Donnelly	Lawrence	Suvaal
Faehrmann		

**NOES**

Banasiak	Maclaren-Jones	Rath (teller)
Borsak	Merton	Roberts
Carter	Mihailuk	Taylor
Fang (teller)	Mitchell	Tudehope
Farroway	Munro	Ward
MacDonald		

## PAIRS

Houssos  
Mookhey

Farlow  
Martin

**Amendment agreed to.**

**The Hon. Rod Roberts' amendment lapsed.**

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

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

*Rulings***PERSONAL REFERENCES AND REFLECTIONS**

**The PRESIDENT (10:59):** Honourable members, yesterday during question time the Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources made a comment that the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party in a former capacity "lost her job because she could not manage her conflicts of interest". Subsequently, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition retorted, "The Minister has form in getting nasty and personal when she is under pressure." Points of order were taken that both comments were unparliamentary and out of order, and should be withdrawn. I reserved my ruling and undertook to review *Hansard*, which I have now done.

Separately, at the end of the take-note debate yesterday a point of order was taken by the Hon. Bronnie Taylor that a comment directed at her by the Hon. Greg Donnelly was offensive and inconsistent with a respectful workplace. I have reviewed *Hansard* and the comment concerned was, "That shut her up." As a starting point and as remarked by the Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast in question time yesterday, members in this Chamber are subject to criticism on many occasions. I note the ruling of President Johnson in 1987:

When a person is in public life and a Member of Parliament, the risk of being criticised in a political way must be taken. Politics is not an area for sensitive persons.

In the course of debate, when members canvass the opinions and conduct of their opponents, they must expect criticism. That said, I note another ruling by President Johnson in 1987, reiterated by President Ajaka in 2018, on the issue of the reflections and withdrawal of comments. Both Presidents observed:

Allegations of a personal nature against Members can only be made upon a direct and substantive motion. Members must exercise their privilege of free speech with good sense and good taste, so as to maintain courtesy of language towards other Members in debate. Personal references not only reduce the standard of debate, provoke retaliation and lead to disorder in the House, but degrade the Parliament in the estimation of the people.

Having reviewed the transcript, I note that the comment made by the Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources about the Hon. Natalie Ward was very specific and contained a serious allegation. In the circumstances where offence was taken, I believe it is appropriate to ask the Minister to withdraw her comment, which I do now.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:02):** To suit the convenience of the House, I withdraw the comment.

**The PRESIDENT:** That is appropriate. The comment made by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell about the Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources was more general and fits better into the category of criticism of political nature. That said, the comments made by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell and the Hon. Gregory Donnelly in the context of the debate yesterday were unhelpful and disrespectful and not of the standard expected by the House. I urge all members to maintain respectful behaviour when participating in the proceedings of the House. More generally, I note that the conduct of members during question time yesterday was particularly poor and fell below the dignity of the House. I reiterate my ruling from 20 June 2023:

Members who are contributing to a wall of noise while Ministers are attempting to give their answers, members who are calling out across the Chamber before Ministers have even commenced their answers and members on all sides who persistently and loudly interject during question time will all very quickly find themselves on calls to order.

If the same conduct is repeated today during question time, I will not hesitate to call members to order. If I need to call any member to order three times, I will have them removed from the Chamber.

*Visitors***VISITORS**

**The PRESIDENT:** I welcome to the Parliament today student leaders from high schools across New South Wales who are attending the Secondary Schools Student Leadership Program conducted by the Parliamentary Education Office. They are all very welcome.

According to sessional order, proceedings are now interrupted for questions.

*Questions Without Notice***MINISTER FOR FINANCE**

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (11:03):** I inform the House that I became a grandfather this morning. I have to say that it is not the first time.

**The Hon. Daniel Mookhey:** Or the last.

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE:** Or the last. Out of deference to the Minister for Finance, I direct my question to the Leader of the Government. On what date did the Premier put in place what he has described as a comprehensive plan for managing the conflict of interest arising from the Minister's responsibilities for insurance-related legislation and her husband's employment by the Insurance Council of Australia?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:04):** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I will take it on notice and get back to him with an answer.

**PUBLIC SERVICE SENIOR EXECUTIVES**

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (11:04):** My question is addressed to our fine Treasurer.

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** Misleading the House!

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY:** There is a wall of noise already. Will the Treasurer update the House on the number of senior executives within the New South Wales public service and aligned government services?

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:05):** I thank the honourable member for his question and I will update him on the number of senior executives in the New South Wales public service, which is expanding faster than the number of grandchildren of the shadow Treasurer. I place on record our congratulations to him today. It is fantastic news. It is much better than the news I will tell the House right now, which is that in its last year the former Government hired 379 senior executives in 364 days. It was hiring more than one senior executive per day for its last year in government. Members might think that is troubling, but the year previous it hired 347.

**The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine:** How many?

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** Some 347. That is the largest ever increase in senior executives in the 167-year history of the public service. The party of small government let it get out of control. If members want to understand just how much that hiring spree cost, I will tell them. It cost \$100 million per year—\$400 million over the forward estimates. What is worse is that at the same time the Coalition was swelling the top brass of the public service, essential services were run threadbare. What is even more disappointing is that the biggest department that accounted for the largest expansion in the size of the senior executive service [SES] was Transport. We recall what happened last year in transport. Rail workers were fighting for safe conditions, pitted against the former Minister at the same time that the former Government was telling rail workers and commuters, "There is no way we can sit down and negotiate." But, all of a sudden, there was a hiring spree in the Transport department happening under its watch.

To put that into perspective, there is a shortage of healthcare workers, and school students need more teachers in their classrooms—and I welcome the students in the gallery to the Chamber. Our police officers need more constables in our stations. Paramedics are under immense pressure as well. For years they were told that their pay could not change and that they would have to take a sacrifice for the team. Rather than investing that money in essential services, there was a binge out on senior executives at the top of the public service. The average salary of one of those SES workers is \$264,000.

What is really surprising about that is that at the same time that the former Government decided to hire more than 700 senior executives in two years—after COVID—it promised at the last election to cut it. According to the last election, the size of the SES should be around 2,900 by now but instead it is over 4,000. The

comprehensive expenditure review that the finance Minister and I are leading is determined to get to the bottom of that so we can free up more money to put into our essential services just as we were elected to do.

### MINISTERIAL CODE OF CONDUCT

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:08):** My question is directed to the Special Minister of State. Given his shared responsibility with the Premier for the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, what steps has he taken to ensure that all his ministerial colleagues are fully aware of their responsibilities under the New South Wales ministerial code of conduct, which is an applicable code for the purposes of section 9 of the ICAC Act?

**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) (11:09):** I thank the honourable member for her question. I assure her that as the Government has come in there have been very serious and repeated discussions about what incoming Ministers' obligations will be and how Ministers will seek to satisfy them. It is a big change, to be frank, coming from opposition into government. In my experience, Ministers in the new Government have taken that role seriously. Certainly the Premier has taken it seriously. In general, he has been careful to indicate that in public. I also assure the member that he has been very clear with the team in private that they need to uphold standards. That is his expectation.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM:** On the matters that have detained the House, the Premier has been very clear in the other place about his specific expectations. I will make a final observation, as I did yesterday.

**The PRESIDENT:** The Hon. Wes Fang will cease interjecting.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM:** Opposition members have been pursuing the matters relating to the Minister for Finance for a number of weeks now, and they are yet to show any allegation or any matter where she has done the wrong thing or any suggestion that the two important tests in the ministerial code of conduct have been breached. We are about to break for the winter recess. Those opposite need to show that there is some issue if they want to bring this matter to the House and mount a case. A very serious investigation is about to land tomorrow about a conflict of interest that detained this House for quite some time. That was the standard that this House has asserted in the past when we have investigated these matters, and all members of the House took an interest in that debate. I have to say it seems like this issue is heading nowhere.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:11):** I ask a supplementary question. In his answer, the Minister referred to the matters that pertain to the Minister for Finance. Will the Minister elucidate and provide the House with information about when he first became aware of that conflict of interest and what specific steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the Minister for Finance is complying with the requirements of the code?

**The Hon. Daniel Mookhey:** Point of order—

**The Hon. Bronnie Taylor:** Cover-up, cover-up!

**The Hon. Daniel Mookhey:** The ghost of Walt Secord lives! Mr President, you have given wide latitude for supplementary questions, but that one well and truly strays into the category of new question. It should be pursued by the Opposition at its next substantial opportunity.

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell:** To the point of order: In his answer, the Minister clearly spoke about the matters that we have been raising in relation to the Minister for Finance. He mentioned what the Premier said in the other place as well. He absolutely addressed that issue, and I would like an elucidation on that matter.

**The PRESIDENT:** It is very close to the line, but I will allow the question. The Minister has the call.

**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) (11:12):** I have listened closely to the answers given by the Minister for Finance in the House, and I have indicated to the House the steps that she has taken. I believe she has stayed firmly within the code.

### SOLAR FARMS

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (11:12):** My question is directed to the Leader of the Government in her capacity as either the Minister for the Environment or Minister for Energy. In accordance with the Mining Act 1992, mining companies are required to lodge a rehabilitation security bond before work begins. That is to cover the full cost of all rehabilitation and mine-closure activities should a mining company default on its rehabilitation obligations. Given that New South Wales now has four of the five biggest solar farms in Australia, does the Government have a rehabilitation security bond for solar farms? If not, why not?

**The PRESIDENT:** Members will not interject. The Leader of the Government is capable of answering the question on her own.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:13):** I thank the honourable member for his question. It is a serious question. In relation to the mine rehabilitation issue, I generally point out that a range of rules and regulations go to that, which are looked after by the Hon. Courtney Houssos. To get to the member's point, no, solar farms are not required to do a rehabilitation plan because, first, they are in place for a very long time. The infrastructure that is—

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

Are you all right?

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**The Hon. Sam Farraway:** I was just talking to myself.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** A bit quieter would be better. I will do the right thing and speak through the Chair before the Hon. Natalie Ward takes a point of order.

**The Hon. Natalie Ward:** I was just getting a paper clip.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** You've got form, Natalie. Come on! You've done it before.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Members have done very well for the first 10 minutes. Let's keep it up.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** To get to the point, no. The point—

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**The Hon. Mark Banasiak:** We want an answer.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** I am trying to answer.

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** You're not.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The Hon. Wes Fang is not being helpful.

**The Hon. Rod Roberts:** Point of order—

**The PRESIDENT:** I suspect the Hon. Rod Roberts is about to take an excellent point of order.

**The Hon. Rod Roberts:** Yes, I am, Mr President. I cannot hear. I have asked a very serious question, and I am raising the issue on behalf of rural constituents. I would like to hear the answer.

**The PRESIDENT:** As would I. I uphold the point of order. The Leader of the Government has the call and will be heard in silence.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** Solar farms are not required to have a rehabilitation plan. The point is that they will be there for a long time. The base infrastructure is put in place and the panels are removed over time. However, I acknowledge that there are real issues relating to the recycling of panels, which we will have to come to grips with over the next 20 to 50 years. A lot of excellent work is being done by a variety of universities. I give a shout-out to UNSW, which I have visited. It is doing some incredibly groundbreaking work on how we can deal with the recycling challenge. In relation to the land, solar farms are in place. It depends on whether the land is fully owned and the solar panels will be there permanently, or whether the land is leased and perhaps the idea is that the panels would be removed.

No, it is not considered Government policy, nor is it something I would support, to require solar panels and solar farms to do rehabilitation. They are supposed to be in place for a long time. They are the energy of the future, and they are the cheapest thing. We live in the sunniest continent on earth. The sun is our free super power. The more we harness it, the more solar farms we can have. That is the way we need to deal with it. The final point that I think the member is alluding to, which is a very important one, is that there is land-use conflict around where we put solar farms and how they are achieved. We need to work very hard with all communities to make sure that we do the best to try to resolve that issue.

#### ENERGY BILL RELIEF

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (11:16):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Energy. What is the Minns Labor Government doing to ease cost-of-living pressures for people in New South Wales?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:17):** I thank the honourable member for her question. It is very disappointing that members opposite are not aware of the many millions of dollars going into supporting New South Wales households to deal with rising energy costs. The Government understands the cost of living, and it is taking action to deal with it.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I call the Hon. Sam Farraway to order for the first time.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** The New South Wales Government made a very clear election commitment to provide \$485 million for targeted energy bill relief to eligible households and small businesses—something that those opposite did not do. We have secured another \$481 million in co-funding from the Commonwealth.

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

You don't like it. Why don't you want to hear about it? People actually need support. As a result, this financial year we will deliver electricity bill relief—

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The Leader of the Government will be heard in silence.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** We will deliver electricity bill relief to 1.6 million eligible households and 320,000 eligible small businesses. Those households will receive \$500 this year to support them in dealing with their bills. Small businesses will receive \$650.

**The Hon. Sam Farraway:** What about regional seniors?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** Do you not care about small businesses and them getting \$650 off their electricity bills? Fine. Why don't you leave rather than continuing to interrupt me?

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The Hon. Sam Farraway has been called to order for the first time. I suspect he does not want to be called to order for the second time.

**The Hon. Daniel Mookhey:** There was a second time.

**The PRESIDENT:** No, there was no second call to order. He was called to order for the first time. A range of school students are present in the public gallery. If not for Hansard and for the dignity of the Chamber, I urge members to at least try to restrain themselves for our student visitors. The Leader of the Government has the call.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** It is extremely important that people understand the bill relief that will be rolled out in the next few months, which will provide \$650 to 320,000 small businesses—Opposition members had absolutely no commitment to that. Secondly, it will provide relief to 1.6 million households. Members must also understand—if they are listening—that under the Energy Accounts Payments Assistance program we have increased energy bill relief to \$500. People who are doing it really tough can apply for support to help pay their electricity bills. Members opposite might not think that is important. They may be living in the past or wishing that they had won the election; they might like to pretend that the budget this Government inherited from them is not a disaster and that it can all go away.

The Government is doing important work that will make a difference to 1.6 million households and 320,000 small businesses. Rising energy costs are a huge issue, and we know that communities are worried about that as they start to get their winter bills. We could choose to do nothing about it, we could whinge about it, or we could do what we are doing, which is providing relief to people when they receive their energy bills. I look forward to reporting to the House on how we will do that. I flag that in future we must also ensure that everyone who is eligible applies to get that rebate.

#### **RAIL NETWORK AND FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP**

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (11:21):** My question is directed to the Leader of the Government, representing the Premier. Last weekend commuters across Sydney were subjected to utter chaos on rail networks, with some 600,000 commuters impacted. That followed from the Minister for Transport telling the people of Sydney on 4 June to get ready for a year of pain and, "We are going to massively disrupt the network on weekends." In less than a month the FIFA Women's World Cup will be hosted in our city. That is a huge event on the international stage, made up of teams from 32 countries. To date, it is estimated that over 750,000 tickets for games in Australia have been sold. Will the Government provide an assurance that it will not embarrass Sydney on the world stage, and that there will be no scheduled track work for the duration of the world cup?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:21):** I thank the honourable member for her question. It is an important one. The point we must make is that there are billions of dollars in overspends, a lack of maintenance and a huge maintenance gap, which this Government has inherited as a result of 12 years of inaction by the former

Government. There is a maintenance problem and we must fix it. The good Minister for Transport has been working extremely hard to put in place the works that must be done to ensure that commuters can get where they need to go on reliable transport. The approach of this Government and the transport Minister is to be up-front about the challenges and problems. We have been very up-front. That is the difference between this Government and members opposite, who wish they were in government. They left us with the mess that we have inherited.

The transport Minister is working very hard on those issues. She has put in place the Sydney Trains accelerated maintenance program, or maintenance blitz, to reduce the maintenance backlog to acceptable levels within the next 12 months. The accelerated maintenance program should minimise disruption as much as possible to customers and third-party operators, but it will be tough. The repair plan requires reducing high-priority defects by 75 per cent, reducing the high-priority inspection backlog, accelerating the delivery of renewing critical assets, and installing remote condition monitoring technology, which was neglected for 12 years.

**The Hon. Tania Mihailuk:** Point of order: I specifically asked whether the Government would embarrass Sydney on the world stage and allow those scheduled track work upgrades to continue throughout the duration of the world cup. The Leader of the Government has not addressed that matter.

**The PRESIDENT:** The member's question was quite substantial and contained a number of different parts. I understand the fundamental part of the question was at the end, and that has not yet been addressed. The Minister was being directly relevant, but I require her to address the substance of the question.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** The point of order came as I was getting to that part of the question, which is that we are excited to host the FIFA Women's World Cup. It will be an incredible opportunity to showcase—

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** Are you going to stuff it up?

**The Hon. Natalie Ward:** It is the FIFA Women's World Cup. Don't stuff it up.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** Well, you know, boohoo.

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** You stuff it up and say, "Boohoo."

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** We want everyone from around the world to come and enjoy what is going to be an incredible spectacle. The Minister for Transport will be working extremely hard to manage the transport needs so that everyone who wishes to come to the FIFA Women's World Cup will be able to travel there. I will take the question on notice and provide the member with the actual detail of what plans have been put in place to make sure that people can go to the FIFA Women's World Cup using our transport system. But I make the point that the Government is absolutely committed to this being a world-class, exciting event. It will be, and the Minister for Transport will do what is needed.

**The PRESIDENT:** I call the Hon. Wes Fang to order for the first time.

#### MINISTER FOR FINANCE

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (11:25):** My question is directed to the Minister for Finance. On 15 June 2023 the Minister announced:

The government will continue to review and, where required, strengthen conflict of interest and confidentiality terms for all professional services engagements.

Will the Minister advise the House of the current requirements regarding the conflict of interest for professional services engagements, and which aspects may require strengthening?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:26):** I am delighted that, after 23 questions, smearing me, my husband and the excellent organisation that he works for, we can actually turn to—

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** Point of order: In the first 10 seconds of her answer—

**The Hon. Penny Sharpe:** What is the standing order—65 (5)?

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** —the Minister suggested that the Opposition is smearing her by asking questions.

**The Hon. John Graham:** That is not a point of order.

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** It is Standing Order 65 (5). The answer must be directly relevant to the question. The Minister has suggested that the Opposition is smearing her, but that should be done by way of substantive motion.

**The PRESIDENT:** There is no point of order. The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I am delighted to provide an answer to the honourable member, and I thank her for her question, on the work that we are doing after the appalling revelations of the Federal Senate inquiry into consultants. Again, I place on record my thanks to Federal Labor Senator Deborah O'Neill, who has done diligent and important work on this for years. I pay tribute to the upper House inquiry and my Labor colleagues on that inquiry. They are working particularly hard to make recommendations about the way the New South Wales Government uses consultants. The Auditor-General produced a report earlier this year, which showed that since 2017 the New South Wales Government used over a billion dollars in employing consultants.

**The Hon. Greg Donnelly:** How much?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Over a billion dollars and that was spent without strategic purpose. As part of our comprehensive expenditure review, we are looking very closely—

**The Hon. Daniel Mookhey:** More consultant spending?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I acknowledge the interjection from the Treasurer. I have made a series of announcements about the work the New South Wales Government is doing. We are looking at implementing significant multimillion-dollar penalties for breaches of privacy provisions. On 15 June I announced:

The government will continue to review and, where required, strengthen conflict of interest and confidentiality terms for all professional services engagements. This work is already underway as part of the recommendations from the Auditor-General's report on the use of consultants.

I also announced:

The government will require PwC to attest that no staff member who has been found to have breached confidentiality or misused information as part of work for the Commonwealth Treasury will be involved in any NSW Government work.

Further, I took the significant step of suspending PricewaterhouseCoopers from providing taxation services for three months. That was after seeking advice from the Treasury secretary—

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The Minister has the call

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** —and other departmental officials that we are working closely with on this matter. We certainly—

**The PRESIDENT:** The Hon. Wes Fang will cease interjecting or he will be called to order for a second time. The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** Also of relevance, there has been an announcement over the weekend that Allegro Funds will be acquiring part of the PwC business. We will of course ensure that the highest standards will be required to be a pre-qualified provider within the New South Wales government system of professional services procurement. [*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (11:30):** I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate the part of her answer where she spoke about strengthening the requirements? Is the Minister therefore setting a higher standard for those professional services organisations than for herself?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:30):** No.

#### RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (11:30):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources, representing the Minister for Health. Will the Minister update the House about how the Government is promoting better health outcomes in regional New South Wales?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:31):** I welcome the question from the Hon. Emily Suvaal. As members would know, as a former nurse, or still registered—

**The Hon. Greg Donnelly:** Point of order: Clearly audible and loudly being spoken is reference to the Minister by the Hon. Sam Faraway and the Hon. Wes Fang as "she" in their discussion that I can clearly hear on this side. That is quite inappropriate. She is an honourable Minister in this House.

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell:** What? Saying "she"?

**The Hon. Greg Donnelly:** No, they are pointing at her and saying "she". I would ask the President to remind those members that it is unparliamentary—

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The member has the right to be heard in silence.

**The Hon. Greg Donnelly:** —and that they cease and desist.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! When members are at the dispatch box, it is appropriate for members to refer to other members by their full title and their appropriate title. If they are conversing in a quiet and respectful manner about someone on the other side of the Chamber to talk about "he said this" or "she said that" or whatever, that is not inappropriate or unparliamentary. The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** As I was saying, the Hon. Emily Suvaal is a registered child paediatric nurse; I am in awe of her. I acknowledge our other registered nurses in the Parliament. I welcome the excellent question about regional health outcomes because we know how important our regional health—

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** It is so interesting that I am talking about regional health, an issue that one would expect The Nationals to want to hear more about, and yet they are more interested in either conversing amongst themselves or not hearing.

**The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham:** Point of order—

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I call the Hon. Wes Fang to order for the second time.

**The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham:** The Opposition continues to heckle and interject, and rather than being, as was described by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday, sotto voce, it is far more irritante and fastidioso—that is, annoying and irritating. I ask that Opposition members be called to order and told to desist from irritating and annoying members of the House.

**The Hon. Bronnie Taylor:** To the point of order: I was listening. I think everyone has forgotten very quickly, and all respect to new members in this place, that there is always a level of chatting—

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

**The Hon. Bronnie Taylor:** I was listening. I am happy to listen. The Minister should answer the question. That is the job.

**The PRESIDENT:** The point of order relates to interjections being disorderly at all times, and they are— from all sides of the Chamber. If all sides of the Chamber would cease interjecting, we would be able to hear the Minister's answer in silence. The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I am delighted to update the House about how the Government is promoting better health outcomes in regional New South Wales. I answer this question in my capacity representing my excellent colleague the Hon. Ryan Park, the Minister for Health and many other things, but also in my capacity as the Minister for Finance. As part of the important work we are doing in our comprehensive expenditure review, we have uncovered that 1,112 nurses were employed by the previous Government on temporary contracts at a time when, as we heard from the Treasurer earlier in question time, in 365 days the New South Wales Government could appoint 379 executives worth \$100 million a year. What did those opposite do for temporary nurses when they were in government? They put them on temporary contracts.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The Hon. Wes Fang is about to be called to order for the third time.

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

**The PRESIDENT:** I beg your pardon? The Hon. Wes Fang will cease interjecting or he will be removed from the Chamber until the end of the day. The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I update the House that of those 1,112 temporary nurses who were employed across New South Wales, 26.6 of those full-time equivalents were employed in the Southern NSW Local Health District—26 temporary nurses at a point when nurses want a permanent job to be able to move to a regional area, to be able to put down some roots, buy a house, plan their own family. What did the former regional health Minister do? She put them on temporary health—

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell:** Point of order—

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell:** Once again, the Minister is reflecting on a member of this side of the Chamber in her contribution. She is directly naming the Hon. Bronnie Taylor as the former Minister for Regional Health.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** She is afraid of her legacy, is she? She can get up and defend it.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell:** Why are you so afraid to do things in your own portfolio?

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell:** Too many conflicts? It is too many conflicts; you cannot talk about it.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! If the Hon. Sarah Mitchell has a point of order, she is welcome to take it.

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell:** My point of order is that the Minister should not be reflecting on the member in this place as she is doing and repeatedly does.

**The PRESIDENT:** The fact that the Minister referred to the former Minister for Regional Health does not imply a reflection at this point, but I will be listening very carefully. The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I inform the House that in the Hunter New England Local Health District, where I know the honourable member who asked me the question resides, 138.2 full-time equivalent nurses were employed on temporary contracts at a time when we should be providing secure jobs for these nurses to be able to move to regional areas—

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** —or to be able to put down roots and actually plan their families. No, those opposite put them on temporary contracts. [*Time expired.*]

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I call the Hon. Bronnie Taylor to order for the first time. Excuse me? The Hon. Bronnie Taylor will cease gesturing at me. The Hon. Rod Roberts has the call.

#### RED FIRE ANTS

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (11:38):** I am enjoying this, Mr President. Let them continue. I just feel really embarrassed for the students who are in the Chamber.

**The PRESIDENT:** Me too.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Hopefully they do not take that away as a reflection of the way the rest of us operate in this House. My question is directed to the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Regional New South Wales. As the Minister would be aware, New South Wales is facing an outbreak of red fire ants which threaten to cause billions of dollars worth of damage to our crops, homes, infrastructure and people with their severe and venomous stings. Given that the ants are now only 23 kilometres north of our border with Queensland and existing containment methods appear to be failing, what contingency plans has the Minister and her department developed in the event that the invasive species crosses into New South Wales?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:39):** I thank the honourable member for his question. It is a significant issue. Managing biosecurity and biosecurity threats is a key priority for the New South Wales Government and for me as the Minister. The threat is currently in Queensland, but the member is quite right to point out that it is very close to the New South Wales border. I am paying close attention to it and the department is working on what needs to occur.

It is a national response, which is what happens with biosecurity issues like this. Queensland has taken the lead but New South Wales is getting prepared for what could happen if red fire ants make it across the border. It is a national response and it is on the agenda of the national Agriculture Ministers' Meeting, which is coming up in a couple of weeks. There is some money allocated to the response and we take it seriously. It is a live consideration for me, the Government and the department. We need to make sure that we manage the threat and that it will be contained to Queensland. I am conscious that we have to manage it because red fire ants are incredibly dangerous and devastating. We want to make sure the issue is as contained as it can be as part of a national response.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (11:40):** I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate on the money that has been allocated? How much money?

**The Hon. Daniel Mookhey:** A lot.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:41):** I acknowledge the Treasurer's interjection. As I said, money has been allocated as part of a national response. The way national responses work for biosecurity issues is that the State that is affected—we are affected by some issues but this one started in Queensland—take the lead

on managing it, then all the States make contributions. We have contributed to the national response and we will continue to do that. I am conscious, as I outlined in my previous answer, that the red fire ants are getting closer to the New South Wales border. This will be a topic of conversation at the national Agricultural Ministers' Meeting, which is coming up in a couple of weeks' time. I will provide further details on the response as it continues.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY (11:42):** I ask a second supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate regarding the funding for the national approach? The question was not answered. How much money? When was the money allocated to the national response? What was the date?

**The Hon. Daniel Mookhey:** Point of order: At least in respect of the first part of the question, it is just a repeat of the first supplementary question, which the Minister answered. The member cannot just repeat it in a second supplementary question.

**The PRESIDENT:** The Treasurer is quite right. However, I rule the second part of the question in order.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:42):** I refer to my previous answers. This is an ongoing matter that has been affecting Queensland for some time. We are conscious of any impact that it may have on New South Wales and I am conscious of how close it is getting to the border. We are managing it. The department is focused on what we need to do. Again, it will be a topic of conversation at a national level at the national Agricultural Ministers' Meeting.

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell:** Point of order: It was a very specific question. When was that money allocated? Either the Minister should answer the question or take it on notice. If the Minister does not know, she should take it on notice and come back to the House.

**The PRESIDENT:** Does the Minister have anything further to add to be directly relevant to the question?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** It was allocated this month. It is a live issue, as I have outlined in both of my answers. It is a live discussion inside the Government, with the Treasury and my department. We are conscious of the threat and we are taking it seriously. We are considering the money and making sure that we can protect New South Wales from the red fire ants, which could be devastating for New South Wales if they cross the border.

## ELECTRIC VEHICLES

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY (11:43):** My question is directed to the Minister for Energy. In seeking to accelerate the take-up of electric vehicles in New South Wales, what consideration is the Minister giving to the need for engaging with the insurance industry to develop an appropriate model for the electric vehicle home charging infrastructure, including in relation to strata insurance?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:44):** I thank the honourable member for his question.

**The Hon. Sam Farraway:** Is it surprising?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** I am quite surprised. I am sure that there is some trick here given the previous questions but I am happy to try to answer the question as best I can. We have a comprehensive electric vehicle strategy. It will be absolutely essential in the transition. It is essential that there is a wide expansion of the use of electric vehicles for us to get to net zero. There are an enormous number of challenges in making that a reality, such as the Federal fuel standards issue or the actual use and access to infrastructure, which is a key one. The New South Wales Government has a range of programs that are trying to deal with that and we will roll those out, as we should. In relation to insurance, I do not know at this point. I will find out and come back to the House.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY (11:45):** I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate on the comprehensive electric vehicle strategy that she touched on in her answer? Given the strong views that have been expressed by the Insurance Council of Australia in the New South Wales election platform 2023, what steps is the Minister taking to ensure that the Minister for Finance does not participate in any decision-making of that action, that policy or that matter?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:45):** I could take a point of order because some of that supplementary question is out of order, but I am happy to go into the electric vehicle strategy. As I said, it is about incentives for people to think about and to purchase electric vehicles. It is about working closely with the industry on the barriers that people see and on the education programs so that issues like range anxiety can be dealt with. It is about making sure that we have got the right infrastructure in the right place so that it is easy for people to deal with it. The electric vehicle strategy is about working with the Commonwealth on what levels they can—

**The Hon. Sam Farraway:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance. I asked the Minister to elucidate as to whether the Minister for Finance would be a part of any decision-making around the comprehensive electric vehicle strategy. That was specifically what I asked, whether the Minister agrees with the question or not. Is the Minister for Finance a part of the decision-making process on the New South Wales Government's electric vehicle strategy?

**The Hon. John Graham:** To the point of order: That is not the question the member asked. I ask that you rule the supplementary question out of order.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! No, it is far too late to do that. I do not uphold the point of order taken by the Hon. John Graham.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** To the point of order: I appreciate my colleague's efforts. The member asked me to elucidate my answer in relation to the comprehensive policies and programs we have got in place. I was answering that part of it. I could have taken a point of order, but I did not because I am trying to answer the part of question that is in order to the best of my ability. In the future I will not be so generous. I am answering the question in a directly relevant way.

**The PRESIDENT:** Yes. With the preamble by the Hon. Sam Farraway to his question it was not quite as focused as he contends. The Minister was being directly relevant.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** You might need a question time committee. I suspect—

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell:** We have got one, don't worry.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** Well, it is not working so well.

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** All this care about electric vehicles. I can hear it.

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** That is not being directly relevant. According to Standing Order 65 (5)—

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** Is the Hon. Wes Fang suggesting that I am not being directly relevant? He should take a point of order and get kicked out.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The Leader of the Government and the Hon. Wes Fang will cease chatting with each other and chat with me.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** We have the fastest take-up of electric vehicles that we have ever had, and it is increasing. This Government is committed to making sure that we get there because it is essential for us to get to net zero and for us to look into the future around the technology.

**The Hon. Courtney Houssos:** Point of order: The Leader of the Government made an excellent point in her best efforts to answer part of the somewhat rambling elucidation that was sought by members opposite. Instead of listening to the answer, members opposite are more interested in engaging in conversation.

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

**The Hon. Courtney Houssos:** My point of order relates to the behaviour of members opposite. They should be called to order, particularly the Hon. Wes Fang, who is on two calls to order.

**The PRESIDENT:** There is no point of order. I understand the Leader of the Government being put off by and stopping to listen to the Leader of the Opposition, but she has a short memory. Like other members, I remember the Leader of the Government doing exactly the same thing when she was Leader of the Opposition. The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** This is pretty straightforward. The Government has a comprehensive EV plan. It will work with all stakeholders to make sure that it can be rolled out as soon as possible so that we can lift the uptake of EVs. They are the future of our distributed energy network. They will be incredibly important to get to net zero and take our responsibility of dealing with climate change seriously. *[Time expired.]*

#### VETERANS SUPPORT SERVICES

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (11:50):** My question is addressed to the 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. Will the Minister tell the House what the New South Wales Government is doing to support veterans?

**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) (11:51):** I thank the member for the question. I can update the House about a small, practical but very important step that the Government has taken in relation to veterans. Every year our veterans are asked to travel repeatedly to a Service NSW centre with new documentation from the Department of Veterans' Affairs to reverify their eligibility for concessions. That process is inefficient and some of the time veterans find it distressing. The Government has announced that it is removing that approach, lifting the burden off veterans who have previously had to do this.

Eligible vehicle registrations for New South Wales veterans will now be automatically renewed at 12-week or six-week intervals, or when a compulsory third party insurance policy is received and a vehicle eSafety check is completed. That is a small but very practical step that means that veterans will no longer have to attend a Service NSW centre to re-establish their eligibility for a concession on vehicle registration or on licensing products. The change is a result of representations made by veterans. The Government has listened to them and worked with Transport for NSW to update an important piece of technology, making it easier for veterans to navigate the registration and licensing concessions. It is a big win for veterans, who will save significant amounts of time not having to stand in line at a Service NSW centre. It will also provide a little bit of assistance for their pockets.

From 1 July 2023 the catchily named New South Wales vehicle registration and licensing database enhancement will come into effect, which will automatically validate Department of Veterans' Affairs file numbers. Initially 1,400 veterans will benefit from the initiative, but that number is expected to increase over time by approximately 25 per cent per year as more members serving in various forces become eligible under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004. Veterans can check if their registration has been auto-renewed via the Service NSW app. I give credit to former Minister Dominello for his work on Service NSW app and website. This change is a significant improvement for veterans who have raised issues. It is a simple and streamlined process that will save time and veterans can avoid the distress they have been experiencing. I am happy to update the House on the matter. I commend the change to the House.

#### **PRAWN INDUSTRY FUNDING**

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (11:53):** My question is directed to the Minister for Agriculture. Recently a recovery package of \$21.4 million was announced to support commercial prawn fishers along the Clarence River. The package includes \$5.4 million for future security, \$1.256 million in fee waivers, \$1 million for surveillance and diagnostics, and \$105,000 for the mental health Stay Afloat program. However, it only totals \$9.261 million of the promised \$21.4 million. Will the Minister explain to the House where the remaining \$12.139 million sits? Has it already been allocated and spent?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:54):** I thank the honourable member for his question. To inform the House, white spot was reported in black tiger prawns on 12 February 2023 on a prawn farm in northern New South Wales, with a diagnosis confirmed on 14 February 2023 by the NSW Department of Primary Industries. It has been an ongoing issue since February this year and a temporary control order was put in place then while further investigations occurred. Unfortunately, as some members would be aware, white spot was detected in prawns on other prawn farms across the Clarence region and the control order subsequently had to be extended by a couple of months. In the past couple of weeks it was unfortunately extended for another couple of years.

This news is devastating for the industry in the Clarence region. The Government takes white spot seriously. One of the first things I did when I became the Minister for Agriculture was to meet with the affected prawn farmers, the fishermen's co-op and other people from the industry to work through what a package could look like. We worked with the industry over a couple of months because I know how devastating the disease has been. In answer to the question, a significant package worth \$21.4 million was outlined by the Government to support the industry, including \$5.4 million to help secure the future of prawn fishers, surveillance and diagnostic activities and helping prawn farmers upgrade their operations to better protect the environment.

The package also included money for the clean-up of affected prawn farms, including chlorination and other things. The outbreak was found in February and since then further outbreaks were discovered. The Government has worked across the industry to clean affected farms so that people can remove the disease and get their prawn farms ready for business again. Some of them will make decisions about how they want to operate going forward. So the package includes broader work that was done in addition to the financial support that I recently outlined.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (11:57):** I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for her answer. Perhaps on notice, will she elucidate on the breakdown of the broader measures in terms of the seemingly unallocated \$12.139 million—just a dissection?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:57):** It is a very reasonable question. The money is allocated. It is full package of \$21.4 million. I am happy to provide information to the member and brief him on the details. I have had discussions directly with the industry and farmers about what the package means for them. In terms of the amounts of what the clean-up has cost specifically and things like that, I am happy to engage with the member on that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:58):** I ask a second supplementary question. In her answer the Minister indicated that she was happy to brief the honourable member in relation to those matters. Would that invitation also extend to Coalition members who are interested in a briefing about that package?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:58):** Yes. I would be happy to do that.

**The PRESIDENT:** For the benefit of members, question time started at 11.03 a.m. so it will conclude at 12.03 p.m.

#### SMALL BUSINESS INSURANCE

**The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (11:58):** My question is directed to the Minister for Finance. Labor made a pre-election commitment to only require small businesses to get insurance, such as public liability and professional indemnity insurance, after a contract is given to them rather than at the time a tender is submitted. It promised that this would apply to 90 per cent of all government procurement by the end of 2023. After nearly three months in the job, is the Minister on track with this change and how will it benefit small businesses?

**The Hon. Daniel Mookhey:** Point of order: Ministers can only be asked questions on matters for which they are responsible. The matter raised by the member is a responsibility of the Minister for Small Business, not the Minister for Finance. Hence, I take a point of order because it is out of order to be asking Ministers about matters that fall outside their ministerial responsibilities and that particular issue is the responsibility of the small business Minister, whom I represent.

**The Hon. Natalie Ward:** To the point of order: This is getting ridiculous. It was a very good question from the honourable member. If the Minister is not the responsible Minister, she is entitled to take the question on notice and refer it to the responsible Minister, as has been done many times in this Chamber. I ask that you direct her to the question.

**The Hon. Chris Rath:** To the point of order: It is a procurement matter. Is the Treasurer seriously suggesting that procurement is no longer a responsibility of the Minister for Finance?

**The Hon. Daniel Mookhey:** Further to the point of order: It is not a procurement matter. The question has far more to do with small business engagement, and that is why—to be fair to the Government—when the election was announced it was part of a small business package. Responsibility in respect of that particular policy actually belongs to the Small Business Commission, which I am responsible for in this place.

**The PRESIDENT:** I will rule on the matter. I say two things. Firstly, I refer to a ruling of President Burgmann that the Leader of the Government may elect to answer any question directed to a Minister. Questions do not have to be answered by the specific Minister of whom they were asked. Secondly, while I understand the point that the Treasurer makes, I do not pretend to know the exact vagaries of the allocation of Acts under the new Labor Government. The Minister has the opportunity, as the Hon. Natalie Ward said, to answer the question in any way she wishes, which can include referring it for response to another Minister.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (12:02):** On that basis, as the Leader of the Government, I will take the honourable member's question. I thank Opposition members for their insightful questions. I will refer the member's question to the Minister for Small Business for an answer.

#### ABORIGINAL CULTURAL FISHING

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (12:02):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Regional New South Wales. Will the Minister update the House on the availability of trust funds for Aboriginal fishing?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (12:02):** I thank the honourable member for his question and for his ongoing interest in agricultural issues. The Aboriginal Fishing Trust Fund provides grants and loans that enhance, protect and promote Aboriginal cultural fishing, or provide fishing-related economic opportunities for Aboriginal communities. The current balance of the trust fund is \$2.3 million. A total of \$500,000 is currently available through the Aboriginal Fishing Trust Fund program. The program provides opportunities for Aboriginal communities in commercial fishing, tourism, cultural fishing, and research and education related to fisheries resources throughout New South Wales. The program is in its sixth funding round. Typical projects funded by the trust include the purchase of capital equipment, the establishment of a new carp removal service, cultural fishing related camps and workshops across New South Wales, and research projects to document traditional uses of seaweed and to revitalise cultural fishing.

Each year Aboriginal groups or individuals are invited to apply for grants or loans to promote Aboriginal fishing initiatives. Applications for funding are first assessed by the independent Aboriginal Fishing Trust Expenditure Committee, which ranks the applications before providing them to the Aboriginal Fishing Advisory Council. To ensure integrity and impartiality of the applications, a probity adviser is engaged. For the benefit of members opposite who, given their track record, are clearly unfamiliar with the term "probity", it is defined as the quality of having strong moral principles and decency. Following consideration by the probity adviser, advice is provided to me as the Minister for approval. The Government will continue to recognise the significance that fishing has for Aboriginal communities and to support the trust to ensure it promotes cultural fishing and provides fishing-related economic opportunities for Aboriginal people.

The funding program is a fantastic opportunity to support fishing-related ideas and get them off the ground for the benefit of Aboriginal communities in New South Wales. It is important that we protect Aboriginal cultural fishing. That is a key priority of the Government in line with the recommendations of the parliamentary inquiry into the commencement of the Fisheries Management Amendment Act 2009. Applications for the sixth funding round of the Aboriginal Fishing Trust Fund are now open and will close on 25 August 2023. We hope that the newly supported projects will continue to make a meaningful difference to Aboriginal communities across the State. We encourage Aboriginal businesses and communities that could benefit from an Aboriginal Fishing Trust Fund grant or loan to apply in the current round. Information for applicants can be accessed via the Department of Primary Industries website.

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

#### SOLAR FARMS

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (12:05):** Further to my previous answer on what happens to solar farms when they are no longer operating, as part of the planning approval process it is a condition of approval that solar farms provide a decommissioning plan. I am advised, however, that there is no requirement for the Government to hold a bond for solar farms, and the Environment Protection Authority does not require an environment protection licence for solar farms.

#### *Supplementary Questions for Written Answers*

#### MINISTER FOR FINANCE

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (12:06):** My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Leader of the Government. What advice did the Premier receive from the Department of Premier and Cabinet and on what date did he receive it prior to putting in place what he has described as a "comprehensive plan" for managing the Minister for Finance's conflict of interest in relation to insurance matters?

#### RED FIRE ANTS

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (12:06):** My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for Agriculture, and it relates to my question regarding fire ants. Would the Minister please elucidate her answer to include how much is in that budget and when it was allocated?

#### *Questions Without Notice: Take Note*

#### TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE:** I move:

That the House take note of answers to questions.

## MINISTER FOR FINANCE

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (12:07):** In answer to a question, the Minister for Finance suggested that members on our side of the House had conducted a campaign to smear her and her husband. That constitutes a complete misunderstanding of the line of questions and, in fact, of her role in relation to the issues which have been articulated. I make it absolutely clear that there is no smear directed at her husband and there is no smear directed at the Minister. However, we do say that this is a Minister who seems not to understand the intransigent conflict of interest which seems to exist in her holding responsibility for the insurance regulator and her husband being a significant lobbyist on behalf of the regulated. That is the problem which she needs to address, and we have invited her to address how that issue is to be handled. This morning we had a most unfortunate circumstance where the Government, aided and abetted by the crossbench, sought to shut down any debate in relation to the substantive issues and the production of papers in respect of ascertaining what was done.

**The Hon. Penny Sharpe:** You put it up as formal business. If you didn't want that, you wouldn't have put it up as formal business.

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE:** I thought you might have had the common sense just to comply. We have had a Minister who regularly says, "I have complied with my obligations under the Ministerial Code of Conduct." We may well accept her assertion that she has done that. It would have been open to the Minister on the very first day that this issue was raised, the very first day, to demonstrate the manner in which she complies with her obligations and not one further question would have been asked. But we are met with a consistent response of, "I have complied with my obligations," without ever producing one thing which demonstrates how she has complied with her obligations, those documents which she has submitted for the purposes of showing to the Premier, to the Government, to the world that she has resolved this issue of her conflict of interest. She accepts that it exists. However, she does not want to substantiate it. To shut down an application for an order for papers shows that this is a government determined not to be involved and ensure that transparency is available for the actions of this Minister. It was regrettable and in many respects does disservice to this House.

## SOLAR FARMS

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (12:10):** I take note of the answer given to me today by the Leader of the Government. I am glad she is still in the Chamber because it gives me a chance to ventilate the concerns and I hope she takes them on board. I find it curious that we have a rehabilitation security bond for mining companies, yet not one for solar farms in New South Wales. I certainly hope it is not a matter of green energy favouritism over the mining industry, the very same industry that keeps our lights on and our society moving forward. I am willing to give the Government the benefit of the doubt at this stage and chalk it up to a simple government oversight. Because, as we know, solar energy facilities have a large impact on the environment in which they are built. It is important that we ensure no solar farm is left to decay, should a company go bust. Solar panels and batteries contain materials such as metals, glass, ruthenium, indium, tellurium, lead and lithium, which, if not handled properly, can lead to serious environmental and human health problems. A report by The Australia Institute discusses the possible harms caused by photovoltaics [PVs], stating:

... all PVs carry potential risks for workers in their production, and there are some risks in their installation and disposal that can affect the wider community.

The report goes on to state:

... there is potential for hazardous materials to leach when they are deposited ...

But the report also states:

... these potential problems can be avoided by proper decommission and recycling of material ...

In their current technology, solar panels have a shelf life of about 25 to 30 years, after which they can be decommissioned and their materials, hopefully, recycled. Ideally, the solar company then begins the rehabilitation process in returning the site to its natural state. The NSW Climate and Energy Action website states:

If a site is to be decommissioned it must be returned to its pre-existing condition.

The Minister alluded to that. I was very well aware of that. The website continues:

All infrastructure (above and below ground) is removed so agricultural activity or other land uses can resume.

That is a great start, but as it stands there seems to be nothing stopping a solar energy company from going bankrupt, folding up, closing up shop, leaving the facilities to either decay or damage the environment and leaving the problem for government and taxpayers to clean up. If renewables are the future, and clearly they are, then we have to start preparing for the future. That means laying the groundwork for proper decommissioning and planning for what comes next. What applies to mining must apply to renewables so there can be no policy favouritism or

oversight. Solar panels are far from perfect, so let us deal with them like we would any other energy source. For that reason, I urge the Government to consider creating a rehabilitation security bond for solar farms.

### RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (12:13):** I contribute to the take-note debate and acknowledge answers given by the Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources in her capacity representing the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health in the other place. The Minister outlined in her answers some of the steps that the Government is taking to address the issues in regional health and further articulated details of some of the legacy issues around the number of unfunded temporary nurse positions. Last week the Minister in the other place outlined the number of unfunded nurse positions, which we knew was in the order of 1,111-odd. I acknowledge the work of the Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources in highlighting the nature and extent of the problem in some of our rural local health districts [LHDs].

For the benefit of the House I give these numbers: In Hunter New England LHD there are 138.2 unfunded full-time equivalent [FTE] positions; South Western Sydney LHD, 119.5 unfunded FTE positions; Western Sydney LHD, 109.1 unfunded FTE positions; South Eastern Sydney LHD, 104.4 unfunded FTE positions; Sydney LHD, 99.4 unfunded FTE positions; Northern Sydney LHD, 82 unfunded FTE positions; Illawarra Shoalhaven LHD, 61.4 unfunded FTE positions; Central Coast LHD, 57.1 unfunded FTE positions; Western New South Wales, where it is very hard to attract and retain staff, 56.1 unfunded FTE positions; Northern New South Wales LHD, another place where it is very hard to attract and retain staff, being a border LHD, 51 unfunded FTE positions; Nepean Blue Mountains LHD, 50 unfunded FTE positions; Mid North Coast LHD, 43.3 unfunded FTE positions; and Murrumbidgee LHD, another place where it is hard to attract and retain staff, being a border town, 41.6 unfunded FTE positions.

In Sydney Children's Hospital Networks—one of my former workplaces—there are 41.0 unfunded FTE positions; Southern New South Wales LHD, 26.6 unfunded FTE positions; Justice Health, 19 unfunded FTE positions; Far West LHD, 6.5 unfunded FTE positions; HealthShare, 3.0 unfunded FTE positions; NSW Health Pathology, 1.7 unfunded FTE positions; and NSW Ambulance, 1.1 unfunded FTE positions. This is a total of 1,112 unfunded full-time equivalent positions beyond the 2024-25 fiscal year. I acknowledge the steps that both the Minister and the Treasurer are taking to address the funding issues we have been left with.

### RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

#### MINISTER FOR FINANCE

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR (12:16):** I contribute to the take-note debate. This is a very interesting Chamber at the moment. I refer to the answer by the Minister for Finance, who it has been very challenging to get an answer out of on numerous occasions on numerous things. Members are constantly talking about vacancies and full-time equivalent positions. When we on this side were in government, and I was the Minister, we were very transparent about the challenges we had in the workforce. I put that on the record again, because this recreating of history for political gain is offensive and unbecoming.

When we talk about temporary contracts, there was a lot of surge capacity within the New South Wales health system at a time of unprecedented challenge with COVID. The job of the Government at the time regarding temporary contracts is to make sure that, if those full-time equivalent staff are required—which I have absolutely no doubt they would be, and we knew that as well—they are renewed. This is not a big political gotcha moment and it was not funded. It is political opportunism at its worst and it really bothers me as someone who has worked in the health system for such a long time, who loves it, who is passionate about it but who understands that there are real challenges ahead.

Those opposite cannot keep recreating history. They just have to be honest. They just have to be transparent. If the new Government comes up with really great ideas that I missed as regional health Minister, I will congratulate them and I will applaud them, because that is the right thing to do. To turn these issues into continual personal attacks in this place for political gain is unbecoming and unnecessary. The great thing about this Chamber is the debate that we have. As the Hon. Penny Sharpe used to constantly say when Leader of the Opposition, we have a right to ask questions and we have a right to have them answered. The more that members are not allowed to answer, the worse it looks for them. Members who were here four years ago saw on a number of occasions what was done on a personal level. I do not condone it and I do not like it. But those opposite sit on this high moral ground and pretend that no-one else has been through that. The behaviour that you walk past is the behaviour that you accept in this place. Everyone should take a long hard look at that.

## RAIL NETWORK AND FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (12:19):** I take note of the response provided by the Leader of the Government to my question on the ongoing scheduled track work every weekend throughout the year. My concern is that track work will heavily disrupt how the 750,000 people who have bought tickets to watch the FIFA Women's World Cup in the coming month will travel to these games. This is an international event. The Labor Government has to be cognisant of how significant this event is. I am sure many members opposite will be coming along to the games. It is critical to understand that the best way for people to travel to the games is by public transport, especially when travelling to Stadium Australia on the Olympic site.

Last weekend there was major chaos in Sydney. Several lines had scheduled track work, including the airport line. In fact, the FIFA Women's World Cup had a march across the Harbour Bridge on the weekend to launch the event. Members can only imagine that a number of people travelled from interstate and internationally to come along to that event. Lo and behold, those people get off at the airport and there are no trains to travel on around Sydney—a world city about to host a significant event that the world will watch.

I am concerned by the Leader of the Government's response to my question. I did not think it was a sufficient or thorough commitment to ensure that the World Cup will not be disrupted. In fact, following an interjection from a member that there is a possibility the Government would ruin the event, I think her response was, "Boohoo." I am concerned that the Government is not taking its obligation seriously for such a significant event. People are watching this event with respect to whether Australia bids for the men's World Cup down the track. This is a significant event. Thousands of people across Sydney, Western Sydney and indeed around Australia and internationally will be coming along to these games.

I understand that there has to be maintenance, and there is no suggestion that anyone wants to stop any emergency works from being undertaken, but these are scheduled works and they can be rescheduled. Members would think that the weekend demonstrated the Government is not ready for such a significant event as the World Cup. Some 600,000 commuters were impacted on the weekend. That is a huge number. Members can only imagine how many more people will be impacted over the course of the next month as Sydney hosts this amazing, significant international event. [*Time expired.*]

### MINISTER FOR FINANCE

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (12:22):** I take note of answers given by the Minister for Finance in relation to the Opposition's absurd suggestion of a conflict of interest. I note that this issue seems to be ending with a whimper rather than a bang. I think there were one or two questions today, which is quite different to what members have seen over preceding weeks. There was a frank and succinct answer given to a question about evidence of complying with the code of conduct. The absurdity of that question needs to be seen in the context of what the honourable Minister has previously said. When this issue first arose in this Chamber, she said that in the lead-up to her being appointed the Minister, and in order to avoid a potential or perceived conflict, certain strict arrangements were put into place by her husband. That avoided any conflict of interest.

None of the questions asked have once suggested how it could possibly be a conflict of interest in circumstances where a person is an employee of a particular organisation and has recused themselves completely from involvement with the New South Wales Government. All of this has to be viewed in the context of what the ministerial code states. I again note that none of the questions that elicited these answers have had any specific reference to the code. The code applies to an actual conflict of interest, not a possible or potential one that has been avoided through appropriate action. The honourable Minister has continued to answer in a frank, succinct and graceful way a barrage of questions that all rest on a false premise. Never have those opposite attempted to precisely put an allegation. There is no allegation. That is the true context in which her answers must be viewed.

I ask members to compare this absurd suggestion of a conflict of interest arising from an employee completely recused from dealing with the State Government to other, hypothetical scenarios. For example, it is not the case that the Minister is alleged to have accepted hospitality from an insurer. Certainly it is not the case, for example, that she is said to own undeclared shares in an insurer. What is being suggested is that the mere fact of the employment of a person who is related to her and is completely recused from dealing with the State Government arises to a conflict of interest. It is rubbish, and her answers have made that clear, yet those opposite persist because they will not engage with the real issues.

### MINISTER FOR FINANCE

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (12:25):** I also take note of answers given today by the Minister for Finance, particularly her written answer provided this morning to the supplementary question I asked yesterday. My question was pretty fair and standard. In response to questions asked, the Minister has repeatedly said that she

has put comprehensive arrangements in place, that she and her husband have gone above and beyond what they needed to do and taken extraordinary steps. My written question was quite simple:

On what date did the Premier put in place the comprehensive plan for managing the conflict of interest arising from her ministerial responsibilities for insurance-related legislation and her husband's employment by the Insurance Council of Australia?

What was the date those matters were put into place? When did the Premier make it clear that this is what she needed to do to manage the conflict of interest? The response did not give a date. She said, "I complied with my requirements." If, as the Minister has said many times in this House, it is all above board and she has followed everything she needs to, why is she so afraid to give us a date? Why can she not say, "Yes, I put those arrangements in place the day I was sworn in," or the day after? Was it in March, following the election? Was it in May, following the transfer of a number of these Acts to the Minister's responsibility?

For a Minister and a government that continually try to make the point that it is all above board and there is nothing to see here, why are they so afraid to provide detail? To stand up and say, "I complied with the code," is not an answer. When you are asked specifically, "What was the date that came into place?" say the date. Was it in March or May? Was it last week? Was it when people started asking questions about this? It is not a difficult response in order to be up-front not just with the House but with the people of New South Wales.

I also note that today the Leader of the Opposition asked the Leader of the Government a similar question around the date. The Minister has taken that on notice and I look forward to that answer. It is an opportunity to be transparent. As members saw earlier today, that opportunity was not afforded in debate on a Standing Order 52 call for papers. That leads to more and more concerns from members on this side of the Chamber that something is up. If there is nothing to see here and no issues in terms of transparency or integrity, why is the Minister not putting these things on the record?

Why is the Minister referring to the steps that her husband has taken? Opposition members have never smeared her husband, and I reject the allegation that the Minister made in her answer today. On the very first day we asked about this issue, she spoke of the steps that her husband and his employer have taken. That is great, but he is not the person responsible for decisions under the ministerial code of conduct. He is not a member of Parliament. While that is useful information to have on the record, the Minister is still to provide any specific detail as to how she is managing these issues. She does not respond to questions in relation to dates. She does not respond to questions in relation to specific portfolio and policy matters and how she is managing the conflict. We will continue to ask questions about these matters because the people of New South Wales have the right to know. Members of this House have the right to know. [*Time expired.*]

#### SMALL BUSINESS INSURANCE

**The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (12:28):** I take note of the answer the Leader of the Government gave to my question directed to the Minister for Finance. It was quite extraordinary that the Leader of the Government decided it was worthwhile to shield the Minister from the question that I asked, which in fact was directly relevant to the portfolio responsibilities she has under the Allocation of the Administration of Acts. I know that earlier the President said he did not know the details of the administration of Acts. For the benefit of the House, I thought I might make those clear. The Minister for Finance is in fact responsible for the Public Works and Procurement Act 1912. In particular, the Minister for Finance is responsible for part 11 and the fifth schedule. Part 11, section 163 states:

- (1) This Part applies to the procurement of goods and services by or for a government agency, which includes—
  - (a) the procurement of goods and services required by a government agency to exercise its statutory functions ...

I contend that my question was directly relevant to the Minister for Finance. The honourable member should have had the temerity to answer the question because it fell directly within her responsibilities. Small businesses make up over 99 per cent of the businesses in our State. That is a huge part of the business sector in New South Wales. We are talking about 90 per cent of all New South Wales Government procurement being affected by the Labor Government's promise about insurance, public liability, and professional indemnity insurance and contracts.

The idea that this is not a useful and relevant question to be answered and that a defence must be run by other members of the Government to prevent the Minister from answering the question is an extraordinary reflection on the Government's understanding of its responsibilities and also on the Minister's understanding of her portfolio. It is worthwhile ensuring that Government Ministers are completely aware of their responsibilities to the people of New South Wales. When this side of the House was in government and the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister for Finance, he put forward a regional procurement policy. The current Minister should take note of that kind of— [*Time expired.*]

### SMALL BUSINESS INSURANCE

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (12:31):** I take note of the Leader of the Government's answer to the Hon. Jacqui Munro's question about small business and insurance. I remind the House that it was the then Leader of the Opposition, Chris Minns, and his shadow Minister for Small Business, Stephen Kamper, who announced before the election a very bold policy proposal that the next Labor Government would establish a small business bureau. They outlined what that bureau would mean to small business, and three prongs stood out. The first prong was to boost the threshold for direct procurement from government to small business, and small business owners nodded their head at that. The second prong was to cut red tape relevant to necessary qualifications and insurance. I remind the House that the question asked by my colleague the Hon. Jacqui Munro was about small business and insurance. The third prong was to look at delays in the procurement process of government to small business. That is commendable.

I remind the House that the new Labor Government has been in office for 100 days. These issues are critical to the New South Wales economy and must be upheld and followed through. The new Government must be held to account. I share with the House two examples of small businesses in south-west Sydney that I have been in contact with. I visited Greenway Wetherill Park shopping centre with Mark Coure, the shadow Minister for Jobs, to meet cafe owners. They have so much enthusiasm and confidence, with intergenerational family members working at some of the cafes. I highly recommend the patisserie. [*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) (12:34):** I thank honourable members for their contributions to the take-note debate. I make the following points. Opposition members are upset that the House made a decision about how to handle a Standing Order 52 motion that they moved as formal business. The Opposition must have forgotten why we do formal motions—to deal with them expeditiously. If Opposition members did not wish to do that, they should not have put the motion on the *Notice Paper* as formal business. The second point I make is that members opposite have been prosecuting the case around the Hon. Courtney Houssos and their allegations about a conflict of interest that they have never been able to fully define. If they are so upset with the way that formal business went, they should remember that the House defeated it 23-12. They lost the argument to a broad range of members across the House. It is time to give it up.

The third point I make is about the good points raised by the Hon. Rod Roberts about solar farms. The Hon. Rod Roberts always comes into the Chamber with a thoughtful and curious approach to how we should deal with that matter. He is right when he talks about the need for solar panels and solar farms to be dealt with in an environmentally responsible way. Every act that we take must be done in an environmentally responsible way. I was pleased to provide the House with an update about the decommissioning plans. I take on board his comments, which are important as we deal with the massive energy transition and the impacts of new technologies. We must learn the lessons of the past that some older technologies still have big legacy issues.

The fourth point I make is about a particular issue raised by the Hon. Jacqui Munro. I did not take a point of order at the time. How we choose to answer questions is a matter within the standing orders. The fact that I chose to answer that question about the Minister for Finance is, as the President outlined, absolutely within the standing orders. To suggest that there is something wrong with that is trifling with the decisions made by the House and the rulings made by the President. Next time, I will take a point of order. Finally, the Hon. Tania Mihailuk alleged something about my response to the FIFA Women's World Cup question. I put on record that she was incorrect. I responded "boohoo" to interjections from members opposite about them being upset that they are not in government and do not get to host the FIFA Women's World Cup. It had absolutely nothing to do with the challenges for commuters in New South Wales, particularly in Sydney, as we try to fix the mess that we have been left.

**The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose):** The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Written Answers to Supplementary Questions*

### MINISTER FOR FINANCE

In reply to **the Hon. SARAH MITCHELL** (27 June 2023).

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources)**—The Minister provided the following response:

I refer you to my previous answers in the House regarding my fulfillment of all of my obligations under the New South Wales ministerial code of conduct.

### *Bills*

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT (HOUSING AND PRODUCTIVITY CONTRIBUTIONS) BILL 2023**

### **Messages**

**The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose):** I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly agreeing to the Legislative Council's amendments to the bill.

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

### *Private Members' Statements*

## **MODERN SLAVERY**

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (14:00):** On 22 June the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner, Dr James Cockayne, hosted a breakfast to launch his inaugural strategic plan. In addition to the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner, the Hon. Michael Daley, MP, the New South Wales Attorney General, was in attendance with a number of other special guests. In the short time available to me this afternoon, I am not able to cover in detail the full content of the three-year strategic plan entitled *Working together for real freedom: NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner's Strategic Plan 2023-2026*. I encourage all members in this place and the other place to examine the strategic plan and consider how they can support it. The key elements of the plan include removing products of modern slavery from public procurement, establishing a support and referral hotline for those in modern slavery, putting modern slavery survivors at the heart of anti-slavery efforts, fostering responsible business practices in the private sector, equipping frontline workers to identify and report modern slavery, and establishing an expert advisory panel and holding an anti-slavery forum twice a year.

Drawing from the foreword of the strategic plan, the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner notes that an estimated 16,400 people in this State are victims of modern slavery or modern slavery practices. They include but are not limited to workers trapped in forced labour on farms in regional New South Wales or in domestic servitude in urban households; women and children made vulnerable through domestic and family violence or homelessness, groomed and coerced into sexual exploitation in person or through social media platforms; cleaners and security guards working in office blocks, caught in the grip of debt bondage; girls forced to marry in New South Wales or overseas; people living with disability who are being exploited in segregated workplaces or in institutional care; and many more people, including First Nations people and Pacific Islanders.

On the same day of the launch event, new polling conducted by Essential Research was released, which found that 78 per cent of respondents want governments to do more to protect people from modern slavery and modern slavery practices. The same polling revealed that many people are unaware of the severity of the issue in New South Wales, with six in 10 Australians saying that they had no idea that the number of people in modern slavery or modern slavery practices was so high. I look forward to the first meeting of the Parliament's joint Modern Slavery Committee. Much work needs to be done, and I am sure that all committee members are looking forward to working with Dr James Cockayne to tackle this dreadful blight on our society.

## **KALPANA AND RITEN NASSIPURI**

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (14:03):** In the same week that I celebrated my forty-third wedding anniversary, I speak about the Indian Seniors Group, which is a community organisation that runs events for people aged over 55 years in the Indian community. Like so many community organisations, it depends upon the generosity of volunteers. I acknowledge its president, David Passi, and other members of the group are in the public gallery today. On Sunday 18 June I had the pleasure of attending its meeting in Epping, which included the celebration of the sixtieth wedding anniversary of Kalpana and Riten Nassipuri. Kalpana and Riten were married in India in June 1963 when Riten was aged 28 years and Kalpana was aged 18 years. Kalpana completed her bachelor of arts after she was married, and Riten obtained a PhD in pharmacy. After living for 35 years in Nigeria, Kalpana and Riten made Australia their home. They have two daughters, Ruma and Soma, and four grandchildren.

Speaking at the celebration, their friend Anita Passi spoke of the happy couple's 60 successful, emotional, entertaining and joyful years together. In reference to it being their diamond wedding anniversary, Anita described the occasion as "a great sparkling milestone", noting that it reminded Kalpana and Riten "of their wedding day when they stood in front of God, family and friends and promised to each other to stay together forever". A marriage that lasts 60 years requires love, trust, loyalty and respect for each other. Such marriages are an inspiration and an example to all of us, whether married, partnered or single.

Anita also paid tribute to Kalpana's contribution to the community by raising funds for the Cancer Council and by helping in the kitchen at functions of the Indian Seniors Group, including cleaning up the floor after events—a job no-one else wants. Kalpana described the secret of her long marriage to Riten as "commitment, adjustment, patience, time, love and respect". It was an honour for me to celebrate this couple's sixtieth wedding anniversary, hear the speeches that were given, participate in eating the cake that they shared as well as dancing with my girlfriends, some of whom are in the public gallery. Today I wish Kalpana and Riten many more years of happiness together and joy in seeing their children and grandchildren flourish.

### GREYHOUND REHOMING

**The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK (14:06):** The Greyhound rehoming scheme initiated by Greyhound Racing NSW sends retired greyhounds to the United States of America [USA]. It is a remarkable initiative that will bring positivity and joy to countless lives. This groundbreaking international pilot program is a significant step forward in the world of greyhound adoption. Inspired by the increasing interest from the USA in adopting retired greyhounds from Australia, the decision to expand the program internationally reflects the New South Wales greyhound racing industry's outstanding reputation and the high demand for those remarkable animals. Many US States face a shortage of greyhounds as pets, making this rehoming scheme immensely promising. California, Texas and Washington have already shown great enthusiasm for adopting these magnificent creatures.

Ensuring the welfare of greyhounds is paramount throughout this endeavour. The same rigorous checks and balances applied to domestic adoptions are implemented, guaranteeing their wellbeing. A dedicated team is working tirelessly to ensure the success of the program and secure forever homes for greyhounds. This international adoption venture follows years of remarkable achievements in domestic rehoming. With unwavering dedication, Greyhounds As Pets has achieved record-breaking rehoming numbers. That effort, along with the establishment of the state-of-the-art Greyhounds As Pets facility in Londonderry, exemplifies the industry's commitment to providing loving homes for retired greyhounds.

Looking ahead, introducing this pilot program to the USA represents a new frontier in greyhound rehoming. Greyhound Racing NSW and Greyhounds As Pets are eager to expand and evolve this initiative in the coming months. It is not far-fetched to imagine a future where a successful arm of Greyhounds As Pets operates in the United States, driven by the dedication and passion of all involved. I am proud to lend my voice to praise this exciting new chapter. I will continue to support and celebrate the great sport of greyhound racing in New South Wales. I commend Robert Vellar, chairman of Greyhounds Australasia, for this initiative and his hard work in achieving these outcomes and establishing the program in the United States.

### ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (14:09):** I put on record my strong support for the yes campaign for the Voice to Parliament in the upcoming referendum this year. As a unionist, I am particularly proud of the role of trade unions through the "Unions for Yes" campaign. After—at a minimum—65,000 years of continuous culture and connection to the land that we now call Australia, it is certainly time for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be recognised in our 122-year-old Constitution. That important change will make Australia fairer and better. The Voice to Parliament is a natural reflection of union principles and values of consultation and a collective voice on issues that impact us. Enshrining a Voice in the Constitution will enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to provide advice to the Federal Parliament on policies and projects that impact their lives.

As a unionist and Labor Party member, I am proud to stand in solidarity with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters in calling for this change. I encourage all those present or watching today's proceedings to attend the many community events planned by Yes23 under the banner "Come Together for Yes". On Sunday 2 July, Unions NSW will join forces with Yes23 and the City of Sydney as part of a national day of action to enthusiastically support and stand in solidarity with First Nations communities in the campaign for constitutional recognition and a long-overdue Voice to Parliament. Come Together for Yes events will be held across New South Wales, including in the Shoalhaven, Wollongong, the Blue Mountains, Canelo, Capertee Valley, Braidwood, Rylstone and the Central Coast.

I encourage Sydney-based people to join us for a family-friendly get-together at Prince Alfred Park from 11.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. It will be a fun and informative event. We will hear from speakers and listen to musical performances. There will also be activities for children, including, of course, face painting. It is important that we come together, especially as union members, to campaign to make history with this referendum, and so build a stronger and fairer nation. The only concern I share with many others is that, given its momentum and the number of events that are planned as part of the yes campaign, unfortunately I will miss some.

## REGIONAL APPRENTICE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENT TRAVEL CARD

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY (14:11):** I express my deep concern and disappointment in the New South Wales Labor Government's refusal to rule out cutting the Regional Apprentice and University Student Travel Card in its upcoming September budget. The \$250 travel card, which was introduced by the former Liberal-Nationals Government, was a massive help to over 6,000 regional apprentices in managing and assisting with the cost of travel associated with TAFE apprenticeship courses. The impacts of that decision cannot be overstated. The \$250 card has provided invaluable support to individuals like Luke Prentice, a mature-aged apprentice electrician from Dubbo. With a young family to support, to Luke the card was a welcome boost to his family's budget. It was a small relief for him, and for so many families like his, in dealing with cost-of-living pressures. Many others across regional New South Wales share Luke's sentiment. They rely on the card to access essential resources like fuel to get to work and undertake training.

It is disheartening to see Labor's lack of concern for those who reside outside of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. Its failure to support the card sends a clear message that regional people are not a priority for the Minns Labor Government. People in regional New South Wales deserve better. They should be on the same playing field as people in metropolitan centres. The people of New South Wales deserve transparency and honesty from their Government, especially when it comes to critical cost-of-living measures like the Regional Apprentice and University Student Travel Card. As the shadow Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, I am deeply disappointed by the lack of commitment shown by the current Government. The positive impact of the card on regional New South Wales cannot be denied. It improves accessibility to education and training, reduces the financial strain on apprentices and students, and fosters economic growth and activity in our regional communities.

The card was based on the regional seniors travel card, which has been a massive success, with well over one million cards issued in the first three years of the program, and over 300,000 issued in the first quarter of 2023. However, Labor seems content to undermine those achievements and disregard the needs of regional people. The New South Wales Liberals and Nationals remain committed to advocating for regional New South Wales apprentices and university students. We recognise the challenges they face, including the large distances they must travel for study and training. It is important to support them during these unprecedented times, given the soaring cost of living. I will continue to pressure the Labor Government, urging them to reconsider any cuts to this vital cost-of-living program and any future cuts that affect regional New South Wales households. It is essential that every individual in this great State, regardless of their postcode, can access the opportunities they need to thrive. Now is not the time for complacency. Premier Minns must put regional people before Sydney projects.

## PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (14:14):** I am simply astounded by the benevolence of PricewaterhouseCoopers [PwC]. Out of the goodness of its heart, it has placed 666 of its 864 partners on 908 boards across the NGO and not-for-profit sector in Australia. On Monday PwC Acting CEO Ms Stubbins told our inquiry that PwC's partners like to "bring their expertise to boards they are passionate about". PwC is very proud of that knowledge transfer between it and those organisations, and back again. In typical PwC fashion, it has used its actuarial acumen to crunch the numbers and quantify that element of its corporate activities into a metric it calls "social impact time", that is, time spent serving as chairs and members of boards across the country.

PwC sees that many not-for-profit leaders "recognise outsourcing back office functions would benefit their organisation, as they often don't know where to start". I doubt many businesses offer their senior employees paid time away as part of their roles. PwC spent more than 86,000 hours putting its expertise into hundreds of organisations. That is an increase on the previous financial year of 13,686 billable hours that were attributable, in part, to work conducted in the not-for-profit sector, despite a decrease in volunteering and pro bono hours—and that does not even include roles on government boards and agencies, for which we are so lucky to have their time. It is made all the more easy to recognise and praise as PwC reports its social impact time publicly, alongside other core business functions like revenue and profits. Even better, the time that PwC has spent proudly giving back to the community has increased exponentially year on year.

PwC is so generous that it has now designed a full end-to-end chief financial officer service package, which is promoted by PwC partners to the boards of different not-for-profits that would otherwise presumably have no clue how to manage on their own. I cannot overstate how incredible it is that the very same entities on which these PwC consultants are board members then enter into financial service contracts with PwC. It obviously comes at a huge cost, but how could any agency, organisation or not-for-profit exist without the forcible guiding hand of a company that has created a racket on knowledge?

I am truly in awe of the kindness of an organisation that exists purely to serve the community—and not to rake in \$3 billion in annual revenue. That is why it is so wonderful that, apparently, 77 per cent of PwC's partner workforce serves on not-for-profit boards around the country, in order to inform, shape and, ultimately, profit from them. As we found out from our inquiry on Monday, the generosity of PwC partners even extends beyond those board roles. We heard that the current Acting CEO of PwC provided free personal mentoring and guidance to the chief financial officer of the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District—and apparently did not ever seek public praise or recognition for that work. It is just so admirable how devoted PwC is to our community!

### OPAL MINING

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (14:18):** I update the House on my activities as special local envoy to Lightning Ridge and White Cliffs. I have been referred to as the Opal Tsar but, indeed, that is a misnomer—and I will not name the honourable member who coined the term. The context is that a very significant issue has arisen in relation to the validity of mining leases. It has transpired that, since a date some eight years ago, all licences issued under the previous Government in respect of opal mining activities were invalid. That arose from a technicality in relation to the service of the licence applications. Indeed, it has caused a lot of hardship for opal miners in the region.

It was in that context that the Minister asked me to accept the role of special envoy. On 6 June this year the Minister and I travelled to Lightning Ridge and met with a range of stakeholders, including landholders in the area who have been affected by opal mining, as well as the association that represents opal miners, the Lightning Ridge Miners Association [LRMA]. We also met with a range of miners and then travelled overnight to Dubbo for some media coverage relating to our activities in Lightning Ridge. I returned without the Minister on 16 June and met with a range of landholders, the LRMA and some opal miners. I had the opportunity to go quite far underground in a vehicle. Some of the opal mines are relatively small scale but I was interested to learn that some are quite large and a truck can travel underground through them.

I am playing the role of passing on a range of information from stakeholders to the Minister. That is occurring but perhaps not as quickly as we would have wished. I hope it is of benefit to miners who are concerned about the validity of their licences and the reissuing process to know that a member of Parliament will visit regularly, hear their concerns and pass them on to the department and the Minister. I intend to go to White Cliffs during the parliamentary break and meet with a range of stakeholders. I will play a similar role in speaking to the Minister, who is most concerned about the issues, and receiving a daily briefing on the reissuing of licences. A range of complex long-term issues exist, but the validity of licences pertains to people's right and ability to work. That is of great importance to the Government. [*Time expired.*]

### RANDOM DRUG TESTING

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (14:21):** I raise the issue of roadside drug testing for medicinal cannabis. The drug was legalised in 2016 and is prescribed by doctors to treat spasticity in multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, nausea and vomiting related to cancer chemotherapy, pain, and anxiety in patients with active malignancy and life-limiting diseases. As of 31 January 2021, the Therapeutic Goods Administration has issued over 91,000 approvals for Australian medicinal cannabis patients.

In New South Wales it is against the law for someone to drive with any presence of any illegal drug in their system. Medicinal cannabis is the only legally prescribed drug that is screened in roadside drug tests. Roadside drug testing tests for THC, methylamphetamine, MDMA and cocaine. I highlight that there is no testing for benzodiazepines and prescribed opiates. Under the current system, a roadside drug test will return a negative result for a driver under the influence of oxycodone or heroin. That undeniably has the unintended, or intended, consequence of contributing to the opioid crisis by forcing people to use opiates for pain management so they can still drive rather than more suitable alternatives such as medicinal cannabis.

Our driving laws are unfair to users of medicinal cannabis. In New South Wales, an unimpaired driver who has a trace of cannabis in their system from using legally prescribed cannabis can be issued with a fine of \$603 and a licence suspension from three to six months for a first offence. For a second or subsequent offence, drivers are issued with fines of up to \$3,300 and licence disqualification from six months to an unlimited maximum, and that offence will remain on their criminal record.

There is no legislative dispensation for the use of medicinal cannabis in a positive roadside drug test, and there should be. I am raising that matter with various Ministers. A medical defence is already available for medicinal cannabis patients in Tasmania. Our roadside drug testing should accommodate people who are availing themselves of medicinal cannabis treatments. It does not impair driving and should be treated in the same manner as other prescription drugs. Medicinal cannabis users are being discriminated against not only on the roads but also in workplaces. I will raise that in the House and with labour organisations in due course.

## FAITH-BASED HEALTH SERVICES

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (14:24):** On Monday 3 July the Australian Capital Territory Government is set to compulsorily acquire Calvary Public Hospital in Bruce. That follows an appalling process where legislation was rushed through and the usual committee policy was circumvented. Faith-based hospitals are found in public and private health systems in New South Wales. I tabled a motion yesterday that is unlikely to be moved for debate today. The motion called for the Government to protect those pillars of our health system and rule out any similar takeover in this State. I urge the Premier to allay concerns held by many people of faith as well as those in faith-based hospitals that a similar takeover will not happen in New South Wales.

We have many public and private faith-based health providers, many of whom I mentioned in my inaugural speech to Parliament. That includes St Vincent's Hospital, which was founded by the Sisters of Charity in 1857. Today, St Vincent's health care runs two public hospitals in New South Wales—St Vincent's in Darlinghurst and St Joseph's in Auburn. Calvary Health Care runs two public hospitals in New South Wales, one in Kogarah—the Premier's electorate—which specialises in palliative care and rehabilitation services; and the other Calvary Mater in Newcastle, which is a major centre for cancer care. I call on the Government to reassure faith-based hospitals, service providers, aged care, and disability services that this State will not compulsorily acquire faith-based health services like the ACT.

## ABORTION SERVICES

**Dr AMANDA COHN (14:27):** In 2019 this Parliament took the historic and long-awaited step of removing abortion from the Crimes Act. At that time I was working as a GP in Albury-Wodonga on the border of New South Wales and Victoria prescribing medical abortion up to nine weeks gestation. I wrote to members of Parliament then about the experiences of my patients who were, and still are, forced to travel hundreds of kilometres across rural New South Wales, away from their family and support networks, interstate to access abortion services.

I am raising the issue because in the four years since abortion was decriminalised in New South Wales, so little has changed. Abortion may be legal in this State but it is certainly not accessible. Though the Minister for Health has announced an audit of the availability of abortion services offered by public hospitals and service pathways in New South Wales, the findings will be what advocates, clinicians and people with lived experience of navigating the so-called system have been saying for years—that abortion services are largely operated by private providers, often at high cost to patients, and that local referral pathways are variable and fragmented.

Now that abortion is correctly regarded as a health service, it is the responsibility of the Government to ensure that it is available and accessible without financial or geographic barriers. That was acknowledged by the recent Federal Senate inquiry into reproductive health. Australian Clinicians for Choice, a voluntary group of health professionals, have put forward straightforward solutions. This Government must act to ensure that first trimester surgical abortion is provided at all public hospitals, as is the case in Victoria. First trimester surgical abortion, from a practical and technical perspective, can easily be provided in any small hospital that can safely manage a miscarriage, and medical abortion can be safely prescribed by GPs and even using a nurse or midwife-led model of care.

Approximately 10 per cent of Australian GPs are registered to prescribe medical abortions. Approximately 10 per cent of Australian GPs are conscientious objectors. What about the remaining 80 per cent? In the current environment, those GPs are required to undertake additional training unpaid and in their free time. We must support GPs to become medical abortion prescribers, not burden them, to provide comprehensive reproductive health care to people in the community from a provider they know and trust. Finally, we must ensure that conscientious objection, which is an important provision under law, is only exercised as intended: by individual practitioners and not by whole departments or organisations. We must do that because reproductive health care is health care. Abortion is health care.

### *Bills*

## PROPERTY SERVICES COUNCIL BILL 2023

### Second Reading Debate

**Debate resumed from 31 May 2023.**

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (14:30):** The Government opposes the Property Services Council Bill 2023. The bill proposes to fundamentally change the way the property services and strata industry is regulated in New South Wales by creating a new statutory authority, the property services council. The council would have an industry-dominated board and would replace NSW Fair Trading as the regulator under three key property Acts: the Strata Schemes Management

Act 2015, the Property and Stock Agents Act 2002 and the Community Land Management Act 2021. That would mean that New South Wales would move away from an independent regulator towards partial self-regulation by the industry.

The Government's view is that the current regulatory arrangements ensure effective industry oversight and regulation and high-quality engagement with the industry. The bill would be a retrograde step. It would significantly undermine that important independent oversight and regulation and would take New South Wales back to a regulatory model from the nineties that was found to be ineffective. The bill also fails to recognise the Government's initiatives to improve outcomes for consumers and the work that has occurred since it was last debated. Finally, the bill would be disruptive for industry and consumers. For those reasons, the Government opposes the bill.

I will expand on the reasons. New South Wales already has an effective and independent regulator for the property services industry: NSW Fair Trading, which has dedicated professional staff with substantial regulatory expertise, experience and connections with the sector. It is engaged in regulatory education and information, complaint handling, dispute resolution, compliance and enforcement across multiple and interrelated property sectors—from strata and real estate sale and management to residential tenancies, retirement villages, residential land lease communities, boarding houses, conveyancers and short-term rental accommodation. The administration of strata and community schemes laws has been in the hands of the Fair Trading Commissioner for the better part of 30 years.

During the 30 years of administration of those Acts, Fair Trading has assisted with the resolution of tens of thousands of complaints and inquiries about strata and community living. The Fair Trading strata mediation service team are skilled, passionate and compassionate experts who have conducted countless mediations to settle disputes among the million-plus strata residents in New South Wales. Those services not only help New South Wales citizens every day of every year but also provide a public benefit by keeping countless civil disputes out of the tribunal and courts system. The expectation of the public at large is overwhelmingly that the administration of those three flagship pieces of Fair Trading legislation stay in the independent, trusted, accountable and expert public hands that they are in today.

The proposed council board would have 10 members, and an eleventh if the council appoints a property services commissioner. While the 10 board members would be appointed by the Minister, those appointments can only be made from nominations coming from industry and others. The board would consist of members nominated by the property industry, a member nominated by a university and members nominated by those representing consumer interests, as well as one member appointed by the Minister. If appointed, a property services commissioner would be responsible for the day-to-day management of the affairs of the council in accordance with the policies and general directions of the board. Leaving administration of key property services legislation in the hands of a council with an industry-dominated board will put the independent oversight and regulation of the industry in jeopardy.

That model may lead to less consumer-oriented regulation, poor consumer outcomes and the undermining of consumer confidence in the property industry. Moreover, it may encourage the establishment of barriers to entry as industry players attempt to protect their position, with reduced competition potentially leading to increased costs and reduced services, reduced innovation and reduced incentives to play by the rules. It should be abundantly clear that an industry-dominated council would lack the necessary and critical independence from the parties it would seek to regulate. How could consumers trust an industry-dominated council to deal with their complaint about agent misconduct, for example? How could consumers trust staff to help resolve disputes and properly enforce the law when staff work for an industry-dominated council? Could we trust it to provide adequate information to the public or would it favour communications that support agents?

Despite most real estate agents doing the right thing, overall the industry has not demonstrated a capacity to self-regulate. That is evidenced by the record of poor conduct and noncompliance with the law by some elements of the property sector. For example, earlier this year Fair Trading conducted 123 inspections in New South Wales to investigate rent bidding by real estate agents between 18 March and 15 April. As a result, Fair Trading issued 10 warning letters and 51 penalty infringement notices, worth a total amount of \$53,350 for breaches. In 2022 Fair Trading prosecuted a number of agents who fraudulently misused trust money for their own purposes. One licensee fraudulently converted over \$140,000 in trust money. They were sentenced to 2½ years' imprisonment, served by way of an intensive correction order along with a requirement to perform 120 hours of community service.

The property services and strata industry is too important to New South Wales consumers for its regulation to be left to an industry-dominated council rather than an arms-length regulator. It is an important point that the bill fails to take account of developments since 2021 and the Government's commitments to further improve the operation of the property industry. NSW Fair Trading and the Property Services Commissioner are working to

improve the regulation of the property services and strata industry, including by raising the professional standards of property agents and improving relations with the industry. Improving professional standards is one of the main focuses of the existing Property Services Commissioner, who has over 25 years of experience in the real estate industry and has forged a consensus with industry to develop transformative change. That work will result in more balanced and meaningful changes than are proposed by the bill, and should be supported by a strong, independent regulator.

The Government has also made significant commitments to the property sector, including appointing a Rental Commissioner to act as a voice for renters and a new strata commissioner to oversee strata governance and policy in New South Wales. There is broad community support for those commissioners, and the Government expects that their work will deliver valuable improvements in strata and tenancy policy and services. The developments since the bill was first introduced in 2019 highlight why the Government will not support the bill. The bill proposes that New South Wales return to the 1990s, when a similar council existed. The Government has seen how that council worked. There were good reasons for abolishing it. The previous council was replaced in the mid-1990s due to a lack of independence, widespread conflicts of interest, a lack of enforcement against wrongdoing and a lack of tangible return on investment of government time and resources. The council was replaced with an independent government regulator: NSW Fair Trading.

For some decades industry-specific regulatory models have been avoided or abandoned at both State and Commonwealth level due to their lack of rigour in prosecuting misconduct and a lack of vigour in protecting consumers and pursuing the public interest. The regulatory model proposed in the bill runs counter to the direction of regulatory policy in consumer protection in recent years and best practice in regulation. Lastly, the bill would bring significant disruption for industry and consumers, fragmenting customer experiences across different regulators and resulting in poor consumer outcomes. It does not address the immediate consequences of replacing NSW Fair Trading with the council, leaving licensing, compliance, enforcement and complaint handling in a state of uncertainty. The bill also fails to provide for how the council would regulate an entire industry. The Fair Trading Commissioner is an accountable public official who has the resources, expertise and corporate knowledge of a government department at her disposal.

Further, the proposed council will not have the comprehensive coverage of the property sector that is crucial to achieving consistency and consumer confidence. The bill only covers three property Acts rather than the broader property sector, which includes residential tenancies, boarding houses, residential land lease communities, short-term rental accommodation, conveyancers and retirement villages. All those areas are regulated by NSW Fair Trading, along with other industries such as the motor vehicle industry and retail sectors. It is common for a consumer to have various touchpoints with Fair Trading over the course of a single transaction, or their whole life. The bill would fragment the customer experience across different regulators and hand over governance of a sector that has significant impacts on consumers to a statutory council that does not yet exist and has no experience administering laws.

In conclusion, the Government opposes the bill. It would remove regulation of parts of the property service sector from an effective, experienced, independent regulator and instead hand it to an industry-dominated council with no experience, which would result in industry-centric regulation, confusion, disruption and poorer outcomes for consumers. I represent my good friend and colleague the Hon. Anoulack Chanthivong in his capacity as Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading. He is doing a fantastic job. I appreciate the support that he has provided me in formulating the Government's position on the bill.

**The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (14:41):** The object of the Property Services Council Bill 2023 is to constitute and confer functions on a property services council and for related purposes. The Opposition opposes the bill. As we have heard from the Hon. Mark Banasiak, the bill seeks to establish a property services council that would take over many regulatory functions currently overseen by NSW Fair Trading. The council would also advise on matters relating to the real estate and property sector. Further to that, the council would have a board consisting of a range of real estate industry, consumer, tenant and strata stakeholders in its make-up.

As the member has indicated, the bill on its own will not solve the current issues we face in housing, especially affordable housing. The member indicated he had previously introduced a bill that would reform the property services industry in New South Wales in the form of the Real Estate Services Council Bill 2019. While that bill passed the Legislative Council, it was defeated at the second reading stage in the Legislative Assembly. The Minister at the time of debate noted this:

The bill is an attempt by representatives of the real estate industry to claim a greater direct say on the regulation of their members, which they have sought to justify by characterising Fair Trading as incompetent and failing to protect consumers. While it is all too easy to pin the blame on Fair Trading as the regulator, it is difficult to imagine that the industry will investigate its own members with the same rigour and scrutiny as an independent regulator. Without the current level of independence, the potential risk of harm to the public interest is unreasonably high.

Let's put some context around the introduction of this bill. The Real Estate Institute of New South Wales has for many years advocated for this type of bill to be introduced in Parliament. The belief is that the current regulator, NSW Fair Trading, is letting the industry and consumers down. It is worth noting that the Real Estate Institute appears to be the only body that makes this comment. The bill would mean there was a coregulatory model in the industry. The Coalition does not accept that a coregulation model would be the best model to achieve optimal outcomes for consumers, owners and tenants or other stakeholders within the sector.

There is already an effective regulator in the form of NSW Fair Trading. While the Coalition was in government it appointed the Property Services Commissioner in 2021 to assist Fair Trading, which was done to support and improve support for all stakeholders in the industry. The commissioner reports directly to the Secretary of the Department of Customer Service. In August 2022 the Coalition reappointed the commissioner until August this year with a view to the commissioner working with the industry on a model for an independent statutory commissioner to be legislated in the future. However, it was not able to legislate for that prior to the March 2023 election.

The Coalition will support measures that improve standards and oversight but does not believe that the bill will effectively address the concerns outlined. Therefore, the Opposition will oppose the bill. In a previous life I was a licensed stock and station agent, wherein I completed the appropriate courses run by the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales and then completed 20 points of continuing professional development each year in order to retain my licence. That was over 16 years ago. From recollection, it was not too onerous, with almost everyone passing assessments.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (14:46):** On behalf of The Greens I oppose the Property Services Council Bill 2023. It is a fundamental principle that a bill that goes this far in reforming an industry and impacts tens of thousands of businesses should come from the Government. I acknowledge the Hon. Mark Banasiak has a keen interest in this, but there should be more information, given the many hours of work he indicated he and his office did to bring this private member's bill forward. However, when there is such extensive reform planned it should come from government. It is notable that crossbenchers such as The Greens have not been lobbied by stakeholders to urge us to support the bill. In fact, not even the mover has approached me or other members of my party to see if we would support it. We ordinarily would have been open to discussing the need for it.

In previous contributions to a similar bill in the previous Parliament, the then Labor Opposition supported a bill like this with amendments. Perhaps it is fair that, now it is in government, the Labor Party is not supporting it. When now Treasurer, the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, spoke to that bill, he said that it had become clear that it was increasingly difficult for the industry to work in partnership with the regulator, and that senior officials of NSW Fair Trading did not understand the industry. He went on to say:

If the regulatory authority cannot answer basic questions, such as who can be licensed, it is time for reform. The only solution is to establish a dedicated commissioner for the property services industry.

The question is whether that is the only solution, and that sounds like a highly politicised statement. At the committee stage the Opposition moved amendments to include the Strata Community Association and the Tenants' Union, but I do not think that would have fixed all of the issues. We are in a unique position over the next four years to get some legislation passed that does not come from government. We could get legislation passed by working with the crossbench and the Opposition to get support both in this place and the other place. I urge members to consult thoroughly with crossbench members if they want their bill supported, if they want their work supported. We are open to reform. We possibly could have been open to considering a bill like this, but there is not the information or the industry support. On behalf of The Greens I urge members not to support the bill.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (14:50):** In reply: Just as I did last week, I preface my speech by saying that these comments do not reflect on the Minister who has carriage of defending the Government's position on the Property Services Council Bill 2023. I had to check my watch and make sure that we have not shifted in time and gone to Freaky Friday, because there seemed to be some body-shifting going on. The now Government, which as the previous Opposition supported the bill, has now taken on the Opposition's position and even the Opposition's excuses for not supporting the bill. I note that for the record.

I refer to some of the Minister's comments regarding examples of bad behaviour by agents. There are good and bad people in all industries. We need to acknowledge that. But the examples the Minister outlined took place under the watch of Fair Trading, the so-called custodians of consumer protection. If we want to look at Fair Trading's expertise in the property sector we only need to look at the shambles of the bill that was passed in this place last week. It had to go to inquiry because one clause was absolutely diabolical: It did the opposite of what the Minister was hoping to achieve. The second part of the bill that was passed had no substance or background as to how it would work. Essentially, we passed the bill blindly, not knowing how it would work

practically. This was all done by the so-called experts at Fair Trading. I will not go into too much more detail about their so-called expertise. It has been well ventilated in my second reading speech with some clear examples of where Fair Trading has stuffed up over the years, and has deskilled and devalued the industry and the work of real estate agents.

I address the Opposition's position, which is at least very consistent with its position when it was previously in government. As a former teacher I am always looking to help provide a bit of positive reinforcement, even though it is probably only a minor improvement. At least the Opposition has been consistent. It has been up-front and honest this time about why it is not opposing the bill. The shadow Minister has given me some reasons about why the bill is not being supported by many of the stakeholders. It is the case that many of these stakeholders have been appeased by the creation of the expert panel. That expert panel would not have been created if we had not pressured the government of the day with the bill in the first place. That extends to the appointment of the Property Services Commissioner by the previous Government. The issue is, just like the Building Commissioner when he was first appointed, the Property Services Commissioner had no standing or recognition in a legislative or regulatory sense.

It was the good work of members in this place, like my colleague the Hon. Robert Borsak, Mr David Shoebridge and even the Minister across from me, who worked to pressure the Government to appoint a Building Commissioner who is the force to be reckoned with that he is today. Currently the Property Services Commissioner has no standing. We are essentially half done with this reform. The bill merely proposes to take the existing commissioner and give them some standing and recognition in legislation. It would still be up to the government of the day to work with the commissioner on their reform agenda and their direction and work with the council on those reforms. I turn to the current Government and its opposition to the bill. I am probably more disappointed in members of the Government than I am in the Opposition, because the Government's opposition now represents a backflip that even the infamous Nadia Comaneci would be impressed by. I highlight some of the comments from the Government when the bill was considered by both Houses last term. The Hon. Daniel Mookhey stated:

I congratulate the member on introducing the bill. The Opposition does not oppose the bill but will be moving amendments at the committee stage.

It should be noted that we accepted those amendments and the bill passed the House with Labor's support. Ms Yasmin Catley, who was the shadow Minister at the time, stated the following:

From the outset, I state that the Opposition supports this sensible bill that will deliver crucial oversight of the property service industry.

Ms Julia Finn stated:

The Opposition supports the original intention of the Property Services Council Bill 2021.

I am disappointed in light of those comments, but I am probably more disappointed about this policy about face when I look at the current Minister, who when discussing the bill with me tried to spin a porky that even the Real Estate Institute [REI] did not support proceeding with the bill any more. Clearly the Minister was not aware of how closely I have worked with the industry and particularly the good people of the REI in drafting the bill. I knew full well that they still supported it because that was the reason I was reintroducing it. I am disappointed that in the first instance that the Minister and I have a chance to interact, he chooses to lie to me. It is not a great way to start a constructive relationship in this place. I do not expect an apology for that. Unfortunately, in this place one gets used to lies. We certainly had our fair share of them from the last Government. But I think he owes an apology to the REI for misrepresenting their views in this case.

The other member I am really disappointed in is Mr Stephen Kamper. He was a member of the lower House whom I had a lot of positive dealings with in the last term of government when we were working on the taxi issues. So it was disappointing to hear about this Government's backflip when I know Mr Kamper had strong support for this reform in the last term. Even during the most recent election campaign he was publicly pledging his party's support for this reform in a room full of real estate agents, including REI representatives. Out of all of the people I am disappointed in, it is probably those two, particularly given what I have just outlined, I am most disappointed in. I note the CEO of the REI is here today to watch proceedings. Perhaps Government members can explain their political gymnastics to him directly on their way out, because they do not seem to be able to answer their phones when the industry is calling and wanting to talk to them. I know the numbers; regardless, I commend the bill to the House.

**The Hon. Courtney Houssos:** Point of order: It was remiss of me not to raise the point of order earlier. During the honourable member's contribution he referenced that the Minister had lied to him. I ask that he withdraw that part of the contribution.

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell:** To the point of order: I am not disputing that that language is unparliamentary but I submit that the Minister should have raised that while the member was giving his contribution, not after the fact.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** To the point of order: I may accept that people have difficulty in accepting the word "lie". I am happy to rephrase and say "was liberal with the truth" or "misrepresented the truth". But the fact remains, he was not completely honest when he made those comments to me. If the Government has a problem with the word "lie", I am happy to withdraw that and replace it with "misrepresent the facts".

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd):** Thank you. I think that would be very useful in moving us forward.

The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion negatived.**

### *Documents*

## LIQUOR AND GAMING DATA COLLECTION

### Production of Documents: Order

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (14:59):** I seek leave to amend private members' business item No. 136 of which I have given notice as follows:

- (1) Omit "within 21 days of the passing of this resolution" and insert instead "on Friday 4 August 2023 by 10.00 a.m.".
- (2) Insert after paragraph (f):
  - (g) any correspondence from the chairperson of the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority to the responsible Minister about money laundering in clubs or pubs and any recommendations to address it;
  - (h) any documents relating to gaming machine compliance checks or the NSW Crime Commission Inquiry into Money Laundering via electronic gaming machines; and

**Leave granted.**

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** Accordingly, I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House on Friday 4 August 2023 by 10.00 a.m. the following documents created between 1 October 2021 and 30 June 2022 in the possession, custody or control of Liquor and Gaming NSW, the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority or the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research and Minister for the Central Coast relating to liquor and gaming compliance checks:

- (a) all emails, including summary data, attachments and Excel spreadsheets sent by the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority Manager of Money Laundering Intelligence and Analytics regarding centralised monitoring system data on suspicious transactions at single or multiple venues;
- (b) the section 21 notices under the Gaming and Liquor Administration Act 2007 and the responses, including attachments issued to or received from:
  - (i) Bankstown Sports Club;
  - (ii) Bardwell Park RSL;
  - (iii) Cabra-Vale Diggers Club;
  - (iv) Canley Heights RSL;
  - (v) Canterbury-Hurlstone Park RSL Club;
  - (vi) Canterbury League Club;
  - (vii) Earlwood Bardwell Park RSL;
  - (viii) Fairfield City Memorial Club;
  - (ix) Markets Hotel;
  - (x) Mekong Mounties Group;
  - (xi) Mount Pritchard and District Community Club;
  - (xii) North Sydney Leagues Club;
  - (xiii) Parramatta Leagues Club;
  - (xiv) Royal Exchange Hotel;
  - (xv) Smithfield RSL;

- (xvi) South Sydney Juniors; and
- (xvii) St John's Park Bowling Club Ltd.
- (c) the analyses of the central monitoring system data that occurred after the responses to the section 21 notices, referred to in paragraph (b), were received;
- (d) the REGIS system records of any referrals of the premises referred to in paragraph (b) to the Complaints and Enforcement Panel in Liquor and Gaming NSW and the minutes of any meetings regarding the REGIS records;
- (e) any correspondence to the Complaints and Enforcement Panel regarding the premises referred to in paragraph (b);
- (f) any complaints made to Liquor and Gaming NSW regarding the forewarning of premises of compliance checks;
- (g) any correspondence from the chairperson of the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority to the responsible Minister about money laundering in clubs or pubs and any recommendations to address it;
- (h) any documents relating to gaming machine compliance checks or the NSW Crime Commission Inquiry into Money Laundering via electronic gaming machines; and
- (i) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

This motion is essentially a mirror image of the motion moved in the other place by the Independent member for Sydney, Alex Greenwich. It relates to allegations that the New South Wales Crime Commission, when it was investigating money laundering, potentially did not have all of the information before it. That is the crux of it. I think it is in the public interest and, indeed, this House's interest that, if the lower House members are receiving documents of this nature, members of this place are also able to view those documents and decide on the correct course. I hope that I have the support of members and I look forward to the motion being supported.

**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) (15:02):** I speak on behalf of the Government and Minister Harris. I remind the House that there were very serious allegations behind this call for papers. The matter received the support of the Government when it was raised in the other place, as will this motion in this place today. They are serious allegations. The members have been entitled to raise them. It makes sense that, if those papers are returned to the other place, members in this place should also be able to look at them. We have a longer and more detailed tradition of examining these sorts of documents. We should put this House to work on those questions as well. For those reasons, the Government will be supporting this motion. I thank the member for making the amendments which, as I understand it, bring the motion in line with what has been moved in the lower House.

I want to raise two matters in putting the position on behalf of the Government. The first is that there have been discussions with the member for Sydney, and it is not out of the question that the lower House resolution will require further amendment. If that were to be the case, we would seek a discussion with the member moving this motion here and with the lower House to keep those resolutions in line. I think that is important and that is the approach we are taking. The second is to indicate to the House that many of these documents may be returned under privilege, and the advice to the Government has been that they will contain very sensitive matters. I would ask that we step through those in a careful and considered manner after the documents are received. We would be open to providing detailed advice to members at that point in the process. With those observations made, I commend the member's motion to the House.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (15:04):** I make a very brief contribution to this debate to put on record that the Opposition will not be opposing the motion moved by Ms Cate Faehrmann.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (15:04):** In reply: I reassure the House that I am working very closely with Mr Alex Greenwich on this motion and, potentially, ultimately, the New South Wales Crime Commission in terms of what comes back. I am very aware of the potentially highly sensitive nature of the documents that will be returned. I will work in the spirit of ensuring that sensitivity is respected by this House.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd):** The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Condolences*

**SIMON CREAN**

**The Hon. BOB NANVA (15:05):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes the death of former Australian Council of Trade Unions President and Federal Labor Leader Simon Crean who passed away in Germany on 25 June 2023, aged 74 years.
- (2) That this House notes that:

- (a) Simon Crean was elected to the House of Representatives in 1990 and served until 2013;
  - (b) Simon Crean was Federal Labor Leader between 2001 and 2003 and served as a Minister in the Hawke, Keating, Rudd and Gillard governments; and
  - (c) Simon Crean was a longstanding advocate for working people, the labour movement and the national interest.
- (3) That this House sends its sincere condolences to Simon Crean's family, friends and colleagues.
  - (4) That this resolution be communicated by the President to the family of Simon Crean.

I pay tribute to former Federal Labor leader Simon Crean, who passed away on 25 June 2023, aged 74, with the words from his maiden speech as the member for Hotham on 17 May 1990:

Change in the name of progress achieved through conflict and social disruption is not my vision of Australia or our common future, nor is its promotion a part of my concept of the role of government in a democracy ... I am committed to placing the national interest first and developing through consultation and cooperation the most effective mechanisms for creating a more just and equitable society, and one best equipped to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

His words in the Parliament, on that day, were no trivial undertaking, but were an extension of the creed which he lived by as a trade union official—firstly, as an official at the Federated Storemen and Packers' Union and, finally, as the president of the Australian Council for Trade Unions. Simon's many achievements in the union movement were defined by principled advocacy for workers and the capacity to execute change through collaboration, engagement and consensus, without which the Accord and the bold reimagining of Australia's economy during that period could well have become paralysed by the usual theatre of policy and political argument.

The success of Simon's considered and earnest approach is also evidenced by the indelible impression he left on the nation's public policy framework as a Minister in the Hawke, Keating, Rudd and Gillard governments. Areas as diverse as trade, education, regional development, industrial relations and the arts all benefited from his intellect and effectiveness. It must be said that the considered and earnest approach which made him so effective is perhaps why he has not always received the credit for outcomes that he so richly deserves. He was not driven by, nor did he seek to court, adulation, motivated as he was by the reward of public service and good public policy. The defining moment of his long and distinguished career will likely be his contribution to that which he was ultimately unable to control. His opposition to the Iraq War was filled with principle and delivered with eloquence to the people, the Parliament and our troops. It was a courageous and, at the time, politically unpopular call for the nation's alternative Prime Minister to make. And it was one that, better than any other, demonstrated his willingness to cast aside his own personal advancement to pursue the national interest.

After leaving Parliament in 2013, Simon's contributions to Australia continued through a variety of other roles, most notably as the chair of the European Australian Business Council, advancing the work he accomplished as a Minister to strengthen Australia's trade network and maintain strong diplomatic relationships with foreign nations. Simon's legacy is one of courage, decency and a deep abiding sense of humanity. It is a legacy that I know inspires many people in this Chamber and in the other place, from across the political spectrum. Simon Crean was a rarity amongst giants who have risen to the top of the political and industrial wings of our movement, doing so without a hulking ego or overbearing personality. He will be missed by the whole labour movement. He lived a life of deeds, not mere words. He was respected by those who knew him or knew of him. I pass on my condolences to his wife, Carole, daughters, Sarah and Emma, as well as his many friends and colleagues.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (15:09):** On behalf of the Opposition, I speak on the condolence motion honouring the life and legacy of Simon Crean. We extend our deepest condolences to his wife, Carole, and his family, and we thank the Government and the Government Whip for moving this motion. Today we acknowledge his contribution, and particularly the loss being felt by family, friends and throughout the labour movement. Simon was one of three sons born to Frank and Mary Crean and came from a political family. His father was a Federal Labor MP from 1951 to 1977, serving in the Whitlam Government from 1972 to 1975 as Treasurer and Deputy Prime Minister. His brother was a member of the Tasmanian Parliament. Simon studied law and economics at Monash University and from a young age was actively involved in the ALP and trade union movement. He became general secretary of the Federated Storemen and Packers' Union in 1979 and then president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions in 1985, before being elected as the member for Hotham in 1990.

For over two decades Simon Crean served as the member for Hotham, representing the aspirations and concerns of his constituents. It is rare for a newly elected MP to go straight into the ministry. However, in 1990 Simon was appointed Minister for Science and Technology in the Hawke Government. He went on to serve in the Keating Government and as Leader of the Opposition from 2001 to 2003 before returning to the ministry under the Rudd and Gillard governments. During his time as a Minister he held several portfolios, including Trade, Agriculture, Resources and Primary Industries, Energy, as well as Employment, Education and Training. He was known for his commitment to creating a fairer and more equitable society.

As many members in this Chamber know, I was an adviser in the Howard Government. As a young staffer in Canberra I met Simon on a couple of occasions. From my observations, he was well respected by all sides of politics, known to be a man of principle and a formidable opponent. Throughout his career he was a staunch campaigner for everyday Australians, recognising their invaluable contributions to our nation's prosperity. He fought passionately for workers, ensuring that their voices were heard. Moreover, we must acknowledge Simon Crean's contribution during his post-parliamentary career. Following his retirement from active politics in 2013 he remained a tireless advocate for Australia's interests on the global stage, becoming chairman of the Australian Livestock Exporters' Council after leaving Parliament.

Leveraging his extensive knowledge, diplomatic skills and commitment to fostering international partnerships, he assumed the role of chair of the European Australian Business Council and the Australia-Korea Business Council. As chair of the European Australian Business Council, Simon Crean played a pivotal role in promoting trade, investment and collaboration between Australia and Europe, and worked tirelessly to cultivate stronger relationships with European nations. His efforts to promote dialogue and engagement between Australian and European businesses played a key role in expanding trade opportunities, attracting investment and driving economic development between our regions. I again extend my regards and condolences to the Hon. Simon Crean's family, friends, and political colleagues. I thank him for his service.

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (15:12):** I participate in this condolence motion for Simon Crean and thank my colleague and friend the Hon. Bob Nanva for moving it in the House. The passing of a person is a most important opportunity to make some contribution to reflect on that individual, perhaps at a personal level but also at the political level. I have not prepared a speech but I will talk from some notes. I had some connection with Simon Crean but not a real and significant personal one; I was working with others who did. Other members have given the history that Simon completed his law degree and commenced with the Federated Storemen and Packers' Union [FSPU] Victorian branch in 1971 as a part-time research officer. He was a very talented man and quickly became the Federal research officer in the national office of that organisation. That organisation had its head office in Melbourne, but he worked in the national office and the Victorian branch. He became the assistant national secretary of the FSPU in 1974 and national secretary in 1979. It was a rapid rise; he was obviously someone with a lot of intelligence and ability.

I reflect on his presidency of the Australian Council of Trade Unions [ACTU] during 1975 to 1990. It is well known that at that time the secretaryship of that organisation was held by Bill Kelty. That happened to align with when I commenced my first full-time work with the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association in 1976, the year after Simon commenced as ACTU president. I have strong memories of the way in which he—working with Bill Kelty, Bob Hawke, Paul Keating and a number of others—introduced refreshed thinking about the notion of an Accord between employers, unions and the members they represent in governments.

The Prices and Incomes Accord was born. It went through serious iterations, but it provided an opportunity for unions to pursue—for and on behalf of their members—not only improvements to wages and entitlements but also occupational superannuation and related matters. The whole idea was not just a wage increase, which had been so inflationary back in the seventies, but to adopt this broad thinking about raising the social wage. He worked very hard with a number of people, including leading trade union officials, to bring that Accord process to life and he followed through with its iterations. I offer my sincere condolences to his wife, Carole, his children, grandchildren and other family members. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (15:15):** I also thank the Hon. Bob Nanva for moving this condolence motion. It is important that this House recognises giants of Australian history, and Simon Crean is one of those people. He was a giant of the labour movement across Australia, a significant player in recent Australian political history and in shaping Australia as it is today. Other members have reflected on his early history, including his presidency of the ACTU and work in the trade union movement. It is important to recognise the work done during the Accord and the leadership shown during that time. It fundamentally reshaped the Australian economy and gave ordinary working people a better opportunity to participate in the economy across their working lives, which was a very important change. I recognise the work that he did in that regard.

He was a member of the Federal Parliament for decades, serving in many Labor governments and ministries under Hawke, Keating, Rudd and Gillard. I highlight the fact that he was at one stage the primary industries Minister and also served as regional Australia Minister. He is recognised as one of the better primary industries Ministers that Australia has had. In my new role as Minister for Agriculture, he was referred to me as a person to connect with and seek advice from. People still reflect fondly on his work in that role, which I recognise today. He will be sorely missed. His passing over the weekend was shocking news. I am sorry for his family and friends and those who knew him personally—but also for the labour movement, which has lost a very important figure.

**The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (15:18):** It was incredibly shocking and sad to hear of the passing of Simon Crean over the weekend. Our paths crossed on a number of occasions over the years. I first got to know him while I was working for the forestry division of the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union while he was the Minister for Employment, Education and Training. He was integral in creating the transition schemes that assisted our members to leave the logging industry in the mid-1990s. We needed someone to protect the interests of workers while regional forest agreements protected the environment, and Simon Crean delivered. He was true to his word and the workers' interests were protected. They were able to leave the industry with dignity and with the skills and ability to start new careers elsewhere.

At the turn of the millennium I was a researcher and adviser working for Senator George Campbell. Senator Campbell had a significant interest in Australian manufacturing. I was in and out of Simon Crean's office regularly during sitting weeks while, as shadow Treasurer, he was seeking commitments in Opposition through the budgetary process to fund local manufacturing. Simon Crean was always open to new ideas and cared deeply about the interests of workers.

I remember an occasion when he was in Sydney for a full day of meetings at the old Commonwealth government offices at 70 Phillip Street. A number of senators' offices, including our office with Senator Campbell, were in that building on the same floor. The senators' offices were around a large central meeting area. Simon Crean was there for a full day of meetings with stakeholders, and I bumped into him in the kitchen while I was making my lunch. I had gone to Woolworths and bought ham, fresh bread, tomato, onion, pepper and salt. I made myself a couple of lovely open sandwiches. As I wandered back to our office, I saw him in the meeting room looking intently over at my lunch and so I passed him a note asking him if he wanted a sandwich. He was having a tough day and, like many of us in politics, he was grateful for some real, fresh food. Later that day he came over and thanked me for sharing my lunch with him and we had a long chat for about an hour or so while he waited for his ride to the airport.

Simon and I shared many common interests, including both having parents who were Ministers in the Whitlam Government, albeit at different times. He was an honourable person, which is rare in a leader, and he was very humble. He treated everyone with dignity and respect. In politics, he always took the principled position no matter how hard it was to do so. For me, his firm opposition to the war in Iraq coupled with his simultaneous support for our troops sums up his impeccable character. He was truly a giant of the labour movement for his immense contribution to the union movement, the Labor Party and the nation. He will be sadly missed. I pay my condolences to his family.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (15:22):** I contribute to debate on the motion to pay tribute to the late Simon Crean. Other members have reflected on his amazing legacy as a Labor leader and as a Minister, but I was inspired very early in my activism by his leadership in the Federated Storemen and Packers' Union at the time, especially by the role that he and the union played in the oil refinery strikes of 1979 and 1980. I am sure some members would remember those strikes. They were a campaign to establish the right to superannuation for working-class people, especially blue-collar working-class people, and the very first industry fund, LUCRF Super, which continues to this day.

Simon Crean was a pivotal player in the battle with the Fraser Government to get that superannuation base standard up and running. At the time, the only people who had superannuation were predominantly senior members of the public service in defined benefit schemes. Everybody else was left to the pension. Those who had access to superannuation had access to a set of tax concessions that working people did not have. It was not fair or just. It resulted in a lot of inequity and people having to work well beyond retirement age. Simon Crean and Bill Kelty were leaders at that time who played such a huge role in putting that on the agenda of the Australian Council of Trade Unions [ACTU] and achieving a breakthrough in the battle to establish the base standard of superannuation, joined by the Transport Workers' Union and a few other unions. That was amazing leadership.

It is more significant that when Mr Crean was president of the ACTU, he took that on into the Accord process. The Accord is often ascribed to Bob Hawke, Paul Keating and Bill Kelty, but the fourth big player was Simon Crean. As president of the ACTU, he led the movement in Accord marks II, III and IV, I think it was, in which he spread superannuation to everyone. He then sat in the Cabinet that established it as a legislative minimum. The last Accord, which was in 1992-93, is the foundation of economic transformation for not just working people but also this country.

Some 40 or 50 years later, the fact that Australia is a finance capital and a net exporter of capital and we can now finance our own economic development as a country is a result of pioneering leadership by not just Mr Crean but also that generation of men and women. Every time we traduce a union boss, we forget the nation-building tradition of the trade union movement. Simon Crean epitomised that nation-building tradition. Without his leadership and the leadership of that generation of officials, we would have a very different country today. That is why I pay respect to his legacy and his contribution to this State and this country.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (15:25):** I confess that I did not think I would be contributing to debate on the condolence motion today, but I thank the Hon. Bob Nanva for moving it. I feel compelled to speak, not because I knew Mr Crean personally—of course I am aware of his legacy, which was so well articulated by my colleague the Hon. Daniel Mookhey—but because the coverage of the sad passing of Mr Crean has once again reminded us of what it is to be a principled public person. Many younger people in Australia would not have been around for the Iraq War or know Mr Crean's stance on it. They would not in their lifetimes have seen a political leader take such a courageous stand against a country that is always our ally, the United States. His final gift to us is a reminder to those younger generations that while someone may not attain the highest office in the land, despite their many great contributions, taking a principled stand will have them judged most favourably in history. I thank him for that last gift that he has given to those who were not around for his initial contributions.

**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) (15:27):** I thank the member for moving the condolence motion. I was shocked to hear the news of Simon Crean's death, as I think many people were. He has been such a feature of our nation and our party. In particular I endorse the comments made by members about his role in the Iraq War. That has received quite significant commentary. Looking back it is hard to remember just what a divisive moment that was, with some of the biggest protests this city has seen and also troops in active service. To be able to balance those issues in the way he did was no easy thing. The grace with which he did it is worth remarking on.

I single out Mr Crean's contribution as arts Minister. The Federal Government has just signed off on the National Cultural Policy, Revive, which is very much built on Creative Australia, the policy that Simon Crean launched as arts Minister on 13 March 2013. That was late in that Government's term and late in Simon Crean's time as arts Minister, but it is literally the document that the current Government has taken around the country in its consultations. It has really stood the test of time.

That Creative Australia policy, which in itself was built on Keating's Creative Nation in 1994, is now embodied in the new policy. The new policy comes at the start of this Government's term and will shape the nation's cultural life for some time to come. Crean as arts Minister drove that policy. It is clear how much he shaped the Federal policy that is now unfolding. New South Wales Government policy will also be heavily influenced by his work. I thank him for his role as arts Minister. Only eight days later, on 21 March 2013, he was no longer a Minister after issues in the party came to a head. That was his first time on the backbench; he had never served on the backbench as a parliamentarian up until then.

I came across him when he was the education Minister. At the time I was the president of the National Union of Students, and I led a series of student strikes and direct attacks on the policy of the Government and on the Minister. He took those with great forbearance. He was a model Minister in that regard, and I thank him for that, given the enthusiasm with which I approached that task. It is very rare to have someone who—apart from that short time on the backbench—served at the most senior level of the union movement, the Parliament and our national life all his life. That really marks him as a leader for the country.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (15:30):** I make a brief contribution to this motion and offer my condolences to Mr Crean's family and loved ones. I am sure this is a very challenging time for them. Like all members, I was shocked to read the news that he had passed away. I looked through some social media and one of my Federal colleagues, Michael McCormack, the member for Riverina, tweeted about his passing. He talked about how when he was an Opposition backbencher in 2010 the advice and assistance that was given to him by Mr Crean was extraordinary, even to the point where he offered to help Michael's daughter when she moved to Melbourne, which was interesting. That stood out to me because it is one thing for members in your own party to say lovely things about you, but may we all aspire to members on the other side noticing great things about us, particularly our integrity and character. On behalf of the National Party, I offer my condolences to his wife and family at what I am sure is an incredibly distressing and upsetting time for them.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA (15:31):** In reply: I thank the Hon. Greg Donnelly, the Hon. Tara Moriarty, the Hon. Cameron Murphy, the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine and the Hon. John Graham for their contributions. Whether as a union official, Labor leader or Cabinet Minister, Simon Crean's determination, decency, integrity and commitment to the national interest was always acknowledged and respected, and his desire to make Australia a more prosperous nation never waned. I particularly acknowledge the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones and the Hon. Sarah Mitchell for their gracious words. They showed a true mark of respect from across the aisle, with which he would have been most pleased.

**The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose):** The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Members and officers of the House stood as a mark of respect.*

*Documents*

**NSW GENERATIONS FUND**

**Production of Documents: Order**

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (15:33):** I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 21 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents, created since 25 March 2023, in the possession, custody or control of the Premier, Treasurer, Minister for Finance and Minister for Natural Resources, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, or Treasury relating to the NSW Generations Fund:

- (a) all documents relating to future contributions by the Government into the NSW Generations Fund; and
- (b) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

I move this important call for papers to give the people of New South Wales the clarity they deserve. This motion is in direct response to the claims made by the Treasurer in last week's abysmal economic statement that the former New South Wales Government was planning to borrow money to invest in the NSW Generations Fund [NGF]. The Treasurer said:

I was told that the previous Government intended to raise \$25.3 billion of debt to deposit into the Debt Retirement Fund. That money would go towards buying foreign and domestic stocks and bonds.

He then went on to say:

Simply put, New South Wales would play around in financial markets using its credit card.

This claim was repeated in the media in the week preceding the statement. It is simply astounding because it is a blatant mischaracterisation of what the actual policy relating to the NGF is. Contributions into the NGF are made up of the proceeds of asset recycling—transactions like the sale of WestConnex—and the proceeds from mining royalties and State-owned corporation dividends, not borrowed money. Furthermore, in August 2021 the former Treasurer announced that contributions to the NGF would be paused in light of the COVID pandemic. Following that, the position was adopted that contributions would not be made while the State was in a cash-operating deficit. Contributions were then scheduled to recommence when the budget was expected to return to surplus in 2024-25.

The NGF was established by the former Coalition Government as a responsible way to manage the State's debt obligations to ease the burden of the State's debt on future generations by setting funds aside, which is an important factor in maintaining a triple-A credit rating. It is about investing surplus funds to deliver value for future generations. The fund is responsibly managed by TCorp in a competitive way. I note that the Treasurer has had a long-term obsession with the NGF and has taken great interest in the fund, along with a close associate of his in the media. The Treasurer was incredibly fond of calling for papers under Standing Order 52 just a few short months ago, so I am sure he is fond of this one. He ably built up the Mookhey wing with his collection of papers. The test for him today is whether he remains a principled individual committed to transparency and accountability by supporting this motion.

I would think that this motion presents very little risk for the Treasurer. If he is confident in his claim that borrowings were made specifically for the purpose of making contributions to the NGF, then show us the receipts. He can support this motion and provide the papers to the House. Failure to do so would be nothing short of an admission that he was being far too clever by half in trying to misdirect taxpayers and the commentariat in his statement last week. It would expose the sleight-of-hand manoeuvres he is attempting to pull off to prepare the ground for a budget filled with broken promises and shortcomings. I encourage all members of this place, in the interest of transparency and in the lead-up to the September budget, to support the motion.

Many members to date have thought it is not yet time to support orders for papers in this House and that this Government needs more time before being held accountable. Now is the time. In that vein, I remind members that we have an important scrutiny function to exercise. Last week's economic statement warrants further scrutiny by assessing the evidence base that supports the claims being made by the Treasurer. Further, with the advent of the Standing Committee on State Development's inquiry into the future role of the NGF, it would be prudent for members to familiarise themselves with information about the NGF to better assess the future strategy for the fund. With those few remarks, I encourage members to support this order for papers. I am sure that I will have the support of the Treasurer.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (15:37):** I contribute to debate and outline the Government's position on this motion. With respect, the shadow Treasurer made some good arguments. He is quite right in saying that the NGF deserves more scrutiny, the previous Government's plan deserves more scrutiny

and the House should heavily engage in this matter. Incidentally, that is what I said in my economic statement. I made the point that the NGF deserves far more scrutiny than it has gotten. In that respect, I confirm that the Government has gone better than a Standing Order 52 motion: It has set up an inquiry. We have referred this matter to an inquiry of this House. I make clear that the Government is cooperating with that inquiry and will provide a lot of the information and documents it received to that inquiry to be tested, reviewed and questioned. I believe that I have been invited to appear before the committee. I am looking forward to appearing and taking questions.

**The Hon. Damien Tudehope:** So am I.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** I know you are. I look forward to it. It is about time that the Hon. Damien Tudehope gets his revenge on me. I had four years. It has been seven question times since I have been asked a question from the Opposition, so I look forward to the inquiry and answering questions. Therefore, it is premature to trigger a call for papers when the Government has indicated its willingness to share documents through the inquiry. That is what we will do. In respect of the one point of substance that the shadow Treasurer made about his previous Government's policy around whether or not this was borrowing, I look forward to explaining at length to the inquiry accounting treatments, how to define surpluses and all the wonderful technical stuff that everyone loves to hear from me in that respect.

With the indulgence of the House, I seek an extension of 45 seconds.

**Leave granted.**

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** When the shadow Treasurer explained that his former Government's policy was to make deposits when there was an operating surplus or budget surplus, that was incorrect. That was not the Government's policy. It was to put deposits in when there was a cash surplus. There is a significant difference between the two. We are talking about a difference to the tune of \$15 billion or \$20 billion. It is not a small distinction. That is what it comes down to. That will be a key question of the inquiry. Every other State jurisdiction uses its cash surplus to reduce the borrowing on its capital programs, but New South Wales is not doing that because of the settings we inherited. That is why the gross debt has grown to \$188 billion.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (15:40):** The Greens do not support the order for papers under Standing Order 52. I will address some of the comments made by the mover of the motion. I would love to know who the members are who do not support calls for papers under Standing Order 52 because they are not yet ready to hold the Government to account. That is certainly not the view of The Greens. Our view is that we will support an order for papers under Standing Order 52 if it has merit. Every time I respond to these motions I tell the Opposition what it must do to make such an order with merit, but it refuses to do that.

Again, the motion is all about what the Government is about to do. It is not looking back over the 12 years of the former Government. From The Greens' perspective—and because we are not in alliance with any other political party—accountability means that we want to know the whole story. Perhaps if an order under Standing Order 52 had come before us that sought additional documents on what the former finance Minister or Treasurer did in relation to the fund—which, on its face, looks incredibly dubious—I would have loved to have seen that in advance of the excellent inquiry that we are about to hold into the fund. I will participate in that inquiry, and I am very excited to do so because I have followed the issue closely. On the face of it, the fund looks very much like another one of those accounting schemes that was all about making the budget look good without providing any substantial, tangible improvement.

If we were to seek papers from the past on what the former Government was doing—that is, the Hon. Damien Tudehope's former Government—sure. But that is not what this order for papers is about. This is saying "all documents relating to future contributions". It is all future-looking. Newsflash: The Treasurer stood up and said very clearly that we are holding an inquiry so that we can all understand it better. In that way we can come together to work out how to fix this mess, and then we will work out the future contributions—thanks very much. Pay attention, put forward a motion under Standing Order 52 that has merit and then The Greens may be inclined to support it.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (15:43):** One Nation supports the call for papers under Standing Order 52. We consider ourselves enablers of the Mookhey wing. We gave him the library card that he used to borrow all the books he put in that wing. We did that for reasons of accountability and transparency. We have always held, and we will always hold, the consistent position that it is the duty of this House, as well as our party, to hold the government of the day to account. I do not want to put words in the Treasurer's mouth, so I will stand corrected, but the assertion was that the former Government borrowed money to invest in the Generations Fund. The former finance Minister and former Leader of the Government in this House said that that was not correct. Clearly, there is a dispute.

By enabling the Chamber to have access to the papers, we can find out where the truth lies. That is the role of every member of this House. That is One Nation's position. I note the Treasurer said that there will be a committee inquiry, but in my experience over the past four years we have always used papers accessed under Standing Order 52 in those committee hearings in order to further enlighten those inquiries. That art was exploited perfectly by the now Treasurer.

**The Hon. Daniel Mookhey:** Perfected.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** No, I said exploited perfectly. You did it perfectly. For that reason the same rule should apply, no matter who is in government. For that reason One Nation supports the motion.

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (15:45):** I oppose the motion of the Hon. Damien Tudehope for the following reasons. Firstly, as Ms Abigail Boyd pointed out, in substance the motion is disingenuous because it does not seek to find out how we got here or reveal how the NSW Generations Fund operates; it seeks a gotcha moment in an attempt to have a shot at a brand new Government that is not 100 days old. The Opposition would be better served developing policies and working with the Government in good faith to fix some of the substantial challenges the State faces—economically, socially and environmentally.

We are 100 million miles away from the next election and the Opposition is probably a generation away from returning to government, yet it is trying to get a gotcha moment and a by-line in *The Daily Telegraph* about some faux scandal. Rather than doing that, the Opposition should reflect and have a bit of "me time" to work out how it got to where it is: in opposition. It is a dark time for the Opposition—and I know. I spent a lot of time on the Opposition benches, as it were. But it is a time to reflect and come up with ideas.

Secondly, the Treasurer has already acted in this place by requesting an inquiry by the Standing Committee on State Development. That is an appropriate course of action. It is hardly the act of someone who is not transparent about or open to discourse on the fund, either in this place or in public. Going forward, we will see what is on the table, but we will also see how we reached this situation. The Premier and the Treasurer have raised significant issues. In terms of the principle of Standing Order 52, I am a good-faith actor. I will work with the Government on its protocols for Standing Order 52. As the Special Minister of State has said, it is a good principle for the Government and crossbench to create a relationship. I am cautious about that support. Standing Order 52 is very important. But I am working collaboratively and in good faith. For those reasons I do not support the motion.

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (15:48):** In reply: I acknowledge the contribution made by the Treasurer. Today he made an admission that he has no commitment to ensuring that there is transparency around the media campaign he ran that sought to undermine the NSW Generations Fund. The failure of the Government to cooperate by producing the papers undermines the very committee of which Jeremy Buckingham is chair.

**The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham:** The honourable.

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE:** I acknowledge that he is the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham. But it undermines the principle of having a clear inquiry when the Treasurer will not supply those papers to the House. As the Hon. Rod Roberts said, an efficacious inquiry requires the material be made available in order to ensure that the evidence of witnesses who appear before an inquiry is properly tested against the background of Government documents. In terms of a principle of transparency, I would have thought that was self-evident. But they walk away from that situation and say, "No, we will give them a chance." But the chance should be to ensure proper inquiries that have well-educated members and that are supported by documentation that the Government relies upon for the purposes of making its submissions.

For Ms Abigail Boyd to say that the House must fulfil some sort of criteria established by her to ensure that there are backward-looking documents as well as forward-looking documents ignores the point that she should be focused on: making sure that the way we do things is transparent. I thank the Hon. Rod Roberts for his assessment of the Treasurer's performances in estimates hearings of perfecting the manner in which witnesses were cross-examined based on the use of orders for documents for the purposes of ascertaining the veracity of evidence given by witnesses and establishing pitfalls and weaknesses. I encourage members to support the motion. The House is at its best if it supports the motion; it is at its worst if it does not.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....15  
 Noes .....21  
 Majority.....6

## AYES

Carter	Merton	Roberts
Fang (teller)	Mihailuk	Ruddick
Farraway	Mitchell	Taylor
MacDonald	Munro	Tudehope
Maclaren-Jones	Rath (teller)	Ward

## NOES

Banasiak	Faehrmann	Mookhey
Borsak	Graham	Moriarty
Boyd	Higginson	Murphy (teller)
Buckingham	Hurst	Nanva (teller)
Cohn	Jackson	Primrose
D'Adam	Kaine	Sharpe
Donnelly	Lawrence	Suvaal

## PAIRS

Farlow	Houssos
Martin	Buttigieg

**Motion negatived.**

*Motions***GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK**

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (15:58):** I seek leave to amend private members' business item No. 213 for today of which I have given notice by omitting paragraph 3 (a).

**Leave granted.**

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM:** Accordingly, I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) the Government has committed to the creation of the Great Koala National Park [GKNP] on the mid North Coast of New South Wales;
  - (b) all peak New South Wales conservation non-government organisations and 13 community conservation groups are seeking the gazettal of the GKNP on the New South Wales mid North Coast;
  - (c) the Commonwealth Government listed the koala as endangered for the first time last year, and that fewer than 100,000 individual animals are thought to live in the wild;
  - (d) despite a common misconception that koalas get "stoned" or "high" on eucalyptus leaves they do not, according to the Australian Koala Foundation, rather, koalas need more sleep than most animals because eucalyptus leaves contain toxins and are very low in nutrition and high in fibrous matter so they take a large amount of energy to digest, and sleeping for long periods is a strategy for conserving energy;
  - (e) the proposed GKNP area is home to an estimated 20 per cent of the world's koala population;
  - (f) the creation of the GKNP requires a just and fair transition out of native forest logging for affected workers and communities;
  - (g) according to a report by Deloitte or MTPConnect dated October 21 and commissioned for the Federal Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, Australia's medicinal cannabis manufacturing industry realised revenues of approximately \$31.2 million in 2020-21 and provided employment to nearly 1,500 workers;
  - (h) by 2025-26, the number of Australians employed in the industry is expected to have risen to approximately 2,000 workers;
  - (i) the cannabis industry employs 420,000 people in the United States of America and 100,000 people in Canada;
  - (j) Victoria has developed and is implementing its Medicinal Cannabis Industry Plan 2018-2021;
  - (k) New South Wales does not have a cannabis industry development plan;
  - (l) the NSW Department of Primary Industries described industrial and medicinal hemp as a "green environmentally friendly crop as it requires less irrigation water and use of agricultural chemicals than other fibre crops";
  - (m) industrial hemp is fast growing and able to complement or replace wood in paper, plastics, building materials and other manufacturing; and

- (n) the mid North Coast, North Coast and Northern Tablelands have excellent climatic conditions for cannabis, existing and thriving horticultural sectors with associated skills and training programs, government and agency support, logistics and infrastructure and knowledge base.
- (2) That this House commends the Government for its commitment to the creation of the Great Koala National Park.
- (3) That this House calls on the Government to:
  - (a) gazette the Great Koala National Park as soon as possible;
  - (b) continue to involve First Nations Gumbaynggirr, Dughutti and Yaegl nations;
  - (c) implement appropriate transition measures for affected timber workers and communities; and
  - (d) consider, as a transition measure, the development and implementation of a New South Wales cannabis industry development plan and industry assistance for industrial hemp, medicinal hemp and medicinal cannabis focused on the mid North Coast, Northern Tablelands and North Coast regions of New South Wales. It is absolutely fantastic that New South Wales has a government committed to the Great Koala National Park, which is going to be an ecological and biodiversity jewel and an asset for the entire planet. Preserving the forest ecosystems on the mid North Coast is important not only for koalas but also for the innumerable other species that live in them. For members who do not know, I live in that ecosystem, as it were, on the edge of the Pine Creek State Forest and the Bongil Bongil National Park. It is an amazing place where within 100 kilometres there is a multitude of ecotones, from subtropical to temperate and even alpine ascending the escarpment and gully to Ebor. It is an absolutely incredible part of the world, so it is fantastic that the Government is creating the Great Koala National Park there.

As the motion sets out, koalas are under threat. A key threat to their reduced numbers is the logging of forests and—as I will put on record again and again in this place—invasive species, such as dogs, cats, pigs and foxes. On my 10-acre remnant rainforest property the koalas have been driven away, not by me and my landcare efforts but by neighbours' dogs.

**The Hon. Cameron Murphy:** You forgot Liberals and The Nationals.

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM:** The Nationals, that is right. It is incumbent on the Parliament to create a just transition for workers moving out of the logging industry, which is what my motion is all about. Some people might think that a cannabis industry is pie in the sky—a pipedream, as it were. But a medicinal cannabis industry is a solution to the transition from forestry to other industries. It is a serious and growing industry that employs hundreds of thousands in the United States and Canada. Already thousands are employed in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, and that number is growing. The industry can be cut and pasted into the mid North Coast, the North Coast and the Northern Tablelands.

But it is already there. I visited Cymra Life Sciences at Alstonville, which employs 36 people, makes \$4 million in turnover and grows 4,000 square metres of fantastic high-quality organic indoor cannabis. It is absolutely the best cannabis in the world. I highly recommend banana OG! It is absolutely fantastic. People all over the world cannot get enough of the hybrids, the plant breeding, the patents and the intellectual property coming out of the cannabis industry. People think that cannabis is just some hippies up in the hills growing some weed. It is, but it is also a massively complex job-creating and economy-stimulating industry, which is what the motion is about. The Coffs Harbour, Grafton, Taree and North Coast regions are the perfect place for it. There is already a massive horticulture sector there. I note that 700 workers are employed in the timber and forestry industries in the six local government areas on the North Coast. Workers in those good jobs have created the building materials that we need, but they need to transition. There are already 2,000 jobs in the horticulture industry in those areas.

I call on the Government to develop and support a cannabis industry policy that is focused on creating a totally legal cannabis industry, including for medicinal cannabis. Victoria is already doing it. The Government should create jobs in the industry on the North Coast as part of a transition away from logging. A lot of the timber workers on the North Coast love cannabis and support the industry. A lot of them are growing it in the State forests. The Government should legalise cannabis, create a plan for the industry and make sure that there is a just transition as the Great Koala National Park is created. I commend the motion to the House.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST (16:04):** On behalf of the Animal Justice Party, I speak to this very creative motion moved by the Legalise Cannabis Party. The Animal Justice Party strongly supports the creation of the Great Koala National Park. It is imperative that the new Labor Government gets on with that very urgent task. Koalas in New South Wales have been a political punching bag for many years. They are hurtling towards extinction unless major action is taken to protect them and their critical native habitat. This morning I was proud to stand with an alliance of animal and environmental protection groups calling for the urgent implementation of the Great Koala National Park. They know that this important project cannot wait.

Alongside the Great Koala National Park, it is important to shift away from native forest logging as soon as possible. It is simply nonsensical to allow any further logging of our native forests and cause further loss of biodiversity, destruction and fragmentation of animal habitat. There is no economic justification to keep the

industry going, as Forestry Corporation of NSW is losing taxpayers' money on its native logging operations and 90 per cent of the State's timber products already come from plantations. The Animal Justice Party supports a just transition out of native forest logging for affected workers and communities, whatever that looks like—whether that is through a compensation package, as has occurred in Victoria, as the member is suggesting—and the measures in the motion are potentially a good opportunity. A move into the hemp industry is a good move. However it happens, we must act now before it is too late to save the koalas and the other animals who call our native forests home.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON (16:06):** I speak in support of the motion of the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham, which is good from start to finish. It should be supported by the Government as a reasonable and well-justified call to take the necessary action. As a farmer, I have grown industrial hemp, which is the other side of the incredible alternative industries that are offered in the Northern Rivers. The creation of the Great Koala National Park should be celebrated. Everybody is so pleased that the Government has committed \$80 million to it. The fact that the Great Koala National Park is still being logged is socially, economically and environmentally untenable. Those forests are home to around 20 per cent of the State's wild koala populations. It is imperative that we stop logging their habitat right now. Everybody is behind the Government taking these bold and quick steps.

**The Hon. Mark Banasiak:** That is misleading the House.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** I apologise. I know everybody except some members on the other side of this House is behind the Government creating the Great Koala National Park. This morning many people from the community came to the Parliament. They are standing behind the Government but asking, "Can we speed up? Can we please hurry up? Can we get those industrial-scale machines out of those precious ancient native forests, because they are suffering and they are in ill health?" The koalas need those machines out and the trees need to stay standing.

The best thing we can do is support the workers by backing them and being honest and open with them. Let us get them on the journey out of our precious public native forests and start the regenerative work and the alternative industries. The community has done the work on the costs. It has been on the table for a decade. Let us get those machines out and get on with protecting koalas by creating the Great Koala National Park. I thank the member for moving the motion. Let us also bring on the incredible medicinal and industrial hemp industries. As The Greens have been saying for the past 30 years, hemp is part of the future. [*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (16:09):** The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party obviously does not support the motion. It is probably one of the only parties in this place that has been quite open about not supporting the Great Koala National Park. If members look at the spatial mapping, which I raised previously in this place, it shows that we do not need to gazette a national park to achieve the objectives. There are corridors for native wildlife. I said in this place earlier that I felt like it was freaky Friday, but I have been snapped back into reality and I am firmly assured that it is whacky Wednesday.

I correct the record regarding a statement made by the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham about 700 North Coast jobs. That is misleading because there may be 700 jobs in the Forestry Corporation but there are over 5,900 jobs invested in the hardwood sector just in that area alone, and more across the State. We cannot say it is only 700 jobs; it is much more than that. Regarding a transition phase, if we are going to go down that route we need to look at the mistakes that have been made in Victoria in underdoing that—not that the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party would support it. I do not think it can be fixed with Cheech and Chong economics or by transitioning all the hardwood foresters into hemp farmers either.

**The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham:** That was a zinger.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** I think the honourable member has been watching a little bit too much of *Pineapple Express* when developing this motion. I am open to his suggestion that the House look at hemp farming. I am open to him bringing it to Portfolio Committee No. 4 - Regional NSW, which I chair. That is an option if he wants an inquiry. I am more than happy to look at that. As to it being the sole solution to transitioning 5,900 jobs, the member might have inhaled a bit of stuff downwind from a crop burn.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY (16:11):** On behalf of the Opposition I oppose the motion and respond to some of the comments made by members. I agree there is probably a bit of whacky Wednesday with this motion. The mover referred to parts of it being a pipedream and to misconceptions that sleepy koalas are stoned on eucalyptus leaves. In all seriousness, the motion has some well-meaning aspects, but I raise the significant risk of them causing more harm than good.

I acknowledge that the original motion has been amended. Firstly, suspending native forestry—I know that aspect was amended—sounds like an attractive notion because we need to preserve our heritage and protect our wildlife, particularly koalas, which are mentioned in the motion. But at the same time we must consider the wider

implications. Our forestry industry is not all about cutting down trees. It also entails a responsibility to manage our forests sustainably. We have developed an industry capable of balancing resource extraction with the regeneration of crucial ecosystems. Simply stopping those operations could lead to unanticipated consequences such as fire risks, pest problems and in many ways—from some very quick research—an overall decline in forest health.

My second point is about the gazetting of the Great Koala National Park. While preserving our wildlife is critical, we need to ensure that we do it in a way that considers the socio-economic implications. People in that region have lived and worked there for generations. We must avoid decisions that impose drastic changes on those communities without proper consultation, planning and adequate consideration of all potential impacts. My third point is about transitioning timber workers and communities to other industries. It sounds like a feasible solution; however, the reality is far more complex. People associated with the industry on the mid North Coast tell me that jobs in the industry cannot just be swapped directly for jobs in another sector.

Many of the livelihoods of the people who we are talking about are built upon years of skill development in that industry. It is not just about employment; those industries, particularly on the mid North Coast, are part of the cultural fabric of the region and of people's identities. I recognise some of the good intentions as well as some of the whacky parts of the motion. The Opposition does not support it. We should all strive for some balance in protecting our environment, but let us do it in a way that includes safeguards for our communities, our workers and our country way of life, and let us look at sustainable development.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (16:14):** On behalf of the Government I make a contribution to the motion about the Great Koala National Park and a cannabis industry development plan. I thank the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham for his thoughtful contribution on those subjects. Sometimes it might have been a little bit whacky, but the points he raises are very important. The single biggest environmental commitment that Labor took to the election was the creation of a Great Koala National Park. Long before the election and ever since, we have been extremely explicit about the way that we would do that. We were clear that we would establish a process, which we are currently doing—more information about that is coming soon—that will involve all of the impacted stakeholders. We were clear that we would do a proper economic analysis.

There are no agreed facts in this debate. We have consultants at 100 paces with a whole range of different information, and the only way to seriously deal with it is to work through the process in a methodical way. That is what we will do. The creation of a Great Koala National Park as soon as possible is an extremely important commitment, but we will do that work properly. As I said, we will take the time to work with a consultation process that includes conservationists, the forest industry and its workers, First Nations people, community groups and scientists. The environment faces a range of challenges, as does the timber industry. All members who have sat in this place for a time know that we have real challenges that we must take seriously. We have been clear in saying that we will not implement a moratorium in relation to forestry at this point. That is absolutely our commitment, because we need to work through the process.

I raise the issue of the gathering today. Some people came who I deeply respect and who I have worked with for over a decade in conservation work to save koalas. I was extremely disappointed that I was not invited to today's event and that no-one even sought a meeting with me before fronting the media. We need to work in collaboration. For the person who has committed to creating this park not to be invited to the press conference and not to be sought out for a meeting is a real problem. We could have talked through a lot more of the detail regarding the moratorium issue. The NSW Environment Protection Authority is monitoring all native forestry operations as we work through the park creation process. We need to be clear that plantation forests will be harvested. That is the point of plantation forests; it is why they have been growing for 30 years waiting to be harvested. We are working closely with the Forestry Corporation on the precautionary principle as we move through the process as soon as possible.

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (16:17):** In reply: I thank all honourable members for their contributions. I thank the Minister for her contribution. As the decision-maker and the person who has put this issue on the agenda, she is concerned that everyone works with all stakeholders to build consensus. I share that concern. We need to recognise that our State's great national park estate has been created through the work of the community and also that the decisions to create it have been made by Labor environment Ministers: Bob Carr, Pam Allan, Bob Debus and now this Minister who is charting a path to create a massive asset for this State. I thank her for her support and look forward to working with her and other Ministers on creating a just transition for the community where I live.

My son was a timber worker. I understand the timber industry's importance to the economy, but I also understand that we have to make a transition. I thank the Hon. Emma Hurst and Ms Sue Higginson for their contributions. I note some of the criticisms. Some members talked about cannabis being whacky. That is a trope—

a tired stereotype. In the next 10 years cannabis will be a global industry in this country as big as the alcohol industry. In the United States, it is already becoming bigger than alcohol—cannabis is worth \$100 billion to its GDP. It is going to be a trillion-dollar industry in a generation, and New South Wales has its head in the sand and is missing the opportunity—to create the jobs, the medicine and the safe industry—that other people are grasping.

It is disappointing that the National Party relies on those tropes. It does not recognise the opportunity, unlike the member for Northern Tablelands, Adam Marshall, who would welcome a medicinal cannabis industry in his area. I wonder what the member for Coffs Harbour, Gurmesh Singh, thinks? I bet his constituents in the blueberry industry would welcome it with open arms. They have the skills, the knowledge and the climate. We have the infrastructure. It is a cut-and-paste proposition. No other industry offers the opportunity to transition those forestry workers into a like industry the way that medicinal cannabis could. I urge honourable members to take the motion seriously. I may have been joking around but the issue is serious. We need a just transition.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....19  
Noes .....16  
Majority.....3

**AYES**

Boyd	Higginson	Moriarty
Buckingham (teller)	Houssos	Murphy
Buttigieg	Hurst	Nanva
Cohn	Kaine	Primrose
D'Adam	Lawrence	Sharpe
Faehrmann (teller)	Mookhey	Suvaal
Graham		

**NOES**

Banasiak	Maclaren-Jones	Rath (teller)
Borsak	Merton	Roberts
Carter	Mihailuk	Taylor
Fang (teller)	Mitchell	Tudehope
Farroway	Munro	Ward
MacDonald		

**PAIRS**

Donnelly	Martin
Jackson	Farlow

**Motion agreed to.**

**REGIONAL SENIORS TRAVEL CARD**

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY (16:29):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) the regional seniors travel card was rolled out by the former Coalition Government in 2020 to acknowledge that seniors in regional New South Wales have greater distances to travel and do not have the same level of access to public transport;
  - (b) the regional seniors travel card was expanded in 2022 by the former Coalition Government to include eligible seniors who are carers and those with disabilities;
  - (c) since 2020, more than one million cards have been issued, helping seniors maintain their independence by easing the cost of travel; and
  - (d) the regional seniors travel card has injected more than \$196 million into the New South Wales economy.
- (2) That this House calls on the Minns Labor Government to do the right thing and continue funding the \$250 regional seniors travel card in the September Budget.

The regional seniors travel card was introduced by the former Liberal-Nationals Government in 2020 to acknowledge that seniors in regional New South Wales have greater distances to travel and do not have the same

level of access to public transport. The numbers really do speak for themselves. In the first three years of this program we saw in excess of a million cards issued to seniors in regional New South Wales. Up until March of this year, before the change of government, we saw in excess of 300,000 cards issued just in the first quarter. That is in excess of 1.3 million cards issued to seniors across regional New South Wales. During the course of this program the former Government also expanded it through to some veterans, carers and those on the disability support pension. We had direct feedback throughout about the success of that program and its importance.

Today I bring this motion to the House because the New South Wales Minns Labor Government has refused to commit funding for the regional seniors travel card in the upcoming budget. Instead it finds a way to accuse regional seniors of doing the wrong thing, despite over 90 per cent of spending on the regional seniors card being used to purchase fuel. I remember those statistics from when I was the Minister. Over 90 per cent of that card was modelled by Transport for NSW to be spent on fuel. The Liberals and Nationals have had to stand up for regional seniors and start a petition to lobby the Treasurer to make sure that he finds the cash for the September budget.

Seniors in regional New South Wales are not happy with the Premier or this Government. This program should be beyond politics. It is a program that works. It has injected over \$196 million back into the New South Wales economy through things such as pre-booked NSW TrainLink services. It supports taxi operators across this State. It supports community transport operators, particularly in regional areas where they have greater distances to travel. There is a holistic reinvestment of these funds back into this economy, supporting our seniors across the bush in the middle of what the Government states—and I agree—is a cost-of-living crisis.

I am perplexed as to why the Government would cut a successful program that is accepted by the community. Again, the numbers speak for themselves. I acknowledge that clearly there are some regional MPs who do sit in the Labor Party caucus. But at the end of the day, that caucus is dominated by Sydney-based members of Parliament. I believe the Labor Government is putting Sydney before regional seniors. It should not be up to Opposition members to have to do these petitions. This is a program that works. It reinvests in our State. Nevertheless the petition is out there. I encourage all members in this Chamber to visit [savethetravelcard.com.au](http://savethetravelcard.com.au). We will run this petition up until the budget and I will do my best to convince the Treasurer that he needs to find that money in the budget.

I recall many letters I received in my time as Minister—and the previous regional transport Ministers would say the same—from Labor MPs who wanted their local government areas, which were actually defined as being in Greater Sydney, to be a part of the regional seniors travel card. I think it is a bit disingenuous for Government MPs to be out there trying to slash and burn or the finance Minister getting a laser cutter out to these travel cards when in fact some of the Government's very own MPs supported this policy when in opposition. Even the now Minister for Regional Transport and Roads loved it. She promoted it on her Facebook page in Maitland on 24 January. In the lead-up to the election she was promoting successful policies and programs by the Liberal-Nationals Government yet she is obviously part of the razor gang and the laser cutters who now want to cut it. Again I say that the New South Wales Labor Government is putting Sydney in front of regional seniors.

**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) (16:35):** Firstly, I indicate on behalf of the Government that amendments to this motion will be moved. One will be moved by the Government and I understand another will be moved; my colleagues will refer to those. Of course the Government recognises that there is some value in this card. But the real question for the shadow Minister is: If he is such an advocate now, why did his Government not fund it? That is the issue.

**The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose):** I remind the Hon. Wes Fang that he is on two calls to order.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM:** We have seen this issue of the fiscal cliff that was left with not just this program but a number of other programs. Having lost the argument when he was in government, he now wants to re-prosecute it. That is fine, but the startling facts that have come to light about the administration of this program are deeply concerning. The new Minister has exposed how they operate on one of these other cards, and we have the same problems with the administration of this card. *The Daily Telegraph* took this card out and found:

The card ... worked to buy a 20 packet of Holiday Crush cigarettes for \$32 at one service station.

**The Hon. Sam Farraway:** That's not the seniors card. You're misleading Parliament.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM:** It went on:

At another, the card worked to buy a \$33 pack of Bond Street classics, a strawberry doughnut and a can of Mother energy drink.

**The Hon. Sam Farraway:** Point of order: I ask the—

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM:** I referred to both cards. You misheard me.

**The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose):** What is the member's point of order?

**The Hon. Sam Farroway:** I ask that the Minister for Roads not mislead the House. When referring to *The Daily Telegraph*, refer to it correctly.

**The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose):** Order! That is a debating point, not a point of order.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM:** For the benefit of the member, I made the point to note that was about the other card. This card suffers the same deficiencies. Here they are with an energy drink, a strawberry doughnut, cigarettes—these things could kill you!

**The Hon. Sam Farroway:** Point of order: It is unparliamentary, is it not, to be using props? He is waving around a newspaper article.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM:** I will put the prop down.

**The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose):** I saw no prop. The Minister may proceed.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM:** I simply make the point that these things could kill you—and I am talking here about the strawberry doughnut! Such was the administration of this program under the former Government that you can wander into any service station with these cards and get yourself a feed full of strawberry doughnuts. To hear the shadow Minister say he was aware that 10 per cent of more than \$400 million was being wasted in this way—

**The Hon. Sam Farroway:** Point of order: The Minister is misquoting what I said in my contribution.

**The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose):** There is no point of order. The member has the right of reply.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM:** Some \$40 million of strawberry doughnuts were going out the door under his watch. He has some questions to answer about this program. That is what I am hearing as he speaks to this. The Government rests.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (16:38):** One Nation supports the motion. Again, it is because of this divide between the bush and the city. As you know, Mr Assistant President, I live in Goulburn. Unfortunately I am an elderly person myself. In another couple of years when I retire from this place, I hope to be in receipt of the seniors travel card. In all seriousness, Goulburn has no metros or government buses. We have no trains like they have in Sydney. We have no ferries and we have no Ubers. Elderly people rely on these travel vouchers to help them get about the State. We do not have a big bank of specialists in Goulburn. Every time an elderly person needs to seek medical attention they have to travel to either Bowral or Canberra, which costs money. They cannot jump on the bus or train. They need to drive or make some alternative arrangements.

It is a sad fact of life that a lot of young people leave regional areas and move to the city, so our elderly people have no family networks to turn to for support. When they want to visit their family, they have to leave the country and travel to the city. They cannot afford to do this during a cost-of-living crisis. I hear the Minister's argument, and I do not know whether it is right or not. He said it is not funded going forward. I hear the Hon. Sam Farroway say it was funded. I do not care if it was funded going forward or not. This is a damn good idea and it needs to be funded by the current Government. It is no good saying what the other mob did. Labor is now in charge. It has hold of the steering wheel and it can drive this.

This is extremely important for people who live in the bush. You will not hear me stand up here and support the Creative Kids vouchers: Buy a bloody crayon and get some butchers paper if you want to be creative. You will not hear me say anything about the Active Kids vouchers: Take your kids for a lap around the block, buy a soccer ball and kick it around, or take them flying a kite like we did when we were kids. But this is an important initiative that needs to be retained and supported because there is a definite need for it. One Nation will support the motion.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (16:40):** I speak in strong support of the motion moved by my colleague the Hon. Sam Farroway. I start by quoting one of the smartest people I know, which is my five-year-old daughter, Matilda. Quite randomly—out of the blue—she said to me one day when we were driving along a bumpy road, "Mum, this is Labor's fault because they only care about Sydney." I am worried she has been listening to me on the phone a little too much over the past few years. However, I will use Matilda's wise words in this debate because, as the Hon. Rod Roberts said, this is a classic example of regional seniors being discriminated against by this Government. Everything that the Hon. Rod Roberts said is dead right.

As someone who lives in Gunnedah, I have the same issues. We do not have trains, Uber, ferries or access to the same levels of public transport that people do in Sydney. I know of regional seniors in my community who have found the card to be a lifesaver, literally, when they have been able to use it to get to medical appointments or when they go to get groceries—those basic things. It is a discount on their transport that, frankly, people who live in the city probably take for granted because it is always available. A senior who lives in the city can always get discounted travel support. Seniors cannot get the same thing in regional New South Wales without this card. Members opposite keep using the example of doughnuts and Mother energy drinks. If they foresee an issue with the administration of the card, there is a simple solution: make sure that there are measures in place to stop people who might be rorting the system unintentionally. Members opposite should not throw the baby out with the bathwater and take the card away from everyone, including those people who have been using it for the right reasons, and discriminate against regional seniors.

The fact that we have had more than one million cards issued since 2020 tells us that people like it, people are using it and it is making a difference for our seniors when it comes to meeting cost-of-living pressures. I encourage everyone to sign the petition. People power is important, particularly when we are dealing with cost-of-living measures. This is something that The Nationals feel strongly about, and we have been elected to be a voice for regional New South Wales. It is important that the concerns and issues of our community are put on record in this place. The Government has every ability in the upcoming budget to continue the card.

I am not interested in making reflections on what we did when we were in government. We set up the card. We funded the card. Government members can now make a conscious choice in the budget to fund it, to continue it and to show their support for regional seniors. I hope the Minister for Regional New South Wales is making this point to her colleagues as she goes through the Expenditure Review Committee processes. It is her job, as the Minister, to stick up for regional seniors. If that does not happen, then I think it raises serious questions about whether she is doing what she is supposed to be doing. We support the motion. We support the card and the House should back it in.

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (16:43):** I would like to start my contribution by saying that my nine-year-old son is concerned about the rorting of the card! However, I cannot honestly say that, so I will not.

**The Hon. John Graham:** He's pro-doughnut.

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE:** He is pro-doughnut, that's true. I expected that there might be an amendment from the mover of the motion, because the Leader of The Nationals, the member for Dubbo in the other place, has said in recent days that the cards need to be reassessed. I infer he has said that in relation to the reported rorting of the cards. Notwithstanding what the member for Dubbo has said, we have seen a motion moved that is a full-throttled endorsement of a voucher system which, unfortunately, has been rorted. For this House to resolve, in a full-throttled way, to endorse a rorted system would be most unsatisfactory.

The strategy of the Opposition needs to be called out, and I have witnessed it over recent months since being elected. The strategy was to create a whole lot of voucher systems worth billions of dollars in the lead-up to the election but not to fund any of them in the forward estimates and to then turn up after losing government and argue that every single voucher system should be funded, even though it did not put any of them in the forward estimates. If the Opposition had put a certain percentage in the forward estimates or put other money aside so it could fund some of them, it might be understandable, but that has not occurred. The political strategy has to be called out. I think the comments of the member for Dubbo in the other place have to be acknowledged. He has acknowledged the problems with it. That has not happened here. Accordingly, I move:

That the question be amended by omitting paragraphs (1) and (2) and inserting instead:

That this House notes that:

- (a) the regional seniors travel card was rolled out by the former Liberal-Nationals Government in 2020; and
- (b) the regional seniors travel card was expanded in 2022 by the former Liberal-Nationals Government however it failed to fully fund the program across the forward estimates.

That, I would suggest, is an accurate motion that this House could support because it makes clear that there have been problems with rorting. It also makes clear how disingenuous it is of members opposite to continually move these motions as though they supported all of these voucher programs in a bona fide way. They did not fund them in the forward estimates.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (16:46):** I speak to the motion on behalf of The Greens. I move the following amendment:

That the question be amended as follows:

- (1) Omit paragraph (1) (d) and insert instead:

- (d) the regional seniors travel card, in its current form, allows holders to use their funds on any goods or services sold at an approved merchant including but not limited to cigarettes.
- (2) Omit paragraph (2) and insert instead:
  - (2) That this House calls on the Minns Labor Government to recognise the value of the card and tighten the card's spending criteria to only NSW TrainLink regional trains and coaches, fuel and taxis.

The Greens support means-tested support for senior people living in regional New South Wales to be able to access regional transport. We support Government assistance to support them to buy fuel and, in circumstances, to catch taxis. We know that public transport in the regions is in an absolutely appalling state. Many constituents talk to me about rail stations that have closed, buses that are no longer there and trains that are either not on time or have been cancelled.

The regional seniors travel card is important. The Greens think that it was a potentially good initiative by the Coalition when it was in government. However, the system clearly was not tight enough—we have heard those stories of strawberry doughnuts, cigarettes and everything else. But the fact is that the card has not been budgeted for in the forward estimates and the Opposition is, at this point, using this as a political stunt because it really is a policy-free zone—as we are seeing every day in this place. The Greens want to try to reach a compromise. We recognise the value of the card and ask the new Labor Government to tighten the criteria and recognise its value as well. Indeed, if it can be budgeted for and continued, that would be a fantastic outcome. I hope members will support the motion to recognise the value of the card in the first place. That would be a big step, considering the current level of debate. I commend my amendment to the House.

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR (16:49):** I contribute to debate on the motion, which is about regional people having access to a program that was working really well for them. I noticed in the contributions of those opposite the accusation that we had only introduced some of those programs just before the election, but then they contradicted that and said that some had been around since 2020. How any member who has experience in the regions could speak against this card and what it is doing is quite honestly staggering. I was a cancer nurse living in regional and rural New South Wales and patients would often say that it was so hard to afford to get to treatment. That is why we made the biggest increase to the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme that this State has ever seen. That is why local community groups raise money to help people with their transport costs. That is exactly what the regional seniors travel card did.

Members opposite have been degrading country people because of that one story about the doughnut and the drink. Is the Government saying that country people abuse the handouts that they get? That is really offensive. And guess what? People are not perfect; human beings are not perfect. People will access benefits and use them for things that perhaps they should not. But the great majority use this card for fuel. Government members are talking about someone who bought a doughnut and a drink by saying, "It's all a rort. Country people are terrible. They can't be trusted. They're just going to abuse the card." That is absolutely atrocious conversation. Country people are using the card for the greater good. I hate to disagree with the Hon. Rod Roberts, who I admire deeply, but initiatives like Creative Kids are really important to people.

**The Hon. Courtney Houssos:** All of these things that weren't funded.

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR:** Those opposite use the argument "Oh, it's not funded. Oh, you haven't funded it," but they need to wake up. They are the Government now. They can decide.

**The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose):** Members will keep it down to a dull roar.

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR:** It is a bit of a cacophony. It is unbelievable. Members opposite have to make choices about what to fund now that they are in government. If they think that the community is listening to them say, "It's unfunded," then I point out that they did not fund the pay rises that they promised at the election. Here we go again with more Labor lies and more degradation of country people and communities. They will not forget.

**The Hon. WES FANG (16:53):** I give my support to the good motion moved by the Hon. Sam Faraway. It is a good motion because it provides a choice for the Government. Labor was elected to government, and we accept that. The program that we put in place when we were in government is on the chopping block thanks to the Minister for Finance and her razor gang. This program is important to us because many metropolitan seniors have the ability to access subsidised travel that people in rural and regional communities are not able to access. The tyranny of distance is much greater felt by those seniors who live west of the Great Dividing Range. There is no question about that. Seniors who live in metropolitan areas are able to catch buses, subsidised trains and ferries. The transport options available to them at subsidised rates do not exist to the people we represent.

The regional seniors travel card not only provided a little bit of relief to seniors in rural and regional communities but also provided equity. It was an opportunity for those seniors who do not live in metropolitan

areas and are not able to catch a subsidised train, ferry or bus to purchase fuel to put in the car so that they could make the trip to visit their loved ones. They could go and see the doctor or visit relatives and friends or whatever it is that they wanted to do in a way that was provided for by the Government as a cost-of-living relief measure. I note the comments made by the Hon. Stephen Lawrence suggesting that we need to reassess the card. If any reassessment of the card is necessary, it should be increased. The Government and the Minister for Finance should commit to increasing the value of the card because cost of living has gone up. The price of fuel and travel has gone up. They should increase it and back regional seniors like we did. [*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (16:56):** I support the motion moved by my colleague the Hon. Sam Farroway. The regional seniors travel card is a practical measure that really does make a difference to those who live in regional New South Wales. Whilst there are so many appealing aspects to living in the country, the long distances that one has to travel to access services are a challenge to many. The distances one may have to travel to see a doctor, for example, can pose a real financial burden on the elderly, especially as so many of the affordable public transport options that those in the city use are not available to those living regionally. The regional seniors travel card could be used at certain retailers to pay for pre-booked NSW TrainLink regional trains and coaches, fuel and taxis.

The elderly and seniors often need to see specialists and have medical appointments more frequently as they age. In New South Wales we want to see that regional living does not mean restricted living. The cost of travelling to appointments when you are no longer able to drive and public transport is not a viable option can very quickly add up. The regional seniors travel card is a great help to so many in regional New South Wales. It provides some cost-of-living relief at a time when it is sorely needed. This is a simple, practical measure that ensures we are looking after those who have contributed so much to our great State. I do not want to see those outside of the city left out or forgotten. I certainly would hate to see our seniors missing important appointments because the cost of travel is beyond their means.

With the expansion of the card in 2022 by the former Government to include eligible seniors who are carers and those with disabilities, the cards are inclusive and show government support for those who need it most. It has been disappointing to see the current Labor Government already cutting so many cost-of-living relief programs. I call on the Government to continue funding the regional seniors travel card in the September budget. It is the right thing to do for our regions and for our seniors. As a regional MLC in particular, I feel compelled to be a voice for those in the bush. Should the Coalition have been returned to government, a budget would have been done and dusted and the card would be funded. That argument does not hold water. I support the motion.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (16:59):** I support the motion simply as a matter of equity. A senior with a gold Opal card can travel as far as Wollongong by train for \$2.50. A senior in Katoomba with a gold Opal card can travel to Sydney by train, catch a ferry to the zoo and then catch a bus to Palm Beach all for \$2.50. A senior with a gold Opal card in Newcastle can get to Cronulla and back for \$2.50. There is good news for our interstate friends. If they live in Albany, the Gold Coast, Alice Springs or Adelaide, they can bring their seniors card with them when they visit New South Wales and they too can get a gold Opal and travel our entire network for \$2.50 a day.

But what are the options for someone living in the regions? Concessional rail travel is available, but they first have to get to the train. If they live in Monteagle and want to travel to Sydney by train, they have to catch a taxi to Harden station with a fare between \$130 and \$160. How accessible is that? The regional seniors travel card addresses exactly that situation. We all know that the transport network available to those who live in the city is simply not available to those who live in regional and rural areas. What this card does is help grandparents see their grandchildren. It helps patients see their doctors. It helps those on limited and fixed incomes to engage with cultural and sporting activities.

It goes some small way to redressing the balance between the city and the bush. Just because it allegedly can be used to buy strawberry doughnuts—more the breakfast of young tradies than of travelling 65-year-olds—it does not mean that it has been used in that way or is regularly used in that way. It is very disappointing to see government research and policy development apparently being outsourced to *The Daily Telegraph*. If the problem is loopholes, the Government should fix the loopholes. Good government would address administration issues rather than punishing regional seniors and reducing their travel options. I wholeheartedly support the motion.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (17:01):** As a true Coalitionist, I can say to the House that I really am a Nat.

**The Hon. Sam Farroway:** Literally—Nat's a Nat.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Literally. As a very brief Pitt Street farmer, I speak in support of the motion. This is a great initiative. It is endorsed by more than a million people who have taken it up. [*Time expired.*]

**The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose):** I welcome the family of the Hon. Rachel Merton to the gallery—her husband, Justin, and daughters Amelia and Alexandra. They are most welcome.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY (17:02):** In reply: I acknowledge and thank members from both sides of the Chamber for their contributions. I will not name them all. I have some corrections to make for members opposite. First, what members have put on display today is the great divide between the city and the bush. I say to the Hon. Stephen Lawrence that I agree with the hardworking and fantastic leader of The Nationals and local member for Dubbo that ciggies, bottles of Fanta and Coke and lollies should not be bought on the card. That was never raised with me when I was a Minister. Some members opposite have forgotten or do not realise that they are now in government. It is the Government's job to fix this problem.

It shows how out of touch this Labor Government is. We are talking about purchases at service stations. The most expensive thing at a service station is the fuel. That money on the card will be spent on fuel. What I have to say about the great divide is that it was only today that the Minister for Transport confirmed in the media that from 1 July there will be no fee increases for the Opal network in Sydney. Clearly that is indicating, "If you live in the city, there are no increases. We will continue the funding. We are all good. Keep hammering away. But if you are a regional senior who relies on a \$2.50 travel card, it is on the chopping block"—well and truly.

I say to the Hon. John Graham that from my recollection as a former Minister, 90 per cent of the regional seniors travel card was spent on fuel. The remaining 10 per cent was not spent on doughnuts. It was spent on our community transport operators and the NSW TrainLink services, and the remainder was spent on our hardworking taxi operators. The Hon. John Graham must understand that this card is well used in the bush and the money is reinvested back into our economy. This was a two-year program, which was extended for another two years. It was operational until it was cut this week by the Government. The completion of the four-year program is funded for 2023. If we had won the election I had every intention of budgeting for an extension of the program. Members opposite have forgotten that they are now in government. Where is our Treasurer? He is the one we need to talk to. We need money in the budget. The Hon. John Graham talked about doughnuts. Let us talk about doughnuts—the only thing regional seniors will get out of this lot is doughnuts! [*Time expired.*]

**The PRESIDENT:** The Hon. Sam Farraway has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Stephen Lawrence has moved an amendment, to which Ms Cate Faehrmann has moved another amendment. I propose to put the Hon. Stephen Lawrence's amendment first. If that is carried, then Ms Cate Faehrmann's amendment lapses.

**The Hon. John Graham:** Point of order: I think these two amendments could live happily side by side, but I am happy to be corrected by the Clerk.

**The PRESIDENT:** On advice from the Clerk, the question is that the amendment of the Hon. Stephen Lawrence be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....20  
Noes .....16  
Majority.....4

AYES

Boyd	Higginson	Murphy (teller)
Buckingham	Houssos	Nanva (teller)
Cohn	Hurst	Primrose
D'Adam	Kaine	Ruddick
Donnelly	Lawrence	Sharpe
Faehrmann	Mookhey	Suvaal
Graham	Moriarty	

NOES

Banasiak	Maclaren-Jones	Rath (teller)
Borsak	Merton	Roberts
Carter	Mihailuk	Taylor
Fang (teller)	Mitchell	Tudehope
Farraway	Munro	Ward
MacDonald		

## PAIRS

Buttigieg  
JacksonFarlow  
Martin**Amendment agreed to.****Ms Cate Faehrmann's amendment lapsed.****The PRESIDENT:** The question is that the motion as amended be agreed to. Is leave granted to ring the bells for one minute?**Leave not granted.****The House divided.**Ayes .....20  
Noes .....14  
Majority.....6

## AYES

Boyd  
Buckingham  
Cohn  
D'Adam  
Donnelly  
Faehrmann  
GrahamHigginson  
Houssos  
Hurst  
Kaine  
Lawrence  
Mookhey  
MoriartyMurphy (teller)  
Nanva (teller)  
Primrose  
Ruddick  
Sharpe  
Suvaal

## NOES

Carter  
Fang (teller)  
Farraway  
MacDonald  
Maclaren-JonesMerton  
Mihailuk  
Mitchell  
Munro  
Rath (teller)Roberts  
Taylor  
Tudehope  
Ward

## PAIRS

Buttigieg  
JacksonFarlow  
Martin**Motion as amended agreed to.***Visitors***VISITORS****The PRESIDENT:** I acknowledge in my gallery Dr Dale Marchant, a consultant psychiatrist in the public health system of New South Wales and the partner of Peta Waller-Bryant, who may or may not be having a very significant birthday today.*Motions***AL-NAKBAH****The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (17:23):** I seek leave to amend private members' item No. 172 by inserting in paragraph (1) (a) after "Guildford", "and organised by the United Australian Palestinian Workers and Australian Palestinian Graduates".**Leave granted.****The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Accordingly, I move:

(1) That this House notes that:

- (a) the seventy-fifth anniversary of Al-Nakbah commemoration event was held on Saturday 3 June 2023, at the Australian Palestinian Club, Guildford, and organised by the United Australian Palestinian Workers and Australian Palestinian Graduates;
- (b) the following people attended:
- (i) Mr Izzat Abdulhadi, the Head of the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific;
  - (ii) His Excellency Dr Ali Kraishan, Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Dean of the international Corps and Dean of the Council of Arab Ambassadors;
  - (iii) the Hon. Bob Carr;
  - (iv) Deputy Consul General of Ireland Adrienne Hicky;
  - (v) Mr Abdul Nazar, Consul of Information, of the Republic of Indonesia;
  - (vi) Ms Dina Nanic, representative of Consulate of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
  - (vii) the Hon. Senator David Shoebridge;
  - (viii) the Hon. Anthony D'Adam;
  - (ix) the Hon. Jihad Dib;
  - (x) Dr Hugh McDermott;
  - (xi) Mr Arthur Rorris, Secretary, South Coast Labor Council;
  - (xii) Mr Paul Keating, Secretary, Maritime Union of Australia NSW;
  - (xiii) Councillor Lisa Lake, Mayor Cumberland Council;
  - (xiv) Councillor Bilal El-Hayek, Mayor, Canterbury Bankstown Council;
  - (xv) Councillor Greta Werner;
  - (xvi) Councillor Diane Colman;
  - (xvii) Councillor Ola Hamid;
  - (xviii) Councillor Mohamad Hussein;
  - (xix) Councillor Glenn Elmore;
  - (xx) Union Aid Abroad – Apheda;
  - (xxi) Arab Australian Federation;
  - (xxii) Prof Richard Madden and Dr Ros Madden;
  - (xxiii) Prof Peter Manning;
  - (xxiv) Australian Palestinian Club;
  - (xxv) Palestinian Christians in Australia;
  - (xxvi) Australian Palestinian Seniors' Association;
  - (xxvii) General Union of Palestinian Engineers;
  - (xxviii) El Dinnieh Sons Charitable Association;
  - (xxvix) Bhanin Association;
  - (xxx) Islamic Charity Projects Association – Australia;
  - (xxxi) Bint Jbeil Association;
  - (xxxii) Al Mina Association;
  - (xxxiii) Australian Beirut Charitable Association;
  - (xxxiv) Australian Jordanian Community Association; and
  - (xxxv) Himyana Association.
- (c) the following award recipients were recognised for their achievements:
- (i) Rama Emad, HSC ATAR 99.6;
  - (ii) Milad Albadawi, HSC;
  - (iii) Omar Abu Mahmoud, HSC;
  - (iv) Adam Shockair, Bachelor of Health Science, Clinical Science (Western Sydney University);
  - (v) Nour Aychan, Bachelor of Nursing (Western Sydney University);

- (vi) Kamal Marwan Ekerawi, Bachelor of Laws (University of Technology Sydney);
  - (vii) Nour Aletah, Bachelor of Social Work (Western Sydney University);
  - (viii) Rana Judeh, Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Biomedical Engineering and Diploma in Professional Engineering Practice with First Class Honours (University of Technology Sydney);
  - (ix) Harley Sawalha, Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Laws (Honours) (Macquarie University);
  - (x) Khaled Abu Mahmoud, Bachelor of Exercise and Sports Science (Western Sydney University);
  - (xi) Hiba Sultan, Bachelor of Medical Science (Western Sydney University);
  - (xii) Aishah Abu Mahmoud, Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics (Honours) (University of Wollongong);
  - (xiii) Ibrahim Anwar Ahmad Ibrahim, PhD in Electrical Engineering (Macquarie University); and
  - (xiv) Munther Emad, Doctor of Philosophy (Western Sydney University).
- (2) That this House recognises the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to live in peace and security within their own State, as part of a two-State solution.

This motion is a necessary corrective to the lopsided approach that has been taken by this House in the past in relation to matters pertaining to Israel and Palestine. The Nakbah means "the catastrophe" in Arabic. It refers to the destruction of Palestinian society in 1948 and the permanent displacement of more than half of Palestinian Arabs from their homeland. In 1948 more than 700,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled from their homes during the war. At least 400 Arab villages and towns were razed or depopulated, with many being left uninhabitable. The Nakbah is a traumatic event in the collective memory of Palestinian people. For Palestinians, the Nakbah did not end in 1948; it is an ongoing occurrence and the everyday reality for the Palestinian people. Millions of Palestinians remain under illegal occupation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, more than five million refugees remain scattered throughout the Middle East.

Millions of Palestinians also remain stateless. In Israel laws have been passed to legalise the expropriation of Palestinian land. Illegal Israeli settlements and land confiscations and home demolitions continue to displace Palestinians to this day. The United Nations General Assembly requested in 2022 that the anniversary of the Nakbah be commemorated on 15 May 2023. In 2022 more Palestinians were killed in the occupied territories than in any year since 2005 and 63 Palestinians were killed in the first two months of 2023 alone. Earlier this year Bezalel Smotrich, the Israeli finance Minister, called for the Palestinian village Huwara to be wiped out. That is a reminder that the Nakbah is ongoing for Palestinians. His comments follow Israeli settlers violently attacking the village, killing one Palestinian and injuring a further 100. There is an unrelenting drive to supplant the Palestinian people from their land. The ongoing expansion of settlements, demolitions and land seizures is evidence of that fact.

That is causing the erosion of the viability of the two-State solution. There is no agreement or process towards treaty. The conflict seems perpetual without a pathway towards resolution, and the current Israeli government is a very extreme government which appears to relish the continuing ambiguity. It is an asymmetrical conflict. Israel has a powerful army, perhaps one of the most powerful modern armies in the world, and the Palestinians have no army. They have no capacity to resist. A couple of weeks ago the Israeli military used attack helicopters in the occupied West Bank during an arrest operation. The fighting killed five Palestinians, including a 15-year-old boy, and a further 91 were injured. A 15-year-old girl was also shot inside her house. That is a reminder of how intractable the conflict seems and that a resolution is very far away.

I move the motion to mark the commemoration event held on Saturday 3 June 2023. I thank the organisers of the event, the united Australian Palestinian Workers Union and the Australian Palestinian Graduates. While it was a sombre occasion, it was also an opportunity to celebrate the educational achievements of young Palestinian Australians whose efforts reflect favourably on the aspirations of the Palestinian community to make a positive contribution to this country. I congratulate all those whose achievements were recognised at the event. I commend the motion to the House.

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH (17:28):** On the face of it the motion looks quite innocuous; however, the Opposition will not support the motion unless it is amended. Therefore, I move:

That the question be amended as follows:

- (1) In paragraph (1), omit "Arab Australian Federation" and "Prof Peter Manning".
- (2) In paragraph (2), omit all words after "Palestinian people" and insert instead "to co-exist in peace and security alongside the State of Israel, as part of a two-State solution; and supports both States living side by side within recognised, secure borders."

If we are to acknowledge Palestine in the motion, it is important that we also acknowledge Israel as part of that two-State solution. On first glance the motion looks innocuous, but if one looks through all the people mentioned

in the motion, one will find some very interesting characters. In particular, when the chairperson of the Arab Australian Federation was vice-president of the General Union of Palestinian Students they had deep connections with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation [PLO] at a time when the PLO was synonymous with terrorism; rejected a two-State solution and Israel's continued existence; and condoned the use of violence to achieve Palestinian aims. That is why the Opposition wants to strike the Arab Australian Federation from the motion.

The Opposition also wants to strike out the reference to Professor Peter Manning. In 2009 Professor Manning signed a letter encouraging Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions. He called for universities to refrain from participating in any form of academic and cultural cooperation, collaboration or joint projects with Israeli institutions. I understand that this motion is very important to the member—and with the amendment the motion will pass—but the Opposition has grave concerns about supporting the unamended motion when it mentions figures like Professor Manning and does not include Israel as part of a legitimate two-State solution.

I remind the House that the creation of the State of Israel was not a product of imperialist sentiment or violent colonisation, but instead one of necessity following the abomination of the Holocaust. For centuries the Jewish people were ostracised, despised and subject to the most abhorrent forms of ethnic cleansing known on the historical record. They had no physical homeland or any security of life or liberty, and that is why the Opposition seeks to acknowledge Israel in the motion.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (17:31):** On behalf of The Greens, I support the motion. I thank the Hon. Anthony D'Adam for moving it. There is a significant Palestinian community in Australia, with about 15,600 people identifying as having Palestinian ancestry during the most recent census, the majority of whom live in New South Wales. On behalf of The Greens, I am pleased to support the important work of community organisations like the Australian Palestinian Club in providing Palestinians in Australia with a community hub and point of connection. Commemorating Al-Nakba, both in wider society and in Parliament, is important. On 15 May 1948, 75 years ago, a catastrophe for the Palestinian people occurred. With the declaration of Israel's independence, 75 per cent to 80 per cent of the Palestinian people were made refugees and the remaining 20 per cent to 25 per cent were internally displaced on their own lands.

The Palestinian people have thousands of years of connection to the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. The formal dispossession of their land by the State of Israel following years of atrocities like massacres, bombings, looting, land confiscation and razing of Palestinian towns by Zionist militia is an atrocity that continues to be felt to this day. It is right to acknowledge Al-Nakba in this place as an historical event, a painful commemoration for the Palestinian people and something that continues to be perpetrated by the State of Israel. The September 2022 report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 found:

... the occupation is not merely belligerent, but is settler-colonial in nature and that Israel has prevented the realization of Palestinian people's right to self-determination, violating each component of that right, wilfully pursuing the "de-Palestinianization" of the occupied territory.

In commemorating Al-Nakba, The Greens also commemorate the ongoing human rights abuses against the Palestinian people. The people of Palestine deserve to live in peace and security within their own State, and the Palestinian diaspora across the world deserve the right of return if they choose. The Greens recognise that the State of Israel's ongoing occupation of the Palestinian territories and the expropriation of Palestinian land, water, air space and resources is illegal and must be opposed. We reaffirm the right of Palestinians and Israelis to each live in peace, security and equality, and call for freedom and statehood for the Palestinian people.

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (17:33):** I request that paragraph (1) and paragraph (2) of the Hon. Chris Rath's amendment be dealt with separately. Paragraph (1) of the amendment seems to attempt to airbrush from history the fact that two organisations and one person attended a public meeting. I note that the motion that was moved by my learned colleague does not seek to endorse those people in any particular way. I do not suggest that he is doing anything to the contrary. It simply notes that two organisations were represented and that one individual, clearly a professor of prominence, was in attendance at the event. It says something about the state of politics around this issue that the Opposition is seeking to airbrush particular people who attended a meeting from history in quite a Stalinist way.

Paragraph (2) of the amendment surely cannot pass without it being noted that the Opposition moved a motion a few weeks ago to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of Israel and did not mention the Palestinian people—who are such an important part of our community—at all. However, when this quite reasonable motion is moved, Opposition members fall over themselves to insist that Israel must be mentioned. That speaks volumes about a two-sided approach. I await with interest to see how those opposite respond to that discrepancy. The strength of the motion is that it recognises the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. Those aspirations have been sought to be delegitimised on so many occasions.

It is said of the Palestinian people that they are not democratic and it is said of the Palestinian people that certain important human rights are not respected in Palestine in the same way as they are in Israel—and there is some or a complete degree of truth to those arguments. But they do not delegitimise the right of Palestinian people to exist—at all. But that is how they are deployed. Frankly, they are the arguments of the powerful seeking to delegitimise those who seek to advance the interests of those who do not have power.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (17:36):** I speak in support of the Hon. Chris Rath's amendment to the motion. I respond to a couple of matters raised by the Hon. Stephen Lawrence. It is strange to assert and a long bow to draw that a motion about the seventy-fifth anniversary of Israel was somehow a deceptive way to rule out the existence of Palestine. This motion seems to be a retaliation of some sort. Nonetheless, the Opposition has sought to find a way to support the motion by including that the two-State solution, which is in the motion, recognises each State. There is the State of Israel; that is just a fact. I am not quite sure where the Hon. Stephen Lawrence was going with that.

The point of the amendment is not to airbrush the people from existence but to recognise that people such as Peter Manning do not fit with our idea of a harmonious, multicultural Australia. In 2009 he signed off on a letter with fellow academics calling for universities to refrain from participation in any form of academic or cultural cooperation, collaboration or joint projects with Israeli institutions. He has also chaired forums in Marrickville for a Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions group. The interesting question is why were so many Labor members at the Al-Nakba event, happily alongside people who call for an end to the existence of Israel? Eddie Zananiri rejected the two-State solution and Israel's continued existence and condoned the use of violence to achieve Palestinian aims. If the Labor Party is seriously saying that that is what it stands for then it is a very strange day in this Chamber.

The amendment makes sure the motion accurately reflects the two-State solution. This House does not condone the behaviour of a couple of people at the event. Members should come together in a fair and reasonable way. I have been to Sderot and seen the existence that people live with and the difficulty they have. Rockets are fired across the border into Israel into kindergartens. Israeli children know that if the sirens go off, they have to run to the caterpillar. The caterpillar is a bomb shelter. These are kindergarten children who know that they have two minutes. If we want to go there I do not think it is helpful— [*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (17:39):** I welcome the opportunity to speak in favour of this motion. Before I address the substance of the motion, I wish Eid Mubarak to everyone celebrating Eid al-Adha across New South Wales today. This great Islamic festival marks the devotion of the prophet Ibrahim to Allah and his willingness to sacrifice his son. It also marks the end of hajj. I acknowledge all those of the Islamic faith who have recently completed the sacred pilgrimage to Mecca.

Just as this House acknowledged the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of Israel and its importance to members of the Jewish community in New South Wales, so too should we acknowledge the Al-Nakbah commemoration event through the motion moved by the Hon. Anthony D'Adam. As all members know, neither this House nor our Parliament has a mandate to legislate or exercise any power in matters of foreign affairs. Section 51 of the Australian Constitution makes it clear that external affairs are the jurisdiction of the Australian Parliament. However, we do have a mandate to act in the best interests of the residents of our State. That requires us to reflect the concerns of our diverse population and to do so in a way that encourages harmony within our community.

Acknowledging Al-Nakbah through a motion such as this demonstrates the strength of the social cohesion within New South Wales. It shows our democratic and pluralist traditions are broad enough to allow contradictory and opposite views on an issue. There are few issues where the need to be respectful is more important than that of Israel and Palestine. We need to acknowledge Australians of Palestinian heritage have a very different view of the events of 15 May 1948 than Australians with Jewish or Israeli heritage. That is what this motion does. With regard to the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the Australian Labor Party's position is clear. Labor's National Platform states its support for an enduring and just two-State solution to the conflict. This means a solution based on the right of Israel to live in peace. It means a solution that achieves the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to also live in peace and security within their own State, with secure borders that are internationally recognised and agreed to by the parties.

I note the Australian people have been steadfast supporters of the Palestinian people. We have demonstrated our support through the provision of humanitarian aid every year since 1951. The Australian Government continues to advocate for the resumption of peace negotiations. The differing views within our community come to the fore when the Israeli-Palestinian conflict escalates into violence, as it has done in recent weeks. I believe all Australians are deeply concerned by the recent and escalating violence in Israel and the Palestinian territories. These recent events serve to remind us of the need for both sides to work together to foster

the conditions necessary for peace. I congratulate the Australian Palestinian Club in Guildford on its commemoration event on 3 June 2023.

**The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (17:42):** I contribute to debate on the motion moved by the Hon. Anthony D'Adam and support the comments made by the Hon. Chris Rath and the Hon. Natalie Ward about this very complex issue. It is worthwhile recognising that this is a matter that has been a point of discussion in international affairs and local communities for hundreds if not thousands of years and it is unlikely that we are going to come up with a solution today. I have been to Israel a number of times and into the West Bank as well. I was fortunate enough on my last trip to meet with Tal Becker, an Australian man who grew up in Melbourne. He now lives in Israel and has become somewhat of a peace broker. His approach to this issue is to use each day to lessen the conflict. It is a very mature and realistic way to approach this incredibly complex and emotional matter. By lessening the conflict each day, we move towards something that might look like a solution, even if we cannot see it from where we are today.

I, like the Hon. Natalie Ward, have travelled to places like Sderot and to the border of Lebanon and Syria. They are clearly challenging places to live, just like the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. There is an obvious multi-faith and cultural tension that exists there. I refer back to Tal Becker's activities. What he has been able to do in this situation is be part of the drafting of the Abraham Accords. The reason that they have been successful and have been able to progress is their ability to find the similarities amongst communities that feel they have so many differences—that comes back to the fact that there are Abrahamic religions, Christianity, Islam and Judaism, that stem from the same basic understanding of faith, religion and God—to find those similarities, where possible, to move forward. The Abraham Accords have been very useful in developing stronger trade relations between the Arabic States and the Jewish State. It has allowed for greater trade, relationships, reliance and responsibility amongst nations that have had very serious conflict in the recent past. I note Bren Carlill's piece in *The Canberra Times* this week, which states, "Labor push to recognise Palestine could be harming Palestinian cause ... —[*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (17:46):** I participate in this debate by first thanking my colleague the Hon. Anthony D'Adam for bringing this important motion to the House. It is a necessary motion. I reiterate his sentiments and those of others that there does need to be a bit of a redressing of the balance of this story from both sides of the equation. It is a very important motion and it is not that complicated, despite what some of the contributors to debate have wanted to portray. It is a very simple, straightforward motion. It is asking the House to simply recognise that a commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of Al-Nakbah was held at the Australian Palestinian Club in Guildford, and there is a list of people who attended. That is a fact. Those people physically attended the venue. The idea that it would be amended to, as my colleague said, airbrush them out of having attended almost beggars belief. The last paragraph of the motion simply states:

That this House recognises the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to live in peace and security within their own State as part of a two-State solution.

Are we seriously going to question sentiments like this in a house of Parliament when we are trying to point out that people have a right to democratic freedom and to have some sort of purchase over their own destiny? The second part of the amendment moved by the Hon. Chris Rath is acceptable to this side of the House. What is not acceptable is those opposite trying to erase people's attendance at a function to make a petty point because they do not like the people who attended. Perhaps they should airbrush Mr David Shoebridge out of it because they do not like him. He attended as well.

I remind those opposite that when a similar motion was moved three weeks ago recognising the seventy-fifth anniversary of Israeli independence, this House adopted that resolution unanimously. Instead, my colleague the Hon. Anthony D'Adam previously brought this motion on for formal business and it was objected to. Those opposite brought on this debate and now they want to airbrush people out of having attended a venue. That tells members everything they need to know about the ingenuousness of the intentions of those opposite. I do not think it is good enough to deny what has happened historically. These are well-documented facts. Up to 700,000 people were displaced in 1948. It is well documented in the United Nations. In fact, for the first time last year the United Nations voted to recognise that day as a day— [*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (17:49):** In reply: Firstly, I thank the Hon. Chris Rath, Ms Abigail Boyd, the Hon. Stephen Lawrence, the Hon. Natalie Ward, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, the Hon. Jacqui Munro and the Hon. Mark Buttigieg for their contributions to debate. I can only reiterate the arguments put by my colleague the Hon. Mark Buttigieg in relation to paragraph (1) of the amendment moved by the Hon. Chris Rath. We do not propose to support the erasure of factual matters from the motion. A plain reading of the motion clearly indicates that there is no endorsement of the politics of any of the participants in that event and to suggest otherwise is disingenuous.

The Government is prepared to support paragraph (2) of the amendment. There is some suggestion that the Labor Party does not believe there is a rightful place for the State of Israel. That is not true. We support the State of Israel existing, as we support the recognition of an independent Palestinian State. That is our position, and we are happy to support that element of the amendment moved by the Hon. Chris Rath. With that, I commend the motion to the House.

**The PRESIDENT:** The Hon. Anthony D'Adam has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Chris Rath has moved an amendment. According to Standing Order 106 (4), the Hon. Stephen Lawrence has requested that paragraph (1) and paragraph (2) of the amendment be put separately.

The question is that paragraph (1) of the amendment be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....13  
Noes .....20  
Majority.....7

**AYES**

Carter  
Fang (teller)  
Farraway  
MacDonald  
Maclaren-Jones

Merton  
Mitchell  
Munro  
Rath (teller)

Ruddick  
Taylor  
Tudehope  
Ward

**NOES**

Boyd  
Buckingham  
Buttigieg  
Cohn  
D'Adam  
Donnelly  
Faehrmann

Graham  
Higginson  
Houssos  
Hurst  
Jackson  
Lawrence  
Mihailuk

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

**PAIRS**

Farlow  
Martin

Kaine  
Moriarty

**Paragraph (1) of the amendment negatived.**

**The PRESIDENT:** The question is that paragraph (2) of the amendment be agreed to.

**Paragraph (2) of the amendment agreed to.**

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

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

**The PRESIDENT:** According to the resolution of the House, it being 6.00 p.m. proceedings are now interrupted to enable the Hon. John Ruddick to make his first speech without any question before the Chair.

*Members*

**INAUGURAL SPEECHES**

**The PRESIDENT:** I welcome to my gallery this evening the family and friends of the Hon. John Ruddick, including the Hon. Ross Cameron, former Federal member for Parramatta; the Hon. David Clarke, former member of the Legislative Council; Mr Tim James, member for Willoughby; Ms Tanya Davies, member for Badgerys Creek; Mr Craig Kelly, former Federal member for Hughes; Dr John Humphreys, founder of the Liberal Democratic Party; Mr Paul Barker, national president of the Liberal Democratic Party; Mr Robert Cribb, former president of the NSW Liberal Democratic Party; Mr Nathan Thomason, former president of the NSW Liberal Democratic Party; Mr Lyle Shelton, national director of the Family First Party; and Mr Michael O'Neill, leader of the Informed Medical Options Party. Most importantly, I welcome Mr Ruddick's family: Kelly, Daisy and Ruby Ruddick, and Caixin Xhao. You are all most welcome.

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (18:00):** There was another occasion I was to speak and the strict convention then, as now, was that I be heard without interjection. That was my inaugural speech at the Young Liberal Council a few blocks from here in 1994. I think that was just before your time at that forum, Mr President. But despite being a newbie, I launched into the most bitterly contentious factional brawl of the day. That no interjection thing was wantonly discarded.

Thus began 27 years of a highly dysfunctional relationship between the New South Wales Liberal Party and John Ruddick, multiple candidacies for the Young Liberal presidency, multiple candidacies for State and Federal party president, endless violation of that party's prohibition against speaking to the media, dozens of unsolicited emails to the entire membership about one righteous cause after another, multiple expulsion attempts that were all deftly dodged, and two constitutional reform battles that went on for years and climaxed in apparent triumph only to see the factions soon devise ways to skirt the new rules. To top it all off, in 2018 I wrote a book explaining how everything the Liberal Party organisation was doing was completely wrong. But I do sincerely thank my colleagues here from my former party for their warm welcome to this place. There is no surer way to mend years of factional strife than quitting for good and joining a better party. I feel like Switzerland—peace with all!

I first heard of the Liberal Democrats in 2012 when Clinton Mead, who is here tonight, was elected a mayor. I devoured their website and said, "Hallelujah". I was tempted to defect a few times but did not quite bite the bullet, still betting that the best bet for small government was reform of the Liberal Party. In mid-2021 that changed. State and Federal Liberal governments did four things that made me throw in the towel. The first was the authoritarian COVID police state—all over a bad flu. Bad flus are bad. Bad flus happen from time to time but we treated COVID as though it was Ebola. The COVID fatality rate in New South Wales was 0.13 per cent. While it was at the upper end of what we expect each winter—maybe a little bit more—to call COVID a pandemic was an insult to pandemics.

The average age of a COVID fatality in Australia is higher than the average life expectancy. The New South Wales Government locked citizens in quarantine just for being near a COVID-positive person. Many want to move on from COVID; I do not. Elements in the media tell us there is another pandemic around the corner and that it will be worse than COVID. I am sceptical. But if true, surely we need a royal commission into the last time a pandemic was declared so we can learn. Sweden alone resisted the hysteria. Masks, lockdowns and vaccines were recommended but not compelled. Sweden trusted its citizens and Sweden has had Europe's lowest increase in excess deaths over the past three years. I have respected Peter Costello and Tony Abbott for most of my life. Both have now spoken out forcefully about the COVID madness, but the Liberal Party's best only found the courage to do so after the crisis had passed. The police, and even the army and helicopters, forbade us to leave our homes to get sunshine, fresh air and exercise, but that radical right-wing newspaper *The New York Times* told us in July 2021 that not one person in the world had caught COVID in an outdoor environment.

The second disappointment was vaccine extremism. On 26 July 2021 the Liberal Premier of New South Wales announced a two-week lockdown. Two weeks morphed into many months and a diabolical catch was added: We will not let you out until you take multiple injections of not only a rushed vaccine but an entirely new class of vaccine. Most relented, but everyone got COVID anyway. Last year NSW Health published weekly data showing the fewer vaccines you had, the less likely you went to hospital or an intensive care unit. The fatality rate was similar for the vaxxed and the unvaxxed. Since the vaccine rollout there has been a 15 per cent to 20 per cent increase in excess deaths in nations like Australia that had the mass mRNA injections. Is it the vaccine or the bitter hangover from locking people up for so long? We do not know. But either way, it is almost certainly the result of poor governance and yet another reason for a COVID royal commission.

The Commonwealth Government is still recommending a fifth vaccine, but barely anyone is listening. Too many know of others who had bad reactions. I suspect few even in this Chamber have lined up for their fifth injection, so they are now doing what we were scolded for doing—thinking for oneself. Ivermectin is a medicine made from the compounds found in the soil of Japan. Prior to COVID Ivermectin had been prescribed for humans not four million times but four billion times. It is such a wonder drug that the inventors won the 2015 Nobel Prize for Medicine. Soon after COVID arrived various researchers around the world began noticing Ivermectin may be unusually helpful in treating COVID patients. But big pharma was alarmed. If Ivermectin worked, it was too cheap to make squillions from. So big pharma told politicians to not only ban it for sale but also claim Ivermectin is only a horse dewormer.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration [TGA] is a Commonwealth agency that has the authority to say whether a new drug is permitted to be sold in this country or not. I assumed the TGA's funding came from taxpayers, but I recently learnt that 97 per cent comes from pharmaceutical companies. This is a textbook example of a conflict of interest. The TGA's website today admits it has received over 137,000 COVID vaccine injury

reports. Many drugs are pulled from the market after 137 injuries. For any drug the number of reported vaccine injuries is a fraction of the actual injuries.

In the gallery today is Stephen McDonald, director of the Australian Firefighters Alliance, who represents firefighters who are still not able to work because of COVID vaccine mandates. Stephen Kelly and Roland Crystal, longstanding police officers who were sacked for not submitting to the big pharma State, are also here. I understand new police recruits are not asked about their vax status but those stood down are not yet reinstated. John Larter, a paramedic of 25 years who was sacked for not taking the vaccine, is here too. He represents many other paramedics. Tony Nikolic is also here. He has heroically defended those people and many others in the legal system. It has been a thankless task but one day when the COVID fog has lifted I will nominate Mr Nikolic for an Order of Australia. I urge the Minns-Sharpe Government to follow the lead of jurisdictions around the world and remove those pointless, cruel vaccines.

My third disappointment with the Liberal Party was government debt. Historically Liberal governments have generally had a good economic record, but the recent State and Federal Liberal governments racked up eye-popping public debt which will weigh down New South Wales and the nation for years. When Labor handed over power in this State to the Coalition in 2011, it left a modest debt of \$7 billion. The new Government inherited a projected debt of \$187 billion. It is a similar story in Canberra. It is all appalling. My fourth disappointment was that despite most Liberal parliamentarians privately acknowledging a net-zero carbon economy is a reckless folly, they capitulated anyway because the polls said so. Real leaders do not follow polls; they change them. I must put on record that with all the disappointments of my former party, the Labor Opposition in most cases criticised the Coalition for not being more disappointing.

Yes, I am encouraged by the rhetoric of the new Government around budget repair. But sorry, I am sceptical. There have been very few Labor figures since 1901 who cut spending, deregulated industry and had a pro-free enterprise approach. But when they have done so, such as Bob Hawke, Paul Keating, Peter Walsh, Michael Costa and ALP-ish Joe Lyons, their governments enjoyed electoral success. There is a free tip to the Government.

When I showed up at Liberal Democrat meetings, I found what I had always hoped to find in a political party. Libertarians are widely read, extremely diverse, big-picture thinking and passionate about a better future, plus there is an oversupply of supreme intellectual know-alls who think nothing of having a two-hour argument about whether Ayn Rand is better than Milton Friedman. Spoiler alert: She is. The Liberal Democrats are a libertarian party. We libertarians are plotting to take over the world so we can leave you all alone. Libertarianism can be summed up in two words: Power corrupts. We believe in the inherent morality of capitalism simply because that is what people will spontaneously do when left alone. The worst atrocities of history were not the result of drought, flood, pestilence or plague but of big government throwing its weight around like an elephant stamping on ants. Scepticism of government does not make you a conspiracy theorist; it makes you a history buff.

The relationship between the State and the citizen is a Yin and Yang. The bigger the State is, the more stunted citizen potential. The smaller the State, the more dynamic the citizens. Today's gold medallist in the libertarian Olympics is Switzerland. It is not a libertarian utopia, but for generations the Swiss have enjoyed the least intrusion from government and thrived on all fronts. The Swiss economy is the second most deregulated in the world behind Singapore and has one of the highest per capita incomes in the world. Switzerland has the fourth lowest tax rate in the OECD. Free speech is constitutionally guaranteed. Unlike Australia, the Swiss have a true federation.

Switzerland has a population similar to New South Wales, but power is devolved down to 26 States or what they call cantons. Most political power is held by the cantons, which experiment and learn from each other. Our State governments are largely welfare dependents off a central government far bigger than what the now forgotten but noble Federation-sceptics who dominated this Chamber in the 1890s feared Federation would lead to. Contentious laws in Switzerland are decided by citizen-initiated referendums. We prefer citizen-initiated vetoes, but I will leave that for an adjournment debate. The Swiss Government has nothing to do with health care, except for giving low income earners a voucher that they use to purchase insurance from a dynamic private marketplace. Over 99 per cent of the Swiss have health insurance and—surprise, surprise—enjoy the world's best health statistics in the world.

The Swiss are cautious with social reforms, but cannabis is becoming legal. Libertarians make no moral judgement on the rights or wrongs of cannabis. We want public debate, but we do not want a busybody government threatening punishment over cannabis use. To the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham I say, "When you need a vote on this issue, you have one locked in." Swiss households have one of the world's highest firearm ownership rates, but Switzerland also has the world's lowest murder rate. Those firearms deter criminal behaviour, government overreach and invasion. To my colleagues in the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party I say, "When you need a vote on that issue, you have one locked in too."

What libertarians like most about Switzerland is its 500-year-old tradition of staying the hell out of war. Barring a brief Napoleonic incursion, Switzerland has not been invaded. When the armies of death marched across Europe during World War I, World War II and the Cold War, they did not think to invade Switzerland. Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky recently addressed the Swiss Parliament and demanded the Swiss renege on their ancient tradition and fund his side of the war. Half the Swiss Parliament walked out and rightly urged all sides in that conflict to agree to peace talks immediately. Perhaps Switzerland is so successful because it has not sent its finest young men out to get slaughtered every second generation.

The Swiss are, however, stellar global citizens. In the nineteenth century a Christian businessman from Geneva, Jean-Henri Dunant, was on his way to a meeting in Italy when he came across a horrific sight: 40,000 dead and wounded lay where a battle had just been fought. No-one was providing any care. Dunant cancelled his travel and spent days doing all he could to alleviate suffering. Deeply disturbed, he returned home, called a meeting of other Christian businessmen and gave the world the Red Cross, which today has 16 million volunteers. The Red Cross was not an initiative of the Swiss Government but of private individuals and is the most successful charity in human history. Government programs come and go but the Red Cross demonstrates the best of Christianity and the best of privately organised welfare.

This is a State Parliament, Mr President, but please indulge me to make a point about a foreign policy matter that has the potential to cause catastrophe to New South Wales. Libertarians are concerned at the endless arms build-up in the Asia-Pacific. Our leaders tell us that China is muscling up and expansionist. Chinese leaders tell their citizens that the West is muscling up and expansionist. Both are correct. I fear a July 1914 succession of events that sees the Asia-Pacific stumble into a pointless war. With today's weapons and Asia's population, the death toll from such a war could exceed that of World War II. Assuming Australia was not reduced to rubble in the process, we would be overwhelmed with millions of refugees.

I am sympathetic to former Prime Minister Paul Keating's concerns about our monstrous spending on weapons that are designed not to defend but to attack. The most dangerous person on earth, we are told, is Julian Assange. But if journalist Assange was free to publish his criticisms of the world's war machines, we would all be safer: #FreeAssange. The two American presidents in my lifetime who the experts said would be the most dangerous on the world stage were Ronald Reagan and Donald Trump. But both defied the foreign policy establishment and reached out to historic adversaries, became friends with once hostile leaders and calmed geopolitical tension. Libertarians are not pacifists. When a delusional regime says they want world domination, like the Nazis, Imperial Japan or the Soviet Union, then they obviously leave us no choice. But we agree with Winston Churchill that jaw-jaw is almost always better than war-war. Australia is a proudly Western nation with Asia-Pacific geography. We are therefore best placed to lead the campaign to de-escalate superpower tension in the Asia-Pacific.

Another reason libertarians do not like big government is because mankind is from time to time subject to irrational, harmful mass delusions, especially when melded with big government. COVID is merely the latest case study. One of the benefits of separating church and State was that if a religious grouping did get delusional at least the delusion was contained and not magnified by State power. Let me tell the story of William Buckley, an escaped convict who was warmly adopted by an Aboriginal tribe in the Geelong area. Buckley spent 32 years living in the Australian bush and then walked into the Port Phillip Bay colony in the 1830s. Buckley expected to be punished by the English group for being an escapee, but the English were fascinated by his account and employed him to foster good relations with the Aboriginals.

Buckley wrote a gripping book that contains an episode where his tribe and the surrounding tribes were in a mortal panic. Those tribes held the supernatural belief that the world was held up by a powerful man who used ropes to keep things in place at the end of the world. There was panic because the word had gotten around that the strong man was getting weary and, if every tribe did not immediately send him all their food, tools and weapons, the world would definitely implode. Buckley's tribe and others around furiously obeyed and handed over everything they had and then raced atop a mountain, hoping it might provide some protection if the implosion came. Buckley wrote of the episode:

... but who the knowing old juggling receiving thief, I could never make out. However, it is only one of the same sort of robberies which are practised in the other countries of what is called Christendom.

Buckley was correct: Mass delusions are a universal phenomenon. The pyramids of Egypt are impressive, but the Pharaohs likely concocted an apocalyptic delusion to con countless poor souls to spend their lives in backbreaking work to build fancy graves. Half a millennia ago, the then all-powerful church convinced the peasants of Europe their relatives were suffering in hell, but if they handed over money to the church then they would get an escape pass. "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs." This indulgences scam went on for centuries. It was a powerful elite tricking and robbing the poor and laughing in luxury.

I know this is not the view of this Chamber but please hear me out because, occasionally, minority positions are vindicated with time. Is the global warming orthodoxy yet another mass delusion, turbocharged by big government? We are not allowed to question global warming science but, if we cannot question it, is it science or propaganda? Those who insist on questioning it are not just told they are wrong; they are heretics who must be punished. Since the 1980s we have been bombarded with predictions around rising temperatures, rising oceans and shrinking ice caps. These predictions are not materialising. At most, it is a zigzagged, one degree Celsius rise in 150 years. This is a remarkably stable era for temperature compared to the geological record. Every time there is a natural disaster, we are told that this is proof of global warming but, in every case, a sober analysis reveals these calamities are in line with natural cycles.

Surely, if we are going to embark on re-engineering the world's energy supply, we should ask the hard questions. Why was global warming rebadged as climate change? Is it because the warming did not arrive? We were promised cheaper energy through privately funded renewable energy, but we have ever-soaring power prices despite endless government subsidies. That trendline is unending. Why are the promoters so hostile to nuclear energy when everybody agrees nuclear is the least carbon-emitting energy source? Is it because the promoters are not invested in nuclear? Should we blindly listen to characters like Al Gore and Greta Thunberg, who have zero qualifications in this field? Gore has successfully cultivated an image. He is a Gandhi or Mother Teresa type of figure but, over a decade ago, *The New York Times* speculated that Gore was the world's first carbon billionaire. Gandhi and Mother Teresa, of course, led penniless lives. Are carbon credit schemes the indulgences of our time? For 130 years the Labor Party has striven to defend low-income earners—the battlers that today are struggling while making rich people richer.

When it is pointed out that perhaps the science is not as settled as we are told, some get upset. But surely it would be a good thing if we were not facing a global warming apocalypse, wouldn't it? It seems like some want to press ahead regardless of reality because it is in their commercial and political interests to do so. The 1960s saw the rise of a new movement: environmentalism. That once-fringe movement has won the debate around clean energy and protection of what is left of our natural world. I fear that that good movement has been conflated with and hijacked by a money-making scheme called global warming.

In 2009 I found myself not far from here in a reasonably friendly private debate with a high-profile climate change activist. In the middle of her berating my scepticism, she casually threw her cigarette butt on the street. It was a small incident, but it revealed so much. The climate change movement has become disconnected from real-world environmentalism. The political forces across the Western world who spent the twentieth century advocating for the big government utopia of socialism, disappointingly, did not learn from the collapse of socialism in the early 1990s and, overnight, morphed into "Let's now have a big powerful government to save us all from global warming." They have forgotten that the nations with the most degraded natural environments are the once-socialist utopias. My preference would have been for environmentalism to have branched out into advocating for animal welfare and the protection of endangered species and native forests. But there is no money to be made in those noble causes.

Human domination of the planet is, on balance, a good thing. We are the only species smart enough to protect all life from asteroid impacts et cetera. But, that said, we have established safe domains for our families now, so we do have a moral obligation to protect the remaining species and untouched pockets of nature. When I fly interstate, I insist on a window seat. I see endless productive farms that sustain us all. I see some untouched native forests and bush, and I want my descendants, for the next millennia, to enjoy and learn from those sacred places. Okay, Mr President, we are into the final stretch and, yes, I have saved the best for last.

I want to make the most radical statement said in this Chamber's 200-year history. There is an element in my party that advocates for an entirely government-free society—a movement, founded by Murray Rothbard, known as anarcho-capitalism. It could also be called libertarianism on steroids. Anarcho-capitalists believe the best use of this beautiful Chamber is as a museum—privately owned, of course. It is, at first glance, a shocking view, but one I am increasingly open to. Would a government-free society based on voluntary interaction be more humane, safe, vibrant, diverse and successful? I think it might, and it is definitely worth exploring. Anarcho-capitalists are not revolutionaries; they certainly do not want social chaos. Even when my party wins towering majorities at the 2027 State election, government would be something that would be steadily phased out over decades and with democratic consent.

Government gets its power over the people courtesy of its control over a massive supply of weapons. Elections merely confer control over those weapons. If someone, for example, refuses to pay a humble parking ticket, eventually government will force payment or incarceration under threat of violence. This is what underpins the State—legalised coercion. All government executive action is done by people—people who are paid to act with money taken from taxpayers under duress. Anarcho-capitalism envisions a more moral society underpinned by voluntary actions and agreements. It is hard to measure the size of government today but, when Federal, State

and local government is collated, it is likely around 50 per cent of our GDP. This is getting us ever closer to George Orwell's nightmare. It may well be that, after a few decades of steadily shrinking the government, we get the government down to say 5 per cent to 10 per cent of GDP, but then the democratic consensus is that we cannot cut any further. To find that sweet spot we should set out on the journey with the goal of a 0 per cent government.

Here are some of the initial steps we would take. Firstly, libertarians win every State and Federal election over the next four years. We would then abolish all forms of middle-class welfare. Few government programs are more perverse than taking money from taxpayers, churning it through the bureaucracy and giving part of it back. I always thought that, when I came to this place, I would be voting with the Liberal Party 90 per cent of the time. They keep trying to support middle-class welfare, so I hope they can get back to their original founding principles.

We would adopt a Swiss-style healthcare system, which I mentioned earlier. We would abolish the Department of Education and replace it with a school voucher system, which has been successfully rolled out across the United States—just over the past year or two. The police may be more efficient and responsive if they were private firms that people pay for via an insurance premium. Our court system is woefully slow, inefficient and expensive. It mostly serves the wealthy. But what if those entering a contract agree to what private court has jurisdiction to settle disputes? Private courts would compete for business by building a reputation for wise, impartial judgement and efficiency.

But how would the poor be cared for? The current big-government welfare programs do not have a great record in lifting the poor out of poverty. Anarcho-capitalism would result in most people being significantly wealthier. Good people would come together, pool resources and employ talented staff whose objective is not to tick a bureaucratic box but to genuinely get people back on their productive feet. It may even be possible to have a sufficient defence capacity organised via voluntary contributions and private businesses—but that is, obviously, questionable. What is not questionable is the superiority of the innovative and efficient Uber over heavily regulated taxis. There are other government services that anarcho-capitalists believe will deliver an Uber-style upgrade in the quality of service delivery.

Anarcho-capitalism has a favourable view of human nature and an unlimited belief in our potential. One thing is certain about this planet: All stars have a finite life span and, one day, our fabulous sun will stop shining and we will need another planet. We need to maximise human brilliance and reach for other worlds in the millennia to come. A million years ago, one of our genius ancestors worked out how to start a fire, and since then we have invented the internet, split the atom and explored the solar system. What can we achieve in the coming million years? I am increasingly attracted to the view that we will tap humanity's highest potential via a government-free voluntary-based society.

Within libertarian circles it is said, "Everybody agrees with us in hindsight." Here are five examples. One, Western political parties spent most of the twentieth century split between democratic socialism and Keynesianism. It was the fringe libertarians who articulated the benefits and the morality of free enterprise. Socialism in its various forms killed 100 million people in the twentieth century and Keynesianism gave us stagnation, but Milton Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, Ayn Rand and others in the 1960s and the 1970s began winning public support, which triumphed in the leadership of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Between 1979 and the 2009 subprime crisis, free enterprise dominated the world's economics debate, and it lifted billions out of poverty.

Two, libertarians make no judgement on gay marriage, but we campaigned in favour of marriage freedom when Barack Obama and Julia Gillard were publicly opposed. Three, I was initially wrong on this one, but the libertarians were against this century's catastrophic Middle Eastern wars of choice. Four, we were against taxpayers recklessly bailing out banks in the subprime crisis and lumping us all around the world with debt, which has only ratcheted up since. Five, we are instinctively on the side of minorities being bullied by the State and popular culture. If we are correct in the rear-view mirror, surely libertarianism should be given some degree of deference going forward. Mr President, I ask my parliamentary colleagues, who are now convinced they too should become a libertarian, to form an orderly queue out the front of my office where I will help them complete a membership form. Thank you.

*Members and officers of the House stood and applauded.*

**The PRESIDENT:** I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 8.00. p.m.

*Bills***CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ASSAULTS ON RETAIL WORKERS) BILL 2023****First Reading**

**Bill received from the Legislative Assembly, read a first time and ordered to be published on motion by the Hon. Penny Sharpe, on behalf of the Hon. Daniel Mookhey.**

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** According to standing order, I table a statement of public interest.

**Statement of public interest tabled.**

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** According to sessional order, I declare the bill to be an urgent bill.

**The PRESIDENT:** The question is that the bill be considered an urgent bill.

**Declaration of urgency agreed to.**

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** I move:

That the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for a later hour of the sitting.

**Motion agreed to.**

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

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** On behalf of the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine: I move:

That private members' business item No. 199 be postponed until a later hour of the sitting.

*Motions***LOCUM HEALTH WORKERS**

**Dr AMANDA COHN (20:03):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes:
  - (a) NSW Health faces significant challenges in retaining permanent staff, exemplified by the loss of 12.6 per cent of its nursing workforce in 2021-22;
  - (b) consequently, a considerable amount of public funds are expended annually on overheads associated with the recruitment and allocation of temporary, locum and agency health workers through private recruitment and locum agencies;
  - (c) in 2008 the final report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Acute Care Services in New South Wales Public Hospitals, prepared by the office of the Australian commissioner Peter Garling, SC, recommended that NSW Health should institute and maintain a centralised register of all doctors available and willing to fill casual shifts or act as locums for specified periods;
  - (d) the current Government has promoted the benefits of public ownership and management of essential assets and services, and committed to improving and optimising health spending through the special commission of inquiry; and
  - (e) health workers who undertake temporary or locum placement for NSW Health are required to complete repetitive and time-consuming credentialing and onboarding processes for each local health district.
- (2) That this House calls on the Government to:
  - (a) discontinue the use of private recruitment and locum agencies for the recruitment and allocation of temporary, locum and agency health workers, with this instead to be undertaken directly by NSW Health; and
  - (b) harmonise credentialing and onboarding requirements for health workers between local health districts.

NSW Health faces serious challenges in retaining permanent staff and attracting them to areas of need, particularly rural and regional areas and cross-border communities. NSW Health lost 12.6 per cent of its nursing workforce in 2021-22. Doctors are catastrophically mal-distributed across the State. To fill that gap, NSW Health relies on a large number of medical locum and agency nursing staff, who are recruited through private agencies. While the broader recruitment and retention of permanent health workers require multiple solutions, there is a simple step that the Government can immediately take to both improve continuity of care for patients and save tens of hundreds of millions of dollars that could be reinvested in our health system.

The New South Wales Government must discontinue the use of inefficient and expensive for-profit recruitment agencies, and instead bring the management of temporary contracts for health workers in house to NSW Health. I am far from the first person to suggest this. As far back as 2008, the final report of the Special

Commission of Inquiry into Acute Care Services in New South Wales Public Hospitals, prepared by the office of the Australian commissioner Peter Garling, SC, made that recommendation.

Allow me to explain how private agencies are so inefficient. I have worked as a locum doctor in communities as diverse as West Wyalong, Cowra, Leeton, Casino and Broken Hill. Different hospitals hire staff through different agencies, so no doctor can see every vacancy and no hospital can see every available doctor. That means that doctor A who lives in region A can be flown to region B, while doctor B who lives in region B is flown to region A. I have worked at hospitals where two doctors have accidentally been booked to work the same role for the same week and there is no doctor on the following week. Private recruitment agents, some of whom are paid commission, are incentivised to price-gouge our hospitals. Those agents have discouraged me from accepting placements before the hospital was offering crisis rates. That inefficient duplication impedes the mobilisation of healthcare workers in urgent situations.

Temporary health workers will always be needed, including to support and stabilise a health service following a disaster. That is why recruitment and allocation must be undertaken directly by NSW Health. Very quickly it can streamline and standardise processes as well as reduce overheads, like commission fees and travel costs. The inefficiency is not just costly; it impacts patient care. Even if a locum doctor or agency nurse fell in love with a rural community and wanted to stay longer than their placement, it goes against business sense for a private agency to allow that person to stay, let alone work with them to find them a position. Many agencies actually put in the terms of their contracts with doctors that they are not allowed to directly accept any offer to stay on or return to the same hospital without going back through the agency. That means many rural hospitals have new locum doctors starting every week with no follow-up of patient care and little knowledge of local referral pathways or cultural sensitivities.

Local health districts [LHDs] rarely receive the feedback that they need to improve working conditions to be able to attract and retain permanent staff. It is better for business for the private agencies for rates to be increased sky-high rather than addressing any of the reasons health workers do not want to work at a particular service. This worsens morale for remaining permanent staff, who watch locums and agency staff come and go, often earning more than double the local staff for less responsibility. I witnessed and experienced that firsthand working at Western, Far West and Murrumbidgee local health districts, and the locum problem is only getting worse. At Murrumbidgee, for example, the annual locum spend has ballooned from \$30,000 to \$1.8 million in the past decade. We must harmonise the onboarding and credentialing process between local health districts so that already exhausted health workers are not burdened with repetitive and unnecessary administration to work in a different region.

In my experience working between different LHDs I was asked to complete more than 15 hours of unpaid online modules for recredentialing in workplace basics such as infection control, how to document a patient's allergies, workplace privacy policies and how electronic medical records work. Regional New South Wales is absolutely beautiful in its diversity, but I can assure members that the most important differences between regions are not captured by the online handwashing module. The New South Wales Government has actively promoted the benefits of public ownership and management of essential assets and services. It has expressed its dedication to improving and optimising health spending through the special commission of inquiry. We will always need health workers for temporary placements, but ending the use of private agencies will improve continuity of care for patients and save money.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources)**  
**(20:08):** I move:

That the question be amended by omitting paragraph (2) (a) and inserting instead:

- (a) examine the use of private recruitment and locum agencies for the recruitment and allocation of temporary locum and agency health workers, including considering whether NSW Health can undertake this work;
- (b) support the ongoing work of the National Health Workforce Taskforce of which New South Wales is a member, in considering the issue of supply and demand issues of medical locums; and I indicate that if Dr Cohn will support the amendment then the Government is happy to support the motion. We acknowledge that NSW Health faces significant challenges in recruiting health professionals and retaining permanent staff. This is being experienced not just locally but internationally. But we also acknowledge that if we immediately ceased using locums, some health facilities across New South Wales will essentially be unable to provide health care, leaving remote and rural communities in a vulnerable situation.

As someone who grew up in regional New South Wales, I understand the importance of having local health professionals who are deeply engaged in local communities. The Government will examine that. I have had several conversations with the honourable member around the growing reliance on medical locums. Whilst overseas health professionals are an important supplement to our locally trained workforce, we want to ensure that we are finding local health professionals who can live in local communities, understand those communities and service them. That is incredibly important. The New South Wales Rural Health Workforce Incentive Scheme has been

established to attract and retain key health workers in rural and regional health services. The scheme has already distributed more than \$40 million. This is an important issue and one we will be looking at closely. There is a great amount of work for the New South Wales Government to do going forward.

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR (20:12):** On behalf of the Opposition, I contribute to debate on the motion of Dr Amanda Cohn. I thank her very much for bringing it to the House. She brings a wealth of knowledge into this place. It is terrific to have people with not only clinical experience but experience working in a rural and regional community. I take my hat off to her. Being a GP is a noble position, and I am glad that she is in this place to share her knowledge and expertise with all members. Generally, I am supportive of anything that is going to improve healthcare outcomes in rural and regional New South Wales.

Obviously there is no doubt a huge issue with locums. While it has been previously discussed, but is not noted in this motion, we need to get all States to agree and cap this situation, which is becoming quite unsustainable for the New South Wales health system and other health systems. The problem is that if New South Wales goes out alone and does something different then the locums will just go to Queensland, the Territory or wherever it is they are receiving that enormous remuneration. We need a Commonwealth approach to make it effective.

I agree with what the Hon. Courtney Houssos said in her contribution. I am pleased the honourable member mentioned the regional workforce package brought in last year. It is definitely not the panacea but it is obviously having some impact, which pleases me. I believe health policies should sit above politics. I support the amendments moved by the Government. We need a really cohesive approach to this. I also commend the current Minister for Health, the Hon. Ryan Park, who I think is overall an extremely good person and someone who cares very much about NSW Health. I enjoy working with him, I enjoy being on panels with him and I enjoy his respectful nature of debate.

We must continue to work towards local recruitment. Is there anyone anywhere who does not want local solutions to workforce issues? If there was a magic centre where we had a health workforce, someone would have found it. The Country Universities Centre in Broken Hill is training its first ever resident psychologists because they can train locally and do their masters, rather than being a fly-in fly-out worker. It is about those local solutions. We also have to look at more support for graduate nurses when doing their prac supports—how we help them both financially and when they have to leave their communities to do that. I am excited about the Charles Sturt medical school. I know a couple of the first bunch of postgraduates who are going in there to do medicine. They are country people wanting to work in country environments. I am really excited about the potential for that. I commend the member for bringing the motion to the House and I look forward to working with her in the future.

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (20:15):** I thank Dr Amanda Cohn for bringing this motion to the House for debate. One of the most important matters that governments in New South Wales have tackled and will continue to tackle is the provision of health services around the State, particularly in regional, rural and remote New South Wales. It exercises the minds of those in government, of Ministers, of those in the department and of politicians representing people.

As chair of Portfolio Committee No.2 – Health, I had the good fortune of being involved in the inquiry into rural and regional health in this State. I am sure Dr Cohn has read the report and is familiar with it. As we travelled from town to town around the State, there was a rush of locals wanting to put forward ideas, thoughts and considerations that they believed, if given fair airing and examination, may help to address the shortages in their community. The anxiety around attracting people to regional areas and then keeping them is palpable. I am sure the honourable member appreciates that because she is a doctor. Everywhere we went, we experienced this palpable desire of communities to work with not only their members of Parliament but also their local councils. The member would be aware that councils are providing housing incentives to try to attract people to live in those areas.

I acknowledge the work of the Hon. Bronnie Taylor when she was the regional health Minister. She went around the State off the back of the inquiry. We might debate aspects of that inquiry and report, but I genuinely think she tried to mine the thoughts and ideas of those communities and plough them into some of the initiatives that the former Government launched in the past 12 months or so.

The point the honourable member made about the Commonwealth-State relationship is intrinsically important. Labor governments are in power at the Federal and State levels. Hopefully there will be some way of engaging with other States and Territories—and even directly with the Commonwealth—to examine the ideas being put forward all the time to put downward pressure on the shortage of doctors and clinical staff across the health workforce. I commend the member for bringing the motion and commend the amendment to the House.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (20:18):** I speak in favour of the amendment moved by my colleague the honourable Minister Houssos, and also commend the motion moved by Dr Amanda Cohn. I am pleased that

someone with her experience and knowledge has joined us in this place. All members know this is an issue in rural and regional New South Wales. The matter of locums is best dealt with through the national Health Workforce Taskforce—that is a mouthful—as has been articulated previously. As the Hon. Bronnie Taylor stated, all States are facing this issue at the moment and it needs to be addressed. The matter must not be ignored. I will do all I can in my capacity to work with Dr Amanda Cohn to find the solutions that we need for this issue that acutely affects doctors and all health clinicians in our frontline services.

The amendment ensures that we are not closing down the vital healthcare facilities that we need, particularly in the regions. We are working on finding solutions to the issues that the member raised. The use of agency staff, including agency nurses and medical locums, is part of a suite of options that are currently used to ensure that service delivery is maintained. They cover shifts from absent staff and also fill vacancies. We have seen a real imbalance between the supply and demand of skilled workers, as have other States and Territories and the world more broadly. The national health workforce task force, of which we are a member in New South Wales, is considering the issue of supply and demand, particularly of medical locums.

The safety, welfare and wellbeing of NSW Health clients and patients is paramount. NSW Health is committed to ensuring that effective systems protect patients, clients, staff and their assets. I highlight that health staff accommodation is also an important factor for the recruitment and retention of health staff, particularly in regional areas. A number of health worker accommodation projects have been completed and others are under construction or in the planning stages, particularly across regional New South Wales. I thank the member for moving the motion and commend the amendments to the House.

**Dr AMANDA COHN (20:21):** In reply: I am buoyed to have support on the motion across party lines. I am delighted to hear that the new Government is willing to examine this issue. I am very confident that it will reach the same conclusion that I did and that the Garling report did in 2008. I reemphasise that the motion is not about ending the use of locum doctors or agency nurses; it is about ending the use of private agencies for their recruitment and management, which is much more efficient for NSW Health. I also hope for cooperation from other States. A Federal response would be wonderful. But the situation facing health care in New South Wales, particularly in rural and regional areas, is so dire that we cannot afford to wait for action from the Federal Government or other States before this Government takes the action that is needed now.

**The PRESIDENT:** Dr Amanda Cohn has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Courtney Houssos has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

#### *Business of the House*

### **POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS**

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH:** On behalf of the Hon. Scott Farlow: I move:

That private members' business item No. 173 be postponed until a later hour of the sitting.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Motions*

### **WESTCONNEX**

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (20:23):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) on 15 June 2023, the Minister for Roads, the Hon. John Graham, called the Rozelle Interchange "an incredible project";
  - (b) the Rozelle Interchange is the final part of WestConnex, a project planned and majority delivered by the former Liberal-Nationals Government;
  - (c) WestConnex will deliver countless hours of time savings for drivers and reduce surface traffic across Sydney;
  - (d) WestConnex was opposed by Labor; and
  - (e) on the 14 March 2023, the Minister for Transport, the Hon. Jo Haylen, MP, claimed to have never opposed WestConnex, which was later declared false by the Australian Associated Press.
- (2) That this House calls upon the Government to:
  - (a) publicly declare if it supports WestConnex;

- (b) outline its vision for delivering public transport infrastructure including how it will pay for new infrastructure projects; and
- (c) acknowledge that projects like WestConnex deliver value to the people of New South Wales.

I support the motion and call on the Government to back it in. The motion does two things: It acknowledges the hypocrisy of the Government and gives it an invitation to come clean once and for all. I have put on record on numerous occasions the hypocrisy of the Government. It said one thing before the election and a different thing happened afterwards. The Minister for Roads has taken credit for projects that the former Liberal-Nationals Government undertook, yet all he did in opposition was criticise them. The Minister for Transport either does not know her own record or does not think that it matters. Earlier this month we saw another exclusive from the Minister for Roads regarding Labor's new favourite project: WestConnex.

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** Our project.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Our project. Even now I can clearly remember the grab. The Minister for Roads was wearing a hard hat, underground in a tunnel. While in the tunnel, he said, "Where are we?" The Minister for Roads, with enough make-up on to cover an embarrassing blush, touted the benefits of the project. He called it incredible, which is fair enough because it is an incredible project. WestConnex supported 10,000 jobs during construction. It shifted traffic and heavy vehicles to the underground motorways and returned local streets to local communities. It will allow motorists using WestConnex to avoid 52 sets of traffic lights. It will significantly reduce congestion at a number of bottlenecks, including on Victoria Road, which we have heard so much about, between Iron Cove Bridge and Anzac Bridge. It will improve the speed, reliability and safety of travel across the city. But herein lies the contradiction. Guess who does not love it? The head of his department and his boss, the Minister for Transport, does not love it.

**The Hon. Chris Rath:** What did she say?

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** I am glad you asked. She opposed WestConnex for two terms in opposition and then—shock, horror—a week before the election she said on 2GB that she "never opposed WestConnex", which the Australian Associated Press then declared false. It is one thing in the cut and thrust of a campaign to get a bit of detail mixed up here and there, but to blatantly lie to the people of New South Wales on live radio is something else. If the Minister was not lying when she said that she did not oppose it, then she does not know her own record.

I note the Minister for Transport's record on game-changing projects like WestConnex. She called it a plan to "rip a hole through the inner west". She said, "WestConnex fails when it comes to traffic congestion." Government members have a chance to come clean and answer a simple question. They can get around the Cabinet table, call the union bosses and organise a press conference, with the Minister for Roads on one side and the Minister for Transport on the other side. They can say once and for all whether they support WestConnex. They can also come clean and say what, if any, projects they intend to build in Western Sydney. They can tell us what they are going to commit to.

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** We built them all. We did their job.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** A lot has already been built, but they can commit to the few bits that are left. We ask them to acknowledge once and for all, clearly and unequivocally, that WestConnex is beneficial to Sydney residents. It is a fantastic project that we know has saved people time and effort, getting them home to their families faster, getting tradies across the network efficiently and improving safety across the network. I commend the motion to the House. I commend all members of both Houses to recognise this game-changing project.

I am pleased that Government members are taking credit for it and that they are cutting ribbons on the projects we fought hard for. Those projects ultimately benefit the people driving on our roads and gets them home. Some 52 sets of traffic lights is not an insignificant contribution to making people's lives better in New South Wales. That is why I call on the Government to ensure that projects like WestConnex continue; to acknowledge that those projects deliver value to the people of this State; and to acknowledge that our vision for Infrastructure NSW is paying off. People love those roads. The Minister for Roads has travelled on them. They are incredible game-changing projects. I commend the Minister for Roads for saying it is an incredible project. I commend the motion to the House.

**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) (20:28):** This motion is one of the silliest I have seen.

**The Hon. Mark Buttigieg:** That is a big call.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM:** I know that is a big call, but I make it regardless. I happily confess that they are incredible bits of engineering. I spelt out ahead of the election and I say now that they have also come at an incredible cost to the toll-paying taxpayers of New South Wales. That complexity is why we are seeking to engage the public in a dialogue. There is no sense in pretending that they are not incredible bits of engineering. Being underground at the Rozelle Interchange and seeing the engineering work that was constructed and led by government—along with the public sector—was quite incredible. It was done in a way that has not been done for many projects in any Australian jurisdiction in recent years.

These are incredible projects but they have an incredible toll bill. That is the legacy that New South Wales has been left with. We have different priorities. The shadow Minister knows that. We will shift the dial towards local roads, following the advice of Infrastructure NSW. I commend the transport Minister for her strong start early in the job. We are working closely together but we are not assisted by the cost overruns of the former Government. We have already highlighted a \$1.4 billion blowout on one of the key roads. Opposition members may not think there is not plenty more work to do, but I found it quite confronting when we were briefed on the roads needs around the airport. As the Western Sydney airport rises from the ground, it is going to be a huge challenge for the Government as it looks to how to fund those roads.

Government can be hard but we are enjoying the challenge at the moment, including the Rozelle Interchange. I encourage members to drive through it but be careful as you pay the tolls. They should keep an eye on that cost ticking up, as it does. We still do not know how much that total cost will be, but I guarantee the House and the public—we made some estimates—that motorists have signed up to tens of billions of dollars. The former Government never released that but we will release those figures. We will come clean with the public about exactly the cost of the bill.

**The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (20:31):** Mr President—

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** Strap in!

**The Hon. Natalie Ward:** It will be a wild ride through the WestConnex.

**The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO:** Actually, it is a very smooth ride through the WestConnex. I use it regularly and I use it with the knowledge that Labor members opposed WestConnex every step of the way but now they want to claim credit for it. The scissor-holding hands of the Minister must be well practised by now, cutting the ribbons of the projects that we started. Those projects took significant political will to commence. It was not just a flippant decision. It was hours of consultation, work with engineers, planning and environmental impact statements. It is the kind of work that goes into State-changing projects. They are infrastructure projects that change the lives of people who use them. We know that they do not happen overnight. They happen over years because they are worth investing in.

On this side of the House we understand that when you are in government you have to invest in projects. You have to get a return on that investment and calculate what the best return on investment will be. That is why we are investing in game-changing projects, like WestConnex, that change people's lives. As the Hon. Natalie Ward said, the transport Minister said she never opposed WestConnex but the Australian Associated Press declared that false. The fact that we need to fact check our now Ministers means we will need to interrogate the comments they made about projects that we supported and delivered from the very beginning. We know that WestConnex saves drivers countless hours on the road. It supported 10,000 jobs during consultation, which is absolutely fantastic. It shifted through traffic and heavy vehicles to undergrounds motorways.

I worked for the City of Sydney Council during the WestConnex construction phase when the community was engaged so they could understand the benefits of the project and how it impacted them. Those residents were ably consulted with. They were given opportunities to give feedback on the plans and to understand how the construction sites would impact them. Now that WestConnex is built, they receive the benefit of not having heavy vehicles and traffic going through their local roads. It is significantly reducing congestion at a number of bottlenecks and improving the safety and reliability of movement of traffic across the city. Labor wants it both ways. It wants to claim credit for the former Government's work in the media yet it criticises how we delivered it. I look forward to seeing how members on that side of the House aim to get things done now that they are in government.

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH (20:35):** How good is WestConnex! The Hon. John Graham must be the luckiest roads Minister in the State's history because he will have the honour of cutting the ribbons for all the infrastructure that was planned and funded by the previous Government. He will get repetitive strain injury from all the ribbons he will cut in the next four years. He is the luckiest roads Minister in the history of New South Wales. The huge infrastructure pipeline delivered by the previous Government might last for the next few years because of what we did when we were in government but it will not last forever. If the Government does not have tolls, rules out

asset recycling and abolishes the wages cap, it will never build any new infrastructure projects in Western Sydney again—it will not be able to afford infrastructure like WestConnex if it rules those things out.

Labor has a history of opposing and promising but never delivering major road projects. In Labor's last term it promised the M4 East—announced in 2002, 2004 and 2006—the M5 duplication and widening, the NorthConnex and the M6 Stage 1. Unsurprisingly, it never delivered any of these projects, but the former Coalition Government completed three of those projects and commenced the other. I remind members that to date the Government has already scrapped the Beaches Link and Blackheath to Little Hartley tunnel. It seems this Government has learned from the ghosts of Obeid and Tripodi and has either scrapped major projects or has not committed to or announced new major infrastructure projects. We know why the Government is scrapping major infrastructure projects. It got lucky on WestConnex because it was funded and delivered by us. We know that it will not deliver future infrastructure projects. It will not be able to afford to because it has capitulated to the trade union bosses.

This Government has not answered whether it will remain committed to fund the former Government's record infrastructure pipeline for New South Wales. My prediction is it will not. The Treasurer signalled in his economic statement last week a significant austerity budget and laid the groundwork to scrap further infrastructure projects. The first one on the chopping block is the Sydney Metro. Members opposite hate the Sydney Metro, just like they hated WestConnex but we delivered it. I thank god that WestConnex has not been chopped.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (20:38):** I oppose the motion moved by the Hon. Natalie Ward. While the Opposition was in government it liked to boast about the fact that it got WestConnex off the ground and that it built WestConnex. I was on the inquiry into WestConnex and I heard multiple things about businesses, houses and communities that were completely upended and whose lives were ruined as a result of that motorway. Tellingly I also heard that within government there was a prioritisation of WestConnex and Transurban motorways to the expense of other options being considered. Multiple billions of dollars went towards Transurban and WestConnex at the expense of all other options. They are the failures and opportunity costs of the now Opposition, and possibly the current Government, because of the cosy relationship with Transurban and the obsession with tollways.

What we have seen as a result of that is so many people and so many families are unable to afford those tolls to drive around to get from one part of Sydney to another. When the Coalition was in government it was absolutely obsessed with building more and more toll roads at the expense of public transport and every other option, as did Labor before that. After 12 years in government, the new Opposition has a policy vacuum and a vision vacuum. Now in opposition, it is not really sure what to do on private members' business day. I certainly hope that we get some private members' motions. We do not want to just sit on the crossbench with the Labor Government—The Greens on the same side as the Government. Give us something that is worth supporting and we will support it.

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

Give us some good policy based on merit and we will support it.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**The Hon. John Graham:** Point of order—

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I remind the Hon. Wes Fang that he is on two calls to order. The Deputy Leader of the Government has taken a point of order.

**The Hon. John Graham:** You have taken the words out of my mouth, Mr President. I was just going to remind you that you placed the Hon. Wes Fang on two calls to order earlier and draw your attention to Standing Order 197.

**The PRESIDENT:** Honourable members must have heard the rumour that we will potentially adjourn after this motion, which is very exciting, so let's not drag it out. Ms Cate Faehrmann has the call.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** My time has expired, Mr President. The Greens do not support— *[Time expired.]*

**The Hon. WES FANG (20:41):** Mr President—

**The Hon. John Graham:** You are on two calls!

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I thank the Deputy Leader of the Government for reminding me that I am on two calls to order. That is why I am standing up at the dispatch box to make a contribution to debate on this motion, as opposed to making it from the lounge. I lend my support to the Hon. Natalie Ward and the motion that the

Coalition has moved in this House today, because we are the parties that build things. Here is the real truth about it: Not only did we build WestConnex but we built so many other transport links. We built the metro. We built NorthConnex. We had plans to build so many more things, and the Government has cut them all.

**The Hon. Natalie Ward:** Western Sydney airport.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** That is the truth of it. Not only did we do those things, which are amazing—and I note the former Minister acknowledges how wonderful the engineering feats and the delivery of those projects were—but we continue to support the communities out in western New South Wales through hospitals. I note that the health Minister is in the gallery. Welcome, Minister, to this place. I hope that he appreciates the genteel and kind nature with which we conduct debate in this House, as opposed to the rabble in the other place. The Minister would know how well we built hospitals, schools and infrastructure in this State, and we still did WestConnex. What have we seen from those opposite? Cut, cut, cut. The finance Minister is also in the Chamber. It is her razor gang that is cutting the projects that former Ministers the Hon. Natalie Ward and the Hon. Sam Faraway had planned for this State. The only cuts, cuts, cuts that they are doing are to infrastructure and to our ribbons: cut, cut, cut to the budget and to our ribbons. There is nothing that they are delivering.

*[Government members interjected.]*

The Minister can make a contribution in a minute. She should be on a call to order at least.

**The PRESIDENT:** The Hon. Wes Fang has the call.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** In this House, we must acknowledge that WestConnex has been an absolute game changer for the people of Sydney. When The Greens try to criticise what was transformative and well-delivered infrastructure, it belies the fact that they have no vision and have no plans for Sydney, only opposition. That is a real tragedy. It only goes to serve why they are on the crossbench and will never be a mainstream party. At the end of the day, governments need to deliver, and the Liberal-Nationals Government delivered.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (20:44):** I support the motion moved by my friend the Hon Natalie Ward, who obviously knows about and played an important role in delivering many of the incredible infrastructure projects that were delivered by the last Government. I acknowledge the passion and the importance of infrastructure when it comes to the discussion of such policies relating to the WestConnex. One of the key infrastructure projects of the Perrottet Government is the WestConnex. As the Hon. Natalie Ward mentioned, it is a wonderful piece of infrastructure that allows drivers to avoid 52 sets of traffic lights and reduces congestion across a wide range of bottlenecks, including Victoria Road between the Anzac and Iron Cove bridges.

When I came across this motion, I thought I would do a quick Google search of "Jo Haylen WestConnex"—Jo Haylen the transport Minister in the Minns Government. The evidence of her not supporting WestConnex is right there on her own website. From 7 November 2019, she reports, "I remain firmly opposed to all stages of the WestConnex project." Of course, as the benefits of WestConnex have become beyond doubt, Jo Haylen felt the need to claim she had supported this project that has dramatically improved outcomes for road users. That is families. That is workers. Labor played an each-way bet on the project, and no-one delivers infrastructure playing both sides. I look forward to the opening of the Rozelle Interchange and the Iron Cove Link. WestConnex is one of a plethora of infrastructure projects totalling \$112 billion that was required after a lacklustre 16 years of Labor Government.

This motion asks a very important question: What is Labor's vision today, if any? Back when opposing WestConnex, Jo Haylen said investing in public transport was the answer. We did that too. The metro is a great example. It did not exist in 2011. Now, around 70 kilometres of track has been laid and we had a plan for another 100 kilometres. The Liberal-Nationals promised a further four more metro routes to futureproof our transport network. This included a line from Bankstown to Glenfield via Liverpool and a line that would link the new Western Sydney airport to Westmead. That would be on top of the key M12 motorway that links the M7—*[Time expired.]*

**The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (20:48):** I support the motion of my colleague the Hon. Natalie Ward, as I too am curious as to what the Government will deliver in its current term of government. The Government cannot have its cake and eat it too or bask in the glory of the previous Liberal-Nationals Government's transformative infrastructure program of delivery. Labor appears content to claim credit for infrastructure such as WestConnex, which, incidentally, saves hours of travel. I drove on it on Monday when I attended a Rotary changeover dinner. Talk about getting to my destination in a safe and timely manner! It has no congestion and, as has already been said, avoids 52 sets of lights, to name a few of the benefits. Yet it was opposed every step of the way by Labor. As a regional person who sometimes travelled to Sydney, I used to hate coming to Sydney. Ten

years ago, what took me an hour to drive in Sydney, I could cover almost 100 kilometres in country New South Wales. Traffic delays, traffic lights—what do you call it when people are raging?

**The Hon. Natalie Ward:** Road rage.

**The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD:** Road rage and all those kinds of things—I hated it. Now I do not mind because I can get in my car and get to my destination quick and easy. The only plans I see from the Government are plans to significantly reduce or cut infrastructure projects altogether. I challenge Labor to outline a transformative infrastructure vision of which New South Wales can be proud. It would be good for Labor to acknowledge game-changing projects such as WestConnex. The people of New South Wales need confirmation and affirmation that projects are planned by this Government and that they will not just ride on the Coalition's coat-tails and cut ribbons on projects started by us. Tell us your vision and acknowledge projects that deliver benefits to the people of New South Wales.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (20:50):** I am delighted to make a contribution. I might surprise the House because I am not going to support the motion. There are a couple of reasons why I will not support it. While I was listening, I was debating myself on whether I would make a contribution.

*[Interruption]*

Well, I need to speak to someone intelligent. I thought, "Where do I sit on this?" I was listening to Liberals tell us how wonderful WestConnex is and how they enjoy going through it. I think the Hon. Jacqui Munro said it was such a smooth ride. On a couple of occasions I have actually gone into WestConnex, and you are right; it is a smooth ride—very empty. I have been there on my own. The reason I have been there on my own is because it is really costly. That is what the Opposition does not get. It is really costly. I am delighted to hear that the other side is going to conduct a proper review into the full cost of WestConnex, because we need to know whether it was value for money and why the punters from Western Sydney are, ultimately, paying for it. That is what happened.

I remember when I was first a member in the other place, I was part of the roads committee. One of the first things that the Liberals moved on that committee was a road-pricing agenda. They wanted an inquiry into road pricing. This huge agenda to toll the people of New South Wales started back in 2011. I sat in that committee and I remember how keen the Chair—the member for Strathfield, Charles Casuscelli—and the Liberals on that committee were on pushing this agenda of road pricing and tolling. That is what has happened here. The Coalition has become addicted to tolling. I cannot agree when I hear Opposition members talk about how wonderful it is to go through WestConnex when most people in Western Sydney are not going through it. That is the reality. I know people who do everything they can to avoid WestConnex because it costs too much. So before Opposition members boast about it and pat themselves on the back, they might want to look at the election result. They lost. It is time to stop patting themselves on the back and understand that they lost.

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** They have to cope with this loss, step forward and be a real Opposition instead of patting themselves on the back for project after project. They do not understand that people did not say, "Thank you very much. We are voting for you." They said "No." Wake up! It is very frustrating. It is costly. The tolls are horrific."

**The Hon. Rod Roberts:** You can redo your induction.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK:** I am sorry, the Hon. Rod Roberts, but our constituents—One Nation voters—do not want to pay those tolls. *[Time expired.]*

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (20:53):** I congratulate the Hon. Chris Rath on his continuing intellectual integrity on neoliberalism, asset recycling and privatising everything in sight. The private sector always does things better—toll roads, thousands of dollars a year just to get from point A to point B, electricity prices through the roof because the public sector cannot do it better. It is really respectable, and I thank him! *[Time expired.]*

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (20:54):** In reply: I thank all honourable members for their contributions. The roads Minister, the Hon. John Graham, I will not say he has his L plates on. He certainly has his hard hat on. I look forward to our invitation to attend the opening of the Rozelle Interchange. I think it is a fantastic project. The cost blowouts are, of course, a result of not having a wages cap in place. An unfunded commitment to pay union mates is clearly the Government's choice. That is what governments have—choices. I thank the Hon. Jacqui Munro for her contribution. She is making a spectacular contribution to this place. The Hon. Chris Rath recognised that we now have to pay this Government's trade union mates. Shame on that. I acknowledge the contribution of

Ms Cate Faehrmann. I say to the residents of the inner west that this project has provided them with a transformational area, because what used to be disused railyards in Rozelle—an empty area with long grass that nobody could access—will now be a big, green backyard for the inner west. It is a fantastic transformation of what was a dreadful area. I am pleased to see that.

Words cannot describe the Hon. Wes Fang's contribution. He is phenomenal, as always. I will not even go there. I will not invite his comments because we do not want him to get thrown out of the Chamber just yet. The Hon. Rachel Merton, who is also making a magnificent contribution, recognised the benefits of this project. As a country member, the Hon. Aileen MacDonald uses and benefits from this road, and she spoke to that. The Hon. Tania Mihailuk recognised that there is an associated cost. There is a cost to building infrastructure when there is an infrastructure pipeline of \$116 billion. But the great thing is that under the Liberal-Nationals Coalition people had a choice. They did not have to take WestConnex; they could sit at the 52 sets of traffic lights, as they did under Labor for 16 years. They can continue to do that if they like. They have a choice: They can sit at traffic lights, as they did under Labor, or they can choose to drive through and avoid those traffic lights, as enabled by the former Coalition Government. The people who make the latter choice are very happy.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Deputy President Rod Roberts knows better than to interject.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** The people who choose to use those projects and roads save time so they can get home to their families faster at night. That is important. Tradies can get across the network efficiently. This is game changing for the people of Western Sydney. A saving of 40 minutes a day is huge. On that basis I commend the motion to the House. I thank all honourable members. We will stand by our record of game-changing infrastructure, because under 16 years of Labor nothing was built. We are very proud to stand by our record. We are happy for those opposite to cut the ribbons and steal our homework because they are great projects for the people of New South Wales.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....12  
 Noes .....22  
 Majority.....10

AYES

Carter	Maclaren-Jones	Rath (teller)
Fang (teller)	Merton	Taylor
Farraway	Mitchell	Tudehope
MacDonald	Munro	Ward

NOES

Banasiak	Higginson	Mookhey
Boyd	Houssos	Murphy (teller)
Buckingham	Hurst	Nanva (teller)
Buttigieg	Jackson	Primrose
Cohn	Kaine	Roberts
Donnelly	Lawrence	Sharpe
Faehrmann	Mihailuk	Suvaal
Graham		

PAIRS

Farlow	D'Adam
Martin	Moriarty

**Motion negatived.**

*Committees***SELECT COMMITTEE ON BIRTH TRAUMA****Deputy Chair and Membership**

**The PRESIDENT:** I inform the House that the Clerk has received the following nominations from the Leader of the Government and the Leader of the Opposition for membership of the Select Committee on Birth Trauma:

Government: The Hon. Anthony D'Adam

The Hon. Greg Donnelly

The Hon. Emily Suvaal

Opposition: The Hon. Susan Carter

The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell

Further, I inform the House that the Hon. Susan Carter was nominated by the Leader of the Opposition as the Deputy Chair of the Select Committee on Birth Trauma.

*Documents***TABLING OF PAPERS**

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** I table the following paper:

- (1) Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002—Report of the Department of Communities and Justice entitled *Statutory Review Report: Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002*, dated May 2023.

*Committees***PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE****Government Response**

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** I table the Government response to report No. 6 of the Public Works Committee entitled *Impact of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link*, tabled 5 December 2022.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (21:05):** I move:

That the House take note of the Government response.

**Debate adjourned.**

*Adjournment Debate***ADJOURNMENT**

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

**KOSCIUSKO NATIONAL PARK WILD HORSE MANAGEMENT**

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR (21:05):** I read onto the record a letter written by a constituent to the Premier, the Hon. Penny Sharpe and Steve Whan. The writer has not received a response. It states:

As I sit here to write this letter, I sadly ponder the fact that it will likely fall on deaf ears, but we are now at a point of frustration that we are unsure what else we can do.

Our family have been farming in the NSW Snowy Mountains High Country for over 100 years. I was fortunate to grow up horse riding, camping and fishing in the mountains where we also run cattle in the summer months on our 1200 acre property alongside the now Kosciusko National Park. Almost every year of my life, we have saddled up our horses and drove our cattle up the mountains for the summer months. Over two days as soon as the bull flies ease off after Christmas we would set off along the road to deliver them to fresher pastures, and as winter sets in, we drove them home again.

It's a pocket of land that we treasure greatly and that is regarded as "heaven" by many locals and visitors alike. In the spring time it is covered with wildflowers and the creeks and rivers have the cleanest freshest water you'll find anywhere in the world. The trees are healthy and the wildlife is abundant. Not a day goes by that we don't appreciate how fortunate we are to be caretakers of such a beautiful part of Australia.

Which is why we were in such horror with the recent culling spree by our neighbour (Kosciusko National Park) in May 2023, where 67 brumbies adjoining our property were shot under what we assume was the cover of darkness in a public area with no notification to either neighbours or the public and left laying to rot along side our pristine waterways, walking tracks and even at a very popular well used camp ground for everyone to see.

We appreciate that the brumby debate in the Snowy Mountains is a hot topic and whilst we agree that horse numbers need to be managed (our sub alpine zone has a retention policy under the Wild Horse Management Program), we don't agree with the methods used on this occasion and we are even more appalled by the ignorant decision of NPWS to leave the 67 carcasses laying to rot when they should have been removed, cremated or buried as any other landowner in Australia would be required to do by law. Now you may say (as Atticus Fleming did last week) that it's natural to let them decompose and return to the earth, and if it was a few carcasses in the bush then we would likely agree. But we are referring to 67 carcasses (approx. 33 tonne, so equivalent to over 600 kangaroos) left laying across a reasonably small public area for bushwalkers and campers to navigate around. The sight of something you honestly can't fathom until you see it for yourself and the smell of the rotting carcasses is putrid. It's a repulsive situation to even those of us that are unfortunately familiar to dealing with deceased animals, I can't imagine how visitors to our National Park feel when they come to visit or how young children react when they walk upon them.

And now, there is the flow on consequences for us and other neighbouring landholders. Feral animals travelling to feast on these carcasses. We are certainly no strangers to wild dogs and for many years have worked with National Parks to control numbers, however the food source that is now laying in the park is of epic proportions and as we are in a cool climate will also take much longer to decompose meaning an explosion of dog, fox and pig numbers which will pose a large threat to our livelihood and potentially also to the public.

And whilst Mr Fleming says the baiting program has been heavily increased, there isn't a local landholder around that believes the KNP will do enough baiting to avoid this disaster unfolding.

Unfortunately, the above issue is only one of the many serious concerns we have surrounding the management of KNP. The once pristine high country stretch bordering us at Snowy Plain is fast scrubbing up and becoming more inaccessible year after year and the risk of another intense bushfire potentially wiping us out yet again raises serious concerns.

...

As an Australian, to watch the deterioration of our public managed land is devastating and as a 5th generation landowner it's beyond frustrating. It's our responsibility for the short time we are on this Earth to take care of where we live and as a farmer, it's in our best interest to do so and ensure the land is thriving for the next generation to continue the tradition. The NSW Government needs to realise that we aren't the enemy and to understand that the local landholders and neighbours have passion and experience on our side. We all want the same result, a healthy environment for everyone to enjoy both now and years after we are gone.

We and many other adjoining landowners to NSW National Parks share major concerns over the current management of our public land (and in this case the KNP in particular). Every year feels like another nail in the coffin to our way of life up here to be honest. A kick in the face from a seemingly untouchable government agency that are a law unto themselves.

So what are we asking for? Firstly, for the carcasses to be dealt with appropriately, as should have been done in the first place. Secondly, communication and consideration. It's a simple one really. As neighbours, we feel that some form of communication and consideration would be appropriate. That when we lodge submissions we should receive a response (not just a generic reply). When we have concerns that they are heard and when we have issues, that they are addressed. Local rangers/staff aren't to blame here either. Their hands are often tied and they are doing what they can within the rules made by those in the city.

Last but certainly not least, an enquiry into National Parks and Wildlife Services land management practices and their policies.

This is an issue that needs addressing from above and soon, before there is nothing but ashes left.

That letter was written by Lisa Rowbotham, a brave and courageous woman who makes a lot of sense. I am surprised it has not been raised by the Animal Justice Party or The Greens in this House.

### MONA VALE BASIN

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (21:11):** On behalf of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party [SFF], I congratulate an elite—not to be confused with elitist—group of incredibly dedicated fishos who banded together to achieve a small but respectable victory last night in a fight they did not start for a battle they should not have been in from the beginning. I speak about the Mona Vale fishing community and the group known widely as Mona Vale Basin 4 All, a community group whose freedoms were threatened by sudden and unprovoked action from a group of swimmers who decided they wanted the basin all to themselves. I attended the very first meeting with this group only a mere 2½ half weeks ago. In record time, the unwilling participants gathered and pulled out all stops to fight for their right to equal access of their own shared aquatic backyard.

The proponents of the hideous motion to convert Mona Vale Basin into a no-take aquatic reserve can wash off their dirty tactics in the basin, which they still have free access to because us fishos are a forgiving bunch, albeit a little disappointed. The motion was tabled at a Northern Beaches Council meeting last night. The turnout and support for Mona Vale Basin 4 All was exponential. Council staff were frantically searching for extra chairs as supporters spilled out from the gallery into the foyer. The proponents might have had the front two rows but I think the fishos had the rest. It was phenomenal to see a community that is traditionally somewhat reserved and isolated come together in peaceful unity in support of what was theirs to share originally and should be for a long time to come.

Council acknowledged the overwhelming flurry of emails and support from community members against the motion right down to an email received by the mayor from the NSW Aboriginal Land Council in the dying hours. Sighting the motion, council immediately drafted an amendment where the mover removed "no-take" from the proposal—a first win for us—then, after a moment of reflection, realised that the acknowledged motion had no place in council and it had no jurisdiction to implement the change, instead referring the matter for consultation

to Fisheries NSW, the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for the Environment to follow up—where it belongs.

We applaud the reactive actions of the group. The resources collected in such a short period of time, including the support of a marine biologist, ensured the unwinding of the proponents' lead arguments, which was about seagrass. Seagrass is not sharp enough to cut the argument, especially when it does not exist in the basin. I acknowledge my staff member Chris Dorahy, who attended the meeting on my behalf. Members get paid to work for long hours but our staff do not. I commend him for representing me on behalf of my party when I had duties in this House. If the motion lands on both Ministers' desks, SFF looks forward to consulting with them on the matter.

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LAWS

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (21:14):** I raise an important issue concerning some of the most vulnerable people in the State, namely Aboriginal women who have been victims of domestic violence in western New South Wales. The issue relates to the NSW Police Force prosecuting such women for an offence of making a false accusation or public mischief in circumstances where they retract allegations of domestic violence. I am talking about circumstances where the police rely on the retraction itself as the only evidence that the original allegation was in fact a false allegation. I am aware of a number of cases where victims have been jailed in these circumstances. I became aware of the issue when I was working at the Aboriginal Legal Service in Dubbo. The usual example involves a woman making a complaint of domestic violence and the partner or relative being charged. Time passes, and the woman retracts the complaint. That sometimes occurs on oath.

As I am sure many members are aware, such retractions in domestic violence allegations are very common and they do not necessarily suggest that the original allegation was false. In my experience, normally in that situation police will believe the original allegation and believe that the person has been a victim. In some circumstances they will accept that they cannot be sure and that they cannot prove which statement was true or untrue—that is, the original statement in which the allegation was made or the retraction. In saying these things, I am not suggesting that in no circumstances should such a complainant who makes an allegation of domestic violence not be charged with making a false accusation. It will sometimes be the case that such an allegation can be proved to be false, and a person should of course be charged in that situation. However, in my experience, some police officers take the view—and this perhaps occurs out of frustration with the process of retraction—that they will simply hold the victim to their most recent statement and charge them for having made a false statement. That places the women in an invidious situation that I am sure members of the House will understand.

It is often the case that such allegations are retracted out of fear or out of concern to keep a family together, or in a range of other circumstances. I am aware of cases where pleas of guilty have been entered to charges of false accusation when the person was not in fact guilty, and where the plea of guilty can only be viewed as a continuation of the retraction process. I thought that this issue had been dealt with years ago when I became involved in working with the Aboriginal Legal Service. At the time, there was some media and political scrutiny, but I have recently learned that the practice has apparently re-emerged in far western New South Wales. I have spoken to a number of solicitors from Legal Aid and the Aboriginal Legal Service who are most dismayed about the re-emergence of this practice.

The stories that I became aware of in my previous role were absolutely horrific. They included cases where police officers had suggested in court to complainants that they had been assaulted, and then charged those women not long afterwards for lying in the original allegation. Such police behaviour is contradictory, opportunistic and punitive, and it risks miscarriages of justice. A large number of the Aboriginal Legal Service cases I reviewed in 2013-14 were of women who served time in jail as a consequence of this. I have been advocating on their behalf and I am confident we will see reform in this area. I bring it to the attention of the House because it does not just pertain to these cases or cases in this category. It raises broader issues around miscarriages of justice and how the criminal justice system is operating.

The ultimate solution to this problem is twofold. Firstly, I think all such matters should have the carriage of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Any circumstance where charging a complainant in a domestic violence or sexual assault matter with such an offence is being contemplated should be decided by a lawyer who applies a policy. Secondly, I think there are broader issues around cultural change and training that may need to occur in the Police Force to ensure that these appalling miscarriages of justice do not continue to occur. These women are certainly among the most vulnerable in the State, and their circumstances can be well and truly hidden when they plead guilty as part of a continuation of a retraction.

## UNIVERSAL SCREENING AND SUPPORTS PILOT

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (21:20):** I speak on the significance of the \$4.7 million Universal Screening and Supports Pilot, which was introduced by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government. The initiative aims to provide universal screening and wraparound support services to students who may be at risk of homelessness or who are not reaching their full potential in school. The objective of the pilot programs is to enhance outcomes and tackle issues that could potentially lead a young individual to experience homelessness or to disengage from their education. The pilots were launched by the former Government in Mount Druitt and Albury, areas identified at the time as having high levels of disadvantage.

It is the responsibility of all of us to protect our children and the most vulnerable members of our society. Collaboration between the private sector, non-government organisations and all levels of government is critical to improving the quality of life in New South Wales and breaking the cycle of disadvantage. That can be achieved through the delivery of programs that prioritise services for those in greatest need. Barnardos Australia, in collaboration with local communities, is leading efforts for the Mount Druitt project by supporting four local high schools. Similarly, the Albury project is being spearheaded by Yes Unlimited, also in partnership with local communities, to provide support to three local high schools. Those organisations play a vital role in facilitating the program within schools, connecting students who are at risk of potential homelessness with the specific support they require, including assistance from relevant community organisations.

As part of the program, students from years 7 to 12 complete an annual survey to identify those at risk. The survey delves into their living situation, family dynamics, cultural background, school experiences, and physical and mental health. The goal is to identify risk factors for homelessness and disconnection, such as family conflicts or mental health challenges. Earlier this year I had the opportunity of joining the member for Albury, the Hon. Justin Clancy, who has been a staunch advocate of the pilot since it started a couple of years ago, to meet Yes Unlimited CEO Di Glover. I was pleased to hear about the ongoing impact of the program, the support it has given to the community and the success it has delivered for local young people. The program empowers young individuals to address factors in their lives that may increase their vulnerability to future homelessness or early school leaving without a clear plan.

It is a truly collaborative initiative that originates from the community, bringing together partners such as schools and emergency accommodation providers that recognise the value of shared early intervention. They pool their resources and work closely together to develop tailored solutions for at-risk individuals. The core focus of the pilot is not simply crisis management for young people who have already become homeless, but rather the establishment of a system that drives positive change to prevent homelessness. It uses an evidence-based approach that collects and analyses data, and draws on the collective experience, energy, contacts and resources of multiple agencies to provide customised solutions based on individuals' circumstances.

Signs of potential disconnection from school and home often manifest well before a crisis arises. By learning how to identify those signs and understanding how various factors interact in a young person's life, they can be set on a positive pathway. Our communities already possess many valuable resources that contribute to supporting young individuals and their families and reduce the likelihood of adverse outcomes such as homelessness. The Universal Screening and Supports Pilot has proven immensely beneficial for students, with not only their educational achievements but also their personal growth. Moreover, the initiative plays a vital and critical role in preventing homelessness amongst our vulnerable youth, ensuring that more young people can fulfill their potential after leaving school and integrate into the community.

In addition to providing the necessary support to students, the pilot has alleviated some of the pressures faced by families in need of assistance. What sets the initiative apart is its tailored approach, where providers work closely with each young person and their family to ensure that the support and assistance meet their unique needs. Previously, young individuals and families in need were unaware of how to access the available support. Through the dedicated efforts of organisations such as Barnardos and Yes Unlimited, those young people and their families are being connected with the various support groups they need. The evidence-based approach, driven by data analysis, is proving to be successful. I call on the Labor Government to not only invest in continuing the program but also expand it across New South Wales.

## HARTFORD COLLEGE

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (21:25):** I report to the House a wonderful new education initiative that opened this year: Hartford College in Daceyville. The driving force behind the idea of this impressive new liberal arts school for boy from years 5 to 12 are the founding parents, Tim Mitchell and Ms Penny Wright. The new school is the first of its kind, not just in New South Wales but in Australia, and I expect others of its kind will follow. It has been established with a very clear mission and vision:

Hartford's Mission is to profoundly engage and integrate its parental and teaching community to develop students with sound moral character, well-formed faith and a life-long passion for the pursuit of truth through a classical education.

The college's vision is to be the best school for boys in Sydney, providing an integrated liberal arts education to develop academic and personal excellence in the Catholic tradition. The school's motto "Dare to think; dare to know" directly challenges the common sentiment of groupthink that permeates to such a degree throughout our society today. It encourages students to think outside the box, to ask difficult questions and to have the courage to pursue the truth. Hartford College has also established a clear set of values that apply to parents, teachers and students, and that will underpin all that it does:

#### *Parents*

- Facilitating the development of Christian virtues and moral character in the Catholic tradition in the young men of Hartford College
- Drawing vigour, commitment and vision from a deep engagement with our parental community.

#### *Teachers*

- Teaching the rich tapestry of the Catholic faith always in a spirit of well-formed freedom, encouraging young men to grow into men who flourish through the love and liberty of following God's grace.
- Growing a teaching group of the highest pedigree who approach their work with a spirit of support for each other, continuous learning and improvement and a single-minded desire to obtain the best outcomes for each student.
- Supporting our educators so that maximum resources are available to provide a tailored individual experience to each pupil.

#### *Students*

- Engendering a spirit of self-giving generosity that produces a zeal for life and a commitment to responsibility and service to society.
- Applying the best technologies to achieve academic excellence in all fields of educational endeavour whilst ensuring that technology is a tool and not a master.
- Upholding the pursuit of truth as a pathway to a happy fulfilling life that contributes to and augments the broader culture.
- Producing independent, critical, life-long learning skills in each student.

Hartford College has an engaging and rich curriculum, designed to impart well-rounded knowledge across multiple disciplines and develop critical and independent thinking skills. The liberal arts tradition has foundations in classical Greek antiquity, with great writers and thinkers such as Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Pythagoras and Homer. This tradition was carried on and developed through the ages with Cicero, Virgil, Ovid, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Chaucer, Milton, Tolstoy, Shakespeare, Newman, Tolkien, Lewis and more. Engaging with that extensive tradition, the liberal arts program includes:

- Studies in the classics and foundational texts of Western civilisation
- Solid mathematics, English, sciences and technology core
- Studies in history directed towards understanding our heritage and modern world
- Studies in philosophy as a basis for the love of truth and a critical mind
- Study of a non-English modern language and culture
- Awakening of the aesthetics through art, literature, music, and drama

Hartford College believes that character is a key developmental focus on the journey from childhood to adulthood and, so the school encourages the home and school to work closely together. That is why Hartford College employs a personal mentoring program. The program supports students through their time at school, acting as a sounding board, a developer of critical thinking, and a positive influence in their academic and personal life. The college mentors are typically teachers at the school and will catch up with their students on a regular basis to reflect on the past, and set goals for the future. These discussions will have a dual focus: first, on academic performance, work ethic and study attitudes; and second, on character development across all aspects of life. At the heart of this model are three educators: the parent, the teacher and the mentor, all working together to help their boys grow into well-rounded, virtuous men.

The school offers a range of both individual and team sports and clubs, along with various extracurricular activities. The school is fortunate to have its own chaplain. On behalf of the New South Wales Parliament, I both congratulate and thank Mr Tim Mitchell and Ms Penny Wright, and all those who have encouraged and supported them with their vision, determination and hard work to establish this excellent new boys school in Sydney's south-east. We also extend our best wishes to the school's board of directors, founding principal Frank Monagle, and the teaching and administration staff. May Hartford College grow, flourish and produce outstanding young men.

## WORKERS COMPENSATION

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (21:30):** Recently the Minister for Work Health and Safety, Sophie Cotsis, stepped in to prevent an over 20 per cent average increase in workers compensation premiums. This significant increase would have had a hugely detrimental impact on small businesses already dealing with the rising cost of living and recovery after the pandemic. Why was such a steep average increase even brought up in the first place? The former Liberal-Nationals Government did not make adequate increases to workers compensation premiums between 2014 and 2021, according to briefs given to Minister Cotsis. Last year the former Government was told that workers compensation premiums needed to be increased by 15 per cent but refused to act. That is why we are in this situation—because of the mismanagement of our workers compensation system by the former Liberal-Nationals Government.

Mismanagement of icare ran deep under the Liberals and The Nationals. For example, icare funds were used to pay at least \$700,000 for a former United States Republican political staffer to work in the Liberal Treasurer's office in 2017 and 2020. Icare contracts worth millions were awarded to a group with ties to the New South Wales Liberal Party, and some of the contracts were not put to open tender. In April Minister Cotsis wrote to icare to ensure that average increases to workers compensation premiums for the next three financial years could not be more than 8 per cent. Of course, 8 per cent will still impact small businesses. This Government has been forced to make difficult decisions because of the actions of the former Liberal-Nationals Government.

The inadequate increases to workers' compensation premiums left icare so underfunded that without more significant increases the stability of the scheme is at risk. Recently the Government had to pay a whopping \$669 million in emergency funding from December 2022 to replenish icare's Treasury Managed Fund, making certain that it can continue to function. The Liberals herald themselves as superior economic managers but one only has to look what they have done creating a \$7 billion black hole in unfunded programs, with overrun transport projects that will cost billions of dollars more than was originally forecast, and no funding for over 1,100 healthcare workers from next year.

The Government cannot fix issues that had a decade to fester under the Liberals and The Nationals overnight. We are committed to reforming and rebuilding our workers compensation system. Just today, Minister Cotsis introduced a bill in the other place that will provide a more representative icare board, for the first time allowing employee and employer representatives to be nominated as directors of the board. I acknowledge Minister Cotsis and Treasurer Daniel Mookhey for their ongoing work to repair our State's beleaguered workers compensation system. The previous Liberal-Nationals Government presided over the chronic maladministration of icare whereby injured workers were not receiving the care and compensation they deserve. On top of that, it pretended the funding problem would go away and allowed premium increases to slip by failing to match premiums with liabilities, which in turn would have led to over 20 per cent increases in premiums for businesses this year.

It is now left to our Government to fix the mess—and there is much to do. But this intervention by Minister Cotsis is an important one in ensuring businesses can at least get some respite by limiting premium increases to 8 per cent. We heard of the litany of maladministration, spending on executive bonuses and rorts that went on in that organisation. Care was not delivered and people were not put at the centre of outcomes—which is good care and compensation and, when people are injured, knowing they will be looked after by the workers compensation system. Not only was the outcome not successful but also we do not have the funding to keep up with the liability because the former Government kept putting it off, thinking it would go away. This will take a long time to fix but we are committed to fixing it because this Government wants to prioritise workers outcomes, not profit.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**The House adjourned at 21:35 until Thursday 29 June 2023 at 10:00.**