



New South Wales

Legislative Council

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Eighth Parliament
First Session**

Tuesday 1 August 2023

Authorised by the Parliament of New South Wales

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Tuesday 1 August 2023

The PRESIDENT (The Hon. Benjamin Cameron Franklin) took the chair at 12:30.

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.

Bills

PARLIAMENTARY REMUNERATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL 2023

STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICES REMUNERATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT (RENTAL FAIRNESS) BILL 2023

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

CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ASSAULTS ON RETAIL WORKERS) BILL 2023

CRIMINAL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (KNIFE CRIMES) BILL 2023

LAW ENFORCEMENT (POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES) AMENDMENT (DIGITAL EVIDENCE ACCESS ORDERS) BILL 2023

Assent

The PRESIDENT: I report receipt of messages from the Governor notifying Her Excellency's assent to the bills.

Documents

LAW ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT COMMISSION

Reports

The PRESIDENT: According to the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act 2016, I table a report of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission entitled *Operation Venti: Report pursuant to section 132 Law Enforcement Conduct Commission Act 2016*, dated July 2023, received out of session and authorised to be made public on 13 July 2023.

INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSION

Reports

The PRESIDENT: According to the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, I table an erratum to the report of the Information and Privacy Commission entitled *Report on the Operation of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009: 2021-2022: Open Government, Open Access, Open Data*, dated 7 July 2023, received out of session and authorised to be made public on 13 July 2023.

Committees

PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Reference

The PRESIDENT: I inform the House that in accordance with the resolution of the House establishing the Privileges Committee, on Friday 7 July 2023 I referred the following terms of reference to the committee:

Recommendations of the ICAC arising out of Operation Keppel

- (1) That the Privileges Committee:
 - (a) inquire into and report on the recommendations of the Independent Commission Against Corruption in its report entitled *Investigation into the conduct of the then member of Parliament for Wagga Wagga and then Premier and others (Operation Keppel)*, dated June 2023; and

- (b) make recommendations for further action to be considered by the House, the President, the Clerk and the Government, as appropriate.
- (2) That in undertaking the inquiry:
 - (a) in accordance with Standing Order 226 (a), the committee have leave to take evidence, deliberate and make joint reports with the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics; and
 - (b) the committee consult the President, the Clerk and the Chief Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption as appropriate.
- (3) That the committee report by the last sitting day in 2023.

Motions

ST JAMES' CHURCH

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (12:33): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on Tuesday 20 June 2023, Reverend Christopher Waterhouse was inducted as the Seventeenth Rector of St James' Church, King Street, at a Festal Choral Evensong service;
 - (b) the following people attended the Festal Choral Evensong:
 - (i) His Excellency the Honourable Andrew Bell, Lieutenant-Governor of New South Wales;
 - (ii) Colonel Michael Miller, Official Secretary to the Governor of New South Wales;
 - (iii) the Rt Reverend Michael Stead, Bishop of South Sydney;
 - (iv) the Rt Reverend Keith Dalby, Bishop of The Murray;
 - (v) the Rt Reverend Donald Kirk, Bishop of Riverina;
 - (vi) the Rt Reverend Chris Jones, Assistant Bishop of Tasmania;
 - (vii) the Rt Reverend Richard Hurford, former rector of St James Church King St and ninth Bishop of Bathurst;
 - (viii) the Rt Reverend Stephen Pickard, former Assistant Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn;
 - (ix) the Very Reverend Fr Don Richardson, Dean of St Mary's Cathedral;
 - (x) the Very Reverend Sandy Grant, Dean of Sydney;
 - (xi) Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton, Chief Minister of The Great Synagogue;
 - (xii) Reverend Richard Schwedes, St Paul's Sydney Lutheran Church;
 - (xiii) Reverend Ken Day, St Stephen's Uniting Church;
 - (xiv) Reverend Dr Josephine Inkipin, Pitt St Uniting Church;
 - (xv) Reverend Penny Jones, Pitt St Uniting Church;
 - (xvi) Pastor Christian Hohl, Martin Luther Kirche;
 - (xvii) the Very Reverend Fr Dr Shenouda Mansour, General Secretary of the NSW Ecumenical Council;
 - (xviii) Reverend Fr Andrew Sempell, former rector of St James Church;
 - (xix) Reverend Dr Daniel Dries, Rector of Christ Church St Laurence;
 - (xx) the Hon. Natalie Ward, MLC;
 - (xxi) the Hon. Philip Ruddock;
 - (xxii) the Hon. Justice Julie Ward, President of the NSW Court of Appeal;
 - (xxiii) Councillor William Chan, City of Sydney;
 - (xxiv) Uncle Alan Madden, Gadigal Elder;
 - (xxv) Reverend Christopher Waterhouse; and
 - (xxvi) Mrs Marianne Waterhouse.
- (2) That this House congratulates:
 - (a) Reverend Fr Andrew Sempell for more than a decade of service as the Rector of St James' Church and the wider Sydney and Anglican communities; and
 - (b) Reverend Christopher Waterhouse, for his induction as rector of the oldest church within the City of Sydney during its bicentenary celebrations and wishes him every success in this new role.

Motion agreed to.

*Documents***TABLING OF PAPERS**

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I table a report of the Chair of the Board of the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission for the year ended 30 June 2022.

TABLING OF PAPERS

The Hon. EMMA HURST: By leave: I table a document comprising a printout of the names of 33,790 citizens who have signed an online petition concerning the poisoning of Australian native bees. I move:

That the document be published.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF PAPERS

The Hon. EMMA HURST: By leave: I table a document comprising a printout of the names of 15,731 citizens concerning the spearing of giant cuttlefish in coastal New South Wales. I move:

That the document be published.

Motion agreed to.

*Committees***SELECTION OF BILLS COMMITTEE****Reports**

The Hon. BOB NANVA: I table report No. 5 of the Selection of Bills Committee, dated 1 August 2023. According to standing order, I move:

That the following bills not be referred to a standing committee for inquiry and report, this day:

- (a) Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Vilification) Bill 2023;
- (b) Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Gassing Devices Prohibition) Bill 2023;
- (c) Residential Tenancies Amendment (Rent Freeze) Bill 2023;
- (d) Road Transport Amendment (Demerit Point Reduction Trial) Bill 2023;
- (e) State Insurance and Care Governance Amendment (ICNSW Board) Bill 2023; and
- (f) Water Management Amendment (Transfer of Water) Bill 2023.

Motion agreed to.

*Documents***POLICE TASER USE****Return to Order**

The CLERK: According to the resolution of the House of Wednesday 28 June 2023, I table documents relating to an order for papers regarding a taser incident in Cooma, received on Thursday 13 July 2023 from the Acting Secretary of the Cabinet Office, together with an indexed list of documents.

Claim of Privilege

The CLERK: I table a return identifying those of the documents received on Thursday 13 July 2023 that are claimed to be privileged and should not be tabled or made public. I advise that pursuant to standing orders the documents are available for inspection by members of the Legislative Council only.

*Petitions***PETITIONS RECEIVED****Kosciuszko National Park Brumbies**

ePetition requesting the Legislative Council call on the Government to immediately ban the killing of brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park and cease trapping brumbies in the park while an independent count and management plan review are undertaken, received from **the Hon. Emma Hurst**.

*Visitors***VISITORS**

The PRESIDENT: I welcome to the Parliament visitors from the Economic Strategy and Productivity Group at NSW Treasury, who are guests of Parliamentary Education and Engagement. You are all most welcome.

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

*Questions Without Notice***HOUSEHOLD GAS CONNECTIONS**

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (13:30): My question is directed to the Leader of the Government, and the Minister for Energy. After refusing to rule out a ban on new gas connections in New South Wales, when did the Minister first learn that the Premier had ruled out such a ban?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (13:30): I thank the honourable member for his question and can say up-front that I first heard it when he spoke to me about it. The Leader of the Opposition would be surprised to learn that in this Government we actually speak with each other, that I speak with the Premier's office and that we are in constant communication around all the policies in relation to this matter.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: When was that? Before or after Ben Fordham?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: If the member wants a serious answer, I will try to give it to him. If he stops interrupting, I will try to do that.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: It is a serious question.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, it is a very serious question with a very serious answer, which is quite straightforward. Let's just say that I was in constant communication with both the Premier's office and the Premier in relation to the way that he articulated the Government's position on this matter and that there were no surprises in relation to what the Premier said on Ben Fordham's show. He has made very clear what we are going to do in this matter. This is not a surprise; it has been flagged. It is very interesting to go into what the shadow Minister said in relation to this matter, if we want to go there. But the point will be—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: We understand where you are coming from.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, you do not know what your position is. You guys were all over the shop.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: You didn't either.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, our position is very clear.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The Opposition thinks, "Oh, this is a big gotcha moment." It is really not. The Premier's office and the Premier and I speak frequently on all matters, as the Premier's office does with all Ministers, because we have a government whose members (a) speak to each other and (b) are on the same page in relation to all of the policies that we are putting through as we are working through and dealing with the mess that has been left by those opposite. Our position is very clear about this. There are many challenges when it comes to the transition.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: We do not need any more complications.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Given that some Opposition members do not even believe in climate change, we can keep talking about this all they like—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Do you want more complications?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: There are zero complications here. You might think this is very tricky; it is really not. We talk to each other. There are no surprises in the way in which this Government operates, and we work very closely to solve the real problems that people are concerned about, which are how we tackle climate change, how we transform our energy system, how we keep prices down and how we keep reliability in place.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (13:33): I ask a supplementary question.

The Hon. John Graham: You nearly missed your supplementary.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: You told me to ask it.

The Hon. John Graham: I know. Just as well.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Can the Minister confirm that she spoke with the Premier after he appeared on the Ben Fordham program—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Yes.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: —and that in fact that was the first time that she was made aware of the Government's policy in relation to gas?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (13:33): No, it was not the first time that I was made aware of the Government's policy in relation to this because I am the Minister and I liaise closely with the Premier's office and the Premier in relation to this. The first time that I spoke to the Premier about what he said on the Ben Fordham show was after the Ben Fordham show.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: There you go!

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Blow me down with a feather. Prior to that there had been—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Did you say, "What the hell are you doing?"

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Absolutely not. There has been ongoing contact—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Leader of the Government has the call.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I have been in constant contact with the Premier's office and with the Premier on all these matters. There are no surprises in this Government. We are committed, we are united and we work very closely together on all of these matters, which is something the Opposition cannot say for its lot.

SYDNEY METRO CITY & SOUTHWEST

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (13:34): My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer update the House on how the Government intends to complete the final section of the Sydney Metro City & Southwest between Sydenham and Bankstown? Is he aware of how the total project cost has blown out?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (13:35): I thank the honourable member for his question, and I can confirm that the Minns Government has indeed set upon rescuing this deeply troubled project that we inherited—that is, we have managed to salvage this particular project after years of neglect by those opposite. That stands in contrast to the previous Government's policy intention. We found that out recently from our dear friend the former transport Minister, the Hon. David Elliott, who came forward and said just last week that the previous Government was secretly considering cancelling that project. When did we hear that before 28 March? Before 28 March we heard not a word about that secret plan. I grant this to those opposite: Just because David Elliott was not in the habit of telling his own Government his own policy—accept that—I am sure that from one of his three mobile phones he texted the honourable then finance Minister opposite and said, "This program is on the chopping block."

Let us just understand the level of deception that involved for those communities, because those communities were promised that conversion back in 2012 and beyond. They were told that that project would be opening this year. I recall Andrew Constance, my old friend, sitting in estimates saying in 2023 that project will be opening. Six months to go, it is nowhere to be seen. Just before the election, the former Government was getting ready to cancel it. That is the legacy we inherited. In addition to that level of deception, we were told—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. As much as I am enjoying the barrage of questions from the Leader of the Opposition, perhaps we might hear them when he is entitled to ask them.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: In addition to being told that this project would be open by 2023, we were told that the price tag would be \$12 billion. We are at \$21 billion on this project—\$9 billion extra. To put that into some proportion, \$9 billion buys us a lot of new schools. It is the equivalent of building at least 10 brand new public hospitals and being able to add to our social housing stock in this State. Incompetence has consequences. We are cleaning up their mess. [*Time expired.*]

The PRESIDENT: Before I call on the next member, I welcome everybody back. I enjoyed the contribution of almost everybody to that last question. However, I ask that we just hear from the questioner and then the Minister in response, with perhaps the odd pithy one-line interjection—but that is it. We will then be able to proceed and Hansard will be able to report what is being said.

DISASTER RECOVERY FUNDING

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (13:38): My question is directed to the Minister for Regional New South Wales. Given the Minister assured the House on 24 May that she was committed to "working with communities across regional New South Wales" on disaster recovery, why has she left flood-affected small businesses in 20 local government areas in regional New South Wales on hold for recovery grants for over four months?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (13:39): I thank the honourable member for her question, and the answer is that I have not. This is a question that should be directed to Service NSW. Our Government is fully committed to ensuring that disaster recovery funding is always allocated to those communities that are in need, particularly when they have suffered from disasters. I visited the Central West, which had some attention in regard to the community seeking financial support, and it is entitled to it. I spent some time in Eugowra recently and people are still living in temporary housing on their front lawns. The Government is committed to supporting them. I spent a large amount of time touring that region with people who were significantly affected by the floods. I spent a lot of time with farmers who gave me tours of their land that was affected, and is still affected, by the damage caused by the floods.

The Government is very focused on making sure that people get the support they need. My department has done what it needs to do, and the Government is working across government to make sure that the processes are followed and the money is delivered as it needs to be delivered. Opposition members should not be giving too many lectures on this issue because when they were in government and visited the Central West after last year's flood, they were screamed at in the street. No support was provided by the previous Government. I am committed to making sure that regional New South Wales gets all the support it needs in general terms, particularly when it comes to disaster recovery. My heart goes out to flood victims, particularly those in Eugowra who suffered greatly.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Natalie Ward to order for the first time.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Opposition members are not interested in hearing the answers to the questions that they ask. I do not know why they bother wasting time.

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

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I reiterate my answer. I am committed to making sure that regional New South Wales gets all of the support it needs from this Government. I am very committed to making sure that my department is working across government and across all agencies of government to ensure that all of the services and support required by communities across regional New South Wales are provided, particularly support for rebuilding after natural disasters. I will continue to do that.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (13:42): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the member for her answer.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is trying to ask a supplementary question. She will be heard in silence.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The Minister indicated in her answer that she was working across government and referenced that Service NSW was responsible for the delay in the rollout. Will the Minister elucidate her answer and inform the House what she has done as Minister for Regional New South Wales, including any meetings, conversations or lobbying with her colleague the Minister for Customer Service, to make sure the grants are delivered in a timely way? Will the Minister give any indication of when people across those 20 local government areas will be able to start applying for those grants?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (13:43): I thank the member for her supplementary question. I refer to my previous answer. As the Minister for Regional New South Wales, I am working across government and all agencies that are relevant to make sure that support is provided to communities in regional New South Wales that have been affected by—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Point of order: The question was fairly specific, asking the Minister to outline what steps she has taken in respect of making sure that the grants are made available. Telling us that she is committed is a statement of intent, but we are asking for details of what she has done.

The PRESIDENT: The Minister is being directly relevant and has only been speaking for 20 seconds. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I continue where I left off. As the Minister for Regional New South Wales, I am committed to working across government to make sure that support and services are coordinated in the way they should be across government, as is my department. I am particularly interested in making sure that the Central West is supported because, as I outlined before, I have engaged with the community and heard their stories and seen the situations that people are still living in. They are entitled to the support—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: So the answer is?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Opposition members are just not interested in hearing the answer. It is a serious issue.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Damien Tudehope to order for the first time. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: We are completely focused on making sure that flood-affected communities get the support they need. When members opposite visited that community after the floods occurred, they were yelled at in the street and run out of town. We are committed to making sure that support is given as it is needed and making sure that it is managed in an appropriate way. That is across government, and includes my department working with Service NSW. That is what we do to make sure the money is distributed on a very regular basis, and that is occurring. The advice that I have—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Bronnie Taylor to order for the first time. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Again, they do not want to hear the answers, but the communities do. As they often do, my department and Service NSW are working to make sure that the money gets to the people who require it. My advice is that should be occurring in September. It is not my agency. We are working across government. My agency is working with other agencies across government, as people would expect, and we will make sure that people get the support they are entitled to.

WILDLIFE AND ROAD SAFETY

The Hon. EMMA HURST (13:45): My question is directed to the Minister for Roads. Millions of native animals are injured and killed each year from wildlife-vehicle collisions. Research shows that road speed is a major factor in wildlife-vehicle collisions and that even small reductions in speed limits can reduce accidents. Despite that, the NSW Speed Zoning Standard does not specify impact on animals as a factor that can be considered when reviewing and determining road speeds. Will the Minister review the NSW Speed Zoning Standard and related legislation to ensure that risk to animals and wildlife-vehicle collision rates can be explicitly taken into account when making road speed zoning decisions?

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) (13:46): I thank the member for her question. She has been a strong advocate in the area of wildlife and road safety. She and her party have raised a range of issues on wildlife and animals generally and their interaction with the road network over time. This question goes to one of those issues, although it is certainly not the only one. I will provide the House some background on the NSW Speed Zoning Standard. It sets out the principles and technical information for reviewing, determining and implementing speed zones on New South Wales public roads, and it enables practitioners to make recommendations that promote safe and efficient movement on our road network. Some of the measures taken into account when setting speeds include appropriate speed zones for safety, mobility and place; road design to support desired speeds and compliance in various places; changing behaviour through community engagement; and vehicle technologies. All of those are taken into account.

I am happy to look at the issue the member has raised about the specific provisions of the speed zone strategy and the way it deals with animals. The issue that is most discussed regarding wildlife and road safety is in relation to koalas. As members know, there has been a real crisis in that area. One of the issues making things worse is the interaction of koalas and roads in New South Wales. The NSW Koala Strategy is looking at road strikes and koalas, and a lot of the focus of that work is in south-west Sydney. That is where the work has been done. A lot of that work has focused on exclusion fencing and making sure that we understand how incidents occur. I am happy to take on notice the specific provisions of the NSW Speed Zoning Standard and come back to the House and the member.

FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

The Hon. Dr SARAH Kaine (13:49): My question is addressed to the Minister for Jobs and Tourism. As the group stage of the FIFA Women's World Cup comes to an end, will the Minister tell the House how New South Wales has delivered and embraced this global event?

[Opposition members interjected.]

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister has the call.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: They hate good news. They hate the Matildas.

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) (13:49): I acknowledge that interjection. What an incredible result last night. It was a huge win for the Matildas and it comes on the back of two sellout matches in Sydney and growing crowds at live fan sites. It shows that the FIFA Women's World Cup has captured fans right across the State. As the Matildas toppled Olympic champions Canada on Monday night, a crowd of 4,000 fans were watching along at the FIFA live site at Tumbalong Park. Many others were at public viewing sites in council areas around the State or watching at home. Whether walking past the banners on the city streets or buses, or coming in through Sydney Airport, it is impossible to miss the fact that the Women's World Cup is on at the moment.

I have some facts for the House about how well this event is travelling. A total of 80,853 fans attended the epic Colombia versus Germany game, which finished in extra time. In the dying minutes the result was for Columbia. England versus Denmark at the SFS had full house crowds. At 550,800, Sydney has already sold more tickets than any other host city has ever sold. Outside the stadium the atmosphere is building and so far more than 118,000 people have attended the FIFA fan site at Darling Harbour. Ticket sales overall are 1.65 million across the tournament's 64 games. That is the biggest ever. This is the biggest—

The Hon. Bronnie Taylor: Go women's sport!

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: That is exactly right. It is a huge moment for women's sport. It is the biggest women's sporting competition in the world and this is its biggest one ever. To give members some context, in France 1.1 million tickets were sold for the entire tournament—it is already 1.65 million for this one. It is a very exciting moment. It is not just bringing energy to the State, it is filling up our hotels and sporting venues and stimulating the economy. It is a great example of what Sydney can do. We look ahead to the knockout stages of the game, including the Matildas round of 16 clash in Sydney. I am sure I speak on behalf of all members of the House when I say: We wish the Matildas well.

INDIGENOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM AND GENDER

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (13:52): My question is directed to the Minister for Finance, representing the Minister for Education and Early Learning. With today's announcement of a new Indigenous studies curriculum in New South Wales high schools, why has Minister Prue Car endorsed the distribution of material to all New South Wales Government schoolteachers involving the teaching of falsehoods and fake history to students, specifically this document claiming that modern binary concepts of gender—that there are men and women—are a product of colonialism and that Aboriginal tribes not only tolerated gender diversity and transgender but celebrated it. Where is the historical evidence—pre-1788—of Indigenous men saying they were women and performing domestic-type duties and women claiming to be men and doing the hunting and the fighting? Why, in the name of gender ideology, is this Government now teaching school students things that are plainly untrue about Australian and Aboriginal history?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (13:53): I thank the honourable member for his very specific question to me in my capacity representing the Minister for Education and Early Learning, the Deputy Premier, who is doing an excellent job fixing up the mess that she has been left right across the New South Wales school sector. The question from the honourable member is in relation to the eight new syllabuses that were released yesterday for six weeks of public consultation. The consultation is part of ensuring that the syllabuses will be available to schools for planning and preparation for 2024. The release of the syllabus has been extended so teachers have the time and space to improve outcomes for students in New South Wales. We have the fastest falling education outcomes in the world, which is something that we spoke about a lot in our work on the upper House committee for education over the previous term of government. It is something that the Deputy Premier and the Minns Labor Government takes incredibly seriously.

We know that the biggest single factor in turning around a student's performance is the quality of the teacher at the front of the classroom. The first step has to be ensuring that there is a teacher there, which is something that this Government has well underway. We have made an election commitment to convert thousands

of the temporary teachers in our schools into permanent positions because that is a way of ensuring that teachers stay in place. The other part is about addressing the administrative burden. I speak to teachers regularly and it is something that they—

The Hon. Wes Fang: Point of order—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: You are interrupting the crossbench's question. Good job.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Despite the protestations of the Leader of the Government, what I am doing is taking a point of order in relation to relevance. There is absolutely no relevance to the question—which the Minister herself acknowledged was quite specific—in the answer she is giving. I ask you to draw her back to the question.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Welcome back, Wes.

The Hon. Wes Fang: I never left, Penny.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The question from the Hon. Mark Latham had a significant introduction and discussed a range of different issues; however, it ended quite specifically on a particular issue, which the Minister has not referred to yet. I am sure she will come to it very quickly and make her response specifically and directly relevant.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It was a question in relation to curriculum reform. The speed and the pace of the rollout of the reform is something that teachers have spoken about to the Deputy Premier and other members of the Government. The administrative burden it places on our teachers is something that they have publicly spoken about and it is something that we take seriously. We are allowing them extended time to ensure that the syllabus is adapted. In relation to the specifics, I will take that part on notice and come back to the member with an answer. It was a very specific question in relation—

The Hon. Wes Fang: Have a crack. Give it a go.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Wes Fang has been very good so far.

The Hon. Wes Fang: I was busy.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I may have to move dissent from your ruling.

The Hon. John Graham: It is all relative.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I will come back to the member on the specifics of the question. In the meantime, I congratulate the work that the Deputy Premier is doing in this space. It is an incredibly important area of public policy and it is one that this Government is committed to. We are absolutely committed to ensuring that our kids have the best start in life, particularly in our public schools in New South Wales.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (13:57): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elaborate on her references to the syllabus and the way in which she will come back with a more detailed answer? In that detailed answer, will she provide information to the House certifying that all the material endorsed by Minister Car in relation to the answer to question No. 96 on the *Questions and Answers Paper* is factually accurate and that the Government is not peddling and teaching nonsensical propaganda in our schools. One of the crimes against students is that they are not being taught the facts.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (13:58): Yes.

SYDNEY METRO WEST

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (13:58): My question is directed to the Leader of the Government. Will the Minns Labor Government consider cancelling Metro West?

The Hon. Stephen Lawrence: Rescuing.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (13:58): I thank the honourable member for her question. The issue in relation to Metro West is the disaster that has been left by those opposite. Sydney Metro West has an estimated cost of \$25.3 billion, so for a cost overrun of at least \$12 billion—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Which the Government knew before the election.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It is interesting that the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about what we knew before the election. What we knew before the election was the fantasy budget released by the previous

Treasurer with which he banked taxes that had not been legislated and with which he failed to acknowledge there was \$7 billion of financial cliff built into the entire budget.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Point of order—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The Leader of the Opposition does not like this bit, does he?

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: This is a question about Sydney Metro West. The discussion in relation to the last budget is outside the relevance of the question. The Minister should provide an answer to the question that she was asked.

The Hon. John Graham: To the point of order: While the member is entirely correct, the Leader of the Government was responding to the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition. I ask that he be restrained.

The PRESIDENT: While I have some sympathy with the Leader of the Opposition's point of order, I also note the response from the Deputy Leader of the Government that the Leader of the Government was responding directly to the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition. If the Leader of the Opposition wants the Leader of the Government to remain relevant to the question, he might interject a little less.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I know he did not like it, but we have to be honest about the fantasy budget. He was the finance Minister, as we recall, so it is partly on him as well. Let us talk about Sydney Metro West—\$25.3 billion and a cost overrun of at least \$12 billion. It is estimated to open in 2030 at the earliest, compared with the Coalition Government's initial promise of mid-2020s.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Point of order: This version of the particular position in relation to the Metro is completely outside the ambit of the question asked. Would the Hon. Daniel Mookhey like to answer it on her behalf?

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: You're only my shadow; ask me a question.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: The question is specifically in relation to Metro West. The Minister should confine herself to providing an answer in relation to Metro West.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: To the point of order: I was paying careful attention to precisely what the Leader of the Government was saying. She was providing factual evidence—fact by fact by fact—about Metro West. It is impossible for the Leader of the Government to be more directly relevant than the way she was reciting the \$25 billion overrun that we received and how late the project is. I ask that the point of order not be upheld.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order. The Minister is being directly relevant.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Given that members opposite were so interested in the conversations, the way in which this Government works and the way that we talk about this project, we could not be clearer about the challenges that we face as we try to save the former Government's beleaguered Metro projects that it left in such a dire state—over budget, over time and with no money in the budget to deal with them. This Government is committed to delivering Sydney Metro projects in a cost-effective way.

This morning the Premier and the Minister for Transport announced a rescue plan for the south-east Metro that members opposite were going to cancel. The previous transport Minister wished he could have cancelled it but he did not get around to doing so, so the Government has put in place a rescue package for it. We need to work very closely in relation to this. The Government cannot just inherit a \$12 billion overrun and make a decision overnight. We have put in place those points in the Sydney Metro Review, which we have initiated. If those opposite were paying attention, they would have too.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Another review!

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Well, the mess we got cannot be turned around overnight; we are very up-front about that. The Sydney Metro Review will provide the necessary independent expert advice about what happens next. The Government will keep the community informed of its decision-making all along on the way, as opposed to the hiding, the fantasy budget and the lies about the state of infrastructure that we inherited.

NATIONAL SHEEP AND GOAT ELECTRONIC IDENTIFICATION

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (14:03): My question is addressed to the Minister for Agriculture. Will the Minister update the House on the Government's plan to support farmers in the implementation of national sheep and goat electronic identification [eID]?

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: I bet she's committed to doing it. Are you committed?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (14:04): You know I am; I am very committed. I thank the honourable member for his question. When it comes to the State's \$23 billion primary industries sector, biosecurity is one of this Government's top priorities. Good biosecurity practices not only reduce the risk of the spread of pests, diseases and weeds, but also provide opportunities to maximise animal health, production and market access. The Government is committed to protecting our economy, environment and community from the threat of potentially devastating biosecurity and food safety pests, diseases and contaminants. Identification and traceability of livestock are key to achieving that—particularly for New South Wales, which has the highest livestock production levels in Australia.

Put simply, strong traceability allows us to accurately identify, trace and contain livestock in an emergency animal disease outbreak. That is why I was delighted to announce at the NSW Farmers conference that \$38 million—with New South Wales contributing \$31.4 million and the Federal Government contributing \$7.2 million—is being allocated to the NSW Sheep and Goat eID Infrastructure Rebate Scheme. The scheme will provide funding for the costs associated with the purchase and installation of eID-related infrastructure and equipment to successfully transition to an enhanced traceability system. From 1 August 2023 the sheep and farmed goat supply chain will be able to access the New South Wales sheep and goat eID infrastructure rebate to assist impacted stakeholders to transition from the existing visual tag system to an eID one. The rebate will be first rolled out to saleyards and processors and then to producers and agents from 3 October 2023.

The rebate scheme, which will be administered by the NSW Rural Assistance Authority, includes a 100 per cent rebate to saleyards due to high up-front costs, a 50 per cent rebate to processors, a 50 per cent rebate to stock and station agents, and a 50 per cent rebate to producers. The Government will provide additional free eID-specific training and education to help those involved in the transition to understand the requirements for sheep and goat eID. Industry has been involved every step of the way through the NSW Sheep and Goat Traceability Reference Group, with additional feedback obtained via direct engagement—including with me—from stakeholders from across the sheep and goat supply chain. I will continue to work with my fellow State and Commonwealth agriculture Ministers to push for a national tag tender process to bring down the price of eID tags for sheep and goats across all jurisdictions. The New South Wales Government, in collaboration with the sheep and goat sector, is working hard and will deliver on its eID implementation time frame.

FAITH COMMUNITIES

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (14:07): My question is directed to the Leader of the Government. Given that people of faith in New South Wales have fewer rights and protections than those in other States and Territories, will the Government work with religious leaders, faith communities and relevant stakeholders to fix this and ensure that religious belief or activity is included as a protected ground from discrimination?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:07): I thank the honourable member for her question. The short answer is yes. The Government is working with faith leaders every single day. I commend my colleague the Minister for Multiculturalism, the Hon. Stephen Kamper, for the work that he has done on this. The Government has committed to establishing a faith council, which it is working on all the time. Relating to the two matters that the member raises—and I do not want to pre-empt discussions of the House, but I think I am allowed to talk about this—the religious vilification legislation will be coming through the House this week. The Government looks forward to discussing and getting support for that.

The Government has also been clear about the way it wants to deal with the Anti-Discrimination Act, which is a very old Act. It was groundbreaking at the time under the Wran Government and it has served its purpose well; however, it needs wholesale reform. The Government has already committed—and the Attorney General has been clear about this—to refer the Act to the Law Reform Commission to be very clear and to work systematically through discrimination protections in this State. Everyone in this Chamber would agree that an individual should not be discriminated against based on their attributes. The Government will be working through this carefully.

SYDNEY METRO WEST

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (14:08): My question is directed to the Treasurer. When did the Treasurer first become aware that Sydney Metro West could cost \$25 billion?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (14:09): I thank the member for his question. It is nice to be asked a question from the Opposition; it has been a while. I wonder when the shadow Treasurer will ask me a question. We will get there. I live in hope. The short answer is that upon forming government we were given a

comprehensive briefing about the disarray of the Sydney Metro West and Sydney Metro City & Southwest projects.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Treasurer is being directly relevant.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: We were advised how much money we have been bleeding out per day on the Sydney Metro southwest. In conjunction with that briefing, we were given the opportunity to access information about the state of the Sydney Metro West program. To give some context, we received advice that we were losing \$1 million per day on the Sydney Metro southwest. That is \$1 million per day bleeding out as a result of the mismanagement by those opposite. That is disappointing. Losing \$1 million per day on the Sydney Metro southwest has implications for the Sydney Metro West, as it does for the heavy rail network, hospitals and schools, because money does not grow on trees. We had the opportunity to get acquainted with that during that briefing. It would have been nice to know all of that before we were elected to government.

Insofar as the previous Government made public comments about the Sydney Metro West, I recall what was said and when. I recall Andrew Constance publishing a tweet in 2018 saying that the Sydney Metro West would cost \$16 billion, and then I recall him deleting the tweet. I recall that because we asked him in budget estimates hearings. We made the point that perhaps when we invest billions of dollars in projects, maybe the people of New South Wales should not have to rely on deleted tweets and maybe we should put that information in the public domain. In addition, it is fair to say that I took my responsibilities as an Opposition member seriously. I recall repeatedly trying to move a Standing Order 52 motion to find out what happened, but I could not find out. What did I have to do to find out? I would have preferred that the previous Government did not oppose the Standing Order 52 request and that it disclosed the information. But, nevertheless, here we are. We are rescuing these projects because members opposite stuffed them up.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (14:12): I ask a supplementary question.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Are you going to deliver it?

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Chris Rath has a supplementary question. Under the Standing Orders, Leader of the Opposition, he is the member entitled to ask it.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Will the Treasurer please elucidate on the specific cost of the Sydney Metro West, particularly in light of the comments made in October 2021 by the then shadow Minister for Transport, Jo Haylen, that the Sydney Metro West was scheduled to blow out to \$27 billion, which she stated was \$3 billion over budget, implying a then budgeted cost of \$24 billion?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (14:12): I am happy to elucidate on that because that is the big gotcha that the Opposition has been running in this House and the other place—that the then shadow Minister for Transport was acting as an effective shadow Minister for Transport in October 2021. I have to say, the one thing that those opposite know about the then shadow Minister for Transport is that she was relentless in getting to the bottom of what was going on with that project. I recall the second half of that story, when we tried to find out what was going on, because it was during budget estimates hearings. We were sitting in a budget estimates hearing trying to get that confirmed and we were told by those opposite, "Well, you will know the final cost of the project when it's finally completed in 10 years' time."

According to the previous Government, the people of New South Wales were meant to wait until sometime in the 2030s to find out the cost of that project. The then shadow Minister for Transport was quite right to insist on something better than that. It was unreasonable for the people of New South Wales to have to rely on a deleted tweet from 2018 and then be told that they would have to wait a decade to find out the final price tag. Sensible governments figure out budgets before they build infrastructure; that is what they do. When projects are promised at \$10 billion to \$12 billion but actually cost \$25 billion, like the Sydney Metro West, we make no apologies for restoring some discipline to those projects so that we can continue to build the infrastructure that the State needs. If that is the best those opposite have after four weeks off, they should take another four weeks.

LAND CLEARING

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (14:15): My question is addressed to the Minister for the Environment. Will the Minister update the House on the status of land clearing in New South Wales?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:15): I thank the member for her relevant and timely question. The New South Wales Government is concerned about the rising rate of land clearing in the State. It is the case that land clearing cannot always be avoided; however, current levels have not been seen since the early 1990s. Land clearing causes habitat loss, damages biodiversity, causes soil erosion and contributes to climate change. This week the New South Wales Government released its own data on land clearing from the Statewide Landcover

and Trees Study—the SLATS report. The SLATS report uses high-resolution satellite imagery to detect vegetation change. It is validated by experts to report on rates of clearing each year. That scientifically rigorous method was adopted in 2006 and allows us to map the long-term trends of land clearing. It is an important dataset.

The most recent findings between 2020 to 2021 show that year on year there has been a 7 per cent decrease in clearing, a 35 per cent decrease in native forest harvesting, a 21 per cent decrease in clearing for infrastructure and a 15 per cent increase in clearing for agriculture. The findings show that, since the reforms introduced by the previous Government, more than 379,000 hectares of native vegetation has been cleared in the years following the changes. That is an average of nearly 95,000 hectares per year. To put that another way, we are clearing the size of Singapore every year. The cumulative impact of that is high.

While I was disappointed, I was not shocked when this week New South Wales was awarded the wooden spoon in a report from the World Wildlife Fund that ranked the State ninth out of nine for how State, Territory and Federal governments are performing in tree protection and restoration. We are the worst in the country, which is not where we want to be. I was not shocked, however, because that is exactly what we predicted would happen when the laws changed in 2016. Members opposite said that the reforms were supposed to maintain biodiversity and improve environmental protection, but there is increasing evidence that they have done the opposite.

Labor argued that the changes to land clearing laws would lead to more land clearing, and those numbers show that our fears were well founded. When the laws were introduced, Labor said that they would result in destruction of native vegetation; reduced habitat and weakened protection for native animals, including those under threat of extinction; degraded soil quality and increased erosion, impacting on future food production; reduced water quality and damage to creek and river ecosystems; and increased carbon emissions that significantly contribute to climate change. The most recent State of the Environment report shows that exactly that has happened. New South Wales is committed to turning that around. The current review of the Biodiversity Conservation Act and the related review of the Local Land Services Act will be made public soon. The Government will work closely with landholders to reduce climate change emissions and ensure that biodiversity in this State is protected, not destroyed.

BATTERY STORAGE SYSTEMS

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (14:18): My question is directed to the Minister for Climate Change, and Minister for Energy. As she would be aware, her Government recently approved the construction of two new battery storage systems in Apsley and Muswellbrook, which she says are intended to store a combined 270 megawatts of renewable energy for over 100,000 homes in the Central West, Orana and Upper Hunter regions. While the media release jointly issued by her and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces on 19 July 2023 tells us that the new battery storage system will be used during peak consumption times, power outages and extreme weather events, will she inform the House how many hours the batteries can power those 100,000 homes and if any consideration was given to powering businesses during those times?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:19): I thank the honourable member for his question. I was pleased to join the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces to talk about how New South Wales is getting on with the job of getting more renewable energy into our grid. We are doing that primarily because of the challenge of climate change and the need to reduce our emissions over time so that we are handing the planet back in a better place than we found it. It is a significant challenge. The whole point of energy transition is to make sure that the energy sector, which is one of the highest emission-producing sectors, is able to be changed. The cheapest way to do that is through renewable energy. It is through projects like community batteries, as well as the renewable energy zones, which were supported, aside from the honourable member who asked the question, by almost all members in this House when we developed the road map in a bipartisan way in 2020. It is not an insignificant task, but an important one.

I will need to take on notice the specifics of exactly how long the batteries will work, and come back to the member, because while I am pretty good with the technical stuff and I am getting better every day, I would not want to mislead the House. When we talk about how much energy is able to be stored and dispatched, we often use households as a way of giving an idea of how much the batteries can support. Of course, they also support businesses—they are all part of the same energy system and the same energy market, and we all draw it from different places. It is a way in which we describe it. If the member would like to know how many businesses the batteries would support, I am sure we could give him that equation. We talk about these things in media releases to give an idea of how large they are and how much they can support.

Batteries like these are fundamental. Wind and solar can provide a lot of the energy that we need. As members would know, they will become a very significant part of keeping our lights on into the future and making sure that energy is reliable and that it is the cheapest that it can be as we deal with the challenges of the retirement

of coal-fired power. Batteries solve the problem related to renewable energy, which is that, yes, sometimes the wind does not blow and sometimes the sun does not shine. Batteries are able to store that energy when there is excess—do not forget that on a very sunny day there is a lot of excess solar in the system. We want to make sure that that excess can be stored and used into the future. These batteries are absolutely critical. I again thank the member for his question, and I will come back with an accurate answer for him.

COAL ROYALTY SCHEME

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR (14:22): My question is directed to the Minister for Natural Resources. Will the Minister guarantee that no coalmine will close prematurely, threatening regional jobs, trade, energy security and energy prices, due to any new coal royalty scheme imposed from 1 July 2024 onwards?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (14:22): I welcome and thank the honourable member for his question because, indeed, last week I did—

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: Her question.

The Hon. Scott Farlow: Her.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sorry, her question. I apologise for the incorrect pronoun—for "her" question.

The Hon. Bronnie Taylor: Apology accepted.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Last week I joined with my colleagues the Treasurer and the Leader of the Government in her capacity as the Minister for Energy to announce that we will consult with the coal sector, unions, power stations and key trading partners as we formulate our policy going forward after the conclusion of the coal caps legislation, which is due to expire in June next year. As part of responsible and methodical government, it is important to make these decisions after consulting with those who will be affected. We understand that families and households are doing it incredibly tough at the moment. Most of the people across New South Wales will be bracing themselves this afternoon to see what the Reserve Bank of Australia [RBA] decides to do.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: In seven minutes.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Seven minutes, the Treasurer informs me. We were discussing earlier about whether interest rates would rise again this afternoon. We understand that increasing energy prices are another key pressure on families and households as they face cost-of-living pressures. We want to make sure our three policy points—our coal system, our royalty system and our support for households in providing relief for their electricity budgets with the expiry of the coal caps in June next year—work together. We made an election commitment and took a bipartisan position that we would support the emergency legislation that got passed through when Parliament was recalled in December last year. When talking about the coal caps as the Minister for Natural Resources, it would be remiss of me not to say that there have been a range of issues and challenges with the way that they have worked in operation. I acknowledge the work of the Minister for Energy to try to address those issues and challenges through subsequent arrangements and changes.

The Hon. Bronnie Taylor: Point of order: I thank the Minister for her answer so far and for her relevance, but the question was very specific. It asked if she could guarantee that no coalmine will close prematurely. While I fully appreciate the answer so far, with only 30 seconds on the clock, I would appreciate it if the Minister is brought back to the specifics of the question in her answer.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order. The Minister is being directly relevant. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I was speaking through some of those issues with the coal caps legislation that have been in place. Indeed, the legal logistical arrangements for the rail lines that run through the Hunter are some of the most sophisticated in the world. I have certainly heard the concerns from the coal sector around that. As part of a prudent and responsible government, we will be engaging closely with those affected as we formulate our new policy.

HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT SERVICES

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (14:26): My question is addressed to the Minister for Housing, and Minister for Homelessness. Will the Minister update the House on changes made to temporary accommodation and how those changes will impact the lives of people experiencing homelessness?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast) (14:26): I thank the

honourable member for the question. An unfortunate consequence of the deep housing crisis that we are in is the increasing number of people who are experiencing homelessness. It is a direct result, in particular, of the catastrophic failure in the private rental market, where people are simply unable to secure rentals. A huge piece of work is going on between me, the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces to try to resolve that to bring more affordable rental into the market. That is a top priority for the Government. Whilst we are doing that, we have to address the challenge of homelessness with dignity and humanity, and by not turning away but accepting our responsibility and looking it in the face.

One of the things that we have done is to change the way that temporary accommodation works. Members in this Chamber would probably have never had to call Link2home, which is the number that people call when they are experiencing homelessness. It is one of the worst phone calls anyone can make: "I don't have anywhere to stay tonight." Under the previous system, people were given two nights' emergency accommodation in a motel or hotel—somewhere to stay. No-one believes that is enough time to resolve the issues that have led them to be homeless, but that is what people were experiencing. They are homeless. They pack up their whole lives in luggage; often they have children with them. Every two days, they have to pack everything back up again, physically get themselves to a housing office and reapply. That is not a dignified way to support someone who is in a housing crisis, so we have changed that. We are offering a seven-day initial stay in temporary accommodation, a full week; nine days if the application is made over the weekend.

Again, that will probably not be enough time to get someone into a permanent housing solution, but it provides them the time to have a shower, a meal and a sleep, and to make those phone calls and connections to the support services that they need. We have taken that important step to acknowledge how difficult the crisis of homelessness is and how significant the challenge of finding a permanent solution is. We have also removed the 28-day cap on temporary accommodation, which is another important change. Members opposite say, "You're not doing anything." These are specific steps that we are taking right now and changes that are being implemented right now. Under the previous Government, after 28 days in temporary accommodation, people were out. They were sleeping on a park bench. We have removed that cap. We acknowledge that the housing crisis is real, and we acknowledge it is causing increased homelessness. We are taking deliberate, clear steps to bring humanity and dignity back to those experiencing homelessness.

COVID-19 ROYAL COMMISSION

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (14:29): My question is directed to the Leader of the Government. The World Health Organization recently stressed the need to prepare for the declaration of another global pandemic. Will the Government support a New South Wales-based COVID royal commission so that we can learn what worked and what did not?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (14:29): I thank the honourable member for his question. This is obviously not my call to make. It is also not something that I believe the Government intends to support at this time. However, I will get a more accurate answer from the Minister for Health and the Premier's office.

The time for questions has expired. If members have further questions I suggest they place them on notice.

Supplementary Questions for Written Answers

SYDNEY METRO WEST

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (14:30): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Leader of the Government and relates to her answer regarding the Sydney Metro West. In reference to her statement that there was a \$12 billion overrun on the cost of the Sydney Metro West project resulting in it now costing \$25.3 billion, what base cost is being used to measure this overrun, when was this base cost determined and where was it announced?

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.

SYDNEY METRO WEST

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (14:31): There may be those who are curious about why we would ask the Leader of the Government whether there is any plan to cancel Sydney Metro West. Why would we ask that of the Leader of the Government? There is an answer to that, because the best way to get confirmation that it will not be cancelled is to get the Leader of the Government in this place to articulate some sort of policy. Because

guess what? The Premier will be on 2GB tomorrow overruling what the Leader of the Government has said in this place, because we know that is the way he operates. We have a Premier who is the "Minister for 2GB", and he announces policy on 2GB. So we asked the Minister in this place what the policy is in relation to Sydney Metro West, and guess what? I reckon Ben Fordham will interview Chris Minns tomorrow morning on 2GB.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: It's just because he can't get on.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Is he going on tomorrow? Chris Minns will, in fact, rule out the cancellation.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: I'm on.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: You're on? That would be right. There is a much bigger concern about the answers given today. The Treasurer was asked a Dixer about the Sydney Metro City & Southwest and he had the galling audacity to claim that, in fact, the Government had rescued it. This is a project which was brought to you, planned for you and would have been delivered to you by the Coalition Government. This is a government that has no imagination in relation to projects. It sees a project that we were delivering and then wants to claim it for itself.

The only manner in which this project has any rescue attached to it is in the fact that the Government has spent a whole week talking down projects that the previous Government was going to deliver. The problem we have with that is that it is a betrayal of the people of this State. The people of this State deserve better than to have projects talked down as a stunt for the purposes of a media opportunity to say, "We have rescued the project." It happens time and time again. Those opposite identify a project which has been delivered by the Coalition and then claim it for themselves; "It's ours. We've delivered it!" The worst example was a hospital that we built, that had patients in it, and that they claimed they were responsible for delivering. This is a government without ideas.

SYDNEY METRO WEST
INDIGENOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM AND GENDER
DISASTER RECOVERY FUNDING
NATIONAL SHEEP AND GOAT ELECTRONIC IDENTIFICATION
HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT SERVICES

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (14:34): I acknowledge answers given by the Treasurer regarding Sydney Metro West and also acknowledge his identification, in his capacity as Treasurer, of the true state of what the Government has been left with. I also take note of answers provided by the Minister for Finance on behalf of the Minister for Education and Early Learning. I acknowledge the work that the Deputy Premier has done in the education space since taking office. That work is not insignificant and will go a long way to ensuring that our kids—and, indeed, my kids—have a teacher at the front of their classrooms every day. I acknowledge the answers provided by the Minister for Regional New South Wales and the work that she is doing. Those opposite would know that she attended and spoke at the farmers' conference and made a number of significant announcements, particularly about fire ants and feral pigs. Today she spoke about eIDs for goats. That is really important work that has been done.

I also take note of the answers provided by the Minister for Housing regarding temporary accommodation and the changes that have been made, which will have a significant impact on families and individuals who are experiencing homelessness and seeking out temporary accommodation providers. That is a terrible position for anyone to be in. The fact that they can now get a roof over their heads for seven or, in some cases, nine nights, as a starting point, will go a long way, as will removing the 28-day cap on temporary accommodation. It takes a long time, particularly in the rental market that we are facing at the moment, for a person to secure any sort of semi-permanent roof over their head. We know some of the barriers that people face in the private rental market when they seek out housing solutions. I commend the Minister for the measure of the 28-day cap. As she said, it is not dignified to have only two days to access temporary accommodation. No-one wants to find themselves in that position. I commend to the House the measures that have been put in place, which go some way to addressing this crisis.

LAND CLEARING

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (14:37): I take note of the answer given today by the Minister for the Environment in relation to the catastrophic state of our land-clearing laws in New South Wales. I note that Opposition members sat mute through what was a condemnation of the policies that they brought into being in this State in 2016 when they repealed the Native Vegetation Act, led by the National Party—a disgraceful and effective attack on the environment.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: Point of order: The honourable member is addressing his comments across the table. I ask that he address them through the Chair.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: To the point of order: I was not addressing my comments across the table. I was just making emphasis with my hand and commenting on the record of the Opposition.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: Further to the point of order: When an honourable member is staring and glaring at members across the table and pointing at them directly, they can only take that as those comments being addressed to them directly. I ask that he direct his comments through the Chair.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): There is no point of order. I ask all members to be mindful of the standing orders and to direct their comments through the Chair.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: It is no surprise to anyone who sat through the debates in 2016 that we now have a situation where New South Wales is a pariah and is getting the wooden spoon from the World Wildlife Fund when it comes to land clearing legislation because that was the design of the National Party. Our ecology, especially in western New South Wales, has been devastated over 200 years, cleared and fragmented, and historically we did not know better.

But in 2016 we knew. All the scientists, environment groups and many landholders were saying, "Do not let land clearing go in this State because there will be a free for all." That is what we have seen. Hundreds of thousands of critically valuable and endangered biodiversity land has been cleared. A lot of it has been unauthorised. Mr Justin Field in his time in this place raised again and again the issue of illegal land clearing and it was all by design. I call on the Government to reinstate the Native Vegetation Act, to work to make sure that we have laws that actually protect our biodiversity and vegetation, especially in western New South Wales.

DISASTER RECOVERY FUNDING

SYDNEY METRO WEST

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (14:40): I take note of answers given today, in particular the answer given by the Minister for Regional New South Wales about grants for small businesses in flood-affected communities. This is a serious issue. It is not a surprise to anyone in the House that many areas across the State were completely decimated by floods in recent times. It is important that the Government steps up and provides the support to those communities that they are entitled to receive. It is concerning because we are starting to see a track record from the Minister of not delivering to the people of New South Wales. In May I asked her questions about disaster relief matters and was assured that she would work with regional communities in relation to these issues. Yet again, there is no delivery, no rollout of these programs that have been funded and are in place to provide up to \$200,000 of support for businesses impacted by flood.

What is particularly concerning is that today the Minister seemed to indicate that it really was not her responsibility and referenced Service NSW. It was a very nice "throw Minister Jihad Dib under the bus" moment. Today in *The Daily Telegraph* a spokeswoman from the Department of Regional NSW said that the grants will be open by September. I am confused by the Minister's answer. On the one hand, she has suggested it is not her area of responsibility and yet, on the other hand, members of her department are on the record talking about the delivery of those grants. It is a little concerning. This is something that we will dig deeper into.

The Minister also referenced the community of Eugowra and that she has visited it. That is great. That is her job. She should be out visiting regional communities. That is part of what she is expected to do as the Minister. But comments were made about those of us on this side of the Chamber visiting that community and that we were run out of town. I put on the record how disappointing it is that the Minister felt the need to stoop to that kind of level. She is a better person than that. We were on the ground in Eugowra. Those on the other side know that full well. I was there and we were doing everything we could to get the child care and preschool up and running. We did that on the school site within a matter of days. We continued to work with those communities during our time in government. In Forbes we made sure that the school was up and running on a temporary site. The Minister made comments that we did not help those communities and we were not welcomed there. There should be no politics played when government is doing its job after any kind of disaster. She is a better person than that and I encourage her not to make remarks like that because it is demeaning to her.

I also mention Sydney Metro West. I am sure my colleagues will speak about this. Again we see repeated behaviour by the Government where it says one thing before the election to get elected and does something completely differently afterwards. There are voters in Western Sydney who went to the election on a promise from the Premier that Sydney Metro West would be delivered. Labor was unequivocal in its support for it before the election. Now there is a big question mark over that project. The people of Western Sydney deserve better. They need to know what the Government intends to do. We are already seeing shades of previous Labor

governments, where any major infrastructure project does not get delivered. It is happening in the bush and now with Sydney Metro West in Western Sydney. The people of New South Wales are onto those opposite and will hold them to account.

NATIONAL SHEEP AND GOAT ELECTRONIC IDENTIFICATION

HOUSEHOLD GAS CONNECTIONS

HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT SERVICES

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (14:44): I take note of the answer given by the Minister for Agriculture about eID tags. It was great and useful for the community to hear some details about the rebate program. As the Minister said, it is a joint State and Federal program costing \$38 million in total, with \$31.4 million contributed by the State. The eID tag system is important to Australia and New South Wales to maintain our market access when there are outbreaks of animal diseases. Unfortunately, looming threats in the biosecurity sphere seem to be a regular occurrence these days. It is important that we are in a position to respond urgently and effectively to ensure that market access is maintained and necessary disruptions are minimised. It is a rebate scheme that will apply ultimately to processors and agents and in the first instance to producers and saleyards. I thank the Minister for her work in that area.

I also take note of the answer by the Minister for Energy to the question in relation to the storage of renewable energy. I must admit that I too was unaware that these things are generally measured in household units. It was interesting to hear the explanation that when an amount of energy being stored is referred to in terms of household usage or household units, that energy is being used for the full range of things that energy is required for. That was a useful answer and a little detail as the State transitions to the renewable energy future with all of the complexities and impacts that has that involve all of us.

I also take note of the answer by the Minister for Housing, and Minister for Homelessness in relation to temporary accommodation. It is good to hear that the limit of two days on temporary accommodation has been expanded to a week. One can well understand that for people with all of the problems and difficulties that lead to homelessness it is not possible to get things together in two days. It is good to know that initial stays are extended to seven days and the cap of 28 days has been removed to facilitate more long-term temporary accommodation.

All of those contributions were useful and stood in contrast to the answers that were elicited to all the gotcha questions about who knew what when about different things and the two or three questions designed to take advantage of the budgetary position and what the now Opposition understands about that. It has caused the problems but now seeks to politically take advantage of them.

HOUSEHOLD GAS CONNECTIONS

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (14:47): I take note of the answer given by the Minister for Climate Change on the apparent contradictions in Government policy about the important issues facing New South Wales, in this case gas connections in new homes and the truly disturbing reality of our warming global climate. I commend the Minister for Climate Change and recognise that she understands the urgency of the situation we find ourselves in. However, the Labor Government that she jointly leads must be criticised in light of the comments by the Premier that the issue of gas connections in homes is just another complication or another policy change, when the challenges ahead of us are so serious.

The Premier successfully identified that there are serious issues. He failed to see the connection between household gas and those very serious climate issues that we are facing. As my colleague Ms Abigail Boyd shared with the House this morning, there are currently 1.5 million homes in New South Wales that are using gas and another 35,000 homes are being connected to new gas every year. That is another 35,000 homes that are being plugged into the gas industry every single year, an industry that is driving us towards a catastrophic future. If the Premier would listen to the Leader of the Government in this House he would be on a better path—and we would be on a better path than we are now with his apparent captain's call.

His decision to speak over the top of the well-informed energy and climate change Minister about whether climate action and controlling fossil fuel emissions is a worthwhile pursuit is tragic and wrong. We must electrify and rapidly expand renewable capacity. We must mitigate, adapt and prepare for the dangerous climate change impacts that are already locked in. No activity to reduce the damage that we are doing right now is too much or too complicated, despite what the Premier has said. We must mobilise. We must air ideas that reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. An end of new gas connections in urban areas is a good example of that. It must be on the table, considered on its merit and acted upon urgently.

I invite members to pause and reflect on the image of a gas stove. Currently, the gas is on full. The kettle is whistling on the stove. Our feet are up, in anticipation of that cup of tea. But the kettle has been whistling for

decades. The water has boiled. It is too late for tea. The gas is burning. It is boiling the kettle dry. If we do not turn off the gas, we will burn down the house. I also take note of the answer given by the same Minister to a question on land clearing. If we stopped logging our public native forest estate as a matter of utmost priority, we would stop the insanity that we are witnessing with land clearing and we would save money. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Point of order: I draw the Deputy President's attention to the clock.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): I am well aware of the clock. I tend to run off the analogue clock, which is fairly close to where we should be.

SYDNEY METRO WEST

SYDNEY METRO CITY & SOUTHWEST

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (14:51): If I could take all 26 minutes I certainly would, but I respect the rules of the House. I take note of the answers given by Ministers to questions on Metro West. That landmark project was promised to electorates in Western Sydney prior to the election. It was disappointing to hear from the answers, or non-answers, to questions brought to this place that we really do not have an assurance from the Government that, despite being so emphatic and clear before the election that it would deliver on those projects—which were planned, provided for, set in place and commenced by the Coalition Government—it is not ready to step up and deliver that vital infrastructure to the communities, despite making unequivocal promises to them prior to the election.

Let us be clear: In talking about Metro southwest, the Government is saying, "Look over here," because it is saving that project. Yet it created the scare campaign to start with. That is politics 101: Create the scare campaign, cancel the project and then rescue it. The Government has made only one rescue, and that is from its own reviews. These electorates are crying out for those projects. They need them. Those projects were planned, funded and commenced by the previous Government. We cannot for the life of us understand and nor can the Government's own members understand what they are doing. They were provided with an infrastructure project that was planned and funded, on a platter, ready to go. Federal Labor Minister Michelle Rowland has called for the project to happen. The newly minted Parramatta MP, who baked votes on the back of the promises for the project, has continued that call. Former Lord Mayor Donna Davis has called for it. Burwood Mayor John Faker has called for it. David Borger has called for it. They are all calling for it, and the last time I looked they were all Labor members, not Liberal members.

This is not a Liberal vanity project. This vital infrastructure was promised unequivocally to the communities of Western Sydney. It is extraordinary that the Government would say one thing so emphatically before the election, change its mind and pay people extraordinary amounts of money to do a review after the election, not release the details of that review and then respond to the review and provide a rescue plan for the project, which put in danger the infrastructure that was already underway and commenced. The Government was very clear before the election. It must keep its word, honour this promise and deliver Metro West, because the risk is that those communities will not get the infrastructure they are crying out for.

This project was promised to them before the election unequivocally, as were no new taxes. It was very clear. The words were not in any way misleading, complicated or difficult to understand. Chris Minns said, "No new taxes." The confirmation of Sydney Metro West has led to talk of uplift and of taxing developers and other people for this infrastructure. That seems to me to be a new tax. It seems to me to be the direct opposite of what was promised, once again, before the election. So it seems to me that Chris Minns and the Labor Government deserve a gold medal. They will not get the Commonwealth Games, but they will get a gold medal for spin. Labor claimed that the former Government could not deliver the project, and now it claims that it cannot deliver it. But the fact is that Labor has acknowledged that these services must be delivered. The people of New South Wales deserve much better than Labor.

HOUSEHOLD GAS CONNECTIONS

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (14:54): I take note of a number of answers that were given by the Minister for Energy, and Minister for Climate Change in answer to questions about what Victoria has done to ban gas in new homes, and the apparent contradiction between comments from Minister Sharpe and the Premier, which do not actually seem that different. It is far from reassuring for the people of New South Wales that anybody in the Labor Government will take action on climate change. We heard a whole lot of "meh" from both of them. I want to drill down into what the Premier was reported as saying. He said, "I don't need another complication." Now, I always like to look at the dictionary. The *Cambridge Dictionary* definition of "complication" is "something that makes a situation more difficult".

Finding homes for and repairing the lives of thousands of people after a flood event or a bushfire is pretty complicated. I understand that, as a Premier of this State, that would be pretty complicated. Building new infrastructure and retrofitting buildings, particularly for lower-income earners and more vulnerable people in our society, to provide them with comfortable shelter in extreme heat and cold is complicated policymaking. Trying to save thousands upon thousands of additional species from going extinct because of the climate crisis is really complicated. I understand that that will take time to grapple with. But what is not complicated is banning gas connections in new homes. We are not even talking about retrofitting. We are talking about new homes. It is literally the simplest thing that I can think of that this Government could be doing at this point, not only to reduce emissions, but also, critically, to lower energy bills.

We know that gas prices are pushing up energy bills. We know that the quicker we get homes fully electrified across this State, the easier the job will be of sorting out our energy system. It really bothers me that, yet again, the leader of this State is not prepared to set out the plan for what will happen when we decarbonise and transition away from our reliance on fossil fuels. If we leave it to the market, we will end up with the most unfair situations. The poorest people in our State will not be able to afford cheaper energy sources, and workers and communities will be left behind. It is a complicated task. The Premier must be up to it.

SYDNEY METRO CITY & SOUTHWEST

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (14:57): I take note of the Treasurer's answers to questions about southwest Metro. He said he rescued and saved the project.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: Not all heroes wear capes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Not all heroes wear capes. Our hero certainly does not wear a cape, but the person from whom he must rescue the project is none other than himself. Recommendation No. 3 of the parliamentary committee report on the Sydenham to Bankstown line conversion—which the Treasurer co-authored—states:

That the NSW Government not proceed with the Metro Southwest project, leaving the Sydney Metro to terminate at Sydenham, and that project funds are instead spent on connecting new communities to rail services and improving existing rail services (for example, through digital signalling).

Who authored that report? None other than the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, the Hon. Anthony D'Adam, Ms Abigail Boyd and the Hon. Mark Banasiak. Dissenting members included Fang, Farlow and Mallard.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Sounds like a law firm.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: It does sound like a law firm. Today the Treasurer was concerned about a tweet that was made and deleted by the former transport Minister in 2018. But I am more concerned by a tweet that was made and deleted by the current transport Minister, Jo Haylen, who in 2018 said, "The Government is rushing to lock in the Metro conversion from Sydenham to Bankstown and stop people from having their say on the project. Labor will instead build the western Metro, a new fast train from the city to Parramatta." Where do we stand today? The Treasurer has rescued the southwest Metro project from himself and his own recommendations, and the transport Minister has refused to commit to Metro West. This State is in a very sorry state under the Labor Government. The only people the State needs rescuing from is the Government.

TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (15:00): I thank all members for their contributions to the take-note debate and, equally, for their questions and answers in question time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Deferred Answers

GREYHOUND WELFARE AND INTEGRITY COMMISSION

In reply to **The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK** (20 June 2023).

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Minister for Jobs and Tourism, Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy)—The Minister provided the following response:

The Minns Government broadly supports the previous Government response to report No. 1 of the Select Committee on the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission.

In relation to Recommendation 11 (relating to a national review of prohibited substance rules), the Minns Government agrees with the position taken to not support the recommendation as:

- the Australian Government and National Cabinet has no role in relation to the regulation of greyhound racing, which is administered at a State level.
- Greyhounds Australasia is responsible for setting national rules for adoption by member jurisdictions, with the Commission and Greyhound Racing NSW able to advocate directly to Greyhounds Australasia on any concerns identified in relation the national rules, including in relation to prohibited substances.

FAITH COMMUNITIES

In reply to **The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK** (22 June 2023).

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism)—The Parliamentary Secretary provided the following response:

I am advised that the Faith Affairs Council is being finalised in consultation with faith leaders.

WILD HORSE COMMUNITY ADVISORY PANEL

In reply to **The Hon. ROD ROBERTS** (22 June 2023).

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Energy, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage)—The Minister provided the following response:

Further to the information provided to the Hon. Rod Roberts, MLC, on 23 June 2023 in response to the supplementary question for written answer about threats to National Parks and Wildlife Service [NPWS] staff in relation to wild horse management operations, please see the below additional information.

Table 1: Recent matters reported to NSW Police

Date of incident	Description of incident	Date reported to NSW Police	Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS) event number
28 May 2021	<p>Interruption of the wild horse management program by illegal removal of horses from a passive trap yard</p> <p>Wild horses were released from a passive trap yard by an unknown person.</p> <p>The incident was referred to NSW Police.</p> <p>The offender could not be identified. No further action taken.</p>	29 May 2021	Not available at this time
25 February 2022	<p>Interruption of the wild horse management program by illegal removal of horses from a passive trap yard</p> <p>Wild horses were released from a passive trap yard by an unknown person.</p> <p>The same day, a suspect posted on social media a video of the same passive trap yard with horses in the yard. An Australian flag was attached to the loading ramp at the yard, causing anxiety in the trapped horses.</p> <p>The incident was referred to NSW Police. There was inconclusive evidence for NSW Police to proceed with charges.</p> <p>The Department of Planning and Environment's [the Department] Specialist Investigations Services is investigating the incident and suspects have been interviewed.</p>	25 February 2022	E87450674
7 March 2022	<p>Two passive trap yards vandalised</p> <p>Three members of the public filmed themselves dismantling one trap yard, posting the video on social media. Posters were left at the site that read: "Enough is enough. No more trapping".</p> <p>An additional trap yard was dismantled, with the same poster left at the site.</p>	7 March 2022	E86488604

Date of incident	Description of incident	Date reported to NSW Police	Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS) event number
	<p>NSW Police were notified on 7 March 2022 and attended the site on 8 March 2022 to collect evidence.</p> <p>In consultation with NSW Police, the Department's Specialist Investigations Section took over the investigation. The investigation is continuing.</p>		
17 September 2022	<p>Phone calls: "Hopes that (the NPWS staff member who answered the phone) and all staff get shot in the park".</p> <p>The offender could not be identified (private phone number). No further action taken due to lack of evidence. Referred to NSW Police at regular meeting.</p>	21 September 2022	N/A
18 September 2022	<p>Social media comment: "Shoot the dogs that did this".</p> <p>Referred to NSW Police at a regular meeting.</p>	21 September 2022	N/A
19 September 2022	<p>Social media comment: "How about we take the RSPCA inspectors, the shooters and Mr Griffin out in a paddock and gut shoot them and leave them".</p> <p>Referred to NSW Police at a regular meeting.</p>	21 September 2022	N/A
19 September 2022	<p>Social media comment against a post that mentions the name of a NPWS staff member: "These knuckle heads need a bullet in them".</p> <p>Referred to NSW Police at a regular meeting.</p>	21 September 2022	N/A
23 September 2022	<p>Handwritten letter received at the NPWS office Jindabyne threatening to fire bomb the office as an "act of retribution".</p> <p>Letter opened by a member of NPWS staff.</p> <p>The letter was provided to NSW Police on 23 September 2022 who investigated the incident. The investigation is continuing.</p>	23 September 2022	E92667182
10 October 2022	<p>Social media comment: "Mongrel park murderer's need to be culled".</p> <p>Referred to NSW Police at a regular meeting.</p>	11 October 2022	N/A
3 February 2023	<p>Photos illegally obtained via a trail camera allegedly of two NPWS staff conducting wild horse control were posted on social media, with requests to name the persons in the photograph.</p> <p>The matter was referred to NSW Police and Meta [Facebook].</p> <p>The investigation is continuing.</p>	4 February 2023	Not available at this time
10 February 2023	<p>Social media comment: Threat to slip ammunition into NPWS staff private home mailboxes.</p> <p>Referred to NSW Police at a regular meeting.</p>	10 February 2023	N/A
24 May 2023	<p>Social media comment: "Maybe they need a gut shot to educate them".</p> <p>Referred to NSW Police at a regular meeting.</p>	25 May 2023	N/A

Date of incident	Description of incident	Date reported to NSW Police	Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS) event number
26 May 2023	<p>Head from a horse carcass was dumped in the foyer of the NPWS office and visitor centre at Jindabyne.</p> <p>Three witnesses observed and photographed [person's name withheld] reverse their vehicle to the entrance of the NPWS Jindabyne office and visitors centre, unload the head of a dead horse, and place it in the entry to the building's foyer. [Person's name withheld] captured video during the incident and shared it on social media.</p> <p>NPWS staff photographed the horse's head and contacted NSW Police who advised to remove and appropriately dispose of the head.</p> <p>The matter was investigated by NSW Police.</p>	26 May 2023	E77414403

Table 2: Historical matters

Examples of incidents associated with preparation of the 2016 draft Wild Horse Management Plan are detailed below. NPWS has tracked incidents more systematically since 2021 as detailed above.

Date of incident	Description of incident
17 August 2015	Social media comments about the former manager of the NPWS wild horse project: "I prefer posting his personal details all over Facebook and declaring a Facebook party at his place. A few 100 ferals showing up at his front door expecting a good time would get him slithering back under his rock like the reptile he is".
8 December 2015	Social media comment about the former manager of the NPWS wild horse project: "Let (name withheld) and his Goon squad walk into the Park, Bago and Maragle and shoot them all. No one cares!!!!".
15 February 2016	<p>Social media comments about the former manager of the NPWS wild horse project: "We were about to organize for the NPWS head brumby hater's kids to get belted up at school – well I guess there will be a next time"</p> <p>"All I am hoping for that the horses are not carrying an injury from a bullet. Stay tuned"</p> <p>"If so, I know a kid that will be carrying a broken nose and black eye for a while. Stay tuned!"</p> <p>"Comes with the territory I guess".</p> <p>NSW Police investigated the incident.</p>
7 March 2016	Social media comment about the former manager of the NPWS wild horse project: "I think someone who is good on the computer needs to make up an "Australia's most wanted" poster for (name withheld) from NPWS for crimes against nature – wild horse murderer and National Park destroyer."

HEAVY VEHICLE ROAD SAFETY

In reply to **The Hon. MARK BANASIAK** (22 June 2023).

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Minister for Jobs and Tourism, Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy)—The Minister provided the following response:

I am advised,

Transport for NSW is reviewing and assessing alternative locations for two green reflector sites which have been removed as part of the Newell Highway Program Alliance.

The green reflector sites were removed to allow for construction of overtaking lanes in the Pilliga at Dandry, and the other was at Back Creek, 19 kilometres north of West Wyalong.

Work at the Dandry site is continuing, and Transport for NSW is reviewing and assessing alternative locations for the green reflector sites to be reinstated in conjunction with current construction.

Transport for NSW is also looking to add in additional capacity at Tycannah rest area as part of the North Moree Heavy Duty Pavement project, which may offset any losses of green reflector sites in and around that area.

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NATIVE FORESTRY AND ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY

In reply to **Ms SUE HIGGINSON** (27 June 2023).

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Energy, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage)—The Minister provided the following response:

The Environment Protection Authority [EPA] operates in a functional structure and does not separately cost its expenditure for each industry it regulates. As such, it does not specifically cost the regulation of native forestry.

The EPA has over 800 full-time equivalent staff. Around 350 are authorised officers with powers to undertake forestry compliance and enforcement activities. In addition, the EPA has legal, technical and policy staff that administer the native forestry regulatory frameworks and support compliance and enforcement activities.

PARAMEDIC STAFFING

In reply to **Dr AMANDA COHN** (27 June 2023).

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

I am advised by the Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast,

Last financial year, NSW Ambulance's attrition rate was low at 4.9 per cent. Overall attrition levels are low and proportionate to the organisational growth.

NSW Ambulance received funding for 2,128 staff and 30 ambulance stations in a \$1.76 billion boost to frontline emergency care, as part of the 2022-23 NSW Budget. These positions will be based in both regional and metropolitan areas. This investment, over four years, will provide New South Wales with an additional 1,858 paramedics, 210 ambulance support staff, 52 nurses and eight doctors and improve staff wellbeing by reducing pressure, workload, and staff fatigue.

NSW Ambulance recognises that benefits and incentives are required to attract, support, and retain employees in some locations. These incentives include:

NSW Health Rural Health Workforce Incentives Scheme

In July 2022, NSW Health introduced the Rural Health Workforce Incentives Scheme to enable health agencies to recruit and retain key health workers in hard-to-fill and critically vacant positions. The scheme offers a rural and regional health allowance as one of its monetary benefits. Employees in incentivised positions may be eligible to receive up to an additional \$10,000 every 12 months.

Rural Incentive Benefit

NSW Ambulance has an established Rural Incentive Benefit that enables employees who are posted to priority stations to receive rental relief payments at up to \$100 per week, and Higher Education Loan Program [HELP] fees support at up to \$2,000 per financial year.

Transferred Employees Benefits Scheme

NSW Ambulance Transferred Employees Benefits Scheme provides monetary incentives to permanent employees who are required to relocate because of transfer to an extremely remote, very remote, remote, far rural, or inner rural classified station from a non-classified station, or to a directed posting outside of the Sydney Metropolitan Area boundary.

The scheme provides additional leave and financial assistance to meet costs relating to travel, accommodation and meals when seeking accommodation and commencing duties, school uniforms for dependents, removals and storage, and purchase and sale of real estate.

NSW Ambulance has also invested \$30 million over the last five years to the wellbeing of staff and continues to improve its wellbeing resources, including:

- The Wellbeing Workshop Program, a mandatory workshop for both clinical and corporate staff designed to support their mental and physical health.
- Mental health training for paramedics, including suicide awareness for managers, and occupational violence prevention training. Online wellbeing and resilience training and resources.
- Access to specialist trauma psychologists for staff who are exposed to traumatic work incidents.
- Mental Health Support Program for staff who wish to engage a private psychologist. NSW Ambulance will cover the cost of 10 sessions.
- Health coaching, fitness passports for staff and their families, medic fit exercise equipment and injury prevention specialists.
- In-house Staff Psychology Services across the State, Employee Assistance and Psychological Services.
- Buddy program for new and transferred staff.
- Peer Support Officers, Chaplains, Grievance Contact Officers, Domestic Violence Referral Officers Network, and therapy dogs.
- Targeted campaigns to promote health, wellbeing, and connection such as Thank a First Responder Day, International Families Day, and RUOK Day.
- NSW Ambulance values its staff and provides them with opportunities for recognition, professional development, and growth. These include:
- Investments in diversity and inclusion:
 - Supporting the growth and development of people from underrepresented groups and ensuring that they feel a strong sense of belonging through the (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Reconciliation Action Plan, Continuing Professional Development education, a women's mentoring program and a pride officer program.
 - Flexibility in work arrangements through flexible rostering and work practices, parental leaves and return to work programs.
 - The development of a Working on Country policy enabling our staff to return to Country and career support for Aboriginal staff.
- Maintaining a respectful workplace through grievance management, prevention and management of bullying, harassment, and discrimination.
- Addressing any concerns, suggestions and feedback received in the People Matter Employee Survey and in Professional Development Program meetings.
- Engaging staff in a wide range of learning and development programs.
- Recognition of the hard work and dedication of staff through a number of schemes, including rewards of service medals for exceptional performance and Women in Ambulance nominations.

MINISTER FOR FINANCE

In reply to **The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE** (28 June 2023).

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Energy, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage)—The Minister provided the following response:

I refer the member to my statements made in the Legislative Assembly on 21 June 2023 regarding this matter.

RAIL NETWORK AND FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

In reply to **The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK** (28 June 2023).

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Energy, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage)—The Minister provided the following response:

I am advised the following in relation to the FIFA Women's World Cup matches transport arrangements:

Planned rail and bus transport services for the five games to be played at Stadium Australia, Sydney Olympic Park:

- Trains: additional services will operate including express and limited stop trains between Central and Olympic Park stations, and western line stations and Olympic Park. There will also be a build-up of carriages on various rail lines.
- Buses: Sydney Olympic Park major event buses will run for all five games at Olympic Park across all nine major event bus routes.
- All other transport modes will be operating on regular timetables.
- The Rail Repair Plan works will not impact the rail transport arrangements for the event.
- Planned light rail and bus transport services for the six games to be played at Sydney Football Stadium, Moore Park:

- Light rail: additional frequent L2/L3 light rail services will run between Central and Moore Park, before and after each match.
- Shuttle buses: a limited number of dedicated express shuttle buses will run between Central Station and Moore Park bus terminal for each match.
- Regular route buses: additional regular route services will run on identified route buses, primarily for crowd egress in evenings to meet expected customer demand.
- The transport arrangements have been based on forecasted crowds and postcode ticket sale data, providing insights on where people are travelling from and to, to ensure adequate services are provided.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

In reply to **The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY** (28 June 2023).

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Energy, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage)—The Minister provided the following response:

The matter of insurance for electric vehicles and the associated charging infrastructure is a developing area of discussion which is being explored at a New South Wales, national and international level. The New South Wales Government is working with the relevant industry bodies to better understand the issues that surround insurance and electric vehicle charging infrastructure in homes and strata buildings. I understand that guidance from some international insurance companies has been that electric vehicles should be treated in the same way as Internal Combustion Engine vehicles in relation to insurance risk.

SMALL BUSINESS INSURANCE

In reply to **The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO** (28 June 2023).

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Energy, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage)—The Minister provided the following response:

I am advised that the New South Wales Government will honour all of its election commitments.

SYDNEY HARBOUR BRIDGE FLAGS

In reply to **The Hon. CHRIS RATH** (29 June 2023).

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Minister for Jobs and Tourism, Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy)—The Minister provided the following response:

I am advised:

The Premier's Department determines the protocols for the flags flown at State government buildings and structures.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 4.00 p.m.

Business of the House

POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I move:

That Government business notice of motion No. 1 be postponed until the next sitting day.

Motion agreed to.

Committees

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 2 - HEALTH

Reference

Dr AMANDA COHN: I inform the House that in accordance with paragraph (6) of the resolution establishing the portfolio committees, Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health resolved on 12 July 2023 to adopt the following reference:

Equity, accessibility and appropriate delivery of outpatient and community mental health care in New South Wales

That Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health inquire into and report on the equity, accessibility and appropriate delivery of outpatient and community mental health care in New South Wales, and in particular:

- equity of access to outpatient mental health services;
- navigating of outpatient and community mental health services from the perspectives of patients and carers;
- capacity of State and other community mental health services, including in rural, regional and remote New South Wales;
- integration between physical and mental health services, and between mental health services and providers;

- (e) appropriate and efficient allocation of mental health care workers, including psychiatrists, nurses, psychologists, general practitioners, counsellors, social workers, allied health professionals and peer workers;
- (f) the use of Community Treatment Orders under the Mental Health Act 2007;
- (g) benefits and risks of online and telehealth services;
- (h) accessibility and cultural safety of mental health services for First Nations people, culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD], LGBTQIA+ people, young people, and people with a disability;
- (i) alternatives to police for emergency responses to people experiencing acute mental distress, psychosis, delirium, dementia or intoxication in the community, including but not limited to Police, Ambulance, Clinical, Early, Response [PACER]; and
- (j) any other related matter.

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 2 - HEALTH

Reference

Dr AMANDA COHN: I inform the House that in accordance with paragraph (6) of the resolution establishing the portfolio committees, Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health resolved on 25 July 2023 to adopt the following reference:

Current and potential impacts of gold, silver, lead and zinc mining on human health, land, air and water quality in New South Wales

- (1) That Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health inquire into and report on current and potential impacts of gold, silver, lead and zinc mining on human health, land, air and water quality in New South Wales, in particular:
 - (a) the impact on the health of local residents and mine workers, including through biomagnification and bioaccumulation;
 - (b) the impact on catchments and waterways, affecting both surface and groundwater destined for local and town water supplies, including rainwater tanks, and on aquatic biodiversity;
 - (c) the impact on land and soil, crops and livestock, including through biomagnification and bioaccumulation;
 - (d) the adequacy of the response and any compliance action taken by the regulatory authorities in response to complaints and concerns from communities affected by mining activities;
 - (e) the effectiveness of the current regulatory framework in terms of monitoring, compliance, risk management and harm reduction from mining activities;
 - (f) the effectiveness of current decommissioning and rehabilitation practices in safeguarding human health and the environment;
 - (g) the effectiveness of New South Wales government agencies to regulate and improve outcomes including:
 - (i) the measurement, reporting and public awareness;
 - (ii) the provision of various protective materials;
 - (iii) the ability to ensure the health of at-risk groups;
 - (iv) the suitability of work health and safety regulations;
 - (v) the capacity to respond within existing resources; and
 - (vi) the adequacy of existing work, health and safety standards for workers.
 - (h) whether the regulatory framework for heavy metals and critical minerals mining is fit for purpose and able to ensure that the positive and negative impacts of heavy metals and critical minerals mining on local communities, economies, including job creation, and the environment are appropriately balanced; and
 - (i) any other related matters.
- (2) That the committee report by 21 November 2023.

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 8 - CUSTOMER SERVICE

Reference

The Hon. EMMA HURST: I inform the House that in accordance with paragraph (6) of the resolution establishing the portfolio committees, Portfolio Committee No. 8 - Customer Service resolved on 29 June 2023 to adopt the following reference:

Pounds in New South Wales

That Portfolio Committee No. 8 - Customer Service inquire into and report on pounds in New South Wales, and in particular:

- (a) resourcing challenges affecting New South Wales pounds, including the adequacy of funding given towards the operation of pounds by local and State governments;
- (b) the adequacy of pound buildings and facilities in New South Wales;

- (c) welfare challenges facing animals in pounds across New South Wales, including the provision of housing, bedding, feeding, exercise, enrichment, veterinary treatment, vaccination and desexing;
- (d) the adequacy of the laws, regulations and codes governing New South Wales pounds, including the Companion Animals Act 1998 and the NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No. 5 - Dogs and cats in animal boarding establishments, 1996, as well as the adequacy of the current enforcement and compliance regime;
- (e) factors influencing the number of animals ending up in New South Wales pounds, and strategies for reducing these numbers;
- (f) euthanasia rates and practices in New South Wales pounds, including the adequacy of reporting of euthanasia rates and other statistics;
- (g) the role and challenges of behavioural assessments in New South Wales pounds;
- (h) the relationship between New South Wales pounds and animal rescue organisations;
- (i) the challenges associated with the number of homeless cats living in New South Wales for both pounds and animal rescue organisations, and strategies for addressing this issue;
- (j) strategies for improving the treatment, care and outcomes for animals in New South Wales pounds; and
- (k) any other related matter.

Business of the House

CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

The Hon. BOB NANVA: By leave: I move:

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the standing and sessional orders, the order of committee reports and Government responses this day be as follows:

- (1) Government response to report No. 60 of Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health entitled *Impact of ambulance ramping and access block on the operation of hospital emergency departments in New South Wales*, tabled 8 December 2022.
- (2) Government response to report No. 3/57 of the Joint Standing Committee on the Office of the Valuer-General entitled *Fifteenth General Meeting with the Valuer General*, dated 7 December 2022.
- (3) Government responses to:
 - (a) Report No. 82 of the Standing Committee on Law and Justice entitled *2022 Review of the Compulsory Third Party insurance scheme*, tabled 24 February 2023; and
 - (b) Report No. 83 of the Standing Committee on Law and Justice entitled *2022 Review of the Lifetime Care and Support scheme*, tabled 24 February 2023.
- (4) 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.
- (5) Report No. 15 of the Public Accountability Committee entitled *Appointment of Mr John Barilaro as Senior Trade and Investment Commissioner to the Americas: Interim report*, dated February 2023, and the Government response.
- (6) Report No. 16 of the Public Accountability Committee entitled *Appointment of Mr John Barilaro as Senior Trade and Investment Commissioner to the Americas: Final report*, dated February 2023, and the Government response.
- (7) Report No. 49 of the Standing Committee on State Development entitled *Allegations of impropriety against agents of the City of Canterbury Bankstown Council*, dated February 2023, and the Government response.
- (8) Report No. 18 of the Portfolio Committee No. 7 - Planning and Environment entitled *Allegations of impropriety against agents of the Hills Shire Council and property developers in the region*, dated March 2023, and the Government response.

Motion agreed to.

Ministerial Statement

ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR

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) (16:46): Yesterday, my Cabinet colleagues and I met on the stage of Penrith's Q Theatre at the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre for the first New South Wales Government Community Cabinet meeting. After the Community Cabinet meeting and then a formal Cabinet meeting held in the heart of the west, I was back on the same stage with a new audience later that afternoon. The second act at the Joan was the New South Wales Government's arts, culture and creative industries policy consultation program, A New Look at Culture. The Government announced that consultation in the north building of the Art Gallery of New South Wales on 7 July. Acting Director Maud Page hosted the Government and a media pack in the stunning atrium on the lower level of the Sulman-prize-winning, SANAA-designed wing that has given Sydney a new cultural facility to be delighted with and truly proud of.

I recognise the capital investments made by the former Government and by former arts Ministers—yourself included, Mr President—in the expansion of infrastructure at some of our cultural institutions. Those investments

are worthy of praise. The New South Wales Government must turn its attention to the people of the arts and culture sector. The Government believes that culture is a human right. This year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is appropriate that I draw the attention of the House to article 27 of the declaration. It states:

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. I acknowledge just how tough the past couple of years have been for the arts community and for the people who make up the arts and culture sector. The impact that was wrought by COVID-19 and the lockdowns affected our entire State, but the arts sector was incredibly hard hit. Galleries were closed, theatre stages were left empty and gigs were silenced. Now stages are back in operation, film sets are buzzing and museum programming has come back with urgent enthusiasm. I acknowledge that not every organisation has survived. Not every artist in New South Wales from the pre-COVID days will return to their vocation. Not every act will reunite to perform the art that they love.

This week marked six months since the Federal Government announced its National Cultural Policy, Revive. In response to that framework, the New South Wales Government has taken the initiative to build a policy that aligns with it. The key goal of that policy development, from my point of view, is that the New South Wales Government believes that the arts and culture sector in New South Wales should be bigger. It should be a bigger part of our State's economy, a bigger part of our State's story and a bigger part of our State's sense of itself. We know that arts, culture and creative activity contribute more than \$120 billion to Australia's economy. In Greater Sydney, the workers of the creative industries account for 9 per cent or 10 per cent of the entire labour force. The Government believes that there is room for a bigger arts and culture sector and that the potential is massive.

Of course, growth must be sustainable. It must recognise the pressure that people have been under. That is the central question: What would it take to make arts and culture, the creative industries, grow in New South Wales? Acknowledging the stress and pressure that people have been under, here are three things that might help. The first is a shift from a focus solely on our amazing cultural institutions to a broader policy focus on creative industries. Making the shift that the National Cultural Policy has taken with Revive, and adopting a renewed focus on literature, screen and music, is important but just the beginning. Just as that policy has done, we will take a broader look at creative industries—a new look at fashion, architecture and design. We want to look as far afield as the creative elements of the technology and gaming sectors.

In taking that approach, the Government is able to embrace a workforce that encompasses not merely those engaged in the creative and performing arts alone. It acknowledges that supporting that front line is a much broader arts and entertainment workforce, in turn supported by other associated industries. Beyond that group is a fourth supportive layer of embedded creative workers in non-creative industries. Across the Australian workforce, that has been estimated as being 8.1 per cent of the entire Australian labour force—of course, bigger again in New South Wales. I recognise the research done by A New Approach, which has spelt out quite a good analysis of that workforce. That shift in focus represents one of the crucial changes that will allow us to paint a bigger picture about creativity in New South Wales and ask for more support across government beyond the valuable work that Create NSW does for the sector.

A specific part of government that can offer more support is Destination NSW, so the second thing I would like to see is the tourism body turn its attention to arts and culture because I believe arts and culture should be a bigger part of the State's story. It is a huge part of what people love about their town or their city, about where they live. But it is not always the story that we are telling to the rest of the country or to the rest of the world about why they should come to visit, and it should be. The reason the creative economies of London or New York are larger and more sustainable is that they have essentially issued a standing invitation to creative spirits around the world to visit or to live and work there. That is the sort of invitation that this Government believes New South Wales might issue to the rest of the country and the world.

The New South Wales Government will be driving a policy shift in tourism from destination tourism to experience tourism. That shift is in part about the incredible cultural experiences that people can have in New South Wales. It is about going to a restaurant or having an amazing night out at a venue, from a music-filled laneway bar to the colour and noises of Ramadan nights in Lakemba or Vivid in the CBD. Those are reasons people want to come here but then, crucially, come back again.

The third change is a set of regulatory changes that the Government is determined to drive that will see grassroots arts venues across the State flourish rather than flounder. I do not feel the need to spell those out in great detail to members of this Chamber, who are reasonably familiar with some of the direction, but we do believe we have to change the rules to support grassroots arts spaces. The conversation that the Government is having with the sector is considering whether the planning settings are right to enable culture to thrive—for example, whether the liquor regulations are supporting arts and culture.

The sector is looking for the ability to spill outdoors to access and enjoy outdoor spaces for cultural performance. One of the strongest pieces of sector feedback is the appetite within communities across New South

Wales for reform that will make it harder for single neighbours to complain and close down grassroots arts or music venues. The Government wants to see arts and culture spilling out onto the street and into neighbourhoods across the State. That is a crucial part of what we must do to drive this agenda. I thank the local governments that I have already begun engaging with on this agenda. They have made it clear that they cannot wait to work together with the State Government on this. Those three changes are the three reasons I am optimistic about what this policy could mean.

In particular, I thank members of the ministerial advisory panel. The advice of that group has been invaluable and very direct. The panel is chaired by Louise Herron, CEO of the Opera House and State cultural treasure in her own right; Kerri Glasscock of the Sydney Fringe Festival; Michael Dagostino; Ross Harley; and filmmaker Darren Dale. Joining that group in its work will be an artists advisory panel, which will be chaired by Sara Mansour. It was a pleasure to be present at the State Library earlier this year to see Sara and the Bankstown Poetry Slam receive an honour. Further artists will be added to the panel. It is a crucial part of the process so that the submissions are reviewed by creative practitioners.

Consultation consists of a series of town halls throughout New South Wales: the first stop was Lismore, then Newcastle, Central Sydney and Penrith. A town hall in Bega will be followed by one in Wagga Wagga the next day. A First Nations forum will be held in Leichardt, followed by sessions in Dubbo, on 14 August, and in Tamworth. I am looking forward to having the shadow Minister for the Arts and Heritage, the member for Tamworth, join us and address that town hall. Further town halls will take place in Wollongong and Liverpool, and then conclude in Broken Hill. Those town halls right around the State are an essential part of the consultation. Submissions close on 31 August. I ask directly for the assistance of members of Parliament to spread the word about the process.

Bipartisan support for arts and culture is a great strength of New South Wales. We should treasure and preserve that culture—the way the political system interacts with arts and culture. It is a huge part of the potential in our State. I believe it is time to strengthen Australian arts and culture, especially in this State. The Federal Government's National Cultural Policy, Revive, has taken the first steps along that path, so it is exactly the right moment to be having this discussion in New South Wales. I am pleased to update the House about the development of this important policy.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY (16:57): I speak on behalf of the Opposition and my good friend the shadow Minister for the Arts and Heritage, the Hon. Kevin Anderson, the member for Tamworth in the other place. It is fair to say that although I am representing my good friend Kevin Anderson I am not as artistic and do not have the same level of interest in the arts as the Hon. John Graham or the Hon. Kevin Anderson. Nevertheless, I am here to represent the Opposition. I have a great deal of respect for the Hon. John Graham as a new Minister in the Government, but I must flag at the outset that it is a shame to see the Government using ministerial statements to launch and relaunch different policies within a portfolio. It says a lot more about the lack of legislative agenda that the Government has brought to the sitting week. Nevertheless, we are here to talk about the arts, so here I go.

I have the statement with the Minister's mugshot. It is important to note, as a National Party MP—and you would know yourself, Mr President, in your former role as the Minister for the Arts—that the arts industry is incredibly important. It does not matter whether someone is in Byron Bay or Broken Hill; every town has an artist it wants to claim as one of its own. At the outset, it is important to recognise the work of the former Liberal-Nationals Government in this space, acknowledged by the current Government. The Minister has been able to take the next step in this policy area with the foundation that was left by the former Government, building upon a good legacy and framework—the investments and the groundwork—that was left. It is evident that those investments in the arts and the cultural revolution in New South Wales will certainly put our State on the map as a thriving cultural hub.

The support and investment from the former Government was instrumental in fostering that creative talent, thereby enhancing the State's cultural landscape and global standing. As the Minister starts his consultation across the State, which he outlined in his update to the House and in the document that he has just put out, I hope he intends to learn from the legacy and the groundwork of the previous Government—to continue the journey we started in creating an arts culture and creative industries policy that truly reflect our diverse and dynamic State, particularly in regional New South Wales. Under that former leadership, the arts industry in New South Wales saw a transformation. That change was driven by a commitment to unlocking the potential of the sector with investments to establish new arts venues, fund numerous local projects and champion a range of initiatives aimed at supporting local artists and cultural organisations.

I think the Minister would agree that it is not just about investment. It is also about a shared vision for a vibrant, innovative and inclusive arts sector—a vision that recognises the arts as a powerful force for change, for community engagement and for personal expression, which the Liberal-Nationals Coalition created when we were

in government for the benefit of all citizens for many generations to come. In closing—because I will leave the Opposition's remarks quite brief—I finish with something the Minister also touched on. It was good to see the engagement from the current Minister and that open invitation to make sure the Opposition and the shadow Minister are part of this journey so we can have a bipartisan approach. It is important, and I really do wish some of the Minister's other colleagues shared that view.

It was also great to see the shadow Minister and the member for Vaucluse at the Sydney Fringe Festival. The Minister can correct me if I am wrong, but it is the largest independent arts festival in New South Wales with over 450 events presented in 70 venues, or 20 venues—I stand to be corrected—across Greater Sydney. As the Opposition's commitment to the arts is incredibly solid, a bipartisan approach will ensure that this vital component of our culture and community across the State is supported and promoted, particularly coming out of COVID and out of lockdowns, with our artists and performers bursting at the seams to entertain. So let's embrace them. Let's encourage them to push boundaries and be as creative as possible.

Bills

ROAD TRANSPORT AMENDMENT (DEMERIT POINT REDUCTION TRIAL) BILL 2023

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from 27 June 2023.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (17:04): On behalf of the Opposition, I contribute to debate on the Road Transport Amendment (Demerit Point Reduction Trial) Bill 2023. I am pleased to inform the House that the Opposition does not oppose the bill but, in taking that decision, I make a few points up-front. The Government, as the then Opposition, brought this policy forward as an election commitment and, following the election held in March this year, was obviously able to form government. As a result, and in the proper practice of Parliament, the Government should have the opportunity to pursue its policy and its legislative agenda. We welcome that, regardless of how light that agenda may be. As policies such as this one are pursued, it is important that the appropriate accountabilities remain in place in the context in which this policy decision is being made.

The New South Wales demerit point scheme is designed to encourage safe and responsible driving. Along with financial penalties, demerit points provide a strong incentive to drive within the law. They play a vital role in promoting road safety, reducing accidents and fostering a culture of responsible driving among the motoring community which, as the former Minister, I know all too well the importance of. As many of those in this Chamber and across the community know, there is no such thing as safe speeding. The demerit point system is not and should not be used as a toy of a government of any political persuasion as a means to curry favour with the voting public. It is a world-leading regulatory scheme designed to do one thing, and that is to keep people safe on our roads. During my time as Minister for Metropolitan Roads, I met with many victims of road crime and road incidents that led to the death of a loved one, including the Road Trauma Support Group. Those incidents were often without cause or explanation other than a driver knowingly doing the wrong thing.

It should be noted that, as this is a policy decision of the Government, it was not a reflection of, nor did it flow from, direct policy advice from the Centre for Road Safety. This was the policy of the then Opposition, and it is responsible for its impacts. As the bill comes before the House, I note the current context of the road toll in New South Wales. The road toll is a key measure of the effectiveness of any government, its policy settings and the roads Minister. I would hope that every member in this Chamber agrees that it is extremely important. As of Monday this week, 202 lives have been lost compared to 162 the previous year. They are individuals, not just numbers or statistics. They are loved family members who will never return. Sadly, that represents a 25 per cent increase over the previous 12 months. In real terms, that is more families broken by tragedies on New South Wales roads and more loved ones remaining to pick up the pieces of a broken family.

While the Government is seemingly promoting the idea that it is the carrot instead of the stick approach, I remind members that, under the previous Government's road safety policy, in 2021 we saw the lowest road toll achieved in 100 years—a 99-year low. It is in that light that the Opposition calls on the Government to ensure that it focuses on reducing fatalities, not how many demerit points it can return to the public. I have a number of questions about the bill for the Government. The Opposition asks the Minister to simply outline the Government's view on those questions in his speech in reply. First is about a driver with a history of dangerous driving who has 11 demerit points as of 16 January 2023—that is, the day before the trial commences. If that person then commits their next offence, worth three demerit points, on 17 January 2023, they would thereby receive a demerit point back under the trial. Does the Government think that person should be able to drive? Is that the correct message to send to drivers?

Those questions are important. I do not pose them for fun. I pose them because they are of concern to the Opposition to ensure the bill achieves the right outcomes. My second question is what is the definition of success

for the Government to allow the trial to continue? Is the definition of success a reduction in the road fatality toll or is it the number of demerit points returned to drivers? If the road toll remains higher than the previous year, will the trial be continued? They are important considerations to take into account when evaluating this trial. My third question is, will the Minister outline the eligibility situation for reduced insurance premiums as he outlined in his second reading speech? How does this operate, and what motivated him to mention that?

Turning to the detail of the bill, schedule 1 [1] to the bill amends section 31 of the Road Transport Act 2013 to provide that Transport for NSW may continue to change the New South Wales demerit points register to correct any errors or omissions, but importantly it introduces a requirement that Transport for NSW must change the register in accordance with the new section 32A that the bill introduces. New section 32A provides that Transport for NSW must reduce the number of demerit points recorded in the register against an eligible person by one if they do not commit a relevant offence during the trial period. For the purposes of the trial the bill includes a supporting criterion that must be met to be considered for the removal of the one demerit point. That will include such conditions as the person having to hold an active, unrestricted licence for the duration of the 12-month trial—that is, they must not be disqualified, suspended or otherwise unlicensed during the trial period.

The bill introduces a definition of "eligible person" which, for the purposes of the trial, will mean a person who has held an unrestricted driver licence of any class, be it a light or heavy vehicle class, and the licence has generally remained current during the duration of the trial. There will be some exceptions to the 10-year requirement, including such things as the person's licence not being current at times for matters unrelated to road safety breaches. That could include such things as short-term fine default suspension, expiry less than six months before renewal, and for medical reasons. Learner and provisional licence holders—happily and to my relief—will not be included in the trial. That is an important exception, given those drivers are subject to the strict conditions of the graduated licensing scheme. I have two children who are presently on their L plates. It is important to understand that those people need to be looked after and taught at the highest levels. That includes a zero-tolerance approach to speeding under which a minimum of four demerit points applies to any speeding offence committed.

The bill also defines a relevant offence as being one that Transport for NSW would be required to record because it incurs demerit points, one that results in the person being disqualified from holding or obtaining a licence, an unlicensed driving offence under section 53 of the Act, and also offences that are dismissed by a court without conviction under section 10 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999—the commonly known section 10. That is because section 10 allows the court to find a person guilty of committing an offence but not record a conviction against the person. Offences that do not attract demerit points, such as the majority of parking offences, will not be included as they are not referred to Transport for NSW for recording against a driver's record.

The bill prescribes the trial period as being a period provided by the statutory rules with the period commencing on 17 January 2023 and ending on 16 January 2024. It is intended that the 12-month trial start from 17 January 2023. It is my understanding that the earlier time will demonstrate the Government's commitment to returning the demerit points to drivers as soon as possible. Members might recall the date when this policy was first floated with the public. It is my understanding that, subject to the bill's successful passage through Parliament, Transport for NSW will immediately commence the necessary steps that are required to be put in place for the trial to operate. That will include taking a snapshot of the demerit points register maintained by Transport for NSW to identify all unrestricted licence holders with any active demerit points recorded against them in the three-year period immediately preceding the start date of the trial period.

Lastly, the bill prescribes the new section 31 (5) (b), which is the section that provides for Transport for NSW to remove a demerit point for an eligible person, will expire either on 31 January 2025 or a date prescribed in the regulations. It is my understanding that time frame on the expiration of the section has been included so that Transport for NSW can take into account the time lag that exists from the date an offence is committed until the date the offence is finalised and referred for recording on the driver's traffic history. It is important to note that the three-year period for which demerit point penalties are measured will remain in place, as will the operation of the 12-month good behaviour period. We support those options. This will ensure that those who frequently offend on the roads continue to be properly dealt with. It is of paramount importance to make it clear that there is no such thing as safe speeding.

While the Government has a right to pursue this policy—it took it to the election—the Opposition's concerns arise around the lack of detail surrounding how the trial will continue. We are deeply concerned about the trial continuing and how it will come to an end because New South Wales now has a significantly higher road toll compared with previous years. Knowing that we support the bill, I ask the Minister to address those particular issues and to outline his approach to solving them before debate on the bill concludes.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (17:15): On behalf of The Greens, I support the Road Transport Amendment (Demerit Point Reduction Trial) Bill 2023. The bill amends the Road Transport Act 2013 to allow Transport for NSW to undertake a trial of a demerit point reduction scheme. Under the trial, eligible drivers who do not commit

an offence over the 12-month period will be eligible to have the number of demerit points they held prior to the trial commencing reduced by one. Incentives are already in place for New South Wales drivers who consistently demonstrate safe driving behaviour. Drivers with an offence-free driving record for five years are offered half-price licence renewals. Insurance premiums are also typically lower for safe drivers. Criticism by some stakeholders in the media suggests that there is concern that fast-tracking the reduction of demerit points may have negative impacts on driver safety, but I understand that is essentially what trials are for. I understand that the trial intends to analyse driver behaviour during the 12-month period to determine whether drivers display safer driving behaviour than under existing demerit reduction arrangements.

The Greens have always advocated for evidence-based decision-making, particularly when the matter in question is something as important as the safety of residents on New South Wales roads. The issue is with the way in which the bill has come about. The former Government's decision to remove warning signs for mobile speed cameras increased the number of fines handed out in New South Wales more than 20-fold. Following criticism by the public and the media, the former Government backflipped on its decision and reinstated warning signs over a 14-month period. Unsurprisingly, there was a 90 per cent drop in the number of fines handed out once those signs were returned.

The reduction in the number of fines clearly has nothing to do with safety. The signs are not preventing speeding altogether; they just get drivers to slow down for a stretch of road where they know the camera is situated. I grew up in Queensland until my mid-twenties and that is where I got my first driver licence. In Queensland there was no such thing as signs warning drivers that a mobile speed camera was around the corner. When I moved to New South Wales I was flabbergasted to find that there were mobile speed camera signs everywhere. Other major cities around Australia do not have this phenomenon that occurs when drivers approaching Sydney speed up by 10 kilometres an hour. If drivers approaching Sydney drive at 110 then reduce their speed to 100, then everybody passes them. That happens because drivers know where the cameras are. When there is a sign, drivers know the cameras will be around the corner. On the M1 everyone slows down when they know the 90-kilometre speed sign is coming up. The culture in Sydney is to drive fast.

I do not support the notion of safety cameras. Both the Government and the Opposition jumped way too soon. Once again, it was populous politics in play, no doubt in response to a campaign by *The Daily Telegraph*, *Sky News*—or what have you—saying how outrageous it was that the signs were taken down and people were being fined because they were speeding. The whole point is to stop people from speeding. We are at this point now because the former Government jumped to promise that it would keep the signs in place and to try to do something else to look at the way in which we can reduce speeding.

I am pretty sure that the fear of mobile speed cameras reduces speeding. Again, looking around the country and growing up in Queensland, we drove slower because mobile speed cameras could be around any corner. In Sydney, everybody has lead pedals. They scream blue murder if the signs are taken down because they can no longer go 12 kilometres an hour over the speed limit. That is how they drive. It is a pity that the bill is not more ambitious in reforming our road and traffic laws. I look forward to the day when we reform our unfair, outdated roadside drug-testing laws to allow medicinal cannabis users to drive when they are not impaired. The Greens unenthusiastically support the bill; there is no reason to oppose it. Ultimately, it will not do any harm, but it lacks ambition. If we really want to reduce road deaths and stop speeding, we must do far more.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (17:20): I make an extremely brief contribution to debate on the Road Transport Amendment (Demerit Point Reduction Trial) Bill 2023. I start by saying that, like many others, I hold a New South Wales driver licence. Importantly, I have no vested interest in this scheme because I have all of my points. The last time I had an offence was at least 15 years ago. Perhaps it was longer than that. I had to disclose to the Legal Profession Admission Board every offence I had ever had. The point I make is that, until now, the demerit point system has been punitive. If we break the law, we are punished with a fine and demerit points.

In most cases, the usual demerit point loss is three. That can be doubled and it can be cumulative, so one can lose 12 points for an offence in a school zone or on a long weekend when double demerits are declared. I congratulate the Minister on the initiative. It is an important election commitment. For the first time we have introduced a new and significant element to the demerit points scheme by providing an incentive to people to behave well. If one behaves well for 12 months, those demerit points will be reduced by a point. That has been missing. It may well work towards improving road safety because people who make an error or mistake will not have to wait three years for it to reset. They will get a point back after 12 months.

I point out to the Minister that if the trial is successful, consideration should be given to increasing the restoration of demerit points to three points, given that that is the normal number of demerit points for an offence. When somebody commits a minor infraction, three demerit points come off their licence. Good behaviour for 12 months demonstrates that someone has made a solitary mistake. In those circumstances, if they continue to behave well, they ought to have that taken off their record. This is an important measure. It rewards drivers for

good behaviour rather than simply punishing them for their bad behaviour and their infringement. That is essential to any proper system of driver safety. The bill will deliver that.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (17:23): One Nation supports the Road Transport Amendment (Demerit Point Reduction Trial) Bill 2023, which proposes to modify the current Road Transport Act 2013 by inserting provisions to enable Transport for NSW to conduct the trial of a demerit point reduction scheme. As a party, One Nation is always thinking about ways of supporting the average punter. While we must continue to prioritise road safety, it is also important to introduce a scheme to incentivise people to drive safely, as has been indicated in debate on the bill by many members and, indeed, the Minister. It also gives people hope, particularly if they are close to losing their licence.

I have dealt with many people in the community, including tradies and mums and dads. In the 12 years that I spent as member for Bankstown, the second biggest issue was the desperation of people seeking assistance with their demerit points and fines. It is not as simple as saying to everybody to slow down or read the signs. People make mistakes for a plethora of reasons. We are not talking about people who are reckless or dangerous drivers, although they may form part of the trial. We are talking about the ordinary mum or dad who is driving their kids to school. We are talking about the ordinary tradie who is trying to get to and from home and work. We are talking about the pressures that people face in their daily lives.

There is no question that there are plenty of seen and unseen speed cameras out and about. For the most part, people try their best on the roads. Of course, instances may occur where people find themselves close to losing their licence or having it suspended. The Government should consider any opportunity. I was delighted to hear the Hon. Cameron Murphy discuss the idea of restoring three demerit points. As somebody who has spent many years in East Hills, he will know that people in south-west Sydney often talk about that. If there is an area in Sydney that is inundated with police trying to raise revenue—or, as I would say, cash grab—south-west Sydney is definitely a victim of that. There is no question about it.

I have undertaken some research. For example, the Stacey Street cameras have produced an enormous amount of money for the Government in the past. My independent research shows that often offences are relatively minor or, at least, low level. In fact, last year 70 per cent of all camera-recorded speeding offences were for exceeding the speed limit by less than 10 kilometres per hour. Those offences brought in \$105 million to the Government's coffers. I would like the Government to consider the issue of double demerit points. I remember in the old life that I once had I sat on a particular committee. In 2014 the various members of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety published a report on speeding and the demerit points system. I am sure the Minister is well aware of that particular road safety committee and its report.

Recommendation 18 suggested that the Government strengthen its evidence base regarding the effectiveness of double demerit periods and also examine its objective fairness. However, at the time the Coalition Government declined to accept that recommendation, asserting, "Double demerit points have proven highly successful." Despite that, in its own submission to the inquiry it admitted the following:

It is rather more difficult to isolate the direct impact of the double demerit points measure on the current holiday trauma levels given changes to traffic, enforcement and public education campaigns over the intervening years.

Plenty of reform can happen in this place, and this is a good start from the Government. Clearly, it was an election promise, and a relatively easy one to keep. It is important to keep looking at ways that we can support people out there because the reality is, whether there is a metro or no metro, or an amount of trackwork, most people are getting to places by using cars. That is the reality of living in Sydney.

It does not matter how much public transport we have, we do not have the connections everywhere across Sydney and plenty of people rely on being in cars. It is important that we have a fair system and a system that continuously evolves. I appreciate that this is a trial, but it is also a wonderful opportunity to look at other reforms, like the double demerit points which now extend from one weekend to another, and often for weeks on end. As the Hon. Cameron Murphy suggested, I love the idea of three points. I wonder if that got passed in caucus. It probably did not, but something like that is a way forward and the Minister could consider those types of options as well.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): It being 5.30 p.m., according to sessional order, proceedings are interrupted for debate on committee reports and Government responses.

Committees

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 2 - HEALTH

Government Response

Debate resumed from 29 June 2023.

Dr AMANDA COHN (17:30): In December 2022 Portfolio Committee 2 - Health released its report entitled *Impact of ambulance ramping and access block on the operation of hospital emergency departments in New South Wales*. This report, and the Government's response to it, impacts every person in New South Wales because we all reasonably expect that every one of us and our loved ones can safely access emergency health services when we need to.

Ambulance ramping and access block are growing problems with significant impact on the quality of care that health workers are able to provide for their patients. Ambulance ramping occurs when patients are not able to be transferred from ambulance care to emergency departments within a clinically appropriate time frame. Ramping means that paramedics are tied up caring for patients as they wait for emergency department care and are not able to get back on the road and respond to emergencies.

The term "access block" refers to patients in emergency departments who have been assessed as needing admission to a hospital bed but are unable to access one, usually because hospital wards are completely full, short-staffed, or both. The inquiry heard about the profound impact of ambulance ramping and access block on the health and wellbeing of patients and on health workers who are unable to provide the level of care that they have been trained to provide. In the words of the Health Services Union, ramping and access block are "a symptom reflecting a public health system failing as the result of years of neglect".

The committee's report acknowledged the interconnectedness between all parts of our health system and the need for action in not only emergency departments but also hospital wards and the community. Of the 12 recommendations made by the committee, the New South Wales Government has supported 10, while noting one recommendation and not supporting one recommendation. Firstly, to note the recommendations which have been accepted by the Government, I welcome the Government's commitment to ensure that paramedics have access to work zones out of the elements and I hope to see this implemented urgently. Just this month I was shown photos of an unsafe work area where paramedics had been asked to complete their notes between infectious waste bins.

I welcome the Government's commitment to become a signatory to the Commonwealth's pharmaceutical reform agreements so that patients who are being discharged from hospital can access 30 days of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme [PBS] subsidised medication and not run out before they are able to see a general practitioner. The Government has also indicated its support for the recommendation that a person be appointed with oversight of patient flow, with responsibility for identifying and reporting on system-wide initiatives to address patient flow, and has supported in principle the appointment of a chief paramedic officer.

The Government has supported in principle investing in and expanding the Extended Care Paramedic program with a focus on assisting patients in aged-care facilities and working with hospitals to develop interim solutions on a hospital-by-hospital basis to provide short-term relief while long-term solutions are being implemented. I welcome the Government's commitment to removing the public sector wages cap, but I fear that it has already broken its promise to engage in genuine negotiations with frontline workers, having offered nurses and paramedics a below-inflation pay rise of only 4.5 per cent—a pay cut in real terms, and, in fact, paramedics are taking industrial action right now.

In supporting the recommendation to improve access to community mental health services, in particular for young people, the Government cites its commitment to investing funds to increase the capacity of Kids Helpline and Lifeline. While telephone services can be helpful, and the work of Kids Helpline and Lifeline is essential, they are not sufficient to provide adequate support for people experiencing mental health distress in the community and within emergency departments. It is timely that Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health is now conducting an inquiry into the equity, accessibility and appropriate delivery of outpatient and community mental health services.

I know from my own work as a GP and from the countless people who have contacted me that too many people are ending up in emergency departments as a last resort and because their mental health has worsened because it is so hard to find timely, affordable and culturally safe mental health care in the community. The Government must extend its support to practical implementation of safer emergency departments for people experiencing mental distress as well as alternative spaces for care, and more streamlined, less fragmented and better resourced public mental health care in the community.

The Government has only noted the recommendation to increase the number of staffed beds in public hospitals with a goal of reducing patient occupancy to 90 per cent initially and 85 per cent thereafter. Emergency departments simply cannot function when hospitals are at or over 100 per cent capacity. It should horrify every one of us that hospitals trying to operate over capacity are a dystopian new normal. The inquiry heard that trainee emergency medicine specialist doctors have been struggling to answer exam questions on what to do differently in the disaster situation of a hospital operating above 85 per cent occupancy because they work under those

conditions every day. Not being able to transfer patients to hospital wards means that newly admitted patients are kept in the emergency department, sometimes for days, and do not receive the quality of care that they should. For the New South Wales Government to not even accept a goal of reducing patient occupancy to 85 per cent, and instead point to the role of the Commonwealth and other worthwhile but not directly related initiatives to provide care outside of hospitals, is a shirking of its responsibility.

It is of particular note that the Government has not supported the recommendation to remove location limits to allow extended care and intensive care paramedics to retain their qualifications when transferring to a regional location. Doubling down on this disincentive for highly skilled health professionals to move to the country is a disservice to rural and regional New South Wales. The Government's response is that not all locations have sufficient workload or activity to ensure maintenance of current competency for clinical procedures that are required infrequently.

I know full well, as a country GP who has worked in emergency departments, that there are certain procedures that can be dangerous to perform without the opportunity to practise them regularly. The solution must be providing extended care and intensive care paramedics working in the regions with opportunities to maintain their skills, not forcing them to lose their qualifications and take a pay cut. I have spoken with paramedics in regional Victoria who are visited by paramedic educators who travel to support them with maintenance of their advanced clinical skills. Other options could include requirements for periodic in-person refresher courses or even short rotations to areas where these procedures are performed more frequently. When something is doable in Wodonga, but not in Albury, it is very clear that the problem is one of political will rather than any genuine barrier.

Finally, there is the question of how to reduce demand for hospital services altogether. Recommendation 10 speaks to the need for better access to GP services as well as aged-care and disability services. The Government response refers to the establishment of 25 urgent-care services, but urgent care services alone will not meaningfully reduce demand for hospital services. It is not people who need stitches or a quick x-ray who require the most care and resources of emergency departments and hospitals; it is patients with exacerbations of complex and chronic illness, like chronic heart failure, chronic kidney disease, chronic lung disease or immunocompromise. People with complex and chronic illness need regular appointments in primary care with GPs, allied health professionals and chronic disease nurses to prevent and respond early to any worsening of their condition. The dearth of access to that kind of service in the public sector will not be addressed with urgent-care services and needs further attention.

I look forward to the opportunity, as the new chair of Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health, to hold the new Government to account on the important commitments that it has made, and to continue to push for improved access to mental health and primary care services in the community, and safe working conditions and fair pay for paramedics and all health workers.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (17:39): I contribute to the take-note debate on the Government response to the report entitled *Inquiry into the impact of ambulance ramping and access block on the operation of hospital emergency departments in New South Wales*. It was the last inquiry undertaken by Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health in the previous Parliament. The then Government was greatly opposed to the inquiry and tried to undermine its commencement, let alone its completion. A lot of work was done by the then Minister backgrounding a whole range of people, including the media, to explain that the inquiry was a waste of time; that it would not reveal anything; that he knew everything that was going on to the extent that if there were any issues, he was fully across them and that people should just trust him; and that it would be a matter of time before the myriad matters would resolve themselves.

Nevertheless, the committee pressed on and the inquiry took place, and it completed its work at the very end of the previous Parliament. The committee's report was tabled on 8 December 2022. All up, 35 submissions were made to the inquiry, which was less than the committee would have liked but there was quite a short time frame for making submissions and that may have explained that in part. The inquiry had two full hearing days with a total of 32 witnesses. The details of the submissions, the hearing days and the witnesses are all available as appendices to the report, which was report no. 60 of Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health.

It is widely accepted in the community that a government's greatest responsibility is to the health of its citizens. New South Wales is not atypical in allocating a significant part of its budget to health. The inquiry examined what the health sector calls patient flow. That is the path a patient takes from calling 000 or presenting at an emergency department [ED], through to being treated and in many cases admitted to a bed on a ward, to finally being discharged from the hospital. Problems with patient flow can occur anywhere in the health system. Stakeholders were clear in their submissions and oral evidence that the issue is not simply with ambulances, EDs and hospital beds, meaning that a blockage in one part will cause blockages elsewhere in the system.

The inquiry examined the main parts of the health system where problems, and therefore solutions, are to be found. The committee examined the structural issues that contribute to problems with patient flow. First and foremost, hospital occupancy rates are too high. When hospitals operate constantly at 100 per cent occupancy, they cannot admit patients from EDs during surge periods or times of unexpected demand. As well, an ED operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, while the rest of the hospital operates for considerably fewer hours. Another factor impacting on patient flow is primary care, particularly access to GPs and other services including mental health services. It is true that low-acuity patients do not take up significant resources in EDs, although they can contribute to overcrowding. The main issue is that people who cannot access primary care when they need it are deteriorating before presenting to an ED as high-acuity patients. Treating people early and in place not only ensures a better health outcome for patients but also places less strain on the health system.

Similarly, many aged-care residents and NDIS clients currently cannot access the treatment they need in their homes or in the community. The problem is exacerbated when patients are ready to be discharged from a hospital but do not have an appropriate place to return to or will not be able to access the ongoing medication and treatment they require. People in that cohort are remaining in hospital beds longer than they should have to. That is known as bed block, and it is a contributing factor to ED overcrowding and ambulance ramping. Primary care, aged care and the NDIS are Commonwealth Government responsibilities, which was noted in the report, yet clearly how those areas function and operate has a major impact on the New South Wales health system. The fragmented approach to health between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories has long been acknowledged as problematic. It is therefore important that the New South Wales Government continues working closely with the Commonwealth to ensure that people are not kept out of hospital unnecessarily while also ensuring that patients are not kept in hospital any longer than required.

At the heart of this inquiry were the impacts that patient flow problems have on patients and staff. Patients are suffering because their care is compromised by a health system that is not functioning as well as it should. The committee heard troubling examples about patients' health deteriorating in ambulances and overcrowded EDs, or suffering a loss of dignity through being treated in inappropriate spaces. The committee was very clear in the preparation of its report, and I appreciate the cooperation from the members of the committee on the day we pulled together the report and its recommendations. The committee wanted to assure all healthcare staff in New South Wales that it understands that the problems and challenges with the health system are outside of their individual control. That is why the committee made several targeted recommendations it believed will help provide staff with greater influence over their circumstances at work. For example, based on the evidence provided to it during the inquiry, the committee believes that both paramedics and pharmacists are willing and are in a position to do more to help improve patient flow in public hospitals.

I acknowledge the contributions of those who participated in the inquiry, either by making a submission or giving evidence at the two public hearings. I thank my colleagues, who were very collegiate in the way they participated in the inquiry and worked together to produce the recommendations. Dr Amanda Cohn commented on the Government response to the inquiry's report. As the former Chair of Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health, I am pleased that there was a high level of support for a number of the recommendations. The Government has inherited issues with the New South Wales health system. Many matters need to be addressed, and they were reflected throughout the report. The new Government will have to deal with those. Minister Park is working very hard to address them. They did not manifest overnight; they will not be resolved overnight. The strong support for the recommendations is very pleasing. That speaks to the commitment the then Opposition took to the last election to make health a very significant priority for a new Labor Government.

On the recommendations that did not receive support, one of which was noted and the other not supported, they address matters that continue to exercise the mind of the Government. Governments do not simply sign off on recommendations and not return to them. I always believe that all recommendations from a good report can inform a government, and while they may not be able to accept them at a point in time, there is always scope for those matters to be referred back to a committee, revised and enhanced, and sent back to the Government for its consideration. The committee was pleased with the report. It believe the inquiry was necessary even though it was at the end of the Parliament. I commend the Government response to the report to the House.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (17:49): I make a contribution to the take-note debate. In December 2022, Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health released its final report on the inquiry into the impact of ambulance ramping and access block on the operation of hospital emergency departments in New South Wales. The report made 12 recommendations, which broadly relate to relieving pressures within the New South Wales health system, with the intent of preventing delays in transfer of care. On 29 June 2023 the Government tabled its formal response to the inquiry. In its response the New South Wales Government has reinforced its commitment to reducing pressure on emergency departments in New South Wales hospitals.

The Government response provides full or in-principle support for 10 of the 12 recommendations. Despite the pressures on frontline staff, they continue to give 110 per cent to make sure our health system runs as well as it possibly can. Demand for health services, including emergency medical care, has grown exponentially over the past few years, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 3 million patients present to New South Wales public hospital emergency departments each year. In 2021 and 2022 emergency department attendances for the most urgent triage categories—triage categories one and two—increased faster than those for less urgent categories. In the same period demand for ambulance services reached record highs. It is clear that unprecedented demand for urgent medical care and the flow of patients through hospitals has contributed to ramping and wait times in emergency departments.

There is much to be done to fix the mess that those opposite left us after 12 years in government. We know we need to do better and we are determined to begin. The Minns Government is committed to reducing strain on emergency departments and paramedics. We are rebuilding our health and hospital system. We are doing so through the rollout of 25 urgent-care services across New South Wales, as well as innovative solutions like our virtual-care services. We are implementing safe staffing levels in hospitals, starting in emergency departments. We are committing \$175 million to recruit an additional 1,200 nurses into the healthcare system by 2027 and we are hiring another 500 paramedics to be based in regional and rural New South Wales.

NSW Health is hard at work to address the committee's recommendations, which I referred to earlier, to reduce pressures on hospitals. The New South Wales Ministry of Health also works closely with local health districts, specialty health networks and NSW Ambulance to monitor the transfer of care of patients from paramedics to emergency departments. Finally, NSW Health is also working closely with health services in New South Wales and with Commonwealth partners to address factors that impact the transfer of care, including enabling greater access to aged-care facilities, enhancing NDIS placements and improving access to primary care for patients.

My final point relates to the recommendations made by the committee. The Government response supports six recommendations and supports four recommendations in principle. Recommendations 1, 3, 4, 9, 10 and 11 are supported. Recommendation 1 is that NSW Health ensure that every hospital that experiences bed block provides dedicated paramedic work zones out of the elements. Recommendation 3 is that the New South Wales Government abolish the wages cap for State sector employees, including junior doctors, paramedics, nurses, midwives and other healthcare staff, and move to a system of productivity-based bargaining to deliver fair wages, productivity growth and better public services to the people of New South Wales. Recommendation 4 is that the New South Wales Government appoint a person with oversight of patient flow with responsibility for identifying and reporting on systemwide initiatives to address patient flow. Initiatives to be trialled should include greater use of data modelling and expanded hours of operations for areas of the hospital other than emergency departments. Recommendation 9 is that the New South Wales Government become a signatory to the Commonwealth's Pharmaceutical Reform Agreements.

Recommendation 10 is that the New South Wales Government should continue to engage with the Commonwealth Government at a ministerial level on out-of-hospital care alternatives to improve patient flow, including access to GP services and admission and discharge of aged-care residents and NDIS participants. The Government is working very hard in this space. We are actively engaging with the Commonwealth regarding access to GP services and reducing the impact of people who are medically able to leave hospital but cannot be discharged because they are unable to access a residential aged-care facility or the NDIS support they need.

This includes the establishment of 25 urgent-care services across the State by the end of June 2025 in partnership with local health districts, primary health networks and general practitioners so people with urgent healthcare needs can access appropriate care in healthcare settings outside of hospital, including through virtual models of care. Recommendation 11 is that the New South Wales Government improve access to community mental health services, in particular for young people, such as through the Safe Havens program. It should also consider ways of making emergency departments more appropriate spaces for mental health patients, including improving access to mental health specialists within emergency departments.

The Government supported in principle recommendations 5, 6, 8 and 12. Recommendation 5 is that the Government appoint a chief paramedic officer based on the model in Victoria. Recommendation 6 is that the New South Wales Government invest in and expand the Extended Care Paramedic program with a focus on assisting patients in aged-care facilities, along with greater efforts to extend the program to rural and remote New South Wales. Recommendation 8 is that the New South Wales Government provide funding to increase the number of public hospital pharmacists so that their availability better matches the operating hours of emergency departments, and that the Government should also consider implementing partnered pharmacist medication charting in hospitals. Recommendation 12 is that the New South Wales Government work with hospitals to

develop interim solutions on a hospital-by-hospital basis to assist with ambulance ramping, emergency department overcrowding and access block to provide short-term relief while long-term solutions are being implemented.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): The question is that the House take note of the Government response.

Motion agreed to.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE VALUER GENERAL

Government Response

Debate resumed from 20 June 2023.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): The question is that the House take note of the Government response to the report entitled *Fifteenth General Meeting with the Valuer General*.

Motion agreed to.

Business of the House

POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Hon. WES FANG: On behalf of the Hon. Chris Rath: I move:

That committee reports and Government responses order of the day No. 6 be postponed until the next sitting day.

Motion agreed to.

Committees

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Government Response

Debate resumed from 28 June 2023.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (18:00): I take note of the Government's response to the Public Works Committee's report entitled *Impact of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link* [WHTBL]. I welcome the Government's response to the comprehensive findings and recommendations that were made during the course of the inquiry. One issue during the inquiry that got some initial attention, and then became clearer as time went on and as evidence was heard—and which is still incredibly relevant and something that the Government's response touches on—is the acquisition of land at Cammeray Golf Club to make way for the Warringah Freeway Upgrade, which has been of huge concern to the community.

As part of the committee's investigations, which were sparked by the community's concern, I moved a Standing Order 52 motion relating to that aspect of the project. The documents obtained painted a disturbing picture of what looks like an evolved version of pork-barrelling through the planning process. Cammeray Golf Club engaged with Transport for NSW [TfNSW], former Premier Gladys Berejiklian and former Minister Rob Stokes in the three years to 2022 to secure a multimillion-dollar rebuild of the golf course under the guise of related land acquisition purposes due to the Western Harbour Tunnel and Warringah Freeway Upgrade. Some 48,500 square metres of land leased by the golf club from North Sydney Council was acquired by Transport for NSW for the construction, and the inquiry heard a lot about the disruption that caused.

Notable patrons of the club include Tim James, Trent Zimmerman and Gladys Berejiklian, whom board members secured a meeting with on 13 October 2019 and had multiple meetings with in 2020. Those meetings were not disclosed in ministerial diaries despite the production of a letter on behalf of the golf club, which was contained in the documents that were returned following the Standing Order 52 motion. Prior to the acquisition proposal, in 2018 the golf club's general manager solicited a planning revision of the course by a group of consultants called Golf Development Partners.

The nine-hole course was deemed unviable after recording huge profit and membership losses over the past decade, but the proposal outlined by Golf Development Partners included a nine-hole par-three course, full-size driving range, suites of virtual golf simulators, a modern mini golf course, a renovated clubhouse and a car park extension. The original memorandum of understanding for the Western Harbour Tunnel and Warringah Freeway Upgrade program, signed on 21 May 2020, outlined the obligations of Transport for NSW to restore the surface of the land to its condition as at the commencing date, remove any structures from the surface of the land and make good any damage to the land caused by the carrying out of the works, as identified in the dilapidation report. The works undertaken by the acquisition were not intended to improve the course beyond its previous condition.

Community engagement regarding the project began in 2017. The terms of the environmental impact statement [EIS] were published on 15 January 2020. At no point during that EIS process did Cammeray Golf Club make a submission. The EIS was exhibited publicly on 29 January 2020 and closed on 30 March 2020. It was not in any way amended by the golf club. However, the Transport for NSW time line revealed through the Standing Order 52 motion states:

In March 2020, the Parties agreed to enter into a nonbinding arrangement, setting out the framework to develop and deliver an adjustment to the Golf Course at the Club's option, taking into account TfNSW's acquisition, use and/or occupation of various parts of the Golf Course for the purpose of carrying out the WHTBL Program (Initial Term Sheet). The club is to provide written advice to TfNSW endorsing the inclusion of the 2018 Cammeray Golf Course concept design in the planning instrument by Monday 9 March 2020. This concept design will be used to demonstrate the extent of the works to redesign the course due to the impact of construction activities.

Until 2020 Cammeray Golf Club had been in agreement with the modest acquisition and redesign process put forth by Transport for NSW. It was not until 9 March 2020 that the club submitted the course redesign as part of an acquisition and adjustment program. A board member submitted the entire business case to Transport for NSW on 27 July 2020. In August 2020 the then director of Cammeray Golf Club contacted the Department of Planning to consider funding the proposal by Golf Development Partners under the Western Harbour Tunnel and Warringah Freeway Upgrade plan, contending that the golf course "required a strategic plan to remain viable". During this time a board member presented the proposal to Transport for NSW, referred to as the interface agreement, and was advised that the department could only operate within the planning permission of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Warringah Freeway Upgrade.

In an email dated 28 September 2020, Transport for NSW initially regarded undertaking the proposal put forth by the board member as a "reputational risk" and a "mere tick a box exercise". In response, a Transport for NSW representative articulates "the need to sell the benefits" to the community and expressed that the "timing of the Crown land resolution" was a risk to community perception. This is evidence from a Transport for NSW communication that it was worried that what it was being asked to do by Cammeray Golf Club could cause them concern, at least in the eyes of the community.

In a meeting on 26 October 2020 Transport for NSW concluded that the "alternative layout is not feasible via our planning approval". However, on 16 November 2020, Place Design Group, working for Golf Development Partners on behalf of Cammeray Golf Club, developed a concept design. On 26 November Transport for NSW approved the design which, despite having already been approved internally, was then submitted for an 11-week tender on 21 May 2021. Between 2020 and mid-2022 Transport for NSW engaged with Cammeray Golf Club and ultimately agreed to the interface agreement, which includes the payment for the design concept by Golf by Design at a cost of \$3.235 million, development of a mini golf course at \$1.095 million, a revised short nine-hole course at \$2,789,952, a practice lesson area at \$336,525, a putting green at \$109,365, as well as revised parking facilities at cost unknown as at January on the basis of the documents that were obtained. That is a total of at least \$7,565,842 of works agreed relating to the proposal from Cammeray Golf Club.

That is in addition to the already awarded land acquisition compensation of \$807,000 for land that the golf club did not own but was leasing from North Sydney Council, as well as the \$35,000 club fit-out and \$12,000 private surveillance required to undertake the Commonwealth Grants Commission proposal. The term sheet for the proposal was then revised on 12 August 2021. It appears that Cammeray Golf Club had secured a complete reconfiguration of the course by Transport for NSW as per the above proposed requirements under the Western Harbour Tunnel and Warringah Freeway construction, despite that operation being outside the land acquisition remit. On 21 January 2021 the instrument of approval for the project, SSI8863, was published, which, despite it not having been raised in the EIS process previously, contained a condition known as E101, which stated:

The design and establishment of an altered Cammeray Golf Course must provide an equivalent standard golf course or the provision of works to offset the loss in standards. This must be undertaken in consultation with and at no cost to Cammeray Golf Club.

To recap, we have a situation here, as revealed by those documents, where a compulsory acquisition process was entered into with Cammeray Golf Club. The golf club got a generous \$807,000 for something to compensate it, even though, as I understand it, North Sydney Council was going to bring its lease to an end fairly shortly. The golf club received that compensation and then, after the EIS was displayed and the EIS process was gone through, it, with rather high-profile patrons, managed to somehow secure, through Transport for NSW, over \$7.5 million worth of upgrades through the insertion of a condition into the State significant infrastructure instrument of approval.

To me, that looks like another rather evolved version of pork-barrelling. Why give money directly to a golf course? Why give favour to the local community through a direct grant that could be open to scrutiny, when the cost could be capitalised by including it within the conditions of a project such as the Western Harbour Tunnel and Warringah Freeway upgrade? This incredibly concerning revelation has been discovered in the documents

obtained by a Standing Order 52 request. This area is ripe for further investigation. I thank members for allowing me to bring this issue to the attention of the House.

Debate adjourned.

Business of the House

POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Hon. BOB NANVA: On behalf of Ms Cate Faehrmann: I move:

That committee reports and Government responses orders of the day Nos 1 and 2 be postponed until the next sitting day.

Motion agreed to.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: On behalf of the Hon. Aileen MacDonald: I move:

That committee reports and Government responses order of the day No. 3 be postponed until the next sitting day.

Motion agreed to.

The Hon. BOB NANVA: On behalf of Ms Sue Higginson: I move:

That committee reports and Government responses order of the day No. 4 be postponed until the next sitting day.

Motion agreed to.

Bills

ROAD TRANSPORT AMENDMENT (DEMERIT POINT REDUCTION TRIAL) BILL 2023

Second Reading Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

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) (18:13): In reply: I thank members for their contributions to the second reading debate, including Opposition spokesperson the Hon. Natalie Ward, Ms Cate Faehrmann, the Hon. Cameron Murphy and the Hon. Tania Mihailuk. I will respond to a number of the matters raised. I thank the Opposition for not opposing the Road Transport Amendment (Demerit Point Reduction Trial) Bill 2023, and I welcome the contribution of the shadow Minister. I thought that perhaps the shadow Minister strayed even as far as supporting the bill at one moment during the debate, but I do not want to verbal her. I have, on occasion, while contributing to debate, done both of those things. I welcome the commitment of the Opposition to vote for the bill.

I agree with one contribution made by the shadow Minister—that is, the importance of the demerit point scheme in New South Wales to ensure that drivers do the right thing, get the message and, particularly, slow down as they travel across New South Wales. That, of course, is a bipartisan position. I recognise the facts she placed on the table about the dip in the road toll in 2021, which was very welcome. I place on record that the road toll in 2022 increased from that low. That was a concern of the then Opposition when the policy was announced during the election. I thank the shadow Minister for supplying the specifics of the questions that she asked in the debate, and I will attempt to respond to those specifics.

Firstly, the shadow Minister asked about what would happen if someone who has 11 demerit points on 17 January 2023 and was offence-free until 17 January 2024 then received three demerit points. I will give two responses. One response on the specifics and one response on the broad principle of the matter. On the specifics, I am advised that that would lead to the person being suspended. If no demerit points expired during the 12-month period, then the driver would have 14 points on 17 January 2024. Even with a one-demerit point reduction, they would still be subject to suspension. That deals with a specific question that was asked.

I refer to the principle that the shadow Minister referred to, which questioned if that would apply even to drivers with quite high numbers of points. The answer is very much yes. This trial—and it is a trial—is about rewarding even bad drivers for doing the right thing. Bear in mind that the trial applies to about one-third of drivers across the State, who have demerit points on their record. It is a big call-out to all drivers with demerit points to do the right thing over the trial period and they will be rewarded. We genuinely want to see how that goes.

Secondly, the shadow Minister asked about the Government's definition of success that will allow the trial to continue. I place on record that an evaluation plan will be developed in alignment with the trial. It will include both quantitative analysis of offences and road trauma during the trial period as well as qualitative measures, such as surveys of drivers impacted by the trial and the wider community. Upon completion of the 12-month trial

period, the analysis will be provided to the Government so that a determination may be made as to whether there is any need for a continuation of the measures or the development of an alternative approach to further incentivise safe driving behaviours.

The shadow Minister referred to some specific measures in her contribution, including the road toll, the number of demerits returned and if the road toll is higher at the end of the trial. As a Minister, I place on record that I hope all of those things are part of the analysis. I am confident that they will be. A good thing about this area of government is that it is one of the most evidence-based areas. There is good evidence about driver behaviour, road accidents and serious crashes. There is better evidence in New South Wales than there is in many other States. I assure the House that there will be evidence. I am happy to report further to the House on the results of the analysis. I know members will be interested in that.

Thirdly, the shadow Minister asked about the eligibility situation for reduced insurance premiums that was referred to in the second reading speech. I referred briefly to that; it was not the main thrust of the speech. I am advised that the 12-month trial to remove a demerit point for non-offending drivers may impact on one of the items that insurance companies request when a driver seeks to establish insurance. An example is the compulsory third party insurance that a driver might seek. Often a driver might be asked about their demerit points. Drivers who maintain clean driving records will sometimes be rewarded with discounted compulsory third party insurance premiums. The Government was merely making the point, on advice, that that may have a financial benefit, as well as the other benefits that retaining those points would have for drivers.

I make a couple of more general points. Firstly, we are absolutely introducing the carrot and the stick with the bill. The stick has been used very widely across New South Wales, and we think it is time to try something new while recognising the importance of the existing demerit point scheme. No-one is backing away from that. But here is an idea to also try something that might enhance it. It is a genuine trial. This is an evidence-based area of government, and we will be looking at the evidence. I hope the trial works. I am confident that it may, but in the end it will live or die based on the evidence that is presented to the Chamber.

I note the call for broader reforms. I note the Hon. Cameron Murphy's call for more points to be returned. I note the Hon. Tania Mihailuk's call for the double demerit scheme to be re-examined. All of those are broader reform questions that the Government may well turn to, and I am open-minded as an incoming Minister looking at what the best way to have these laws in place is. The key point, though, is that we are not waiting to act. We committed to that at the election, and we have moved urgently to get the bill in place and deliver on our election commitment. The Government is committed to acting immediately in these areas. In fact, progress has been so swift in this area that, as members know, we have been able to start the trial well before we ever expected to, rewinding the start of the trial back to when it was first made public on 17 January this year.

Finally, I recognise the points that the Hon. Tania Mihailuk made. This is very much about average drivers. This is very much about how most people make their way around the State. If they are getting to work or getting the kids to school, they are often on our roads and this matters a lot to ordinary people. One of the concerns that the Opposition had during that warning-sign debate is that it is very important that we retain community support for the road safety enforcement mechanisms that we have in our community. The consequences of losing points can be very severe for people. They can lose their job if they lose their licence. That is a consequence for some people.

That has happened, and it has happened more than ever over the past couple of years in New South Wales. This really matters to drivers in the regions, and this really matters to someone who is a professional driver. For those drivers out delivering packages for people during COVID or just in general, a taxi driver or an Uber driver, this really matters. Every point really matters. These are ordinary workers, ordinary people, doing their job. How many points they have, the chance to earn a point back and the chance to have made a mistake but have some redemption even in this small way, even with one point during this trial, really matter to people who have been hit hard as they have gone about their ordinary day. I emphasise that this is very much about retaining community support for the important road safety measures that we have in place in New South Wales. Having made those contributions, I thank members again for their support for the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): The question is that this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Third Reading

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.*Adjournment Debate***ADJOURNMENT**

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

MATILDAS FOOTBALL TEAM

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (18:25): This evening I pay tribute to the extraordinary efforts of a particular women's football team, our Matildas. It has to be said that the Matildas' efforts last night in their convincing win over Canada, 4-0, is a real testament to the players, the coaches and the support staff. I also acknowledge the extended families and friends of the players and their support of these remarkable women as they play in the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup. The achievements of the Matildas are remarkable. They are a truly inspiring group of women. Things have progressed somewhat for female athletes like the Matildas in recent times. The 2007 FIFA Women's World Cup was the first time women were awarded prize money at all—25 years after their male counterparts. But in 2023 they still only receive a quarter of the prize money that is afforded to their male counterparts in the FIFA World Cup.

When I attended uni roughly 12 years ago, in my chemistry subject was an impressive young woman and athlete who played for the Matildas and Sydney FC at the time. She studied full time and juggled an intense training regimen, alongside her other work and family commitments. This is someone who at the age of 16 years could swim 50 metres freestyle in 26 seconds. She was a gifted and natural athlete and could have pursued many different sporting paths. She chose to pursue a team sport, soccer. She had amazing coordination. I recall sitting with her one break between classes. She screwed up her sandwich wrapper in one hand and without much thought pegged it across the room and straight into a bin about 10 metres away. I was in complete awe of her. She played a large part in my decision to quit smoking—basically, I was shamed out of it by how extraordinarily fit and strong she was. She also told me regularly smoking was disgusting and it would kill me.

I watched her play a game in the W-League, as it was called at the time, out in Parramatta. The skill of the team was extraordinary. I was horrified to learn that she would have to fund her own travel to attend cup matches in south-east Asia at the time. I was also horrified to learn that she received very little income from her playing. Fast forward to now and there have been many great leaps forward, but great inequalities still exist. There is still an enormous pay difference between women's and men's football teams globally and in Australia. Recent articles have cited a gender pay gap in Australia of minus 549 per cent.

The Matildas recently called out FIFA over the gender pay gap. In the lead-up to the current 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, the Matildas released a video asking governing bodies to better invest in the game. I acknowledge the Professional Footballers' Association for its work in assisting to formulate the video, so expertly delivered by the Matildas. The video highlighted the following:

736 footballers have the honour of representing their country on the ... biggest stage this tournament. Yet many are still denied the basic right to organise and collectively bargain.

The players say:

Collective bargaining has allowed us to ensure we now get the same conditions as the Socceroos, with one exception. FIFA will still only offer women one quarter as much prize money as men for the same achievement. And our sisters in the A-League Women are still pushing to make football a full-time career so that they don't have to work part-time jobs like we had to.

I pay tribute to the many former and current Matildas, like the one I attended uni with. I pay tribute to their families and the sacrifices they have made in order for those women to pursue their careers. I reiterate the requests made by the Matildas to get out to an A-League game to lift up the next generation of Matildas. I thank them for their efforts to leave a better legacy for the shirt and for sticking together and refusing to back down and getting the result, particularly last night. I wish the Matildas all the very best for the remainder of the FIFA Women's World Cup and for the impending renegotiation of their collective bargaining agreement. I also thank the Professional Footballers' Association for their work. They have all been powerful forces for good.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY (18:29): I am discussing a significant topic that affects our nation's future and that is the Voice to Parliament proposal and referendum. Let me begin by stating that this is not about questioning the importance of Indigenous representation. It is of utmost importance that our Indigenous communities are heard, respected and included in the national decision-making process. But this should not lead us to believe that the current Voice to Parliament proposal is the best or, indeed, the only way to achieve this. The key argument against the Voice to Parliament proposal is not against its intention but against its implementation.

It proposes a significant change to our Constitution, a move that could create a separate representative body based on race and ethnicity. The potential for division is something we should be wary of as it goes against the tenets of equality that our Constitution upholds—that all citizens, regardless of their race or ethnicity, are equal under Australian law.

Another concern is the proposal lacks clarity in terms of its scope and power. We need a clear understanding of the practical function of the Voice. How would it operate? What kind of influence would it have over legislation? If it were purely advisory, could its advice be ignored and, if so, what then would be its purpose? If it holds veto powers, would it not possibly create a deadlock in Parliament? Without answers to these questions, the proposal remains ambiguous and its implications uncertain. I also urge everyone to consider the financial implications of the proposal. In an era where we are striving to ensure financial stability for our nation, it is important that we approach significant changes like this one with a clear understanding of the potential costs and benefits.

There is also a risk that the establishment of a Voice to Parliament might detract from the vital work that needs to be done in other areas to support our Indigenous communities. Health, education, employment, and the reduction of incarceration rates are pressing issues that need our immediate attention and resources. Instead of a Voice to Parliament, we should consider other avenues that achieve the same goal of meaningful inclusion. There are other parts to consider and we owe it to everyone in this country, particularly our Indigenous community, to explore all viable options before deciding on a single course of action.

Recently, during the winter break, I had the pleasure of hosting The Nationals Federal leader, David Littleproud, and the shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians, Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price. I can say that Jacinta is a rising star in the Australian Parliament. She is a former deputy mayor of Alice Springs Town Council, a community that is affected by so many challenges and one of many large Aboriginal communities across Australia that could benefit so much from a voice designed around the needs of our First Nations people that could achieve real outcomes, not one that is designed by inner-city and Canberra bureaucracies.

Back home in the Central West, Jacinta met several Wiradjuri Elders and community members on the matter in Bathurst and Orange. I am talking about the Bathurst Local Aboriginal Land Council and the Wiradjuri Traditional Owners Central West Aboriginal Corporation. The consistent feedback was that the Voice to Parliament as proposed did not support the needs of their communities. We then held a community forum at the Bathurst RSL Club on Monday 10 July with over 160 people crammed into the diggers bar—local Central West community members turning out to hear the shadow Minister speak on the referendum. The biggest question in the room was what does the Voice involve? How will it work? It was very clear that the Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, and Minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney, need to come clean with Australia and tell us what the Voice really means for all Australians and for our Indigenous communities. What does it mean for communities right across the country and for the many generations that come after us?

In conclusion, we should strive for a solution that recognises the important role of Indigenous communities in our nation's story, that ensures that their rights are protected, their voices are heard and their needs are met. This can be achieved without resorting to radical changes to our Constitution. Just look at the 11 proud Indigenous members of our Federal Parliament. Let's get more Indigenous Australians into Federal Parliament. We need a pragmatic, comprehensive and inclusive solution that will uphold our principles of fairness, equality and unity as we are one Australia. Therefore, I urge communities across the country to vote no on this proposal until we have thoroughly considered, understood and addressed all potential ramifications and explored alternative options. Let us remember our goal to achieve a united Australia that values and respects the contribution of all citizens irrespective of their cultural heritage.

GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE

Dr AMANDA COHN (18:34): Every person in our community deserves dignity, safety, respect and kindness. They deserve to be themselves. People in New South Wales deserve a health service committed to diversity, inclusion and belonging and that adequately responds to the health needs of transgender and gender-diverse people across the State. Those are not my words; they are the words of NSW Health in its introduction to the LGBTIQ+ health strategy released last year. Gender-affirming health care is health care and it belongs in mainstream health services. Having been a provider of gender-affirming care as a GP in Albury Wodonga, I have firsthand experience of both the breadth and importance of gender-affirming care. People who seek medical support to affirm their gender have a variety of goals and the support they need may not always include non-reversible or invasive procedures. For example, I have referred patients to speech pathologists for support to change the pitch of their voice, given advice about how to safely wear undergarments that give the chest a flatter appearance, involved mental health professionals to support patients with the stress associated with transitioning at work and helped people to manage unwanted symptoms like period pain.

Some people do seek changes that require the prescription of dangerous-sounding cross-sex hormones, which are really well-understood medications because they are the same medications widely prescribed by GPs for common indications such as menopause. As with any long-term medication, informed consent is critical and the process is fairly slow—usually over multiple appointments over a period of weeks or even months. Quality guidance for practitioners to ensure they are appropriately assessing patients and prescribing safely has been published by organisations like the Australian Professional Association for Trans Health. Some trans and gender-diverse people do seek surgery. However, some people only seek genital surgery because it is a requirement under the New South Wales Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act to change gender markers on one's official documents. New South Wales is now the only jurisdiction in Australia with this requirement and it is past time for that legislation to be changed.

Regardless of each individual's goals and preferences, gender-affirming care is life-saving medical care. I may never truly understand the experience of being born into a body that does not match my sense of self, but I have had so many people describe their experience to me, as well as the distress that comes from not being affirmed and supported to live their lives as their authentic selves. Gender-affirming care is mental health care. But it is far harder to access than it should be. Three in four transgender people struggle to access gender-affirming treatments. For young people, gender-affirming care can be urgent, not only because of the mental health risks associated with not validating a person's sense of self but because some physical effects of puberty, such as voice cracking, are not reversible. The Royal Australian College of Physicians has argued that denying or delaying gender-affirming care for young people is unethical.

In response to the recently reported dysfunction and delays at Westmead Children's Hospital impacting patients referred to the gender centre, the Government has committed to a review of the delivery of gender-affirming care across the State to inform a new care framework for clinicians. I have seen the incredible difference that gender-affirming care can make to a person's life—the joy and validation that is possible. We all benefit when trans and gender-diverse people are affirmed, supported and empowered to participate fully in community life. It is critical for gender-affirming care to be accessible across New South Wales.

HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (18:38): In recent weeks I attended an event, sponsored by the New South Wales Society of Labor Lawyers, concerned with the idea of a human rights Act for New South Wales. It was a very interesting event with a variety of distinguished speakers eminent in the law. It was also well attended by a range of lawyers and other community members. Recently the New South Wales Society of Labor Lawyers has publicised that it has written to Labor MPs urging a human rights Act for New South Wales. There is a current important context to this at the national level, which is that the Australian Human Rights Commission has recently released a position paper called *Free & Equal: A Human Rights Act for Australia*, which I note was published in December 2022 and puts forward a model for an Australian human rights Act.

Additionally, in March 2023 the Federal Attorney General asked the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights to conduct a review of Australia's human rights framework. There is a lot happening in the human rights space. Any proposal for a human rights Act model in New South Wales needs to take into account what has already happened in other Australian jurisdictions. The Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and Queensland already have a human rights Act and on a national or international level Australia is the only liberal democracy without some form of a bill of rights or human rights Act.

In those Australian jurisdictions the human rights Acts are based on a dialogue model. There is no power given to a court to strike down laws; rather, courts are empowered to issue a declaration of incompatibility where a law is inconsistent with a human right, and Parliament needs to engage with human rights when legislating but ultimately retains the right to legislate inconsistently with a human right. Generally there is a provision that requires courts to interpret legislation consistently with human rights where that is possible, and some Acts give a right to seek a remedy for a breach of human rights.

Of course, the contrast to the dialogue model is a United States style bill of rights where a supreme court retains the right to strike down laws. That model does shift power from an elected parliament to a generally unelected court. It is very rare in my experience to hear someone in Australia involved in law reform and human rights to actively campaign for a US style bill of rights here. That said, it is not entirely foreign. We have a Federal Constitution that sets out strictly the basis for legislative power and imposes limits on that power. Laws are fairly regularly struck down by our courts and the sky does not fall in.

Having in a previous life worked in a ministerial office in a human rights jurisdiction, I can vouch for the strengths of the dialogue model. Reforms do not occur without consideration of and engagement with human rights. That makes for better law. It sometimes makes a huge difference, sometimes in ways that are never obvious or indeed publicised. I believe we saw this work to some extent during COVID. Human rights jurisdictions

produced better public health orders—more tailored, more specific—and in some cases lockdown was largely avoided. The Australian Capital Territory comes to mind.

The legal responses to COVID engaged a large number of human rights. Freedom of association, movement, speech and many more were severely limited. In New South Wales it took a few iterations of the public health orders to recognise those rights in terms of the right to protest. Many in the community were shocked that the right to attend sporting events was upheld while at the same time the public health orders completely banned all protests. I would suggest that was a direct consequence of a lack of a requirement in New South Wales for drafters and policymakers to engage with human rights.

The politics of COVID continue to play out. I hope that one of the political consequences of COVID is more unity and less contention on a human rights framework. Many on the right and the left were, I think, rightly concerned about the extent of lockdown, its rationale and its implementation—all things that a human rights framework would have required policymakers to engage with. Many on the right, and the left too, are concerned with government intervention in the dissemination of information in society. A human rights Act will provide a framework for analysing and debating these issues.

Freedom of religion too engages both sides of politics and international human rights law protects that right and so too would a human rights Act. A human rights Act would also speak to independence of the courts and the right to a fair trial—also something I have spoken about in this place before as a right in need of protection from those who come with high-minded arguments and saintly intentions and much more. All of the fundamental rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights could be recognised in a human rights Act, as could other recognised rights deriving from the common law or international law. I am sure the discussion and debate will continue on this important issue.

RURAL AND REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS

The Hon. WES FANG (18:43): I briefly discuss an issue which has been around for a long time but for this Parliament has come to light during the inquiry by the Standing Committee on State Development into the feasibility of undergrounding the transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects. I am not discussing that issue per se but more that rural and regional New South Wales is in effect used by the wider metropolitan areas as an environmental offset and the way they feel better about situations that they bring upon themselves. By that I mean things such as renewable energy.

The inquiry visited places such as Tumut and Armidale. In order for renewable energy to be produced and transmitted the landholders in those areas have their land and amenity invaded, either by a solar farm or a wind farm—or indeed by the transmission of that power from the renewable energy zones into the metropolitan areas. For a metropolitan area to operate on renewable energy, it needs to be produced outside the metropolitan area. Large, clear spaces are needed to erect the solar farm or the wind farm. That energy then has to be transported. Landholders who have loved and lived on their land—who have been generational farmers—are slowly but surely being encroached upon by the increase in the number of renewable energy projects, or the requirement to move that power from one place to another.

When talking to those landholders about the impact this has had on them, it is quite clear that they face not just the economic loss—although that is quite severe because when large, high voltage transmission lines pass over their property they cut it in half—but also an easement as well. That means the land underneath is not productive and the farm is devalued because people do not like living near transmission lines. We have the situation where this is being forced on landholders. Why is that the case? It is the case because as a State and a country we are looking to move to a more renewable energy-driven electrical system. That is great and I think that, despite views on any number of issues, everyone will acknowledge that renewables will increase in the energy mix as we go forward.

I hope that when we come to this place and talk about what we are doing around renewable energy zones, renewable energy and a greener energy grid, we remember we are impacting people in rural and regional New South Wales in ways that I do not think many who live in metropolitan areas quite understand. This has been crystallised by the number of people—the overwhelming showing that we have seen during the committee's hearings—and their desperation. The people of rural and regional New South Wales have said, "Enough." They just want to be considered and have their voice heard. I hear their voice and I will make sure that I continue to be a strong advocate for them in this place.

DRUG TRADE

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (18:48): Another day, another brazen shooting in Cocaine City, or Sydney. There are 11 dead that we know of. In response, a decades-old government approach—the war on drugs—continues to fail. Our communities are vulnerable and our streets are unsafe because this policy empowers drug

gangs rather than stops them. Surely it is beyond time to consider new approaches, including one that can and will drive organised drug gangs out of business overnight: legalisation. Two police insider comments last week reveal why. Senior police admitted that their operations could be partly to blame for recent gang-related violence, telling the media that drug busts that do not result in arrests can lead to criminals seeking retribution. Late last week an unnamed police source told *The Sydney Morning Herald*:

These gangsters will be on Centrelink in six months if you legalised drugs.

In contrast, senior police bureaucrats, media and politicians have all been saying that Sydney has a drug problem and getting tougher is the answer—despite the evidence that it does not work. Despite mounting evidence of its abject failure, the pointless war-on-drugs cycle continues. The New South Wales Government, police bureaucrats and conservative media have not said or done anything different to what has been said and done in recent decades. Meanwhile, the same drug narratives keep being peddled: Cocaine is a deadly, dangerous drug that must be kept off our streets, along with cannabis, ketamine, MDMA, magic mushrooms and others. Each year many more people die from overdoses from legal drugs like alcohol, prescription opioids and antidepressants than they do from cocaine.

In 2021 the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre reported that the rate of drug overdose deaths involving opioids in Australia doubled between 2002 and 2019, with 1,008 overdose deaths reported that year alone. That same year, 183 died unintentionally from consuming alcohol, while 77 died from consuming cocaine. Most cocaine deaths were a result of the deadly substances the drug was cut with, like lidocaine, which can stop one's heart from beating if taken in large doses. According to the World Health Organization, each year alcohol kills three million people worldwide. In 2021 there were 1,559 alcohol-related deaths and 30,000 hospitalisations in Australia—the most reported in 10 years. Is it time to wage war on alcohol and make it illegal? Wait, we tried that and failed. Instead, we regulate alcohol by ensuring that every bottle is clearly labelled with health warnings and alcohol content.

We advise pregnant women not to consume alcohol. We take the responsible service of alcohol seriously and we boost the Federal budget by around \$8 billion in tax each year. Why are some drugs legal and not others? It is certainly not because of the harm they cause. Coca has been used by indigenous groups for thousands of years. It is used as medicine to alleviate pain, combat altitude sickness, improve concentration and, yes, feel good. Of course too much cocaine can get one into trouble and can cause death, just like alcohol or paracetamol. The latest estimates have Australians consuming around 5.6 tons of cocaine each year, or 5.6 million bags. The amount we are consuming has doubled in a decade. Anyone who says we need to keep telling people not to take drugs has rocks in their head. The people who benefit from this stupid and dangerous mentality are criminals, along with the police union and bureaucrats, who demand more resources that they do not need because they already have enough resources to deal with the problem.

Is it not time to ask ourselves what harm could it do if we created a strictly regulated cocaine market? We would say goodbye to the black market and police resources could be deployed elsewhere to focus on other very pressing problems like family violence. The thrill of buying something on the black market would disappear—yes, it is a real thing—no unknown substances would be mixed in and we could provide mandatory health warnings. If the Government taxed it at 50 per cent—tobacco is taxed at 65 per cent—we could pay nurses more, and fund health services like alcohol and drug treatment centres, particularly in the regions. We urgently need a new approach, starting with acknowledging that the war on drugs has failed. All options must be on the table, including giving gang lords what they fear most: Centrelink.

HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (18:53): On 12 July I attended the panel discussion on a human rights Act for New South Wales with the Hon. Stephen Lawrence, as he mentioned earlier in his adjournment speech. The round table was co-sponsored by the New South Wales Society of Labor Lawyers, the NSW Council for Civil Liberties and Australian Lawyers for Human Rights. I acknowledge that the Attorney General of New South Wales, the Hon. Michael Daley, was also in the audience. It was a great discussion. We looked at models for a human rights Act, including legislation in other Australian jurisdictions and also internationally, and a considerable amount of time was spent debunking the common myths around human rights Acts. Some of the ideas will assist us to pull together some useful elements, should New South Wales choose to introduce such an Act in the future.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): The time for the adjournment debate has expired. The question is that this House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 18:55 until Wednesday 2 August 2023 at 10:00.