



New South Wales

Legislative Council

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Eighth Parliament
First Session**

Wednesday 13 September 2023

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday 13 September 2023

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

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

Announcements

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BICENTENARY CONCERT SERIES

The PRESIDENT (10:01): I advise all members that, in honour of the Legislative Council's upcoming bicentenary, talented musicians from the Sydney Youth Orchestras and the Sydney Conservatorium of Music will hold concerts in the Fountain Court every sitting Wednesday during the lunch break. The Reflect. Celebrate. Imagine. concert series will kick off today with a string quartet performance by Sydney Youth Orchestras playing pieces by Mozart, Brahms, Bach, Australian composer Elena Kats-Chernin and more. I invite members to come along, enjoy the musical performance starting at 12.45 p.m. today and take the opportunity to reflect on our great State being home to Australia's oldest Parliament.

MEMBERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The PRESIDENT (10:02): I also draw members' attention to the fifth in our members development seminar series being run from 1.00 p.m. to 2.00 p.m. Today's session will be presented by the New South Wales Information Commissioner, Elizabeth Tydd, and the New South Wales Acting Privacy Commissioner, Sonia Minutillo. The session will provide information about the role and functions of the Information and Privacy Commission and how the agency's work intersects with that of the Executive Government, the Parliament and members. Once again, the session is being run in the theatre and is open to all members and their staff. A light lunch will also be provided. I encourage members to attend today's session on an important topic.

Motions

CAHILL STREET PLAYGROUND

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (10:03): I move:

That this House notes that:

- (a) on 5 August 2023 the Inner West Council opened the newly upgraded Cahill Street Playground, and the Hon. Mark Buttigieg, MLC, was honoured to attend representing the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Hon. Paul Scully, MP;
- (b) the following guests attended the opening:
 - (i) Councillor Philippa Scott, Deputy Mayor of the Inner West Council;
 - (ii) Ms Kobi Shetty, MP, member for Balmain and councillor of the Inner West Council; and
 - (iii) Councillor Marghanita Da Cruz of the Inner West Council.
- (c) at the opening, members of the local community expressed great excitement and were very engaged with the upgrades to the new park; and
- (d) the upgrades were possible due to funding from the New South Wales Department of Planning's Public Open Spaces Legacy Program.

Motion agreed to.

CARILLON BUSINESS AWARDS

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY (10:03): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) the annual Carillon Business Awards were held on Saturday 9 September 2023 at Bathurst Goldfields; and
 - (b) the event was attended by over 350 local business owners, sponsors and community members.
- (2) That this House acknowledges:
 - (a) the importance of small businesses in Bathurst and the contribution they make to the Bathurst region and economy; and

- (b) the tireless efforts of the Bathurst Business Chamber and the continued advocacy and representation it makes on behalf of its members.
- (3) That this House congratulates the following winners from the 2023 Carillon Business Awards:
 - (a) William Windsor, Harvest Cafe and Store;
 - (b) Bathurst Community Transport Group Inc;
 - (c) Town and Country Rural Supplies;
 - (d) Cleary Fairbrother Property;
 - (e) Oxygen Recruitment and HR;
 - (f) Loveridge Digital;
 - (g) Sueanne Manhood, Bathurst Little Learning Centre;
 - (h) Colton Computer Technologies;
 - (i) Hipscotch;
 - (j) Jack Begg, Vivability;
 - (k) Angus Edwards, Kenny Spring Solicitors;
 - (l) Ben's Small Motor Repairs;
 - (m) Trent Meadley, Meadley's Mobile Mechanics;
 - (n) Kieran O'Dwyer, Bathurst Strength and Conditioning; and
 - (o) Café Viva.

Motion agreed to.

TRIBUTE TO LOUISE KUCHEL

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (10:04): I move:

- (1) That this House notes with sadness the passing of Louise Kuchel, who was an incredible and compassionate beacon of light in the disability advocacy sector, particularly for the neurodivergent community and who:
 - (a) fought to reduce discrimination faced by children with neurodivergence in the education system and in the community and to create an inclusive society;
 - (b) founded the podcast *Square Peg Round Whole* and the advocacy group "Parents for ADHD Advocacy Australia", both of which are representing and advocating for the neurodivergent community and fighting for system-wide reform which dismantles the barriers that people with neurodivergence face in schools, communities and workplaces; and
 - (c) fought to achieve change including securing vital funding and fighting for the rights and wellbeing of people with disability throughout her time at Cerebral Palsy Alliance, Parents for ADHD Advocacy Australia and Family Advocacy.
- (2) That this House acknowledges Louise's profound and lasting impact on the lives of people with disability and all those who knew her and passes on its deepest condolences to her family and friends.

Motion agreed to.

Documents

UNPROCLAIMED LEGISLATION

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: According to standing order, I table a list detailing all legislation unproclaimed 90 calendar days after assent as at 12 September 2023.

TABLING OF PAPERS

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: According to the State Owned Corporations Act 1989, I table the following reports for the six months ended 31 December 2022:

- (1) Essential Energy
- (2) Forestry Corporation of NSW
- (3) Hunter Water Corporation
- (4) Landcom
- (5) Port Authority
- (6) Sydney Water Corporation

- (7) Transport Asset Holding Entity of NSW
- (8) Water NSW

Business of the House

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT: The nineteenth item of private members' business is listed as item No. 347 standing in the name of Ms Sue Higginson relating to Cheryl Grimmer. This was agreed at last night's Business Committee meeting. Ms Sue Higginson's office advised this morning that the item should, in fact, be item No. 371 concerning the Office of National Intelligence climate risk report. With the agreement of the House, should the House reach that very unlikely point in proceedings, item No. 371 will be called on as the next item. It is entirely up to the House if it wishes to agree to that or not.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (10:12): I am not aware, and the Government has not been informed, that Ms Sue Higginson wished to change that item of business. It has not been agreed to by the Business Committee. We are always open to those things but, on this occasion, given that we have not been told about it, we do not agree to that change. I do not know what we need to do to enforce that.

The PRESIDENT: I will consult the Clerk. The House has not agreed. Therefore, the private members' business list will stay as is.

Bills

PARLIAMENTARY EVIDENCE AMENDMENT (MINISTERIAL ACCOUNTABILITY) BILL 2023

First Reading

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

Second Reading Speech

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (10:15): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

It is with great reluctance that I introduce the Parliamentary Evidence Amendment (Ministerial Accountability) Bill 2023.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: It is crossing lines that you would not have let us cross—and we did not.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I have only delivered the first sentence. The bill has only arisen as a result of the actions of this arrogant Labor Government. Swept to power on a wave of doing politics differently, it is proving to have a fundamental disdain for transparency and accountability. When recently requested to appear as a witness before the inquiry by the Public Accountability and Works Committee into the appointment of Josh Murray to the position of Secretary of Transport for NSW, the Minister for Transport refused to appear. The Minister claimed that she is not answerable to this House. The Egan decisions made it clear that the Executive Government is responsible to both Houses of Parliament. On the Egan cases, the second edition of *Legislative Council Practice* states:

Not only did they confirm in general terms the power of the Legislative Council to order the production of State papers, they also confirmed the fundamental role of the Council in scrutinising the activities of the executive government and holding it to account under the system of responsible government in New South Wales.

This is a consequence of responsible government, and it is the role of this place as a house of review. It is a primary role of this House to hold this and all future governments to account. The bill could have been avoided if the current Government accepted the role of Legislative Council committees in scrutiny and accountability. Under the previous Government, Ministers of the Crown appeared as witnesses before parliamentary committees, not counting budget estimates hearings, on no fewer than 43 occasions.

Under the current Government, both the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and the Treasurer have appeared as witnesses before committees of the Legislative Council. The Minister for Transport claimed that her refusal to appear was in accordance with "a parliamentary convention that neither lower House MPs nor Ministers appear in upper House inquiries, with the exception of budget estimates". With due respect, what convention? Including the recent appearance of the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, there have been no fewer than 30 appearances of Ministers of the Crown who were members of the Legislative Assembly as witnesses before Legislative Council inquiries, other than budget estimates hearings, since 2011.

The deeper convention at the heart of our constitutional system is the accountability of the Executive Government to the elected members of Parliament. With members of both the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council appointed as Ministers of the Crown, there is a need for practical arrangements to ensure that all Ministers can be held accountable by both Houses. For example, members of this House can address questions, whether asked in question time or put on notice, to a Minister who is a member of the Legislative Assembly, through the system of ministerial representation.

Documents from the Executive Government are routinely ordered to be produced by this House, and the Executive Government, for the most part, complies. However, when it does not, the Leader of the Government is held responsible as the Minister representing the Government, and I have been in that position on multiple occasions. Thankfully, it was never acted on. In relation to an inquiry being conducted by a Legislative Council committee where the committee believes that a particular Minister may have evidence relevant to the inquiry, it is not practical for another Minister to represent that Minister. Evidence must be based on what a witness personally knows. In some cases, a witness may be the only source of evidence about a particular matter relevant to an inquiry, or critical to testing the veracity or comprehensiveness of the evidence provided by other witnesses.

If a Minister of the Crown is considered by a committee to be such a witness, the refusal of the Minister to comply with the request of the committee to give evidence may effectively frustrate the inquiry and prevent the committee from effectively carrying out its duty. The recent refusal by the Minister for Transport to comply with a request from the Public Accountability and Works Committee to provide evidence to assist with its inquiry into the process by which Mr Josh Murray was appointed to the position of Secretary of Transport for NSW has the potential to frustrate the conduct of that inquiry. There appear to be contradictions between the public statements made by the Minister for Transport on her role in that appointment and evidence given by witnesses to the inquiry.

Only the Minister's appearance before the committee to give evidence can assist the committee to examine those apparent contradictions and get to the truth about whether the appointment accorded, or otherwise, with the proper processes. However, this legislative amendment is not simply about one Minister. It is about the ability of the Parliament to do its job when it comes to the entire Executive. The Parliamentary Evidence Act 1901 deals with the power of either House, and of the committees of either House, to formally summons a person "to attend and give evidence" before the House or the committee. Members would be aware that this power is seldom used, as the usual practice is for committees to invite or request potential witnesses to attend and give evidence. However, the Act provides the necessary power to summons a witness to ensure that both Houses and their committees are not frustrated in the performance of their duty to inquire by witnesses simply declining a request or invitation.

The act of inviting when a witness knows that evidence may be compelled can be summed up as speaking softly and carrying a big stick. The power to issue summonses and compel evidence is a key power of the House to conduct its work. The Opposition believes that the power should also be available in relation to Ministers of the Crown. I believe that it should rarely be used as most Ministers respond reasonably to reasonable requests from a committee to attend and give evidence to assist the committee in its inquiry. I also believe that members will exercise restraint in their use of those powers, as they currently do. I am happy to rely upon the goodwill and judgement of members to stop the process from being abused. However, when a Minister has questions to answer, the Parliament needs a mechanism to get those answers. It is not good enough for the Executive Government to hide from scrutiny by the democratically elected representatives of the people of New South Wales. While the Minister for Transport's actions—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Damien Tudehope has the call.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Thank you, Mr President. It was a well called-for intervention. While the Minister for Transport's actions and comments may have been the immediate trigger for this bill, changing this legislation is about asserting the rights and powers of this House to undertake its constitutional duty—holding the executive government of the day to account. This is not about one inquiry and it is not about one Minister but about a change to the law to let this House get on with its job—to hold the Executive to account. The Executive may not like it and I understand that, but it is important that the Executive be held to account to ensure transparency and uphold the integrity of the Parliament. I encourage all members who desire to hold this and any future government to account to support the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Motions

ERARING POWER STATION

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (10:24): I move:

That, with the publication of the Cameron O'Reilly report into the New South Wales electricity system, this House supports its recommendation, as accepted by the Minns Government, to keep the Eraring power station open beyond 2025, in recognition of:

- (a) the projected electricity generation capacity gap in 2025, which, if not corrected, will lead to blackouts in New South Wales;
- (b) the way in which renewable energy zones in the State will not be operational before 2028, having run over budget and behind schedule;
- (c) the debacle at Snowy 2.0 Hydro, an expensive scheme which is running many years behind schedule and well over budget;
- (d) the lack of confirmed pumped hydro development approvals and investment in any other part of New South Wales;
- (e) the way in which the Kurri Kurri and Tallawarra gas-peaking plants are running behind schedule;
- (f) the general lack of back-up power or firming capacity to support the expansion of intermittent wind and solar power in New South Wales; and
- (g) widespread community opposition to Rewiring The Nation, the construction of large transmission corridors such as HumeLink in the south of the State, designed to relocate the source of power generation in New South Wales from coal-fired electricity along the coast to renewables built a long way inland.

This motion is a manifestation of the TINA principle: There is no alternative to keeping Eraring open for keeping the lights on in New South Wales. The recently published O'Reilly report shows that very clearly. It did not undertake any original assessment of energy security in New South Wales because it did not need to. It simply quoted the data that was available to the former Government, which did nothing about this particular problem. The data from the *Energy Security Target Monitor Report* and the *Electricity Statement of Opportunities* showed an electricity generation capacity gap in 2025-26 of somewhere between 260 megawatts and 450 megawatts. This is a recipe for blackouts, if nothing is done.

The O'Reilly report went on to acknowledge that the assessments of the capacity gap of up to 450 megawatts increasing over a 10-year period were completed before it was officially announced that the Snowy Hydro 2.0 project would be delayed until December 2029—that is, five years overdue and massively over budget—and also that the renewable energy zones in New South Wales would not be operational until 2027-28. The capacity gap is obvious and cannot be filled in any way other than by keeping Eraring open. The Minns Government has done the right thing—the only sensible and commonsense thing—in saying that it would engage with Origin, and possibly Brookfield from Canada, if it takes over Origin, to keep Eraring operational. The alternative in New South Wales is blackouts.

We know that from the debate last year about energy security in this State. In the winter of 2022, then Minister Kean said to the people of New South Wales, "Don't turn on your dishwashers." By extension, he was saying, "Don't turn on any of your household appliances because we would get blackouts." That was Minister Kean in the middle of last year saying, "Don't turn on your dishwashers. Wash them by hand." If we lose 25 per cent of New South Wales' electricity capacity with the closure of Eraring in 2025, brought forward by the electricity road map, of course we will have blackouts. Why would the former Government, or any government, undertake assessment of the energy security situation, know the data, know the likelihood of blackouts and do absolutely nothing about it and have no plan to keep Eraring open? It is the god complex of the former Minister, who thinks a relatively small provincial government in Australia with a limited amount of carbon emissions can save the planet.

The motion really is a test for the new Opposition on where it stands on energy security. For decades the Liberal Party has said it is the party of small business and families, yet it takes the manifest risk of blackouts for small business and economic wipe-out. It takes the risk of blackouts for families, destroying all the comforts and opportunities for their children that are taken for granted in the modern household. The new Leader of the Opposition, Mark Speakman, says, "These risks are worth taking." That is one of the most reckless and irresponsible things we will ever hear because the data is clear: an electricity generation capacity gap of up to 450 megawatts in 2025-26 at the closure of Eraring, with the gap continuing to increase over the 10-year assessment of the *Electricity Statement of Opportunities*.

I know some members in the Chamber—and you, Mr President, were part of the historic all-night debate—think that a provincial government in Australia can save the planet and make some big contribution. I had an assessment from the Parliamentary Library and the Royal Society in London showing that the Kean plan would lower global surface temperatures by 0.00055 degrees over a century. We can have an optimistic outlook, but the data is clear. We are told to follow the science. If we are to follow the science and the O'Reilly report and its quoting of obvious energy insecurity data, the only option is to keep Eraring open.

Whether it is by my motion or the foreshadowed amended motion of the Labor Party that states it would engage with the owner of Eraring to extend it beyond 2025, this Chamber, this Parliament and this Government have no choice. There is no alternative. If we want blackouts, we do nothing, which was the recipe of the former Government. If we want to keep the lights on, to keep prosperity for the business sector and all the convenience

and comforts we take for granted in our modern civilised society, we must keep Eraring open. There is no alternative.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (10:30): The Cameron O'Reilly report was devised as a structure to give permission to maintain the status quo and the business-as-usual approach to the energy transition. It is no secret that the electricity road map is running over budget and behind schedule. That is precisely because it is relying on private, profit-seeking investors to guide and lead the transition responsible for building new generation with the pace and urgency required to meet the demand of climate change pressures. What the pro-privatisation Marsden Jacob Cameron O'Reilly report seeks to do is to endorse the Government's calculated apathy to ramping up renewable energy generation in New South Wales. Let me quote directly from the Marsden Jacob report:

NSW has an electricity sector that is almost totally controlled by the private sector ... Privatisation of generation and transmission means a managed transition in NSW is more complex to achieve than, for example, in Queensland, where the state government owns most of the generation, and all network assets ... The Roadmap itself is predicated on private investment in new generations and network assets. Any potential return of government ownership or direct intervention could have implications for private sector confidence, and therefore Roadmap outcomes. It would be desirable if it could be avoided.

That warrants repeating. The O'Reilly report states that the most desirable outcome for the Government transition plan is for there to be no return of government ownership or even direct intervention. That report has been endorsed by the Chris Minns Labor Government and seeks to further entrench private sector dominance in one of the most essential public services, with billions of dollars in profits skimmed off into international capital coffers while all the risks are underwritten by public dollars. That is a reprehensible neoliberal scheme, and the new Labor Government, which campaigned so hard on an anti-privatisation agenda, should be ashamed of its decision.

On our current trajectory, it is true that there would be pressures on the generation capacity of the New South Wales electricity grid if Eraring were to close on its scheduled date. But rather than putting the foot on the accelerator and funnelling massive public investment into a clean, green and prosperous future, the Government is signing a blank cheque to extend the life of Eraring as a pressure relief valve on the urgency of the issue. We cannot let the pressure off. The pressure is mounting and the urgency is only getting greater. Any move that would seek to extend the life of fossil fuels is a total and unjustifiable abrogation of responsibility by the Labor Government.

Rather than seeking to reverse the disaster that energy privatisation has been in this State, the Labor Government is now heading down the road of setting a precedent for every other coal-fired power station that is still open. "You don't think it's profitable to run your power station anymore because the world is moving to renewables? That's okay. Bring your planned closure date forward, and then hold the Government to ransom until it pays up for you to delay it." We expected so much better than this from Labor.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (10:32): I have only three minutes, so I will be quick. I wish to move an amendment to the motion moved by the Hon. Mark Latham. I move:

That the question be amended by omitting all words after "as accepted by the Minns Government," and inserting instead:

to engage with the owner of the Eraring power station on an extension beyond 2025, and notes the Government's response that:

- (a) confirms the delivery of the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap as a whole-of-government strategic priority;
- (b) will accelerate the energy transition by streamlining planning approvals and unlocking opportunities to connect new renewables outside of renewable energy zones;
- (c) will bring forward the benefits of the transition for regional communities through more coordinated community benefit sharing;
- (d) will further embrace small-scale renewables and lower their energy bills through a consumer energy strategy; and
- (e) will manage energy security.

I will say three things about Ms Abigail Boyd's contribution. First, Labor did not privatise the electricity system we have inherited. That is the mess we are trying to clean up, and all of it has been made harder. Secondly, we will not be spending multiple millions of dollars of taxpayers' money buying back old, clapped-out coal stations. Thirdly, the infrastructure road map based on private investment was wholeheartedly supported by The Greens when it went through Parliament. That is the system that Parliament designed and that we are implementing.

I again urge everyone to read the first 20 pages of Cameron O'Reilly's report. It will tell members more than they need to know about the system in New South Wales: how it works, the challenges we are facing and the reality this Government is facing, which was a road map that was over time and over budget. I am entirely focused on bringing that back on track and on investing. I again point out that in this budget there is another \$1.8 billion of investment to bring renewables forward. That is our focus. The Government has indicated that it will make this a whole-of-government priority. I spoke about this yesterday and will not go into it in the short time I have now.

My point is that energy reliability is a real thing. It is not something we can just wish away or pretend about or roll the dice on it being okay. The Minns Labor Government and I as the Minister are not prepared to do that. We have clear reports that suggest that reliability will be tough. Even this summer might be tough. I am being up-front about that with the people of New South Wales and this Parliament. Wishing that it was different does not fix the problem. Households and industries need to know that they will have access to energy when they need it and that we are managing the transition as quickly as possible to keep prices down. There are impacts from all of this, and we cannot pretend that it is going away. The final point I will make is that it is interesting that previously there was a lot of bipartisanship on the infrastructure road map and that has been clearly dissolved by The Greens today. I hope that the Opposition has its brains working and will support my amendment.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (10:36): I contribute to debate on the motion brought to the House by the Hon. Mark Latham. Remarkably, and concerningly, I agree with a lot of what is contained in the motion. He is putting forward a reasonable proposition. Unfortunately, the Government will have to sit down with the operators of Eraring to discuss keeping that coal-fired power station online for longer than I had hoped necessary, not for any fault of the Government but for the fault of the previous Government. This is its legacy of 10 years.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: The member has no idea.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: I have an idea because I was here. Despite appearances, the member is a newbie here. This is not my first rodeo. I was here through the debacle of the O'Farrell Government privatising our electricity infrastructure. What a disaster that was. Selling off the poles, wires and generators and handing it all over—some of it for a dollar—was a disaster. What did they get for Vales Point? It is making hundreds of millions of dollars.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: They sold it for a million bucks.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: For a million dollars. What a catastrophe. It is writ large in the report presented by O'Reilly and Nemes. I urge the Leader of the Opposition to go to page 27 and refresh his memory of how we got to where we are by handing over this natural monopoly of the retailers, the transmission lines—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: The generation.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: And the generation—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Who did that?

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: That is right. The Coalition did that.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: No, we did not.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: Yes, it did.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: It was handed over to the private sector. Now we have lost control of the State's electricity grid. I urge honourable members to look at this report, especially what it says about gas, and that Narrabri is unnecessary and unneeded and will not deal with the firming issue coming down the range. We need to invest in firming, batteries, pumped hydro and wind as soon as possible.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (10:39): No responsible government could ever take the view that we could have a situation where the delivery of electricity is made unavailable to the consumers of the State. It is a fact that no-one can escape from and I am pleased that the Government acknowledges that. The difficulty with this issue and the manner in which the members of the Government have dealt with the response to the Cameron O'Reilly report is that they do not tell us what other options could be, or should be, explored in relation—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Stop the clock. There is too much chatting across the Chamber. I understand that this issue provokes a lot of interest and discussion. However, members will make their comments through the Chair. The Leader of the Opposition is acting appropriately and has the call.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: When I say that the Government has not been transparent about the cost of those potential options, I mean that it has not told the consumers of this State what it is going to cost to keep Eraring open and whether it has done the necessary homework to find out the cost-benefit. We are faced with a government that goes out to the owners of electricity providers and says, "Tell us how much you want," because, in effect, by the manner in which it has negotiated the outcome, it has handed Eraring a blank cheque. In many respects no more irresponsible actions could be taken by members of a government than to make an announcement that it will keep it open without knowing what it will cost the taxpayers of this State, whether the other options are potentially cheaper to be able to export or what the level of risk is. We are faced with a

government that is in baby land in terms of negotiating a commercial outcome to ensure that we get the best deal for the people of this State.

[*Members interjected.*]

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I refer to the original motion and say we on this side of the House support keeping the lights on in this State. We will support the necessary steps, but for goodness sake act like grown-ups. Get into a room and negotiate an outcome. Be transparent about the cost and make sure it has no impact on the electricity bills of the consumers of this State.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Point of order: I was loath to take a point of order while the Leader of the Opposition was speaking, but the Leader of the Government's continued interjections during his contribution was so unparliamentary and so egregious that I would ask you to call her to order.

The PRESIDENT: There was too much interjection from both sides of the Chamber during the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition. All members will refrain from interjecting during the contribution of the Hon. Cameron Murphy.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:43): I have heard it all after that last contribution from the Leader of the Opposition. I thank the Hon. Mark Latham for bringing the debate on this important issue. We need to understand why we are in this position. There is one reason why we are in this position and that is the absolute and abject failure of the Coalition to have an energy policy. The Federal Coalition, for more than a decade, did not even have an energy policy, let alone a renewable energy policy. It is exactly that lack of investment that has put us in the position now where the transition will be much more difficult than it otherwise would have been.

I have heard it all when I hear the Leader of the Opposition try to lecture us on financial management. It was Matt Kean. Matt Kean was the Minister who sold a power station for a dollar that was then on sold by that private company for millions of dollars. The now Opposition members know absolutely nothing about financial management and we ought not be lectured by them on how to run things—the former Government has left us in record debt of more than \$187 billion and has put Labor in a position where it has to clean up the arrangements around the transition to renewable energy. It was its failure of policy, its failure to invest and its inability to deal with the transition appropriately that has now left the mess for Labor to tackle, and Labor will. Labor will talk to Origin Energy about Eraring. Labor will engage and do whatever is necessary to ensure that consumers are looked after but, at the same time, we will transition properly to a new, vibrant renewable energy sector.

I commend the Minister, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, for the important work that she is doing engaging with all the stakeholders to ensure that there is consultation and that we get to a position where we have got energy security for consumers but, more importantly, energy security through renewable energy. We want to make sure that the environment is looked after. We want to make sure that people have the lights on. Given the past failures of Coalition members in this area, they should not be lecturing anybody on how to go about this. They cannot manage a transition to renewable energy at all. They would be best served by being quiet in a debate like this and not trying to lecture members in this House on what they should do. We are the grown-ups and we will fix this. I will not take lectures from the Hon. Damien Tudehope on these matters. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (10:46): I participate in the debate and speak to the Government's amendment. I acknowledge the work of Cameron O'Reilly and Dr Veronika Nemes in delivering the report entitled *NSW Electricity Supply and Reliability Check Up*. I also acknowledge the Hon. Mark Latham for his interest and his work in the energy sector, particularly in the Hunter Valley where I live. In speaking to the amendment, it is clear to us in the Government that we must take a more active role in managing New South Wales' energy security as our ageing coal-fired power stations are being retired. We all know, as has been touched on previously, that the previous Government sold off New South Wales electricity assets, which means that the energy transition that we are faced with has been somewhat more complicated.

Regarding our response to the check-up report, it is important to underscore the Government's priorities in the space. We need a whole-of-government approach to delivering the transition—we have inherited an absolute mess—so we can bring forward the benefits of the transition to communities and also manage our energy security in a responsible way during the transition. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned the impact on the electricity bills of the people of this State. As a responsible government we are keen to minimise and reduce in whatever way we can the impact on electricity bills. We understand people are doing it tough and we have put in place cost-of-living measures for energy relief.

I find it somewhat ironic and contradictory that the Leader of the Opposition talks about the impact on electricity bills whilst other members of the Opposition want subsequent inquiries on the undergrounding of power

lines, which we know costs between three and 10 times as much to undertake. That cost will be directly passed on to consumers through increased power bill prices. I find it ironic that Opposition members talk about reducing the impact on electricity bills while Government members are doing whatever we can to keep the lights on to reduce the impact on consumers and to address the cost-of-living pressures and the mess that has been left by those opposite.

The Hon. WES FANG (10:49): I was not going to speak, but I was provoked by that last contribution. As the chair of that Standing Committee on State Development, which released what was effectively a sham report related to the—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: There is a report before the House to take note of, and to traduce that report is completely out of order. It is a decision of the House, and that is not the way in which decisions of the House are made.

The Hon. WES FANG: To the point of order: There is no applicable point of order. I am well within my rights to respond to the previous contribution. I ask that I be allowed to continue.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Further to the point of order: The member is absolutely entitled to respond to the issues that were raised by the Hon. Emily Suvaal. He is not entitled to canvass decisions of the House regarding reports that are before the House.

The PRESIDENT: I have significant sympathy with the Leader of the Government on that issue. However, I accept that significant latitude is given. The Hon. Wes Fang will be mindful as he makes his further contribution.

The Hon. WES FANG: I was pointing out that the Hon. Emily Suvaal was the chair of the committee that produced that sham report.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: The Hon. Wes Fang is making imputations against a member of this House. The Hon. Emily Suvaal is the chair of the Standing Committee on State Development. The report was democratically dealt with through the committee, and the idea that she has produced a sham report is an imputation. If he wants to make an imputation regarding the member, he should do it by substantive motion.

The PRESIDENT: I uphold the point of order and ask the member to withdraw the word "sham".

The Hon. WES FANG: I withdraw "sham". The report, which was somewhat disputed by the other members of the committee, indicates that the Labor Government used its numbers on that committee to ram through some of the findings.

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: Point of order: Within three minutes of your ruling directed to the Hon. Wes Fang, Mr President, he offends again. I ask that you call him to order and that he contribute to debate in a way that befits this House.

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Wes Fang did not stray over the line and was within the normal political cut and thrust. The Hon. Wes Fang has the call.

The Hon. WES FANG: I seek an extension of time.

Leave not granted.

[Time expired.]

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (10:52): In reply: The most amazing parts of this debate were the contributions of the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer. This is by far the most important economic issue facing New South Wales: How do we keep the lights on in 2025 and beyond, and avoid economic and social carnage across the State? The Hon. Damien Tudehope spoke for three minutes and could not articulate a policy from the Liberal Party, which was in government for 12 years. Why could he not articulate a policy? It is because Matt Kean jumped in straightaway, followed by Speakman, and said, "Our policy is to take the risk; we'll roll the dice." The capacity gap is manifest; it is clear in the report. Everyone knows that a gap of up to 450 megawatts—and getting bigger—in 2025 means blackouts for New South Wales. The policy of the Liberal Party is to roll the dice and say, "If we were still in government, we would do nothing."

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: I have supported the policy.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I say to the Hon. Damien Tudehope, in the words of the great Lyndon Johnson, "There comes a time in politics where you've got to pee or get off the pot." This motion and the amendment are evidence that the Liberal Party needs to make its position known. Does it take the reckless, irresponsible stance of allowing the lights to go out in New South Wales?

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: I said no.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: But you have no policy for how you would do it. This is the magic sprinkle policy of the Liberal Party—"We'll just sprinkle some dust out there and hope that the lights magically stay on." It is not a time for utopian thinking; it is a time for practicality. Whatever the faults of Labor members in supporting that flawed electricity road map three years ago, at least they have woken up to reality now. They have a report that states that unless we keep Eraring open, the lights will go out. How hard is it for the Liberal Party to accept that position? The Kean-Speakman madness of saying they would do nothing is completely unacceptable. The same thing applies to the Liberal Party and The Nationals, who are now in strategic retreat about the road map and are worried about the transmission corridors, as they should have been three years ago.

The other contribution to the debate was from The Greens, saying that they acknowledge that the blackouts are coming. Their solution is to pump more investment into renewables. Well, it is too late. One cannot turn the Queen Mary around on a 5¢ piece, which is the whole thing about rebuilding the New South Wales electricity grid. How much investment do we need? The acquisition for and construction of Snowy 2.0 is costing in the order of \$30 billion, and it is a complete disaster. It is at least five years over schedule, \$10 billion over budget and going nowhere.

On top of that, the \$9 billion investment in the renewable energy zones is growing by the day. Pumping money into the fairy dust is not a solution. The only practical thing to do is to keep Eraring open. The Hon. Rod Roberts and I stood here time after time three years ago and said, "You will bring forward the closure of coal-fired power stations and you do not have the backup power. Blackouts are inevitable." That is the reality we face now. Support the motion and, if not, support the amendment.

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Mark Latham has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Penny Sharpe has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.

Business of the House

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: By leave: Pursuant to Standing Order 75 (7), I give notice that on the next sitting day I will move that leave be given to bring in a bill for an Act to amend the Mining Act 1992 to provide for the validation of certain mineral claims and matters relating to mineral claims.

Motions

PUBLIC SCHOOL VENTILATION SYSTEMS

Dr AMANDA COHN (10:57): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) during winter there is an increased likelihood of contracting respiratory infections;
 - (b) in May and June of this year, students were learning from home due to COVID-19 outbreaks among students and staff at Martindale Public School, Orange High School, Yawarra Community School, Kincumber High School, Cammeray Public School, Carenne School, Liverpool Girls High School, Parkes High School, Kemps Creek, Karabar High School and Five Islands Secondary College;
 - (c) children are particularly vulnerable to risks associated with the transmission of airborne pathogens, with lower vaccination rates and higher asthma prevalence than adults;
 - (d) people are at higher risk of adverse outcomes if they contract a respiratory illness such as COVID-19 and deserve equitable and safe access to schools and public buildings;
 - (e) the spread of respiratory illnesses has significant economic repercussions, with the National Institute of Labour Studies estimating that in an average pre-COVID year, Australia was losing approximately 2 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product to unexpected health-related absences, most of which were caused by respiratory illness, and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation calculating that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, poor indoor air quality was costing Australia an estimated \$12 billion per year; and
 - (f) adequate ventilation is a crucial factor in reducing transmission of airborne pathogens indoors.
- (2) That this House calls on the Government to:
 - (a) report on the progress of the installation of ventilation systems in public schools;
 - (b) commit to ensuring that all public schools receive permanent remediation works for ventilation; and

- (c) extend the rollout of permanent comprehensive ventilation systems and high efficiency particulate air grade filtration systems to all public buildings, including but not limited to health facilities, community centres, public libraries, public transit stations, prisons, remand centres and sporting facilities.

Every person in New South Wales deserves full and equitable access to participate in community life. Every child deserves to be safe at school, but that is not yet the case. I have spoken with the mother of a child who was hospitalised in the first wave of the COVID pandemic, who has tirelessly advocated for her daughter's primary school classroom to have HEPA filtration installed. Finally, the department provided a temporary, portable solution, but the portable air purifier is underpowered for the size of the room and is too noisy for the teacher to run at all the times that it is needed. That mother's experience with the Department of Education has been described to me as feeling like a box-ticking exercise rather than putting in something that would make a difference.

I have spoken with the parent of a child with disability in a similar situation, who is so desperate that they have looked into legal action against teachers under disability law. Teachers who are already overworked and undervalued should not be put in that position. It should not be up to individuals to take additional precautions to be safe when they go out. Public spaces must be safe and accessible for every person across New South Wales. I have spoken with people with a disability who take a portable carbon dioxide monitor with them whenever they go out so that they know if an indoor space is adequately ventilated or if they need to wear a P2 mask because they know that ventilation is inadequate.

The John Curtin Research Society's submission to the recent Federal Inquiry into Long COVID and Repeated COVID Infections argued that requiring in-person school attendance for children at higher risk of adverse outcomes from respiratory infection likely constitutes indirect discrimination under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act unless reasonable steps are taken to mitigate the risks that disproportionately harm people with disabilities. It also argued that similar considerations apply to all venues that people with disability may be expected to access, including hospitals, workplaces and publicly accessible buildings. For spaces where permanent remedial ventilation is impractical, the installation of upper-room ultraviolet germicidal irradiation is another alternative that can make indoor spaces safer for all of us.

Adequate ventilation in schools benefits all children. Studies have shown that, in addition to reducing the spread of infection, enhanced ventilation and, subsequently, lower carbon dioxide levels in classrooms have been strongly associated with improved concentration and learning outcomes. The NSW Department of Education has conducted a review of ventilation in public schools. It reported that the majority of spaces in schools could be adequately ventilated through natural and mechanically assisted ventilation. But what I have heard loud and clear from parents is that the previous Government's audit resulted in a huge number of temporary and inadequate fixes. For example, an assessment could be made that a certain classroom is safe with the window open or with the provision of a portable air purifier that is never run because it is too noisy, not taking into account how often that window cannot be opened because of outside temperature or noise.

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

Questions Without Notice

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE ILLUMINATION

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (11:00): My question is directed to the Minister for the Arts. On 11 May 2023, the Minister declined a request to table advice that he had said showed that it cost \$100,000 to turn on the lights for the Opera House to mark an event. Will the Minister now confirm that there were options available for appropriately lighting the sails of the Opera House to mark the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III of Australia for between \$10,000 and \$50,000, and that the decision of the Premier to cancel the illumination was a purely political decision?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (11:01): I thank the member for the question. I am advised that the cost can be up to exactly that amount. I will stick to the convention followed by previous Ministers of not tabling advice. Of course, there is a range of ways to tackle any of these important occasions. We will not turn the Opera House into a billboard for any occasion that comes or goes, which is what the former Government did. That was what was going on and that is why the Government has changed its approach. I can inform the House that I have now signed off on a policy, which we will shortly release to the public, about the exact way we will approach this. The Government is moving away from the approach of the former Government, which was to light up the Opera House every day of the week.

Let us be clear about why the Opera House was being lit up so often. Having shut down the city over a decade—a decade marked by lockouts—and then as we all had to cope with the COVID lockdowns, the former Government was desperate to throw public money at any sort of activity and to light up the Opera House whenever

it could. That led to, in this Government's view, the lighting of the sails far too often. The Government will put in place a policy that makes it clear exactly what occasions the Opera House should be lit up for.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Point of order: I ask that the Minister direct his attention to the question I asked, which was whether there were options for lighting up the Opera House for between \$10,000 and \$50,000 and whether the Minister agrees with the advice, which has now been provided, that this was a purely political decision.

The PRESIDENT: My ruling has three parts. The first is that it would be helpful if I could have a copy of the question. The second is that it would also be helpful if I could hear the Minister's response over the interjections from the Opposition. The third is that the Minister is being directly relevant at this stage of the answer, but I ask him to consider the specific remit of the question in his remaining minute and 15 seconds.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I am happy to take the part of the question about options on notice. Was this decision purely political? Absolutely not. I do not accept that that was the case. Of course, it is appropriate that important occasions be marked, and that is why the Government will set out the policy so that it is clear exactly how it will approach each of these questions. But I will not be dealing with the conspiracy theories of the Opposition. I can rule a range of things out: The Government will not be renaming King Street. It will not be instructing the Theatre Royal to change its name.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Point of order: I hope that the President could hear the Minister's answer because it is clearly straying from the leave of the question.

The PRESIDENT: I had hoped that the member would use the term "bull's roar", but he did not. Nevertheless, the point of order is upheld. The Minister will return to the leave of the question.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I have taken what I think is, in the view of the Leader of the Opposition, the most important part of the question on notice. I look forward to returning to the House and to the member with some of that detail. But I reject the suggestion that it was purely political.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (11:04): I ask a supplementary question. In the course of his answer, the Minister articulated a view that there is a convention not to table advice. Will the Minister please advise the House what that convention is, and why he would not table the advice that he referred to in his previous answer?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (11:05): As I have informed the House, that is certainly my understanding of the convention that was applied by the former Government, including at budget estimates hearings and in the House. I am happy to take that part of the question on notice and return with some detailed observations for the member.

CHILD PROTECTION

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (11:05): My question is addressed to the Leader of the Government. Will the Leader of the Government, in her capacity representing the Premier, speak to how the Minns Labor Government is repairing the child protection system?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:05): I thank the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine for this very important question. In March this year the Government inherited a child protection system in urgent need of repair. The former Government left behind an out-of-home care budget due to run out next April, which would leave the New South Wales Government failing to meet its statutory obligations to vulnerable children. We were left with a broken system that, too often, was failing children, failing families, failing caseworkers and failing communities, and without adequate funding to ensure that the most vulnerable kids and families in our State were being supported.

Today, the Minns Labor Government has announced a \$200 million rescue package to prevent the collapse of the out-of-home care system and ensure that thousands of vulnerable kids in New South Wales are kept safe. A recent review into the child protection system under the former Government found vulnerable children were holed up in motel rooms without enough food or clothing, despite non-government providers being paid more than \$1 million for their care. As it did in so many other areas, the former Government entirely outsourced the provision of child protection services to the non-government sector. The former Government decided to stop recruiting emergency foster carers, which left the Department of Communities and Justice without the capacity to look after children in their time of need.

Those emergency arrangements are obscenely expensive. Most importantly, they are terrible for the vulnerable children and young people who fall into them. They cannot continue. If this funding was not found,

vulnerable children could have been forced to return to unsafe living arrangements. Those opposite left behind not only a broken system but also a budget black hole that was growing so fast that it left hundreds of millions of dollars in deficit. Vulnerable children were being funnelled into hotels and motels with 24/7 shift workers instead of being placed with loving foster carers.

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

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Those opposite do not like the answer because the situation is appalling. It is one of the most disgraceful things that we have had to fix. That is why the Minns Labor Government is taking urgent action to ensure we have a well-funded child protection system. There are 15,000 children in out-of-home care in New South Wales, and every one of those children and young people deserves to be safe and protected. It is not safe for them to live at home. This week is Foster and Kinship Care Week, and the Government has been highlighting the incredibly rewarding opportunities for families who open their homes to children who need care and stability. As someone who has been a foster carer, I take the opportunity to personally encourage anyone who has ever thought about it to investigate foster caring. There are kids that need our help and need loving homes every day.

The Government is listening. It is committed to rebuilding the child protection system, and it is committed to listening to the voices of children, families and caseworkers along the way. We know the system cannot be fixed overnight, but we also know that it starts with sensible budget management that rebuilds essential services without privatising public assets or imposing an unfair wages cap on essential workers. This is a government squarely focused on the future of our State and our kids.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION WORKFORCE

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:08): My question is directed to the Minister for Finance. The previous Coalition Government budgeted \$281 million over four years for the early childhood education workforce. Today the Labor Government has announced that only \$22 million will be spent over five years to recruit and retain essential early childhood workers. Why has the Government cut \$259 million from the early childhood education workforce?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:09): I thank the honourable member for her question, and I welcome it. It is clear that there is a lot of anticipation about this Government's first budget next week. Certainly, the Treasurer, myself and many members of the Cabinet—in fact, our whole Government—have been working hard to prepare our first budget. The Government is committed to repairing the budget and rebuilding essential public services. Part of that is lifting the wages cap.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: Point of order: I asked a very specific question about work incentives for early childhood educators in New South Wales. They are not under the wages cap in New South Wales. The Minister is not being relevant. I want to know what is happening to the workforce package.

The PRESIDENT: I understand the point of order and have sympathy for it. The Minister was being relevant about the budgetary process. I ask the Minister to come to the direct point of the question in her answer.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The Government made an announcement today in advance of the budget next week that provides important cost-of-living relief to families who face huge childcare bills. An additional part of the announcement was about the training of staff. The Government knows that in child care, like in so many parts of the economy, they are struggling to find workers. It is all very well for the previous Government to promise childcare centres, but we cannot actually staff the childcare centres that we have at the moment.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: Why are you only spending 10 per cent of the money over five years?

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Where is the money?

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: Where has it gone?

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister has the call.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I note the interjections of those opposite and their anticipation of what will be in the budget papers next week, but I will not foreshadow that. I assure the community that the Government is committed to delivering on its election commitments and repairing essential services. The announcement today goes to the important cost-of-living relief and support that the Government is providing to make sure that every kid gets the best start in life. Early childhood education is crucial—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Sarah Mitchell will be called to order if she continues to interject. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: There would be widespread support in this place and across the community for early childhood education. We know that it is crucial. In reflecting on the previous answer provided by the Leader of the Government, early childhood education is important across many different facets, especially for our most vulnerable children. The Government is absolutely committed to early childhood education and implementing its election commitments, but I am not going to provide a running commentary on what will be presented by the Treasurer in the Legislative Assembly next week and what will be debated in this place. The Government has made some announcements today. I can assure those opposite that this Government, unlike them, is committed to delivering on what it said before the election and what it will do afterwards.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:12): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate the part of her answer where she said that the Government will be delivering on its election commitments in the budget? Given that the Government's election commitment for the early childhood workforce was only a \$22 million package, is the Minister saying that there is no more money to come?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:13): I welcome the supplementary question from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. As the former Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning, she would be aware that the previous Government announced a \$5 billion fund when she was the Minister—

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: The \$280 million wasn't part of the \$5 billion. It was separate money.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister has the call.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: She knows that.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Of course she knows that. She knows everything.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I acknowledge the interjection from the Leader of the Government. I am not sure I agree with her, but I appreciate it. I often tell my children that. Early childhood education is fundamental, particularly for our most vulnerable children. The Government is making important announcements today and will have more to say. This is the Government's first budget in a four-year term. The idea that I am going to come to question time today—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister has the call.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am happy to provide an answer. Early childhood education remains a fundamentally important way of addressing our most disadvantaged kids.

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

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It is a fundamentally important way of addressing disadvantage and giving kids the best start in life, and the Government remains committed to it.

NSW HEALTH SALARY PACKAGING

Dr AMANDA COHN (11:15): My question is directed to the Minister for Finance, representing the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health. Health workers who choose to work in the public sector are rewarded with salary-packaging benefits that reduce the tax payable on their income. However, NSW Health keeps 50 per cent of those tax savings. Health workers and their representative unions have campaigned for many years for health workers to keep 100 per cent of their salary-packaging benefits for working in the public health system. This week the Government announced that NSW Health will keep only 30 per cent, rather than 50 per cent, of salary-packaging benefits for health workers under some awards. Why has this not been offered to all employees of NSW Health?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:16): I thank the honourable member for her question to me in my capacity representing the excellent Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health—and other things—Ryan Park.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Dr Amanda Cohn has asked an important question. The Minister will be heard in silence.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It is an important question. I acknowledge the member's work prior to coming into this place as a GP in regional New South Wales, where we particularly face challenges in attracting healthcare workers. We face a huge array of challenges in the health system in New South Wales after 12 years

of neglect, cuts and budget tricks. The health Minister and the Government more broadly are trying to fix that huge array of problems. One of those issues is around attracting and retaining staff, particularly in regional New South Wales. I am delighted to report to the House that the wages cap has ended now, and that will deliver a 4.5 per cent increase in wages to healthcare workers and public sector workers across the State. It is the largest increase in over a decade. It is all very well to attract staff, but we must retain them, particularly in regional New South Wales.

I acknowledge the longstanding campaigning on this issue by the Health Services Union. It is a really important issue. The union has raised directly with me and a number of my colleagues the issue of salary sacrificing. That is why I was delighted that the Minister for Health announced on Sunday that more than 50,000 healthcare workers will benefit from the changes. That is delivering on the Government's election commitment to deliver better salary-packaging arrangements. It will have a huge impact for allied health, health and security assistants, administration staff, cooks, patient transport staff, paramedics, sterilisation technicians, tech assistants and telephonists. For example, a cleaner earning \$54,483 per year will see an increase in their after-tax, take-home pay of \$753 per year, or about \$15 per week. That is a real wage increase, on top of lifting the wages cap, that will deliver and retain key health workers in the New South Wales health system.

Dr AMANDA COHN (11:19): I ask a supplementary question. In her response, the Minister referred to the campaigning by the Health Services Union, which I also acknowledge, but not to the efforts by the Nurses and Midwives' Association. Will the Minister elucidate why that campaign has not been recognised and why nurses are not being offered the same new salary-packaging arrangement?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:19): I thank the honourable member for her supplementary question. I did note that this would apply to more than 50,000 healthcare workers, and I listed a large number of them. I also note that the Minister for Health has been negotiating separately with our nursing workforce. They face a different range of pressures, and we are certainly seeking to engage with our workers across the board. We cannot solve everything at once, and that is one of the key challenges that we face going into the budget. We cannot undo 12 years of neglect, of budget tricks, of running things up on the credit card or of sloshing money around in the lead-up to an election and then just not allocating any money two years in. We cannot fix all of that in one go.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I acknowledge the work of the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health, in engaging with the different unions and different workforces across the health sector. There are different challenges and we have to prioritise what we are doing. I acknowledge that the Minister recently signed a memorandum of understanding with our nurses to start to implement safe staffing levels. In addition to providing them with a 4.5 per cent wage increase, that is another key way to retain our nurses.

[Opposition members interjected.]

Members opposite might want to interject, but they sure were not telling us about the 1,112 nurses who were put on temporary contracts. The previous Treasurer was happy to walk into the Legislative Assembly and talk about all of the new healthcare workers, but he did not tell us about the fine print. He did not tell us that they were on temporary employment contracts. These are the challenges we are facing. *[Time expired.]*

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR (11:21): I ask a second supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate the part of her answer where she said that the Health Services Union took priority over the nurses union in terms of the negotiation?

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister for Finance may answer the question as she sees fit.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:22): I completely reject the premise of that question. I did not say that we were in any way prioritising one union over another. In fact, my answer went into great detail. I would advise the honourable member to read the *Hansard* closely to see that I said that we are engaging with our workforce with the different unions in order to address the different issues they are presenting to us. Indeed, the Health Services Union has consistently advocated regarding salary sacrificing, as I said, to me directly and to a large number of our colleagues.

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Bronnie Taylor will be called to order if she interjects again.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: But let me speak at more length about the issue that the Nurses and Midwives' Association have raised with us directly.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Point of order: Unfortunately, the Minister is not addressing the question that was asked. I ask that you rule that part of her answer out of order.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: In speaking directly to the question that the Deputy Leader of The Nationals and the former Minister for Regional Health asked me, I thought the House might be interested in where some of those temporarily employed nurses were located across regional New South Wales. Indeed, Hunter New England had the highest count. The Hon. Emily Suvaal would know about the pressures facing—

The Hon. Natalie Ward: Point of order: The Minister is addressing her answer to her colleagues rather than through you, as she should. I ask that you direct her to address her answer through the Chair, as appropriate, rather than whipping up the crowd.

The PRESIDENT: I remind all members to address their comments through the Chair.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I am acknowledging the important work that my colleague the Hon. Emily Suvaal did as a nurse before she entered the Parliament and that 138 nurses were put on temporary contracts in the Hunter New England region by the former Minister for Regional Health. [*Time expired.*]

COMPREHENSIVE EXPENDITURE REVIEW

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (11:25): My question is addressed to the Minister for Finance. Will the Minister update the House on the scale of the previous Government's waste and mismanagement that has been uncovered by the comprehensive expenditure review?

The Hon. Chris Rath: Point of order: There is argument in that question. I ask that you rule it out of order.

The PRESIDENT: I do not contend that there is argument in the question. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:26): They are the facts. We have uncovered a huge amount of waste and mismanagement as part of our comprehensive expenditure review. I thank the member for his question and am delighted that our first Minns Labor Government budget will be delivered by the Treasurer on Tuesday 19 September.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: We are absolutely committed to repairing the budget to rebuild our essential services. We will set out a long-term plan to repair the budget in a sustainable way. We have talked at length about the \$187 billion that the previous Government signed us on to, and the \$7 billion budget black hole of unfunded promises that it left us with. I will speak about three specific examples that we have uncovered through our expenditure review process. Members may be aware that there are some issues around Circular Quay. In almost nine years, members opposite spent more than \$100 million on fancy designs without a single thing to show for it. They spent \$100 million on consultants without a single nail hammered in or a single actual improvement made.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Clerk will stop the clock. As I have said previously, although unparliamentary and out of order, the odd interjection will be accepted if it is funny, pithy or relevant. But Hansard has to be able to do their job. When every member in the Chamber is talking they cannot do it. If members want to read in *Hansard* what was said, which has been suggested this question time, I encourage them to let Hansard do their job. The Minister has the call and will be heard in silence.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If I was allowed the use of props, I could show before and after photos of what \$100 million delivered for the people of New South Wales.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Scott Farlow to order for the first time.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It delivered nothing. That \$100 million could have been spent to build schools, give our teachers a pay rise or put temporary nurses on permanent contracts. Instead, those opposite spent \$100 million on consultants and business cases without a single thing to show for it. Let me talk about the COVID cleaning program that the former education Minister may remember. Long after we stopped wearing masks—

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: You are back here again—that is a bit sad. It was in the Tele about six months ago.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: It appears opposition feels so much longer than it actually is.

The PRESIDENT: Order! There are 20 seconds left. The member will be heard in silence.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Those opposite spent \$3.4 million every week for additional cleaning measures. It was set and forget. Let us talk about the slush fund from the National Party that splashed around \$1.7 million—of which \$1.3 million went to seats held by the National Party. [*Time expired.*]

The PRESIDENT: Order! I call the Hon. Wes Fang to order for the first time. I call the Hon. Penny Sharpe to order for the first time. We are six questions—halfway—through question time. The behaviour of members, especially Opposition members, is undermining question time.

GAS SUPPLY

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (11:30): My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Climate Change, and Minister for Energy. The Government's energy check-up has identified gas capacity or storage as the key constraint in gas supply to our power generators and puts the view of stakeholders, including the Australian Energy Market Operator, that the Narrabri Gas Project, "even at full capacity, cannot deal with supply issues". Does the Government agree with those findings, and does that mean that the Narrabri Gas Project is unnecessary for energy security in New South Wales?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:31): I thank the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham for his question and his ongoing interest in these matters over a very long period of time. There is an examination within the Cameron O'Reilly and Veronika Nemes report in relation to gas. There are also the issues flagged by the Australian Energy Market Operator in its annual Gas Statement of Opportunities, which provides the 20-year supply and demand outlook for the Australian east coast gas market.

The 2023 GSOO, as it is known, forecasts the potential for gas supply shortfalls during extreme demand periods in New South Wales in the short term. Those demand periods and that stress is real, and it is not something we can ignore. The Cameron O'Reilly report made a number of observations in relation to that. One was that supply is an ongoing issue and there are dangers there. But the other point is the role of gas in relation to peaking plants in New South Wales. There are around five peaking plants, plus another two coming on board. They are needed because they are part of the firming technology that ensures that we do not have reliability issues when the sun is not shining and the wind is not blowing.

The point that the honourable member makes in relation to storage is true. Cameron O'Reilly and Veronika Nemes' report said that we need to look at storage. If we are going to have peaking plants, they need to have access to storage so that when they need the gas it is not just in the pipelines—it is ready to go. The Government has accepted that and will be getting more advice on all the policies and infrastructure that we will need into the future.

ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (11:33): My question is directed to the Minister for Jobs and Tourism. At a media conference held as part of the recent Ultimate Fighting Championship [UFC] events in Sydney, in front of the logos of the New South Wales Government and Destination NSW, UFC fighters referred to each other's pornography preferences and alleged engagement in acts of bestiality, and used racial slurs. Is that the new Feel New Sydney that Destination NSW's \$16 million sponsorship is aimed at promoting?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (11:34): I thank the Hon. Natalie Ward for her question. I have not seen the specific comments, but I take the honourable member's concern at face value. I certainly think that those comments, as portrayed, have no place. I have no hesitation in saying that they should not be part of the ordinary discussion we conduct here or expect as members of this House. The Government has made clear that it made an election commitment, and it intends to fulfil it. The very early work about holding that event has indicated that it was hugely successful, and the Government intends to press ahead with the future events.

COAL ROYALTIES

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (11:35): My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer outline what the Minns Government has announced ahead of the expiry of the coal market price emergency directions?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:35): I thank the Hon. Mark Buttigieg for his excellent question. He is, indeed, right that the Government has made announcements about the future of energy and royalties policy after the expiration of the emergency declarations next week. In six days' time I will visit the other place. I have overcome the attempts of those opposite to cancel the Budget Speech. I might take this opportunity to provide a bit of a teaching moment for those opposite, ahead of the budget, because they will need to respond. They will need to know how to read budget papers. They will need to know how to read income statements and

expense lines, and understand basic concepts like the difference between a royalty and a tax. That seems to have created a little bit of confusion for the shadow Treasurer—the alternative economic leader of this State.

So I might explain that a royalty is what the people of New South Wales charge mining companies to exploit and sell the people's resources. That has been its definition for 500-plus years. It might have escaped the notice of those opposite. If you argue otherwise, you are all but arguing that the people of New South Wales should give the non-renewable resource away for free and that they have no right to access the wealth that their resources create. On this side of the House, we have a different view. We respect the mining industry; we respect the jobs that the mining industry creates. But we also respect the fact that, when it comes to something like royalties policy, our job as a government is to make sure that the policy matches the market conditions at the time, which is what we have done. We have announced a lift in royalty rates to deliver \$2.7 billion, ploughing every single one of those dollars back into rebuilding essential services.

After we made the announcement, what was astonishing was not the attitude of the National Party, because at least it has been consistent; it was the attitude of the shadow Minister for Environment, who all of a sudden put out tweets backing in the mining industry when it comes to this policy change. That was different to what the shadow Treasurer was saying, and no-one knows—*[Time expired.]*

WATER MANAGEMENT

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (11:38): My question is directed to the Minister for Water. The ICAC investigation into complaints of corruption in the management of water in New South Wales and systemic noncompliance with the Water Management Act established that certain decisions and approaches taken by the department over the past decade were inconsistent with the object, principles and duties of the Water Management Act and failed to give effect to the legislated priorities for water sharing. The summary report of the Chief Scientist review into the mass fish deaths at Menindee found that explicit environmental protections in existing water management legislation are neither enforced nor reflected in current policy and operations, that many of the recommendations in previous reports have not been implemented, and that that is a cause of the fish deaths and river decline. What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that New South Wales water agencies act in accordance with the Water Management Act?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast) (11:39): I thank Ms Cate Faehrmann for her question. She absolutely raises some extremely valid concerns in relation to water management in New South Wales over the past few years, which has been a key focus of mine since being appointed the Minister for Water. In fact, a day into the term of the Minister for the Environment but before I was appointed Minister for Water, I was in Menindee to talk to the community about what had then been the second mass fish death in mere years.

Obviously, that was when we announced the report of the Chief Scientist, who has released his recommendations and findings, although we still await the full report that he will release in coming days. I can let the member know that right now on the ground in Menindee we have senior officials from the Department of Planning and Environment [DPE] water group, the environment and heritage group and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority [MDBA]—all of the relevant agencies—engaging with that community about a path forward for them. That work is clearly a priority for the new Government.

In specific answer to the member's question, "What am I doing to ensure that New South Wales water agencies act in compliance with their obligations under Water Management Act?", I am giving them an instruction to do that, and that leadership from the top, from the Minister, is the critical issue here. I want to make it clear that public servants in New South Wales are incredibly valued. They do an excellent job and, by and large, I do not want them attacked for following decisions of elected decision-makers.

The previous Ministers for water had an absolute disregard for their legal obligations, as revealed by the ICAC. Decision after decision after decision from the top indicated that that was not a priority of theirs, but it is not the public servants who are the problem. It is the elected representatives. I will always be clear that I am accountable for decisions that I make. This Government acts in accordance with the law. It has been a problem that previous governments did not take that same approach, disregarded their legal obligations and prioritised interests over critical human need and over environmental interests in blatant opposition to their obligations under the Water Management Act.

That is not my approach. I know what the law is. I know what my obligations are. I know the priority of need under the Water Management Act and I make decisions consistent with those. All of the public servants in New South Wales who are responsive to those decisions understand that. They understand their obligations and understand the actions that they need to take. If there are any concerns, I invite people to raise them with me, but

there is a clear difference right at the top in the understanding of our legal obligations. We have shown through commissioning the Chief Scientist's report and our response to it that we take it very seriously.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (11:42): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for her answer. Will she elucidate on what steps she has taken internally to be assured in relation to public servants she has just referenced—by saying that they are acting according to the Water Management Act—that that is the case, since multiple reports, such as the ICAC report, the Ken Matthews report and now the Chief Scientist's report, are all saying that the department and the officials do not seem to be enforcing the Water Management Act and its objectives?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast) (11:43): I thank Ms Cate Faehrmann for her question and, through you, Mr President, the action that I have taken is consistent, clear direction to them about what my expectations are. I have weekly meetings with departmental representatives. That is not saying very much—I am sure all Ministers do that—but that is the forum at which we discuss, openly and clearly, what the expectations of Government are, what my expectations for action are and report back on previous decisions that we have made. I want to make it really clear that accountability under the Westminster system sits with me. My engagement with stakeholders is comprehensive. It is deep. We have a really honest and open engagement with everyone who is interested in water management in New South Wales. If concerns are raised with me, they are followed up through weekly engagement with senior departmental representatives.

I suppose I would say that if the member has any specific concerns of course I encourage her to raise them with me. I acknowledge that her concern more broadly about the way that water management has occurred is valid. She is right to ask: Have I ensured that I have the confidence that the direction and the decisions that I have made are being followed in a root-and-branch way right across the department? The member is extremely right to raise that question, but all I can do is assure her that I do have that confidence and that there is an understanding that there is new direction, new accountability, new transparency, an understanding of legal obligations and an intention to act consistently with them. If there are any concerns, I welcome her or others raising them with me, but I have that confidence based on that deep engagement consistently right across the department.

NSW REGIONAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR (11:45): My question is directed to the Minister for Regional New South Wales. Given that the NSW Women of the Year Awards previously have had a category for Regional Woman of the Year, why has this award been scrapped by the Labor Government under her watch as the Minister for Regional New South Wales?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:46): I thank the Hon. Bronnie Taylor for the question. I do not have responsibility for the women's awards in New South Wales. I am happy to consider the issues raised, but certainly this Government is very focused on making sure that women across regional New South Wales are getting the recognition that they deserve and the support that they need. Whether that is through an awards event or whether that is through every other decision that we make as a government, the women of regional New South Wales are front and centre for decisions that I make as the Minister for Regional New South Wales, and women across regional New South Wales are a key focus for the entire Government.

Today we have been hearing information about childcare support, education and nursing—which are female-dominated industries—and we are making sure that we have proper supports in place for professional women working across regional New South Wales. Absolutely women across the regions are a significant focus of mine. Whether or not there is an award, I will check the details of that. Whether or not there is an award, they are a focus of mine as the Minister for Regional New South Wales. In agriculture, they are a focus of mine. I want to make sure that women working in agriculture get more recognition than they traditionally have had for the incredible work that they do. There are some fantastic women in western New South Wales who are doing amazing work that I would like to recognise and will do so in every decision that I make.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR (11:48): I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for her answer. The Minister said in her answer that she was not aware that it had been scrapped. Will the Minister advise the House if she was consulted about the award category in the NSW Women of the Year Awards for Regional Woman of the Year being scrapped?

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: I do not believe that it is a supplementary question. I think it is a new question.

The PRESIDENT: Wide latitude is given to supplementary questions. I rule that the question is in order. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:48): As I said at the beginning, I am not responsible for the awards. I am not familiar with the organisational structure or how the program is arranged, but I am happy to look at that. I have attended the awards. I cannot tell members off the top of my head the list of categories they are awarded for, but I am sure they are all important. We are probably looking at different ways to recognise women across New South Wales. As the Minister for Regional New South Wales, I have said and will continue to say that I am focused on making sure that women in regional New South Wales get the recognition they deserve—

The Hon. Bronnie Taylor: Point of order: It was a specific supplementary question. Was the Minister consulted, or was she not, on this award category having been scrapped by her Government?

The Hon. Cameron Murphy: To the point of order: I was listening intently to that answer as far as I could. But I just could not hear over the interjections from the other side. As far as I could hear, I thought the Minister was being relevant, but I simply could not hear large parts of that.

The PRESIDENT: Two issues have been raised. First, there is no point of order; the Minister was being directly relevant. Second, the entire Chamber was being a little vociferous.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I will continue where I left off. I have answered the question and will continue to answer the question. Women—

The Hon. Bronnie Taylor: Were you consulted, or were you not?

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Bronnie Taylor will be called to order if she asks that question in that way again.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Women across regional New South Wales deserve every bit of recognition they can get for the incredible work they do—through specific awards programs, through the women's awards that are given each year, through policy decisions the Government makes or through policy decisions I make as Minister for Regional New South Wales, in conjunction with my colleagues across all departments of the Government.

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

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I am absolutely focused on making sure that women in regional New South Wales get the recognition they deserve through policy, financial and structural decisions we make in recognising the work they do, particularly when it comes to female-dominated work. As I highlighted in my previous answer, I have a particular focus on making sure that women in agriculture get recognition for the incredible work they do, because that is not what has traditionally happened in that space.

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

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I will continue to do that as the Minister for Regional New South Wales.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (11:52): My question is addressed to the Minister for Energy. Will the Minister outline how the Government will accelerate the energy transition in New South Wales?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:52): I thank the honourable member for his question. We have had a lot of discussion about that. I know that those opposite do not like talking about it because they are so embarrassed about the mess they left that we have had to pick up. But the particular point I want to make to the House is that we are dealing with one of the greatest challenges we will face, which is tackling climate change. No-one can ignore the weather patterns we are seeing emerge around the planet and the warnings we are getting from every credible scientific body about the need for us to reduce emissions as quickly as possible.

New South Wales adopted the renewable energy road map because we need to make our contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and one clear path to doing that is through decarbonising our energy system. It is a tough thing to do. We live in a State where 70 per cent of our base load comes from coal. None of this is easy; it is a big challenge. The point I want to make is that in a bipartisan way, which is obviously fragile, as we know, we recognised the need to reduce emissions and supported decarbonising our electricity system. We are undertaking one of the most difficult tasks we will undertake. It is the industrial revolution in 10 to 15 years and is absolutely essential.

We supported the road map and action on climate change, which is something that those opposite took a long time to get to. We welcome them coming to the party finally in 2020. It was very good, but let us note that

it took a long time. We are decades behind because of the inaction of those across the Chamber. The point is that the check-up was about making sure that we have the right energy policies in place in New South Wales so that we can rescue the renewable energy future New South Wales needs and invest in it properly and as quickly as possible.

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

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is the only way in which we will be able to decarbonise and set New South Wales up for a renewable energy future with tens of billions of dollars of investment and thousands of jobs, a future of becoming a world leader in other issues, such as critical minerals, and having all the work in place. So we are accelerating that. The check-up is clear. We accept most of Cameron O'Reilly's recommendations, and we are making it a whole-of-government priority, which brings everyone to the table to make sure that this is delivered. We are working closely with consumers and regional communities, and we will muscle up to the energy security monitor and make sure that reliability is guaranteed for New South Wales.

GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (11:55): My question is directed to the Minister for Agriculture. Given that her Government has starkly conflicting policies that seek both to establish a new national park on the mid North Coast and also to continue to allow logging operations to occur across 95 per cent of the area proposed to be protected, how does the Minister reconcile the contrary and inconsistent positions of her Government?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:55): I thank the member for the question but reject its premise. We are working in a proper, methodical way to meet the commitment we made as a government to establish the Great Koala National Park on the mid North Coast of New South Wales. We made a significant commitment to protect koalas, and we are committed also to ensuring a sustainable forestry industry into the future. We are working through those issues in a proper, careful way to make sure that we are considering the views of all stakeholders and people involved. But we are committed to the creation of the park.

Yesterday the Minister for the Environment and I jointly made some announcements, clearly working together and demonstrating that we are working together on this, which is in complete contrast to the previous Government. We are not on both sides of the debate. We must work through this as a government to make sure that all of these issues are properly managed and considered, which is exactly what we are doing. We have ceased logging in what are considered to be koala hubs, the hotspots for koalas, while we work through these issues. That was announced yesterday and is something we have been working on carefully for some time.

In relation to the details of the question, I must say that we do not harvest 95 per cent. There was never any proposal to harvest 95 per cent of the proposed area of this park. That is just not something that would ever be considered. We will work through these issues carefully. Across the State, operations take place in just 1 per cent of the State forest estate. Around one million hectares are permanently protected for conservation, adding to the five million hectares of land set aside in national parks. We work through these things in a professional, careful, considered manner. We will be sticking to our election commitment to set up this park to save koalas, which were headed towards extinction under the previous Government, and to make sure that we have a sustainable forestry industry well into the future.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (11:58): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate that part of her answer that goes to the sustainability of the industry and inform the House of how much the Minister has spent and what the Minister is doing to make that industry sustainable in the true sense of a sustainable, farmed forestry plantation industry?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:59): I thank the member for the supplementary question. These are issues that we will be working around and across throughout the term of this Government. We are committed to a sustainable forestry industry in New South Wales. There is a number of aspects to that. We are committed to working with industry and with all stakeholders, but we are also committed to setting up the Great Koala National Park in the area we said we would. We are working through the process to establish it. We are doing both of those things at the same time. We are clear and open with the community about that process.

ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (11:59): My question is directed to the Minister for Finance. UFC President Dana White trivialised the alleged assault of a member of the public by UFC fighter Sean Strickland, describing Strickland as "a beauty" and saying, "We have people around him now, so he won't be punching people in the

stomach anymore—for fun or not for fun." Does the Minister stand by the Premier's decision to pay \$16 million to this organisation, or has this largesse escaped the laser focus of the comprehensive expenditure review?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (12:00): I thank the honourable member for her question. Of course I stand by the Premier's announcement about the UFC. Of course we are making careful and considered decisions as we prepare the budget. I have to confess that I am not particularly familiar with UFC. When the Premier was at the event on Sunday, I was representing the Government and the Minister for Multiculturalism at the Let's Go Greek Festival in Parramatta.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: Point of order: The Hon. Jacqui Munro has asked a specific question as to whether the Minister stands by the Premier's decision to pay \$16 million to the UFC. It has nothing to do with the Minister attending a Greek festival on the weekend. She needs to make sure that she answers the question that has been asked.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: To the point of order: I was listening carefully to the answer the Minister gave. Her first words were, "I stand by the decision," so she answered the question directly and is now providing some further context about Sunday's event.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: To the point of order: If the member was to be entirely relevant, the context is the UFC, not the Greek festival.

The PRESIDENT: For the benefit of the House, it is two minutes past 12. The Minister will confine her remarks to the substance of question—although we would love to hear about the Greek festival on some other occasion.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I take your advice and ruling in order. It is a significant amount of money to invest, but the Government invests in a range of different events in order to encourage tourism and other opportunities. The Minister for Jobs and Tourism would be able to provide, in great detail, the resultant expenditure from visitors and from other—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister has the call.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The New South Wales Government, like previous governments, continues to support major events coming to Sydney to support the visitor—

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

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The New South Wales Government will continue to invest in these events. Of course I stand by the decision of the Premier.

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

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION WORKFORCE

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (12:04): I am delighted to provide some more information to the House. The New South Wales Government is committed to families having access to affordable, safe and quality early childhood education and care to ensure that all children have the best start in life and learning. The previous Government promised a \$5 billion fund without any plan of how that money would be spent. Despite—

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: It goes to a board. It is in the legislation.

The PRESIDENT: Order! We are almost at the end of question time. Members will assist me by remaining silent. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Despite what members opposite may say, we have not cut the 10-year commitment. Unlike them, this Government has a clear plan for how we responsibly deliver new early childhood services, in a sustainable way, based on evidence and best practice. The New South Wales Government publicly committed to \$3.8 billion during the election campaign for early childhood learning initiatives. That includes 100 preschools on public school sites—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Sarah Mitchell will cease chatting to the Minister across the table. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: —and 50 preschools on non-government school sites in areas of high need during our first term. A further \$22 million has also been promised to turbocharge the early childhood

workforce with new scholarships, professional development and research into improving early childhood learning outcomes.

Supplementary Questions for Written Answers

ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (12:06): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to Minister Graham. Given his answer that the comments on pornography use and alleged bestiality, as well as racial slurs, by UFC fighters at a media conference held as part of the recent Destination NSW-sponsored UFC events "have no place", what steps is he taking to review the \$16 million sponsorship before any further UFC events are held in New South Wales?

Questions Without Notice: Take Note

TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I move:

That the House take note of answers to questions.

NSW POLICE FORCE CIVIL LITIGATION

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (12:07): I take note of an answer—and I use that term loosely—to question 989. It was directed to the police Minister. It has not taken long for the rot to start. It seems like only yesterday the Leader of the Government and Deputy Leader of the Government stood in this place telling us how things would be different; there would be a new cooperative approach of working together. The wheels have fallen off that wagon rather quickly. Minister Catley has tried to make a mockery of the question on notice procedure. I do not know if it is laziness, arrogance, incompetence, disrespect or a combination of all those things. I asked:

Can the Minister advise, what is the total monetary value of civil litigation payments made by the NSW Police Force for the 2022-2023 financial year?

The answer I received was that, as at 8 August 2023, the total amount paid for claims commenced in the 2022-23 financial year was \$9 million-odd. I did not ask the claims commenced in that year, I asked for the total payment for that financial year. I know the answer should be in excess of \$30 million. Remember, never ask a question unless you already know the answer. Members who were in this Parliament previously will know I ask the same question every year. David Elliott had no problem answering it, and even Paul Toole, one of the most incompetent police Ministers I have ever seen, was able to answer it. The Minister is treading on dangerous ground if she thinks she can mislead me or fool around when answering questions. Members will be aware of my inside knowledge of the Police Force and I remind them of the Deputy Commissioner Lanyon episode along with former Constable Keneally.

Further to that, I congratulate Premier Minns on his announcement on Monday that police should not be attending mental health incidents. Clearly he followed up on my speech and recommendation on this very matter that I delivered in this Chamber over a month ago on 3 August. Clearly my finger is firmly on the pulse of policing issues. For a Minister to try to obfuscate, hide the facts or mislead this House is truly appalling and will only lead me to consider other motions through the House. This House and its members are entitled to ask questions and receive legitimate answers. I must indicate that on receipt of that deceptive answer, I raised my concerns with the Leader of the Government. Understanding my frustration and a few choice words that I used, she tried to rectify the matter, and I thank her for that. I received a text message from Minister Catley on Monday 28 August, and there has been radio silence ever since.

The Minister is under siege at present. She has been accused of being missing in action, being involved in cover-ups, not being across her brief and a number of other complaints. I know that she has not engendered any sense of leadership within the ranks of the Police Force, as well, and that is not a good sign. This same Minister, though, has had no hesitation in seeking my assistance and counsel on matters. In fact, she tried it again this morning until I threw her out of my office. Regardless of the fact that she is new, is on her training wheels and still has her L-plates attached, the Minister needs to understand the importance of correctly and factually answering questions from members of the Legislative Council.

NSW REGIONAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR (12:10): I take note of answers given today to questions about the NSW Regional Woman of the Year. It is absolutely appalling to think that the mighty Labor Party, which always talks about women and does a good job of bringing more women into the Parliament, would scrap something like that. I feel for the Minister for Regional New South Wales, because it was quite obvious and really alarming that

she had no idea that it had happened. She should have been consulted, and I would hope that she will now advocate on behalf of regional women for the category to be reinstated.

Members opposite cannot just say, "Yes, we do have the AgriFutures Rural Women's Award." I also note no members of the Opposition were invited this year. When we were in government we made sure that members of the Opposition were there as well. I sent a message to the Minister about that and had no reply. Members in this place say all the time how important it is for women to tell their stories—to have the opportunity to do that so that other women can be inspired and can see the amazing things that they do.

Regional women are incredible. Government members say they support regional people and that they have great female regional members in this place, but they saw fit to cancel an award category that has been held for years and years. It is not words; it is actions. Members opposite cancelled the only category that was for regional women, but there is a little disclaimer saying, "We encourage regional women to apply for all of the categories." What is that? It is patronising behaviour. Members opposite will not silence the Grace Brennans and Anna Barwicks who won the award. They have voices, they won the awards and other women deserve the opportunity to do the same.

I do not know what has happened here, but I honestly cannot believe that the Labor Party would allow it to happen. I think it must be a terrible mistake. Maybe something happened and the Ministers were not told about it, because I do not believe that the Minister for Regional New South Wales could possibly support it. She cannot possibly support an entire category being wiped out, cancelled and absolutely sent to the piles—and why? Do regional women not matter? Regional women do matter; they matter each and every day. Although I am a very proud woman from agriculture, regional women do many things. They are great nurses, teachers, pharmacists and business owners, and that is exactly what the award is there to recognise. [*Time expired.*]

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE ILLUMINATION WATER MANAGEMENT

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (12:13): I take note of the answer that the Minister for the Arts gave to a question from the Opposition about the Opera House sails. I just do not understand the most unhealthy obsession that Opposition members have with displaying the coronation on the Opera House sails. It is absolutely absurd.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: Point of order: I ask that the member's comments be directed to answers given to questions in question time, not to reflections on members in this House. That is the purpose of this debate.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: To the point of order: I am reflecting on an answer given by Minister Graham to a question that was asked by the Hon. Damien Tudehope in question time.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): The Hon. Cameron Murphy will bear in mind the standing orders and continue his contribution.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Minister Graham outlined to the House a change in policy in the way that the Opera House sails will operate. Under the last Government, all sorts of activities and events appeared on the Opera House—even commercial events like horseracing and promoting the gambling industry, at enormous cost to the taxpayers and for no real public benefit. This Government's policy is to be careful about what it puts up there, and I do not understand the unhealthy obsession Opposition members have with the coronation not being up there. It has no place on the Opera House sails, although I think it would do wonders advancing support for a republic in Australia if we did put things like the coronation up on the Opera House sails. The more people see things like that, the more likely they are to support a republic.

I also take note of the answer given by Minister Jackson regarding water management. As Minister Jackson said, our Government will fix that issue. We need compliance, but under the previous Government people were just stealing water. We need to support our public servants. It is unacceptable and hurts people in their own communities when water is unmetered or when one farm pumps water in for its own benefit at the expense of the entire community. This Government will crack down on that through the good work of the public service. The Government will ensure that that situation is fixed and the water is there for the entire community. [*Time expired.*]

NSW HEALTH SALARY PACKAGING

Dr AMANDA COHN (12:16): I take note of the Minister's response to my question regarding salary packaging benefits for NSW Health employees. I am delighted that thousands of workers in our public health service are set to receive an additional 20 per cent of their salary packaging benefits. That small positive step will make a real difference to households struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. However, the Minister's answer did not make it clear why that has not been offered to all employees of NSW Health. Our nurses, midwives and junior

medical staff are working in unsafe conditions with extraordinarily low morale. The recently announced changes to salary packaging could have been a win for all employees of NSW Health to celebrate together. Instead, nurses and midwives in particular, who only narrowly voted to accept the Government's below-inflation pay offer, have been left out.

It is disappointing that the Government is making policy decisions that may cause division amongst workers in public health services, with no clear rationale and at a time when morale is so low. The Minister said that the Government cannot fix everything at once, but it could have easily fixed that. She stated that the Government has to prioritise and, of course, all budgetary decisions are decisions about priorities. I, for one, am disappointed that nurses, midwives and salaried medical staff—particularly junior doctors in our public hospitals—are not seen as a priority by this Government.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION WORKFORCE

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (12:18): I take note of the answer given today by the Minister for Finance to the question that I asked her about the early childhood education workforce. It was very clear that the Liberal-Nationals Government had in place record investments in early childhood education and a very clear and strong vision for the future of that sector, not just over the next election cycle but also over the next decade. Our \$15 billion early years commitment included \$5 billion for our affordable Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund, more than \$5 billion for our universal pre-kindergarten program and really important initiatives to help around things like developmental checks and the early childhood workforce. That was the question that I asked the Minister today.

We allocated \$282 million over the next four years to help the early childhood workforce—to provide scholarship opportunities for people to upskill, retrain and add to their credentials and to provide retention payments to keep early childhood educators in the workforce. It is a bit unclear from what the Minister said today, but the Labor Government's pseudo-pre-announcement mainly involves \$22 million over five years to recruit and retain essential early childhood workers. That is just over \$4 million per year for early childhood educators compared to the \$280 million that the former Government had on the table. The reality is that is not enough money to support a critical workforce that absolutely needs funding from the State Government.

We know that if children do not get access to quality early childhood education in the year before school, and the years leading up to school, they start school less ready to learn. Some 90 per cent of brain development happens before a child turns five. So much is already in place before a child even walks through the school gates on the first day of kindergarten. If we are not investing in the early childhood workforce—in those educators and teachers in our services supporting our children from literally as young as six weeks old—we will not be doing what we should be to support the next generation of children.

I am concerned also about some of the work that the Government is doing around the affordable childcare fund. We know that the Government has flagged cuts to that—it was in the media over the weekend. It is very clear that it is going to come with a razor and attack that fund, even though Government members stood in this place last year and supported the legislation to set it up. Today they are talking about \$100 million in early childhood support. That \$100 million was already legislated in this House—it has already been put in place. There is no clarity for families about what will happen going forward. There is no commitment to the full \$5 billion of funding. There is not even a commitment to the \$775 million that was legislated to be delivered for that fund in the next few years. The Opposition will continue to prosecute this. We cannot walk away from our responsibilities in the early childhood years. If the Minns Labor Government does so, it is letting down the next generation of children in this State, which is an absolute disgrace.

NSW HEALTH SALARY PACKAGING

CHILD PROTECTION

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (12:21): I take note of answers given today, starting with the answer given by the Minister for Finance in her capacity acting for the Minister for Health, and Minister for Regional Health in this place, particularly the reference to the recent salary packaging announcement. I acknowledge my colleague in the other place, Ryan Park, the Minister for Health, and the work he has done—not just on this issue but on the multitude of issues that he has inherited in that portfolio. I also acknowledge the work of the Health Services Union and the tireless advocacy of its secretary, Gerard Hayes. For 20 years the union has been advocating for these salary packaging arrangements. As announced, the Government has reached an arrangement to deliver the extra 20 per cent, which is a huge deal for those workers, cleaners, cooks, allied health workers and paramedics. Again I acknowledge their advocacy and work in this space.

It is also worthwhile to note the historic memorandum of understanding [MOU] that was recently struck with the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association. For over a decade the association had been campaigning for

safer staffing levels, and this is another step that has been taken by the Minister for Health. The MOU will set out an agreement for both the Government and the Nurses and Midwives' Association to work together in good faith to develop a process and time line to implement safe staffing levels, which will also be enshrined in the public sector award. That is long overdue and, again, was tirelessly campaigned for.

For the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association members in particular, and for all public sector workers, the abolition of the wages cap policy was a significant achievement by this Government. Getting rid of that wages cap and the 4.5 per cent pay increase that members are getting this year is just another step that has been taken by the Minns Government in turning around the 12 years of Liberal-Nationals Coalition neglect that saw the on-time commencement of treatment in emergency departments plummet to its lowest ever level last year.

I also briefly take note of answers around the out-of-home care situation and the identified budget shortfall that would see the out-of-home care system basically run out of funds by April next year. That would have left the New South Wales Government failing in its statutory obligations to the most vulnerable children in this State. The \$200 million rescue package announced today is a welcome measure. Again, I acknowledge the Minister for Families and Communities in the other place, Kate Washington, for her work. [*Time expired.*]

GAS SUPPLY

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (12:24): I take note of the answer given by the Minister for Energy about the importance of the Narrabri Gas Project in the north of New South Wales. The question was asked by the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham. Perhaps not surprisingly, the representative of the Legalise Cannabis Party has a few comprehension issues, because there is absolutely nothing in the O'Reilly report that downplays the importance of Narrabri. In fact, the report states that it is absolutely critical for keeping the lights on in New South Wales. On page 85 the report states:

As coal exits and wind and solar increases, the role of GPG as a peaking generator and as back-up during periods of low renewable output will become increasingly important.

...

The difficulties with meeting long-duration storage targets through pumped hydro projects mean that firming will increasingly rely on a mix of batteries and gas generation.

If we want to keep the lights on in New South Wales over the next four or five years, gas peaking plants and gas generation are critical. The report goes on to say that New South Wales currently has no gas production. It is shameful that the largest State in the Commonwealth, with resources in the ground, has no gas production. We rely on importation from gas fields in Queensland and the Northern Territory. Why would we not generate income, prosperity and jobs around the Narrabri project? We also need that gas to keep the lights on.

The report's conclusion highlights the critical nature of going ahead with Narrabri. It states that New South Wales has no gas production and that the issue with gas peaking to meet the variable demand for when the sun is not shining and the wind is not blowing is storage. On page 88 the O'Reilly report states:

... Unlike Victoria, New South Wales has limited gas storage infrastructure.

As this gas capacity problem could impact other NSW gas users, and the ability of gas generators to provide necessary support to the NSW electricity market, it will need to be addressed. The problem is likely to persist even if Narrabri proceeds to full production.

We need Narrabri at full production. The issue is how to store the gas to make the gas peaking plants effective and keep the lights on in our State. Finally, the report states:

To manage these risks, it is recommended that the Government commission AEMO to undertake a NSW gas infrastructure needs analysis to inform what actions may be required to avoid gas capacity shortfalls in the coming decade.

The issue is gas storage, not gas production. We need Narrabri; we need New South Wales to be more gas self-sufficient. But we need the storage capacity, like they have in Victoria, to make sure we keep the lights on through gas peaking plants. We do not want to take the gas from the Northern Territory and Queensland. We do not want to lack gas storage capacity. We want to be more like Victoria, and that, in fact, is what the report recommends. Narrabri is needed—Narrabri is essential—and the honourable member should have acknowledged that.

CHILD PROTECTION

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (12:27): I take note of answers given by the Leader of the Government today. I note that she has been a foster carer and understands the system. I also note that the question was a Dixer, and no doubt the Minister's office provided her with the answer that she had to give. But I make it quite clear that when we look at out-of-home care and the budget, it is a demand-driven sector. We know that the needs of a number of young people in out-of-home care are quite complex. Some young people require 24-hour support from a foster carer, while others might need specific housing or modifications. Therefore, the demand on

the budget does increase. When the Liberal Party and The Nationals were in government, not only did we meet that demand but we also ensured that each year we provided additional support to the out-of-home care sector.

When we came into government, Labor was investing \$1.7 billion in out-of-home care. When we left government, that had risen to \$3.1 billion. In last year's budget alone, we not only met the demand but also invested further in support, including early intervention like expanding KEYS, which is the Kids Early Years Network program. That initiative was implemented under the Coalition Government, working in partnership with Health, Education and the department to provide wraparound support for families with children at risk of entering the out-of-home care system.

We also provided additional funding for the Aboriginal Child and Family Centres and pregnancy group conferencing. Furthermore, we announced the \$100 million investment in Your Choice, Your Future, which was about supporting young people who were leaving the out-of-home care system. We know that young people in out-of-home care quite often need additional support to get on their feet. This funding not only provided support for those who may be able to stay at home with their foster carer but also allowed those who were unable to stay with a carer to live independently. Furthermore, it provided additional funding for caseworkers, particularly for the specialist care that I referred to earlier.

The other thing I mention relates to the Leader of the Government's comments about emergency carers. Again, I go back to the fact that this is an answer that she would have been given by the Minister's office. But the fact is, when I was Minister, we had emergency carers through the department. It is important to have that double-checked through the Minister's office. It will be interesting to see in the budget next week whether or not the Minns Government is investing in early intervention and supporting families, but also in permanency to ensure that every young person in out-of-home care in this State is able to exit out-of-home care and have a safe and stable home life and permanent home.

NSW HEALTH SALARY PACKAGING

COAL ROYALTIES

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (12:30): I address two things that were raised during question time. The first is the point made by Dr Amanda Cohn that not all health workers were benefiting from the salary sacrifice package that has been negotiated by the Minns Government. The answer is quite simple: The Labor Party is in the habit of speaking to its constituents and stakeholders. The various unions in those sectors made it clear as to what they were campaigning for. In the case of health workers, a salary sacrificing package was key. The Minns Government has now negotiated that at 70 per cent, with a pathway to 100 per cent. On top of that, I remind the House of a \$3,500 payment for the vast majority of those low-paid health workers. Nurses had a qualitatively different campaign. Nurses were after a pay rise, which they got. They got the 4.5 per cent standard public sector wage rise, courtesy of the Government abolishing the cap, and they got safe staffing levels, which they were campaigning for.

The idea that one portion of the workforce has been traded off against the other is simply not correct. Each portion of the workforce received what they lobbied for through their unions via a Labor government, which is exactly what the Government was elected to deliver. On top of that, I remind the House of the methodical way in which the Treasurer is going about delivering on a whole range of other promises that were key to this Government's election platform. There is \$2.7 billion in royalties mining, which has also been discussed in the House today, and a reduction of \$4.3 billion of net debt, courtesy of abolishing the Transport Asset Holding Entity that those opposite perpetrated. That puts money in the hands of the Government and allows it to allocate it towards those key promises.

Again, there is a 4.5 per cent pay rise for all public sector workers. In the space of five months, teachers in New South Wales are now the highest paid teachers in the country. That will have an effect on retention and will stop teachers leaving the profession, which, again, was a key election campaign platform the Government lobbied for night and day and has delivered on. Over 10,000 teachers have been converted from casual to permanent contracts. There are rebuilds and builds of hospitals going on in Fairfield, Canterbury, Bankstown, Lidcombe and Mount Druitt. On top of that, we are heading to net zero by 2050 by keeping the lights on. They are key promises that have been delivered in five months—*[Time expired.]*

HUNTER REGION ROADS

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (12:33): I take note of a couple of questions that I asked on notice to the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads relating to Wollombi Road in Cessnock. I am concerned and disappointed—but obviously not surprised—that the Government has decided not to proceed with funding the ring road at Cessnock or upgrading Maitland Road, despite the fact the Government collects billions of dollars in coal royalties that mostly come directly from the Hunter region. It is disappointing to see that the Government is

not investing back into communities like Cessnock. All that is being offered up in Cessnock is an offering of crumbs. The Government is going to upgrade Wollombi Road into a four-lane expressway, offering \$16.8 million to the council. It is in direct opposition to what the community wants, and there has been a lot of concern.

For months, our One Nation State candidate for Cessnock, Quintin King, has run a strong grassroots campaign with councillors who are in the minority, unfortunately, in Cessnock. Many in the community are concerned that the express laneway being built at Wollombi Road will result in the loss of parking, that there will be a direct impact on the business community and that it will remove amenities that many residents currently enjoy on that road. The budget next week provides a wonderful opportunity for the Government to announce that it will upgrade and build a ring road for Cessnock. Why not? It is a growing community. It is a community that has provided for and supported our economy at a large scale through coal royalties for many years and will continue to do so, given this Government has decided to increase coal royalties by another 30 per cent or 40 per cent. Why not give back to the very community that supports that?

I have been looking at Facebook messages and posts from some of the councillors. I was concerned to read about two particular council meetings at Cessnock. There was one on 16 August where they moved a tender into preliminary engineering for Wollombi Road. And there was a rescission motion moved, and subsequently debated, at an extraordinary meeting on 30 August. I note that 30 chairs were removed that evening. There were about 100 people who came to oppose the decision of the councils to proceed with the upgrade, and about 50 of them were locked out of the council chambers. I find that very concerning. If that report is correct—

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: They've had to hire different security there because people are so concerned for their safety.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I note that there is currently some concern in the Chamber from the wife of the mayor.

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: Point of order—

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I note that she has got a conflict, and she should not be making comments during my speech.

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: The honourable member is making a clear assertion about a relationship that I may have with someone else. If she has got comments to direct at me, I ask that she do so by way of substantive motion.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): I remind members that this is the take-note debate. The Hon. Tania Mihailuk's time has expired.

ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE ILLUMINATION

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (12:36): I take note of answers given today. I find it offensive that those opposite funded the Ultimate Fighting Championship to the tune of \$16 million but could not light up the Opera House for \$10,000. Light it up in purple. They cannot afford that, but they will pay \$16 million for the most disgusting, sexist, homophobic event to take place in Sydney. It is, quite frankly, outrageous.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): Order! Pursuant to standing orders debate is interrupted to allow the Minister to respond.

TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (12:37): Firstly, I respond to the questions relating to the women's awards that will be taking place this year. They were reasonable questions. It is essential that we recognise women across New South Wales, particularly women in regional New South Wales. The Government will be reinstating the category for regional women in the awards. It is important that regional women are given the due recognition that they deserve, as I outlined in my answer. That will continue as part of the women's awards that will be taking place at some point soon. Regional women deserve every bit of recognition that they can possibly get, and I am very focused on making sure that happens.

I provide a response relating to the opening remarks made by the Hon. Rod Roberts. I am advised that in the 2022-23 financial year, the total amount paid by the NSW Police Force as of 8 August 2023 in relation to civil litigation claims commenced in that period was \$9,054,086. Since the question was asked on 8 August, that figure has increased further to approximately \$10.5 million as more amounts have been settled. I encourage him to

continue his discussions with the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, who is doing an outstanding job working through these issues. I hope that goes some way towards answering the questions raised today.

I will also touch on some of the other issues covered in question time today, particularly some of the key issues we are raising in advance of the budget and are focused on addressing. One issue of particular importance is fixing the child protection system and managing the system for children in out-of-home care. Children living in these circumstances are our most vulnerable people, and they deserve every bit of support that this Government can provide. Funding was about to run out for these vulnerable people. The system needs to be fixed and it needs the full focus of all the resources that can be provided. We are making sure that that is happening. I also acknowledge that this is Foster Care Week, and we encourage more people to participate in that program.

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

Motion agreed to.

Deferred Answers

HUNTER REGION WIND FARM ZONE

In reply to **The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK** (23 August 2023).

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

The Commonwealth Minister for Climate Change and Energy declared an area offshore of the Hunter as suitable for offshore wind on 12 July 2023. This area includes a 20-kilometre buffer around Cabbage Tree Island to protect the habitat of the Gould's petrel.

The offshore area is subject to regulation by the Commonwealth Government, rather than the New South Wales Government. Feasibility licence applications for proposed offshore wind projects in the area are open until 14 November 2023. Any proposed project that is likely to have a significant impact on a protected matter of national environmental significance must be assessed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) and receive an approval before it can go ahead. Project proponents must demonstrate to the Commonwealth Government how they will ensure impacts to protected matters will not be unacceptable and show how their projects will contribute to nature positive outcomes.

The Commonwealth Government has developed guidance to assist industry to identify environmental risks associated with offshore wind projects and to outline what is required to address these risks. This information is available on the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water's website at: www.deceew.gov.au/environment/epbc/publications/key-factors-guidance.

PARKES SHIRE COUNCIL ROADS

In reply to **The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY** (23 August 2023).

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)—The Minister provided the following response:

I share the thoughts of the Minister for Roads in relation to this tragic accident.

I am advised:

Realignment and a new bridge at Graddle Creek, the McGrane Way, is a project funded under Round Six of Fixing Country Roads, which was announced on 24 February 2023. Funding deeds between successful councils and Infrastructure NSW have not yet been executed.

The funding allocation will be provided to councils on execution of the Infrastructure NSW administered Restart NSW Funding Deed.

Under the guidelines and funding deed agreement, construction must commence within 18 months from receipt of a successful project letter and delivered within 24 months of starting construction.

PARKES SHIRE COUNCIL ROADS

In reply to **The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY** (23 August 2023).

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)—The Minister provided the following response:

I am advised:

Fixing Country Roads is a \$543 million Restart NSW funded program for freight investments that will improve freight capacity, access and efficiency of the regional road network.

Regional councils apply to repair and upgrade local and regional roads to improve the movement of freight to key freight hubs and State roads. Applications for truck wash projects can also be made through Fixing Country Roads.

Projects funded through the program include strengthening, widening, or building roads, bridges or culverts, building heavy vehicle rest areas and truck wash facilities, and upgrades to improve the flood resilience of the network.

Under the former Liberals and Nationals Government, \$80.3 million was removed from the program in 2019 by then Deputy Premier John Barilaro and the then Regional Transport and Roads Minister Paul Toole.

After significant pressure from the then Labor Opposition, the money was finally restored to the program in late 2022.

Prior to the 2023 election the former Minister for Regional Transport and Roads now shadow Minister advised numerous stakeholders in public forums that he had reallocated the funding, but the funding deeds were never signed prior to the removal of the former Liberals and Nationals from Government.

The funding deed for this project is administered by Infrastructure NSW, so it is unclear how the former Minister could have claimed that the funds were confirmed as he was not the signing authority for the program.

Of course as a long term advocate for restoration of these funds, I continue to work with the Treasurer and his office to maximise funding for roads and transport projects across New South Wales. Parkes Shire Council proposed upgrade involves the construction of a new bridge at Graddle Creek to remove the low-level causeway, as well as road realignment either side of the bridge to eliminate the tight corner where the causeway is located.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 2.00 p.m.

Private Members' Statements

CAMPION COLLEGE

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (14:01): On Thursday 24 August I had the pleasure of participating in the opening of a new academic centre and four residential halls at Campion College in Toongabbie—a significant milestone in the history of the college. The keynote address at the opening was delivered by former Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. John Anderson, AC. In his remarks he observed, "We are losing our confidence in the very institutions of freedom and, worse than that, the ideas, beliefs and values that underpin them." I share his view that our institutions of freedom, including the Parliament, are underpinned by a set of ideas, beliefs and values that we have inherited from the past. There is a real danger that if we lose touch with those roots, we will be unable to sustain those institutions of freedom.

Campion College was opened in 2006 as Australia's first liberal arts tertiary college. Its mission is to provide a foundational education in the liberal arts that integrates the insights of faith and reason. Students will be exposed to the spiritual, moral, intellectual and cultural traditions of the faith whilst developing an understanding of the role of Christianity in the history of Western civilisation. Mr Anderson went on to observe:

Change requires leadership, often not by many people, just by people with a greater wisdom, with a greater learning, and with real courage. And that's why this college is so important in our cultural context. Our engine needs refuelling. This is the place where you can distil and build up stocks of that fuel to inject back into the motor so that our society can again thrive.

It has been encouraging to observe Campion College's growth over the past 17 years as one generation of students after another graduates. The college's 300-plus alumni have gone on to make contributions to the community in education, journalism, business, law, medicine, evangelisation, academia and politics. I congratulate Campion College on its success, and I single out President Paul Morrissey for the excellent work he contributes to the success of the college. I congratulate them on their success to date and wish the boards, staff and students all the best for the future.

GENDER DYSPHORIA

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (14:03): The treatment of gender dysphoria in children and adolescents is a highly controversial topic within the medical community. Gender dysphoria is a condition where an individual experiences significant distress due to a mismatch between their gender identity and their biological sex. There are two primary approaches to treating gender dysphoria in children and adolescents. One approach is the affirmation model, which involves supporting the child's gender identity and offering rapid gender transition with the use of puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones. The other approach is a more cautious model that emphasises psychological counselling and exploration of gender identity before making any decisions about medical intervention.

Proponents of the affirmation model argue that allowing children and adolescents to transition early can improve their mental health and reduce the risk of suicide. They argue that gender dysphoria is a serious condition that requires prompt treatment to alleviate distress and prevent long-term harm. Proponents of the more cautious approach argue that affirmation and rapid transitioning may miss addressing underlying conditions, can lead to irreversible physical changes and may not be appropriate for all children and adolescents. Some studies suggest that the use of puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones can have long-term effects on bone density, fertility, sexual function and cognitive and emotional development, and have limited, if any, benefits on long-term

psychosocial function and suicidality. Additionally, these practitioners argue that children and adolescents may not have the maturity or cognitive ability to fully understand the long-term consequences of their decisions.

The advocates of a more cautious approach argue that psychological counselling and exploration of gender identity can help children and adolescents better understand their feelings and make more informed decisions about medical intervention. They argue that this approach allows for a more individualised and nuanced approach to treatment that takes into account the unique needs and circumstances of each patient. The National Association of Practising Psychiatrists [NAPP] guide for Managing Gender Dysphoria in Young People offers a respectful, compassionate, cautious, evidence-based and practical approach to caring for children and adolescents with gender dysphoria.

While the best approach to treating gender dysphoria in children and adolescents remains a subject of debate and controversy within the medical community, the NAPP guide provides a clear pathway for a thorough evaluation of each patient's individual circumstances, taking into account their age, maturity and other medical and psychological factors, as well as family circumstances, in order to deliver treatment that is both safe and effective. I congratulate the president of the NAPP, Dr Philip Morris, on his work in the development of the guide and encourage honourable members who are interested in this important matter to examine it in detail.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE AND RECREATIONAL HUNTING

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK (14:07): On behalf of hunters in New South Wales, I express our deep concerns about the recent State parliamentary report into recreational native bird hunting in Victoria. The Victorian parliamentary report also serves as a stark reminder of the divisive and potentially damaging consequences that could arise if the proposal for a Voice to Parliament is successful in the upcoming October referendum. Despite robust evidence presented by ecologist Professor Richard Kingsford indicating hunting's negligible impact on waterfowl populations, the Victorian Government appears determined to proceed.

The report, spanning almost 300 pages, has recommended an end to recreational bird hunting on all public and private land in Victoria from 2024, without any substantial justification beyond the preferences of certain individuals who do not support bird hunting. However, the most concerning aspect of the recommendations is the clear division of rights and laws that would be established, favouring one group over another. The report suggests that hunting rights should be retained for an undefined group of people recognised by the Victorian Government as "traditional owners". While the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party recognises the importance of preserving Indigenous culture and heritage, we also need to question why one group should receive special protection of their hunting and cultural heritage while others do not. This highlights a growing concern among many Australians that laws are increasingly being used by woke activists to segregate people into different categories, which goes against that most basic of principles: equality before the law.

The proposed Voice to Parliament, which aims to establish a parallel system of political representation based on race—in effect, an Australian version of the English House of Lords—would only exacerbate these issues. It grants the Voice the power to intervene at all stages of the lawmaking process—not just in the drafting and review of laws but also in their enforcement. This broad scope means that any issue, regardless of its relevance to Indigenous Australians, could be subverted by woke activists and subjected to recommendations from the Voice to Parliament. Furthermore, disputes between the Voice to Parliament and the elected Government would not be resolved democratically but rather by the High Court. This potentially undemocratic process raises concerns about the fairness and accountability of the proposed system.

The Select Committee on Victoria's Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangement serves as a clear example of how issues of general concern can be exploited by activists with a divisive agenda. The proposed move in Victoria to restrict waterfowl and game bird hunting to Indigenous people is a politically motivated decision that disregards the scientific consensus and is nothing short of a woke racist apartheid, as it discriminates against white cultural hunting only. The NSW Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party steadfastly supports responsible and sustainable hunting practices that have been proven not to harm waterfowl populations. We must rail against woke politics and uphold the principles of fairness, equality and evidence-based decision-making in our society. Whether it is the proposed Voice to Parliament or restrictions on hunting, we must always strive to create a just and equitable Australia for all.

NSW REGIONAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Hon. WES FANG (14:10): I will briefly address a matter that was raised in question time today, the NSW Woman of the Year Award. I think every member of this Chamber is supportive of what we seek to do by having the women of the year awards, and that is to promote and support women in the roles they have. The categories that the awards recognise—for example, the Premier's NSW Woman of Excellence, the NSW Community Hero, the NSW Young Woman of the Year, the NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year and the

Ones to Watch Showcase—are all important because they allow women to tell their story and allow people to see women achieving. As the Hon. Bronnie Taylor often says, "You cannot be what you cannot see."

Imagine the surprise when we discovered that the rural Regional Woman of the Year Award has been cancelled. We must ask ourselves: What are the priorities of a government that decides that the categories I have listed are to be retained, but the one category that recognises the rural and regional women of New South Wales is cancelled? This is an example of how the focus of this Labor Government is so misaligned with what the community expects because we have all the categories that are applicable to metropolitan women—and rightly so—but the one category that the Government has decided to cut recognises women in rural and regional New South Wales.

We already raised in question time how those opposite sought to exclude Opposition members from the AgriFutures Rural Women's Award despite the fact that, when we were in government and they were in opposition, we ensured that members opposite were invited. For this Government to now cancel the one category that recognised the stories of rural and regional women while keeping the others shows the priority of this Labor Government, and it is not rural and regional New South Wales. It is vitally important that the priority, which is not rural and regional New South Wales, is acknowledged by this House.

ROUSE HILL HOSPITAL

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (14:13): In the lead-up to the last election, I asked the then New South Wales Minister for Health about the long-promised Rouse Hill hospital. He gave the same answer that the Liberal-Nationals Government had given for five years: Yes, it would be built, but it was still being planned and a start date was not available. To be fair, the site of the proposed hospital did have some construction on it: an old wire fence in an empty paddock with tattered and ancient plastic sheeting saying it was the planned site of the hospital. It had been like that for years.

By population, the size of north-western Sydney is greater than that of Canberra. That is why it astounded me and other residents that, despite those opposite being in power for 12 years, it took seven years before any announcement of the Rouse Hill hospital had even been made and then no construction whatsoever for the final five years. At the 2023 election, NSW Labor campaigned hard for the Rouse Hill hospital. All of our local candidates—Tina Cartwright in Castle Hill; Alex Karki in Kellyville; Sameer Pandey in Winston Hills; Warren Kirby, the newly elected member for Riverstone; and Stephen Bali, the returned member for Blacktown—all fought hard to ensure that Rouse Hill hospital construction occurred in the first term of a New South Wales Labor Government.

Earlier this week the Labor Premier and Labor Minister for Health not only announced funding for the hospital but also announced additional funding for more services. The 2023-24 New South Wales budget includes an additional \$400 million to build the now \$700 million Rouse Hill hospital. This will be the first brand new adult public hospital to be built in Western Sydney in more than 40 years. The new Rouse Hill hospital will include an emergency department, maternity services, ambulatory and outpatient care, and medical imaging services. Unlike those opposite, construction of this new hospital to serve the growing population of north-western Sydney will actually happen in this term of Government.

Unfortunately, the current Liberal member for Kellyville has been using his parliamentary entitlements to spread rumours and untruths to suggest that the Rouse Hill hospital has been abandoned. Possibly, he was reading briefings provided by the former Government, but regardless, at the very least, he should apologise for misleading his electorate and tell them the truth—that their hospital is now about to become a reality, thanks to the New South Wales Labor Government.

RETIRED RACING GREYHOUNDS

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (14:16): Let me introduce members to Sabine, who is one of 1,352 greyhounds who retired from racing last year—a lucky one. Sabine spent four years and up to 23 hours a day living in a small crate—any time that she was not racing or training on tracks—before finding a forever home. The first week of her retirement she spent devouring any piece of food that she could get her paws on—anything from bananas to cardboard to muesli bars. She was only 24 kilograms and every single one of her ribs poked through her skin. Each time she was fed, she would consume her entire meal within seconds and cry after eating. A vet then explained that her entire life had been spent in starvation up until that point. She simply did not know if she would be fed again each day.

It took her months to realise that she had access to food whenever she needed and that no meal would be her last. She hates the dark, loud noises, going for walks and most of the outside world. She has scars on her legs, a permanently bent tail from a likely break, and is missing all of the hair on her stomach and hind legs. This is called kennel patch—when greyhounds permanently lose patches of hair from years of constant friction from

lying on a cement floor. In case it is not clear, greyhounds are not like normal pets. They are not purchased as puppies for young families. They do not grow from 10 weeks old in the care of loving homes. Their value is not based on their adoptability. Greyhounds are a product of the racing industry and all too often they are disposed of as such. They exist for profit and when they are no longer profitable, they go missing.

There are six times the number of greyhounds being retired as there are those that are adopted into homes every year. Where are those dogs going? Let me step you through the retirement of thousands of greyhounds across New South Wales. Say a greyhound has turned five. They have developed arthritis in one leg. They are unable to run. They have stopped winning money. The trainer decides to retire them, but retirement costs time and money. The trainer does not want to wait to transfer them through the Greyhound Adoption Program [GAP] and all the foster agencies are full.

The greyhound is instead given to a friend of the trainer and registered as a pet under the Companion Animals Act. The friend has homed 12 greyhounds from the trainer in the past, but there are none to be found at their property. After arriving, starving and scared, the greyhound is taken outside by the friend into the bush where it is shot and buried in a shallow grave with 12 other missing dogs. No-one aside from the trainer and their friend—not the RSPCA or the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission—knows about their death and no-one is looking for them.

To the industry, retired greyhounds are simply an inconvenience, and their deaths are collateral. We can and we must do so much more to stop these wonderful animals from going missing. That is why The Greens will be continuing to urge the Government to pass our bill to implement genuine whole-of-life tracking. Retired dogs will continue to die, nameless and unknown, until this gap is closed.

TRIBUTE TO SHIRLEY MCHUGH

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (14:19): Today I pay tribute to Shirley McHugh, who passed away last month. I knew Shirley as a stalwart of the Liberal Party, particularly in Lake Macquarie, but the truth is that her membership of the Liberal Party was just a small footnote to what was a full and extraordinary life. Shirley grew up in Newcastle and was 13 years old when Newcastle was attacked by Japanese submarines in 1942. As members may be aware, 34 shells were fired upon Newcastle, targeting the BHP steelworks. The vast majority missed their target, and all remained unexploded but one, which hit a house just 100 metres from Shirley's childhood home. As a student, she was an accomplished violinist and dedicated athlete, and topped the State in English at the conclusion of her schooling.

Shirley and her husband had six children together. In 1960 they settled in Coffs Harbour. As the children got older, Shirley naturally sought other challenges. In 1968 she ran for council. As those who knew her would expect, she worked hard on the campaign, with one of her banners reading, "Have a whirl with Shirl." She romped in. In 1970 she became president of Coffs Harbour Shire Council, one of only two women to have held that position at the time. Shirley played a significant role in getting the Queen to visit Coffs Harbour in 1970. The sight of the royal yacht *Britannia* steaming through the breakwater was a delight to all the locals. I am told that Shirley's phone was ringing non-stop in the lead-up to the visit.

With the national press, the *Women's Weekly* and the like all looking for the hot tip on the visit, Shirley took great delight in stretching the truth. She had half of them convinced that, just on the quiet, Prince Phillip would go for a ride in a surf boat. That, of course, never happened. As shire president, Shirley initiated informal meetings with the outdoor workers. One remarked at the time that previously the suits had nothing to do with them and they did not know what to make of that meeting with Shirley beforehand.

In 1976 Shirley enrolled at TAFE to obtain qualification as a teacher and three years later found her way back to Newcastle. While teaching, she obtained an Arts degree and a double master's degree in English Literature. She co-wrote six business communication books, which became required TAFE textbooks. She joined the Charlestown branch of the Liberal Party in the late nineties and was an integral part of local campaigns for local, State and Federal elections. Her institutional knowledge will be greatly missed by many in the party, including me. I was joined at the end of last month for Shirley's funeral in Newcastle by the Hon. Scott Farlow, the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, Councillor Nick Jones, former councillor Kevin Baker and former candidates Nell McGill and Michael Feneley, alongside numerous party members, who all share many fond memories, as I do, of Shirley. On behalf of Liberal Party members in Lake Macquarie, the Hunter and New South Wales, I thank Shirley for her dedication to the community and our party.

VRA RESCUE NSW

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (14:22): I speak today about VRA Rescue NSW, that wonderful organisation that rescues people in dire circumstances across the State—an organisation that was established 87 years ago, in 1936. In Dubbo this year, I represented the Hon. Jihad Dib, the Minister for Emergency Services,

when attending the official launch and commissioning of new rescue vehicles. It was truly exciting to be handing over the nine new fleet assets, worth more than \$2.75 million, to the VRA. The fleet will be used across New South Wales in areas served by the Leeton, Lithgow, Merriwa, Narooma and Quirindi squads. The vehicles are equipped with state-of-the-art technology and will help our highly skilled volunteers carry out rescues and support operations. In Dubbo that same weekend the VRA took part in a multi-agency rail-training activity, which was a wonderful chance to build on volunteers' skills and capabilities in emergency response situations that arise at rail-crossing incidents involving trains and other vehicles.

The VRA is truly a community-based volunteer organisation. From directing car parking at shows and race meetings to marshalling crowds at Anzac Day ceremonies, to working closely with other emergency services on the ground in a whole range of crises, the local VRA volunteers are there. The VRA's leaders play a crucial role. The new commissioner, Brenton Charlton, is making inroads to improve and professionalise training standards and other aspects of governance in each squad. People who I know well and who are involved in the VRA report those improvements to me. The Government continues to fund crucial equipment for the VRA and similar organisations. It recently funded the replacement and upgrade of lifesaving equipment. We should never forget this funding for the VRA and other organisations who are the backbone of our full-time emergency services, particularly in regional, rural and remote parts of the State.

I mention those who play a crucial role in supporting the VRA by allowing and assisting its members to play their crucial roles. For example, in Dubbo we have a 26-year-old mother, a volunteer captain in the VRA, who works at a local business. Her employer is pivotal to the success of the VRA, as he lets her leave work to respond to emergencies during office hours. Without support like that, the VRA's functioning and responsiveness to emergency situations would be extremely limited. The same situation is replicated in areas where the VRA operates. The challenge for organisations like the VRA is not only availability but also recruiting and retaining youth as new members. Traditionally, these organisations have relied on older, retired or semiretired members of the community. Obviously, more senior members of squads can continue to serve. They do not have to necessarily be on rescue teams but can support the activities. I call on communities with Marine Rescue squads, surf lifesaving clubs, RFS brigades, VRA squads and similar organisations to consider helping them, as their success depends on their communities.

GAS SUPPLY

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (14:25): I speak about an issue I will return to again and again, like a broken record. That is the issue of gas supply in this State. I note that in the take-note debate today the Hon. Mark Latham was somewhat concerned by news in the O'Reilly report that new gas supply is not needed in this State. In fact, the issue identified in the O'Reilly report, on page 86, where it talks about gas quantity and gas capacity, is that we do not need new gas in this State. Australia is awash with gas. We are one of the world's largest exporters of liquified natural gas, and eastern Australia is a big part of that through the gas fields in Queensland.

The O'Reilly report says that is clearly the case—that we are awash with gas. It says that despite forecasts again and again, from Exxon, Woodside and Chevron—those great multinational corporate citizens that effectively form a gas cartel; let us be honest about it—that we are about to run out of gas and the prices are going to go up, and Australia's own version of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries will close the spigot, sending up the price and filling up their back pockets, we have not run out of gas, and we are not going to.

In this place 10 years ago I joined with the Australian Workers' Union in calling for a domestic gas reservation policy, and we have one to protect manufacturers and workers' jobs and to keep the lights on. The Turnbull Government brought in the Australian Domestic Gas Security Mechanism [ADGSM], which was welcome. That mechanism is in place. We should assure that the gas we need from Queensland and Victoria is reserved for use here.

The issue outlined in the O'Reilly report is that we need storage. As the Minister said in her reply to a question today, we should commission the Australian Energy Market Operator to investigate that storage. We should tell Santos, "Thanks, but no thanks. We do not need you to desecrate the Liverpool Plains for gas that is unnecessary." We have the gas supply we need in this country. We need to invest in storage. As O'Reilly says in the report, even at full production, Narrabri will not deal with our gas supply issues. We have the ADGSM in place. Now we need a policy to protect our farmlands, build some storage and keep the lights on as we transition to renewables.

KATOOMBA PARAGON CAFE

The Hon. Dr SARAH Kaine (14:28): Growing up in the Blue Mountains, visiting the Paragon Cafe was a special treat. We did not get to do it often but, when we did, it felt really special. To dine in the opulent Art Deco cafe was a real luxury. I did not know what Art Deco was back then—

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: But you liked it.

The Hon. Dr SARAH Kaine: But even to a kid, yes, I could sense that it had some Old World glamour about it, with the panelled walls and the light fittings. Let us face it: Katoomba of the seventies and eighties could use all the glamour it could get. The smell of the coffee and cakes would waft down Katoomba Street and, as we walked past, we would be drawn to the amazing displays of cakes, chocolates and pastries in the windows. That was before the days when boutique chocolate shops were de rigueur, and the most exotic cake in the local Blue Mountains cake shops were jam sponges.

My memories of the cafe are not unique. Many others, locals and visitors alike, have their own happy memories of their time at the Paragon Cafe. It is an icon at the top of Katoomba Street, along with the Carrington Hotel. It is impossible to quantify the value of the memories that are held for that place. It is heartbreaking that the cafe that was the place of so many happy memories for me, for other locals in the mountains, for visitors and for tourists, has fallen into disrepair. Since its closure about five years ago, the cafe has fallen into disrepair and fallen victim to vandals and sadly water damage as well.

I welcome the news that the Minister for Heritage and leader in this place, the Hon. Penny Sharpe, will ask the Heritage Council of NSW to consider whether it should use its powers to ensure the owner maintains the building. It is refreshing to have a heritage Minister who is committed to heritage conservation after 12 years of neglect of our heritage icons by the former Government. Under this Government, we will ensure these heritage icons are preserved to recognise that they hold important memories for many people, including many locals and visitors who enjoyed going there. We need to ensure that future generations can make memories of their own in iconic places like the Paragon Cafe.

Motions

PUBLIC SCHOOL VENTILATION SYSTEMS

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Dr AMANDA COHN (14:31): The advice may suit the needs of the department on paper but it is not practicable day to day for teachers to apply and it is not keeping kids safe. It is fitting that, as we debate this motion, swathes of Sydney are blanketed in wood smoke from hazard reduction burning, which is largely PM2.5 air pollution. What we are providing families by saying natural ventilation is adequate, or that a certain window is to be left open for ventilation to be adequate, is a choice between kids breathing in toxic smoke all day or sitting in an inadequately ventilated space and being exposed to airborne pathogens. I heard today from a nurse working in a public hospital that it has been visibly smoky indoors. She said that she came home smelling like she had been at a bonfire all night and that she experienced a flare-up of her asthma symptoms on her shift. If this is how poor air quality is impacting staff, imagine its impact on patients in that hospital. Kids deserve better. People with chronic illness and disability deserve better. We all deserve to be able to breathe clean air and participate fully in public education and community life.

I understand that the Government will move an amendment to this motion for public schools to receive permanent remediation for ventilation where needed, which I will accept on the grounds that it is clearly needed in every public school. I also understand that the Government will move an amendment to only consider, rather than commit to, adequate ventilation and high efficiency particulate air filtration in all public buildings. That is a welcome step in the right direction, and I look forward to that consideration leading towards better air quality across New South Wales. My understanding is that the amendment is due to budgetary constraints. Budgets are an expression of the priorities of government. If the Government does not think that public safety, clean air and inclusion are priorities worth funding, then it will be held accountable by the communities who need the change.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (14:33): I lead for the Government on this important motion. I move:

That the question be amended as follows:

(1) Insert before paragraph (1) (a):

- (a) Healthy learning environments are key to supporting students and teachers in our schools;
- (b) New South Wales public schools use a mix of natural ventilation and fresh air ventilation systems and, to support common areas, air purifiers are made available for use at principals' discretion,"

- (2) In paragraph (1) (b):
 - (a) insert "under pre-existing protocols," before "in May and June of this year";
 - (b) omit "students were learning from home" and insert instead "some students have learnt from home for short periods of time".
- (3) In paragraph (1) (c), omit "particularly" before "vulnerable".
- (4) Omit paragraph (1) (e), and insert instead:
 - (e) The Commonwealth Scientific Industrial Research Organisation estimates that the cost of poor indoor air quality in Australia may be as high as \$12 billion per year.
- (5) Insert after paragraph (1) (f):
 - (g) the findings of the Department of Education's review of windows, fans and ventilation systems have been released publicly via the School Infrastructure NSW website.
- (6) In paragraph (2) (a), omit "report on the progress of" and insert instead "continue reporting on".
- (7) Omit paragraph (2) (b) and insert instead:
 - (b) support the continued availability of air purifiers for use at principals' discretion;
 - (c) support the installation of permanent fresh air ventilation systems where needed in teaching spaces;
- (8) In paragraph (2) (c):
 - (a) omit "extend" and insert instead "consider extending";
 - (b) omit "to all public buildings, including but not limited to health facilities, community centres, public libraries, public transit stations, prisons, remand centres and sporting facilities" and insert instead "in public buildings".

In the limited time I have left, I make the point that I understand the motivation for Dr Amanda Cohn in bringing today's motion. I worked with her. In addition, my office and that of the Minister for Education have worked with her. We have tried to find an amendment that we can pass through the House today. I certainly pursued the issue as a member of the Public Accountability Committee during the hearings of the inquiry into the COVID response, and I remember asking lots of questions about the—

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: I remember too.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I acknowledge the interjection. I remember asking lots of questions around the audit process, and I remember that, as other States were chartering planes to fly in air purifiers, we were doing the audit. It is true we are no longer in the midst of a global pandemic but there is no doubt, as the motion notes, that respiratory illness is something that we will continue to have to deal with. I think that our amendment has found a balance between that. I acknowledge the comment from the honourable member that budgets are about priorities. As I said to the member yesterday, there is no doubt that we want our schools to be healthy and we want our kids to be able to learn, but our first priority is ensuring there is a teacher in every classroom. We have to go back to getting first things right first, but there is no doubt that it is an important issue and worthy of debate in this Chamber.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (14:36): I speak on behalf of the Opposition. It is a serious issue, but it is also interesting to be on this side of the Chamber to welcome the amendment moved by the Government, which is in line with everything that I said as the Minister at the time about why we need to make sure that the right processes are in place. It alludes to the Department of Education review we did, which was available on the School Infrastructure NSW website. The motion talks about the use of air purifiers at principals' discretion, which again was something that we put in place. It is very much a Kumbaya moment today as we come full circle with those on the other side of the Chamber, who recognise that what we had in place for fresh air ventilation in schools during COVID was the right thing to be doing.

I acknowledge Dr Amanda Cohn for moving the motion. I know she feels strongly about the issue. It opens up the question or consideration of what we learnt during the pandemic that we should look at keeping, whether it is in our schools or other parts of our society, for the greater health good. I note in particular the part of the motion which addresses permanent comprehensive ventilation systems and high efficiency particulate air filters in other public buildings, because we should not let a once-in-a-generation pandemic go without taking some opportunities from it. Fresh air ventilation is incredibly important in schools and other public buildings, not just to assist someone with COVID but in general for people's health, particularly over the winter months when people can have respiratory issues. It is something that government should continue to look at.

I also comment on the part of the motion that refers to some students learning from home earlier this year. COVID was a really tough time and I thank our school communities once again, as I did many times as Minister. When there were outbreaks in school communities and there was concern for the children's welfare, particularly

for those who are more vulnerable because of their health needs, it was a big decision to learn from home, even for a short period of time.

To give credit to members of the new Government, I am sure they had to make tough operational decisions to do that. But I think our school communities have done as well as, if not better than, anywhere in the world in managing particularly the two years when COVID was very prevalent, making sure that we did not take any chances when it came to the health of kids and teachers. Finally, Opposition members really back in the investments that we made in government, including \$100 million for an air quality assurance program that was all about maximising fresh air in classrooms and making sure that our schools continue to operate safely. We will watch closely to make sure that the new Government also makes those sorts of investments in schools.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (14:39): I support the motion and the amendment. As the unamended motion states, with winter comes an increased likelihood of contracting respiratory infections. Every student, parent and teacher deals with that, and our response to it must be led by expert advice. I note that NSW Health, the Doherty Institute and the World Health Organization have identified that maximising natural ventilation—for example, opening doors and windows—is the most effective way to disperse particles in the air. In 2021 the department completed and released the findings of a statewide review of all windows, fans and ventilation systems, including in departmental preschools, to ensure that they can operate as intended. Those findings have enabled it to provide audit reports for schools and identify opportunities to enhance ventilation.

We should always ensure schools remain healthy places to learn. We will continue reporting on ventilation systems, supporting the availability of air purifiers for use at principals' discretion and supporting the installation of permanent fresh air ventilation systems on a case-by-case basis where needed. At the moment New South Wales public schools use a mix of natural ventilation and automatic fresh air ventilation systems. I understand the vast majority of spaces in schools can be adequately ventilated through natural and mechanically assisted ventilation and that a further 4,200 spaces have received permanent automatic fresh air ventilation systems to complement natural airflow. While they do not replace the need to maximise natural air ventilation, 17,000 air purifiers have also been deployed in consultation with principals.

I understand that an audit was undertaken by the Department of Education of all windows, fans and ventilation systems in more than 150,000 spaces across more than 2,000 New South Wales public schools, including preschools, to ensure they operate as intended. The department checked 650,000 windows, 200,000 ceiling and wall fans and 19,000 extractor fans, and schools have received customised advice for COVID-safe teaching and learning. The review confirmed that the majority of spaces in schools can be adequately ventilated through natural and mechanically assisted ventilation, and detailed school-specific ventilation audit reports are publicly available on the department's website. I am also advised that an additional 17,000 air purifiers have been deployed for use by schools. They were intended as an additional measure to assist schools with common areas, as the department already took steps to ensure that they had sufficient natural ventilation.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (14:43): I associate myself with the amendment moved by my colleague the Hon. Courtney Houssos in her capacity representing the education Minister in this place. The importance of adequate ventilation has been underscored previously, and it is also important to note that the best way to ensure adequate ventilation is to open windows and doors. Air purifiers are not a replacement for the natural airflow that occurs, and perhaps we could do with some in this place today—a breath of fresh air, as they say. I acknowledge the contribution by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell and the work that went on during the COVID pandemic in all of our education systems. I also acknowledge my colleague Dr Amanda Cohn for her work in this place and her continued advocacy for the wellbeing of us all.

The department's strategy was touched on briefly by my colleague the Hon. Stephen Lawrence. I am also advised that that strategy was informed by independent advice from NSW Health, the Doherty Institute—a very reputable and well-known institute—and the World Health Organization [WHO]. There is no more leading body than that. I am also advised that even on a still day, our school buildings allow sufficient ventilation for them to be safely operated and meet the recommended ventilation guidance from the WHO.

That being said, as Dr Amanda Cohn acknowledged in her substantive motion, respiratory illnesses are on the increase at this time of year—although we are now coming out of winter. Having just had two young children go through influenza B—which is not recommended as they were quite unwell despite being immunised—really underscores the importance of ensuring that we have adequate ventilation. They are in child care, and things go around a lot easier in the childcare sector given the questionable hygiene at times. But it really underscores the importance of ensuring that ventilation in our schools is adequate. I commend the work of the department and the review that was undertaken.

Dr AMANDA COHN (14:46): In reply: I thank honourable members for their contributions. Much has been said today about the work that the department has already undertaken. Key to this motion is an understanding

that more work needs to be done and that many of the temporary solutions that were deployed in the urgency of the pandemic response are not adequate in the long term, and today I have spoken of some examples that parents have reported to me. I appreciate the collaborative approach that members have taken to acknowledging the significance of the issue and the importance of clean air in our schools. Noting our ongoing disagreement about the urgency of the issue, I look forward to future work that will be undertaken in this space.

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

Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.

Business of the House

POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: I postpone private members' business item No. 397 until the next sitting day.

Documents

MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT OFFICE STAFFING

Production of Documents: Order

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (14:48): I seek leave to amend private members' business item No. 388 for today of which I have given notice as follows:

- (a) omit "14 days" and insert instead "18 days"; and
- (b) in paragraph (d) insert at the end "or communication received by the Office of the Minister for Transport from department liaison officers inside the office of the Minister for Transport, not including ministerial correspondence concerning private individual constituents or representations on behalf of private individual constituents by members of Parliament;

Leave granted.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Accordingly, I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 18 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents created since 28 March 2023 in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Transport, Transport for NSW, the Cabinet Office, or the Premier's Department relating to department liaison officers in the office of the Minister for Transport:

- (a) documents relating to the appointment, secondment or duties of department liaison officers to the office of the Minister for Transport;
- (b) all briefs or briefings sent, received or approved by the Minister for Transport, the Secretary of Transport for NSW, or the former Acting Secretary of Transport for NSW relating to the appointment, secondment or duties of department liaison officers to the office of the Minister for Transport;
- (c) all communication relating to the appointment, secondment or duties of department liaison officers to the office of the Minister for Transport, sent or received by:
 - (i) the Minister for Transport;
 - (ii) the office of the Minister for Transport;
 - (iii) the former Acting Secretary of Transport for NSW, Mr Howard Collins;
 - (iv) the Secretary of Transport for NSW;
 - (v) the office of the Secretary of Transport for NSW; and
 - (vi) any person employed by Transport for NSW.
- (d) all communication created or sent by department liaison officers in the office of the Minister for Transport, or communication received by the office of the Minister for Transport from department liaison officers inside the office of the Minister for Transport, not including ministerial correspondence concerning private individual constituents or representations on behalf of private individual constituents by members of Parliament;
- (e) documents created in response to media inquiries regarding department liaison officers in the office of the Minister for Transport; and
- (f) legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

This is a simple procedural Standing Order 52 motion as it relates to the proper relationship between the Executive and government departments. Some members would be aware that there have been questions in the media relating

to the departmental liaison officers in the transport Minister's office. I have no interest in naming particular staff or identifying particular people in this motion. I have been approached to do so. I have declined to do so, and I think that is in good faith. I do not wish to place further accusations on record. All I seek with this motion is to understand the process that was followed, considering the media attention.

The role of the departmental liaison officer, hereafter known as the DLO, is to provide the Minister's office with an accessible source of knowledge and skills regarding the operation of the agencies and the Minister's portfolio area. In effect, it is an administrative role. I highlight that DLOs are required to be politically neutral and impartial while assisting Ministers. They are to avoid party political activities in the performance of their duties. DLOs are still employed by their home agency and are expected to conform to the appropriate conduct of the public service. There are robust rules around that, for good reason. Just because a DLO may work in the same office as other staff members who are employed under the Members of Parliament Staff Act [MOPS Act]—well-known to many of us in this place—it does not change the rules around the proper duties of those DLOs employed in the public service. The duties are very clear.

Recent media reports suggest that a number of curious connections exist between DLOs within the Minister's office and their roles in the Australian Labor Party. While that is certainly not a crime—no-one is querying that—and I do not make any accusations of a crime, it does raise valid questions on the appointment process and the duties those DLOs are undertaking in that ministerial office. Political staff who undertake political work should properly be employed under the MOPS Act. It is very clear. That Act is there for a reason and it is well-known to those who operate within the rules in this place. DLOs should not be undertaking political work—that is, their role is administrative and non-political work. As a result, the Opposition has questions and seeks documents because it is warranted that this House take an open and transparent look into the appointment process and into the duties and other related matters of DLOs in the office of the transport Minister.

The Opposition has sought to undertake a process that it believes is fair and complies with the rules of this House. It is for that very purpose that this House has Standing Order 52 rules. Those rules are well-known to those now in government and were well utilised by them in opposition. We believe that production under the order sought is warranted in this instance. The Opposition has sought compromise to try to reach agreement with the Government. I have only just been notified of an amendment which was not brought to my attention. We have worked very hard to try to bring together a compromise proposal to the House that ensures that there are not hundreds of documents that we do not need to see. Unfortunately, we cannot always narrow that scope. We do not know what we do not know, and if there is nothing to see, then there is nothing to see. Hence the amendment to the motion to narrow the scope so we are not looking at all correspondence—but we are certainly looking, as the House is entitled to, for information relating to the process and operation of the DLO roles within those ministerial offices.

The Opposition believes that is fair. We believe that is a sensible compromise. We believe that is an entitlement of this House, which looks for information. We seek to do so in a fair and open way, to ensure that if there is nothing to see here, there is nothing to see here—and if there is, that there is full and transparent provision of documents in the normal course, as was promised by the Government. Transparency and accountability, I believe, were the mantras. We would like to see that in action. We would like the documents to be produced. We believe the amendment narrows the scope fairly, and it is a reasonable request for documents in this place. I commend the motion to the House. It is a simple procedural request on the relationship between the Executive and this Government Minister's office.

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) (14:54): I contribute to debate on the motion on behalf of the Government. The Government has made it very clear that it accepts there may be scrutiny over these issues. It has cooperated in a range of ways to ensure that is the case. Some of the motion is unobjectionable from the Government's point of view. It is not a motion the Government would move, but it is not seeking to strike the motion out. The last paragraph is objectionable, either in its original form—which was frankly ridiculous—or in its amended form, which is barely different. The extension of time to 18 days is a welcome and sensible change, but still short of the 21 days that are usual.

It has not usually been the case that this House would turn its attention to the close scrutiny of staff or departmental liaison officers who often play a more junior role in an office—though not always. Usually the focus has been on Ministers, or occasionally on senior staff. This is a major departure. The shadow Minister says that it is in relation to recent media reports—those media reports may well have been generated by the Opposition. The shadow Minister says there are no accusations. Why take this step if there is no accusation being made? If the Opposition is not even turning up with an accusation, why take this very unusual step? It is reminiscent of the Leader of the Opposition's position as he accuses the Independent Commission Against Corruption of breaking the law with no evidence.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: Point of order: While the Minister was initially addressing the motion, I contend that his remarks are now far outside the scope of the motion. I ask that he be drawn back to the content and subject matter of the motion.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): The Minister will restrict his comments to the motion before the House.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: The amendment that has been moved is certainly better—that is why we have granted leave in this instance. What it captures, though, is all communication received by the office of the Minister for Transport from DLOs. The very role of DLOs—and this is captured in the Premier's circular—is to enable communication. Most communication from a ministerial office, as the shadow Minister well knows, travels through these individuals. This motion is highly likely to capture all briefings and all correspondence—most of the material that is transmitted—with this single exemption for ministerial correspondence relating to private individuals. The volume of material is almost as wide as the original scope, and it is an inappropriately wide use of the standing orders. The Government would like to comply with the motion and is supportive of most of the—*[Time expired.]*

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (14:57): On behalf of The Greens, I speak in support of the motion. I understand that we have broad agreement on some of the fundamentals around this particular issue—and we all know the background and the news story that we are talking about. I appreciate the respect being shown to particular staff members by not airing that. But it does raise very valid questions—not around the staff member but around the process of appointments by this new Government. It is convenient to say that we obviously do not want to be looking into the performance of relatively junior bureaucrats within departments; however, we are very interested in the way in which Ministers appoint people to particular roles. As chair of the Public Accountability and Works Committee, I am keenly aware of the challenges and the debates around the appointment. It would be useful for us to understand what the boundaries should be when appointing people with political party affiliations to roles. Obviously, there are lots of circumstances in which that is completely okay, but there are circumstances where it could be problematic. It is in the public interest that we understand what those are.

When it comes to the amendments being proposed, I do not think I have had the benefit of seeing Labor's proposed amendments to the last paragraph. My understanding from discussions with the Opposition is that we are not trying to capture a broad range of things. We are certainly not interested in capturing constituent interactions or anything to do with particular individuals. I thank the Opposition for amending the motion to tighten up the last paragraph, because it was too broad. I also thank the Opposition for amending the motion to extend the time for the department to provide the documents while still getting them in before the estimates session, which is important.

The amendment I have seen from the Opposition is better than the original motion, so The Greens will be supporting it. Again, I feel a bit on the back foot because no-one has shown me Labor's amendment. Anything that tightens it up but still allows us to validly look at communications between the DLO and the Minister, and the DLO and the department, is what we are interested in. If it cannot be resolved now, I hope it can be resolved under the standing order that allows those minor amendments to be made after the motion is passed.

The Hon. WES FANG (15:00): I make a brief contribution off the back of the Minister's comments about the motion. The hypocrisy that we are seeing from those opposite now that they are in government belies the approach that they had when they were in opposition. The Assistant President would know, as I am sure those on the Government benches would know, the wide latitude that the now Government sought through Standing Order 52 orders for papers when in opposition, the engagement that the Coalition government at the time had in relation to those orders for papers and how the former Government sought to have them narrowed. The Hon. Natalie Ward has quite rightly identified the documents, has tried to work with the Government to amend it and has narrowed the scope, as the previous contribution identified.

We are still hearing from those opposite that it is effectively casting a wide net. It is hypocritical. Those opposite are unable to recognise their conduct when they were in opposition. Those opposite campaigned that they were going to be transparent and that the Government was going to be open and provide information, yet what we have seen at this stage has been anything but that. The Minister might want to reflect on the comments he made when he was in opposition. In general, people are starting to wake up to the fact that this Labor Government is not being as transparent as it said it would be. The Government is being hypocritical in the way that it is approaching issues such as Standing Order 52 orders for papers. We are being patronised by those opposite, despite the rhetoric that was given prior to the election, where there are genuine issues that members on this side of the House are now seeking to get access to so that we can hold the Government to account—which is our job. Members opposite should be reflecting on that as we continue into this term of Parliament.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (15:04): There has been a bit of a go around on this. It is fair to say that there have been attempts to try to find some common ground. That has not necessarily been reached, and I indicate that I move the following amendment. I acknowledge that the shadow Minister has not seen it, because I thought we were working on different sets of words, which I then saw literally as I walked into the House. I am not casting blame; I am simply saying this is what the Government is doing. I move:

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

- (d) all correspondence generated by a department liaison officer, between the department liaison officer and the Minister for Transport and the department liaison officer and the staff of the Minister for Transport that contravenes their requirements to be politically neutral and impartial.

We need to understand what this order for papers is doing. The Government, while not being thrilled about it, understands that paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) are very clear about what the House is seeking to do, which is to get information about the appointment of DLOs within a particular Minister's office. The Government is not quibbling with that. As I said, the Government does not love it, but it is not quibbling with it. The Government is quibbling with paragraph (d), even as amended. It is very wide. Our advice is that it will generate pretty much every briefing note and every email, other than to deal with the small narrowing that has occurred in relation to what the shadow Minister has indicated around private correspondence. I understand that the Hon. Natalie Ward has been a Minister. She understands the role of DLOs. They are at the centre of an office.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Excellent Minister.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, she was alright. It is a pity those opposite did not promote her more. The issue here is that DLOs capture a huge volume of information. I plead with those opposite—and I accept that this is probably not going to happen—that if they are trying to capture the role of DLOs within a Minister's office, and if they are trying to understand whether they are exceeding their role around their need to be politically neutral, I believe that this amendment captures the part that is actually relevant. The Opposition is going on a very wide fishing expedition that will capture a lot of junior public servants that are simply doing their role in supporting Ministers of the day.

What goes around comes around, and that is clearly what is happening here. But I also remember that the previous Leader of the Government used to stand here and indicate that these things went too far. I believe that is the case now. If the shadow Minister is genuine, it would be more worthwhile to look at it in a more circumspect and careful way to produce the information that she is seeking, which the Government accepts she has the right to do. This is not the way to go about it. I know that we are all still new. We need to get better at trying to come to some reasonable scope requirements in relation to orders for papers.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (15:07): I express my grave disappointment in this motion.

The Hon. Wes Fang: I'm not angry; I'm just disappointed.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: No, I am quite angry as well, but I will get to that later. I am disappointed because two weeks ago I, along with the Deputy President, sat through two days of self-righteous indignation from members opposite about bringing public servants into political debates, even if those public servants hold high political office within parties. I am extremely disappointed that those opposite see fit to move this motion that targets public servants who are not in leadership positions. I am also disappointed that it appears, at this stage, that The Greens are supporting it. That is potentially the most disappointing of all. This is an outrageous political stunt. I have worked as a public servant with dedicated professional people who are concerned about providing appropriate services to the people of New South Wales. The Opposition, and those supporting the Opposition, are engaging in an arms race to try to do some kind of outing of anyone who has ever had any kind of political connection. It is unseemly. It is unparliamentary.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): Order! The Hon. Wes Fang will come to order.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: Launching an attack on those who do not have the capacity to fight back—

The Hon. Wes Fang: Point of order: Members should direct their comments through the Chair. Clearly, the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine is seeing fit to yell at me across the Chamber.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): The Hon. Wes Fang and the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine will resume their seats. I uphold the point of order, but I also remind the Hon. Wes Fang that interjections are disorderly at all times and ask that he restrain himself.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: I seek an extension of time.

Leave not granted.

The Hon. BOB NANVA (15:10): Paragraph (d) of the motion as it stands represents an unacceptable overextension of the power of the House because it is so non-specific, broad and impractical as to make compliance impossible. It is worth reiterating the opinion of the Solicitor General and Ms Mitchelmore of counsel from 2014:

It would be reasonable in our view, to query or dispute an order that contained an impractical deadline or referred to no specific subject matter in relation to the documents sought ... or referred to a subject matter that was so broad and unwieldy as to place great practical difficulties on compliance.

That is the procedural aspect of this matter. But I find it strange that a member would be inclined to support the motion, not only because of its overreach but because of the unreasonable attack on public servants simply working to support the relationship and communication between a department or agency and a Minister's office. They pose no threat to the public service or the independence of the public service. Departmental liaison officers [DLOs] are beyond this debate. I find it incredibly strange that a motion would target them in this manner. We expect and value the fearless and frank advice that public servants provide, especially those who are closest to Ministers. That poses no threat to the public service. It is how things operate. Departmental liaison officers go beyond the thrust, parry and argy-bargy of political debate.

We should ask ourselves whether this motion, as drafted, which is so broad and so ill-defined, strengthens our democracy—I would submit that it does not—or weakens it by deterring good and expert public servants from providing advice or working to support the Ministers that the people of New South Wales have entrusted. What incentive would a public servant—a DLO, for goodness' sake—have to get into the public service if they are cannon fodder for political debate. They are beyond reproach. It is unnecessary. The point in this political debate is made. The Opposition does not need to use DLOs to make it.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (15:14): I move:

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

- (d) all documents generated by a department liaison officer, between the department liaison officer and the Minister for Transport and/or between the department liaison officer and staff in the office of the Minister for Transport, not including ministerial correspondence concerning private individual constituents or representations on behalf of private individuals or constituents by members of Parliament.

The amendment is self-explanatory. The motion, as has been outlined, is appalling and is a reach, at best. Attacking departmental liaison officers and reaching for this kind of information is quite a leap for this Chamber of Parliament. There has been some discussion during debate about the scope of the motion. I hope this amendment will go some way towards limiting it to a more appropriate scope.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): A number of amendments have been moved. To assist the House, the amendments will be printed.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (15:15): Luckily enough, I do know what I am talking about. I have been made aware of the Government's amendment, and I support it because it reasonably narrows the scope of this call for papers. Standing Order 52 is an incredibly important standing order that allows the Parliament to hold the Executive to account, but the call for papers in this motion is a misuse of it. I will not be joining with anyone to support the motion as moved. It is not just a fishing exercise; it is a deep-sea longline trawling exercise. The Opposition is casting a net over the entire ocean hoping to catch minnows. It is not catching a whale. As the Hon. Bob Nanva put it, it is hunting for junior bureaucrats who are doing great work and are likely to be alarmed that their functions and roles in the ministerial office are going to be used as political cannon fodder. That is not what Standing Order 52 is for.

Earlier today while a Minister was answering a question, an Opposition member interjected saying, "We're coming after you. We're going to get some heads." That is not what opposition is about. It is not about headhunting and trying to get a little sugar-hit gotcha on a Minister or the operations of government. That is not what this incredibly important standing order is about. It alarms me that the Opposition is taking this approach. I will not be supporting it. I will be supporting the Government's amendment because it narrows the scope. The motion, as moved, is an abuse of Standing Order 52.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (15:18): Standing Order 52 is akin to a subpoena in the law. If somebody turned up at court asking for such an enormously wide range of documents as is sought by this motion, they would be thrown out. As the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham said, it is a fishing expedition. I am a very big supporter of accountability, but it has to be targeted. A call for papers under Standing Order 52 cannot ask for all documents in relation to lowly departmental liaison officers in the way that this motion does.

I urge the House to support the amendments so that there is some narrowing of the scope of the motion, because it is an abuse. It is the biggest fishing expedition you can imagine. It is like the entire Pacific Ocean. It is like trying to find plankton using a trawler. I do not know what Opposition members are looking for, but they are asking for absolutely everything. Even if they got it, it would take them so long to look through it that they would not be able to make sense of it or find anything anyway. It is absurd, and it demonstrates that the Opposition is not in a position to do its job. It is not concentrating on holding the Government to account, because things like this are absolutely absurd. I urge the House to support the amendments to this motion.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (15:20): In reply: There has been a flurry of activity from those in the Government, resisting this motion, calling it disappointing, a fishing expedition and all the things that they are outraged by, some five months later. This is transparency. This is accountability, and the flurry of activity shows that there is something here. This House has these orders for a reason. My conduct has been clear: The Opposition is not out to hunt down departmental liaison officers [DLOs] or anyone else. The issue is the duty of the conduct of a DLO and the awareness of senior staff. It is not about hunting down particular people; it is about a process.

I am disappointed that, after various discussions throughout last night and today, the Government did not even have the courtesy to provide me with its amendments or let me know about any of them. That is disappointing. Its conduct shows its approach in this place, and it is a sad sight so early on. The Opposition's amendment focuses on the conduct of the office and the staff member. We sought to confine that. We offered that last night in good faith. We did not get a response until today and now, at the last minute, there is a flurry of Government amendments, including our original amendment that was posed last night. Opposition members are very capable of understanding the processes of this House. We do not seek to do anything other than encapsulate what we are entitled to. We are focusing on the conduct of the office and the staff member.

A junior staff member is under the control of a senior staff member, so it is important to ensure that we classify them. If a breach occurs, a junior staff member is not the one accountable. It is clearly the senior staff member in the office. I have some experience with how a ministerial office operates and how DLOs operate within those offices. We have sought to limit the scope to work with the Government. Not so very long ago, Government members were the ones drafting orders for the production of documents under Standing Order 52. Their motions were very wide, and they were very emphatic about what they were seeking to do. All of a sudden, they are clear about not wanting to comply.

The Government is seeking to limit this House to what it wants the House to see. If there is nothing to hide here, the Government should support the amendment, let the motion go through and produce the documents. But the Government is not inclined to. There is silence when it comes to transparency; there is silence when it comes to accountability. It is all about outrage at producing some documents. If there is no problem here, the Government should produce the documents in accordance with the House rules. We think that it has an obligation to. Before the election, its members certainly promised the electorate that that was what they were going to do. There is no misleading of the House, and any accusation of it from, may I respectfully say, newer members who might not have experienced the extent of Standing Order 52 motions when the Coalition was in government is plainly wrong. We are genuine about this motion. We have been conciliatory and constructive about it, and I urge all members to support our amendment and the motion to produce what the House is entitled to see. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (15:23): I seek leave to withdraw the amendment that I moved in favour of the Government supporting the Hon. Tara Moriarty's amendment.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): Is leave granted?

The Hon. Natalie Ward: I am unclear as to which amendment we are dealing with. There have been so many put forward. I do not have any written copies. I have not been provided the courtesy of anything other than a text message with some, at the last minute—not even a discussion. It would be helpful for the clarity of the House to know what amendment is on the table now. The Opposition amended the motion. The amendment is very straightforward and clear. We circulated it last night. It sets out for all parties how we seek to confine the motion. We think it is reasonable, and we think it limits the scope enormously. We put our initial amendment. If there are other amendments, we would like the courtesy of seeing them in writing.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): To recap for members, the Hon. Natalie Ward moved private members' business item No. 388. The Hon. Penny Sharpe then moved that the motion be amended by omitting paragraph (d) and inserting a new paragraph (d), stating:

- (d) all correspondence generated by a department liaison officer, between the department liaison officer and the Minister for Transport and the department liaison officer and the staff of the Minister for Transport that contravenes their requirements to be politically neutral and impartial.

That is the amendment that is sought to be withdrawn. The Hon. Tara Moriarty then moved that the motion be amended by omitting paragraph (d) and replacing it with:

- (d) all documents generated by a department liaison Officer, between the department liaison officer and the Minister and/or between the department liaison officer and staff in the Office of the Minister for Transport, not including ministerial correspondence concerning private individual constituents or representations on behalf of private individuals or constituents by members of Parliament.

Is leave granted for the Hon. Penny Sharpe to withdraw her amendment?

Leave granted.

Amendment withdrawn.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): The Hon. Natalie Ward has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Tara Moriarty has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.

Bills

PETROLEUM (ONSHORE) AMENDMENT (LIVERPOOL PLAINS PROHIBITION) BILL 2023

First Reading

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

Second Reading Speech

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (15:27): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

It is my extreme honour and privilege to once again join with communities in opposition to the toxic coal seam gas [CSG] industry in New South Wales, by introducing the Petroleum (Onshore) Amendment (Liverpool Plains Prohibition) Bill 2023. At the outset I acknowledge the Gomeroi traditional owners, their Elders and their unwavering defence of their homelands and the Pilliga Forest from toxic coal seam gas, including their heroic action in the Federal Court appealing the gut-wrenching decision by the National Native Title Tribunal to approve Santos' Narrabri Gas Project. I also acknowledge and thank members of the Liverpool Plains community. Some, who are here today in the gallery, have resolutely defended their community land and water and our food bowl from the madness of new coal and coal seam gas for more than a generation—a long battle that I have no doubt is close to being, and will ultimately be, won.

Tomorrow a coalition of community, including Unions NSW, the Country Women's Association, the NSW Farmers Association and the Lock the Gate Alliance will rally in Sydney at 11.30 to march from Customs House to Parliament to once again say no to coal seam gas—and to Santos and their Narrabri project, their Hunter Gas Pipeline and their lateral pipeline—and call on the new Government to halt this toxic and unnecessary insanity in its tracks. I do now, and have always, stood with the community in opposition to CSG. The bill I present today is intended to draw a line in the sand to ring fence the mistakes of the past and protect our precious food bowl, the Liverpool Plains, which have sustained the Gomeroi for millennia and will sustain the people of Australia for millennia if we finally act to protect it.

I now turn to the contents of the bill. The bill will amend the Petroleum (Onshore) Act 1991 and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 to prohibit prospecting for or mining of coal seam gas in the Liverpool Plains area and to prohibit development for the purposes of coal seam gas prospecting or mining in the Liverpool Plains area. In new section 3, the bill will create the Liverpool Plains gas exclusion zone, which is defined as the following local government areas: Liverpool Plains, Gunnedah, Narrabri and the Warrumbungle Shire. I should say at this point that it was my preference and that of my community to divide the area by geophysical characteristics, such as catchments, but that was not achievable.

New section 9 will insert into the Act the Liverpool Plains gas exclusion zone area, over which petroleum titles must not be granted. New section 10 of the bill cancels petroleum titles in the Liverpool Plains exclusion zone through the following provisions, without compensation and without extinguishing liabilities incurred by the holder of the title before the cancellation took effect. It does that by providing:

- (1) If, immediately before the commencement of this section, a petroleum title has been granted in the Liverpool Plains gas exclusion zone, but no mining operations have begun, the petroleum title is cancelled.
- (2) If, immediately before the commencement of this section, 1 or more of the following applications have been made, but not finally determined, the application is taken to be refused—
 - (a) an application for a petroleum title in the Liverpool Plains gas exclusion zone,
 - (b) an application to renew a petroleum title in the Liverpool Plains gas exclusion zone, including a title that would have expired but for the operation of section 20.
- (3) Compensation, including the refund of fees, is not payable by or on behalf of the Crown because of—
 - (a) the enactment or operation of this section, or
 - (b) a direct or indirect consequence of the enactment or operation of this section, or
 - (c) conduct relating to the enactment or operation of this section.
- (4) The cancellation of a petroleum title does not affect any liability incurred by the holder of the petroleum title before the cancellation took effect.

The second part of the bill amends schedule 2 to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and ensures through provision that development of petroleum exploration and production in the Liverpool Plains gas exclusion zone is prohibited by inserting section 10.17, which states:

- (1) Despite a provision of this Act or another law, a person must not, in the Liverpool Plains gas exclusion zone, carry out development for the purposes of undertaking the following in the zone—
 - (a) petroleum exploration,
 - (b) petroleum production.

At this point it is important to remind the House of the long, tortured history that has led us here. I hear so many people ask: Why are we here again? It is because Kevin Gallagher, the CEO of Santos, and his board are effectively the Private Teruo Nakamura of Australian energy business. Nakamura was the last and lone Japanese soldier who finally surrendered in 1974, 29 years after the cessation of hostilities in World War II. He clearly did not know when to give up and fought on long after the battle was lost. The message for Santos and Gallagher, who by the way is busy blowing up his shareholders' money in other areas like personal private jets, is to give up, mate. The battle is over. After billions in his shareholders' treasure and decades of grief, it is over. The community has fought and will continue to fight him to the death. Get the news. In the words of Darryl Kerrigan, "Tell him he's dreamin'."

What is the history of this fight? An emerging fracking shale and CSG industry spread its toxic spores into New South Wales in the late nineties and early 2000s. Eastern Star Gas in the Pilliga, Sydney Gas and then AGL in Camden, the Central Coast, Hunter and Gloucester—no social licence, no economic or ecological assessment and no meaningful regulation. They tried initially with some success to get off the ground, but they got caught. Vigilant communities who watched *GasLand* researched proposals, saw the abysmal outcomes of these companies in action, saw governments asleep at the wheel, and saw the size and threat of the industry—the world's largest fossil fuel industries doing what they do best: buying government for a donation, telling lies and leaving a trail of ecological and economic destruction. They saw the drilling and fracking rigs, and the massive toxic and saline water-holding ponds, and read the noxious contents of drilling fluids being pumped into precious aquifers. They saw the maps of intersecting pipelines and transmission lines, and they saw reports on the impacts of fugitive methane emissions on our efforts to rein in runaway climate change.

They saw it out of control—the CSG industry across the border in Queensland, which has grown rapidly since 2010 to feed Queensland's insatiable liquefied natural gas export industry, where there are now 7,000 producing CSG wells in the Surat and Bowen basins and ongoing conflicts with farmers and communities, who are facing the legacy of a foreign-owned industry that exposed Australia to international gas prices, drove up electricity generation costs and smashed the hip pockets of everyday electricity users. In New South Wales, they imagined this in their communities.

The communities became alarmed and they got active. They formed groups across the State and country and fought back. They locked the gate. They protested, wrote letters, ran community surveys, took court actions, ran ads, held stalls and blockaded—all at their own expense. In New South Wales they bloody well won at St Peters with Stop CSG Sydney. I also refer to Camden, Lismore, Casino and the incredible Bentley blockade; the Glenugie blockade; the Pilliga, and the amazing efforts of the Wilderness Society and the Gomeroi traditional owners; the Mullaley Gas and Pipeline Accord and the North West Alliance, flying the flag, especially at the annual AgQuip; the Central Coast; Coonamble and the work of the wonderful Anne Kennedy; Bulga, Broke and the Upper Hunter; Gloucester and the irrepressible Groundswell Gloucester team; Fullerton Cove near Newcastle and the defence of their farm and Bellata by the tenacious Penny and Robbie Blatchford; and, wherever you were in the State, the Knitting Nannas.

The Hon. Mark Latham: Turn off your own gas.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: Shoosh! One of the largest social and environmental movements in the nation's history brought together city and regional, black and white, young and old to defend land, water and country. At all points I was proud and remained determined to stand in community, with community. I toured the gas industry in the United States and Queensland, saw and lit the bubbling Condamine on fire and linked arms at the blockades. I printed stickers—hundreds of thousands of them—and they, like me, are hanging in there. I agitated, pestered and was described as a single-issue polliwog, a broken record, a megaphone and a loudhailer, but so what? Our climate, water, soil and health are at stake.

In this House we have had innumerable debates, questions and, for 12 years of Coalition Government, obfuscation, denial, half-baked regulation and contempt for concerns—a former Government that has been dragged kicking and screaming to face the reality that the community said and continues to say: no more coal seam gas. We have seen in this place the upper House coal seam gas inquiry, the coal seam gas moratorium bill, the chief scientist's review of CSG and an inquiry into the implementation of the chief scientist's recommendations regarding CSG. In the 2015 State election, it was the biggest issue and the Government had to respond by beginning the process of cancelling CSG licences across the State. But since then, and especially in the last term, we saw a government and, disgracefully, a National Party and Ministers, push the barrow of their mates in Santos and allow the Narrabri Gas Project to proceed.

We saw the statement of gas policy by John "Bruz" Barilaro—written and delivered by Ernst and Young—who was quietly working with Santos too, on the down low. Appallingly, we have seen the approval of Narrabri Gas Project and resurrection of the Hunter Gas Pipeline, which—with the hundreds of landholders who Santos needs but who will not consent to this proposal—we will stop too.

The Independent Planning Commission approved the Narrabri Gas Project in September 2020 despite receiving more than 10,000 submissions, most of which were in opposition to the project. It is estimated to cost \$3.5 billion in total, with Santos already burning \$1.5 billion of its shareholders' money on this dead project. The site of the project is 95,000 hectares, making it the largest project ever proposed in New South Wales. It will be up to 850 gas wells with interconnected, destructive infrastructure at the heart of an ecological jewel, the Pilliga.

The Pilliga is home to 900 species of plants and 100 species of animals, some endangered and endemic to the forest, such as the Pilliga mouse. It is an incredibly important area to the history and ongoing culture of the Gomeroi traditional owners. The plan received 23,000 submissions on its environmental impact statement [EIS], with 98 per cent opposed. Concerns included the potential for the Gunnedah Basin and surrounding aquifers to be poisoned, endangering agriculture. Despite this, the National Native Title Tribunal approved the gas project in December 2022, which is now being contested and appealed.

We also have the Narrabri Lateral Pipeline. The assessment process is currently in the finishing stages. It is planned to extend for 60 kilometres, from Leewood in the Pilliga to the Hunter Gas Pipeline east of Baan Baa. Consent or refusal under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 cannot be done until the end of the assessment process, which is likely to be next year. The pipeline was disgracefully declared to be critical State-significant infrastructure in December 2022, which makes planning Minister Paul Scully the decision-maker. He has wide discretion to refuse on environmental grounds, and I hope he does so.

More recently, we saw Santos gain approval as New South Wales authorities quietly signed off on the reactivation of the Kahlua Pilot legacy coal seam gas wells in the Liverpool Plains during caretaker mode, despite sending an email to farmers on the same day saying a decision would not be made until after the election. Approval for Santos to reactivate these wells was uploaded to an obscure section of the Government's website on 31 March. Ordinarily, these decisions are uploaded to the news section. However, this decision was uploaded to the document library.

The reactivation of the wells means that Santos will now be able to use them to "explore" for gas, essentially meaning the company will be able to operate them as it would any other coal seam gas project, including gas extraction and flaring. Nine million litres of wastewater are expected to be produced from the wells each year. The wastewater will be stored in two five-million-litre storage tanks, with Santos to eventually ship the wastewater to its Leewood facility, near Narrabri. Local farmer Margaret Fleck from the Mullaley Gas and Pipeline Accord said that it was a clear example of the Government trying to hide the decision from the public. She said:

The first reactivation of a coal seam gas well on the world renowned Liverpool Plains foodbowl will trigger public outrage, particularly from local communities, so it's little surprise the government wanted to keep the decision as quiet as possible.

Let us be clear that the bill before the House does not overturn the Narrabri approval, but it does effectively stop it in its tracks. It draws a line in the sand, puts a ring fence around the current project and a prohibition on future development. That means no more. This is the opportunity for the Government to say that there will be no future

approvals for this company, no future for this industry and no future for Narrabri in real terms because, without expansion, this is a dead project. This is the opportunity to protect the Liverpool Plains—an area of the highest possible land quality, a place where agricultural expertise intersects with climate, rain, aquifers, soil and ecology to create our food bowl.

The community, the Country Women's Association, NSW Farmers and any sane person who understands the CSG industry and agriculture knows that the two cannot coexist. We cannot have well pads, roads, pipelines and toxic water-holding ponds on these plains in the middle of a farm. We must choose one or the other—food or fossil fuels. The Department of Planning and Environment defines biophysical strategic agricultural land as "land with high-quality soil and water resources capable of sustaining high levels of productivity". The department notes that these lands intrinsically have the best quality landforms, soil and water resources that are naturally capable of sustaining high levels of productivity and require minimal management practices to maintain this high quality.

Biophysical strategic agricultural land makes up 28 per cent of the three local government areas [LGAs] that comprise the bulk of the Liverpool Plains. We cannot recreate that. We did not make it; it is a blessing we have in our State. We must protect it. This is more than 650,000 hectares or almost one-quarter—23.6 per cent—of the total biophysical strategic agricultural land in New South Wales. It is no place for a gas field. What does this land produce and what will it produce for the next 100,000 years if we are smart enough to protect it? According to the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, agriculture in New England and the north-west, of which the Liverpool Plains is a major part, contributes more than \$3 billion per year to the economy. That is 16 per cent of the total value of agriculture to the New South Wales economy. Agriculture is the top employer in New England and the north-west, at 19.27 per cent of workers, compared to mining, at 0.61 per cent.

According to the Department of Primary Industries, in the four LGAs covered by the bill—Narrabri, Gunnedah, Liverpool Plains and Warrumbungle—the gross value of production of agriculture is \$1 billion. This can be broken down to broadacre cropping at \$600 million, livestock at \$133 million and other agriculture at \$50 million. Protecting our best land is essential. CSG is unnecessary. Who tells us this? The recent O'Reilly report, commissioned by the Government, on electricity reliability tells us that. The recent O'Reilly report smashes Santos' argument, which is that its Narrabri and future CSG developments are essential to securing the New South Wales gas supply and ensuring that demand does not cause a spike in gas and electricity prices. Santos has always said that 100 per cent of its Narrabri production will be reserved for New South Wales and it is essential to meet forecast gas shortfalls. Santos CEO, high-flyer and serial bullshit artist Kevin Gallagher said:

The only way to address gas shortfalls and price spikes at times of high demand is by developing local gas resources close to market instead of relying on imports from other states or overseas.

The O'Reilly report, which is hot in the hands of the Government, clearly contradicts this. On page 87 it states:

The issue is not one of the quantity of gas throughout the year, but the unpredictable nature of demand requiring high volumes of gas to be transported at short notice.

The Hon. Mark Latham should pay attention. The report continues:

That means the capacity of the gas system to deliver the required gas becomes a problem.

His consultation revealed that stakeholders do not believe that Narrabri is the solution. Those stakeholders are our energy regulators and industry experts. Page 88 states:

... few believed Narrabri could address forecast shortfalls in the required time ...

...

The problem is likely to persist even if Narrabri proceeds to full production.

His recommendation is not for more CSG. He does not even mention it. It does not even get a guernsey in terms of shoring up our gas-fired firming capacity. He says:

To manage these risks, it is recommended that the Government commission AEMO to undertake a NSW gas infrastructure needs analysis to inform what actions may be required to avoid gas capacity shortfalls ...

What we know, unfortunately, is that gas, a fossil fuel, will play a part in our transition to renewable energy through the five existing plants and two plants coming online, and they will require a domestic gas source. I urge the Hon. Mark Latham to do a bit more reading. I draw his attention to that radical left-wing organisation the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC] and its document "Gas supply outlook improves but shortfall still possible". Its latest gas inquiry report—of all things—says that of the 2,000 petajoules of gas produced on the east coast 126 petajoules go towards our gas-fired power generators.

Just last year the Federal Government intervened in the gas market and put a cap on gas prices because the Australian version of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries—Chevron, Woodside Energy,

ConocoPhillips, Shell and those multinational gas shills—which has come in and raped the agricultural areas of Queensland for their export liquified natural gas, is saying that there is a shortfall in gas. That is absolute garbage. Australia is absolutely awash in gas. Some 65 per cent of the gas produced in Australia is exported. The Australian Domestic Gas Security Mechanism was brought in by the Turnbull Government. The Government can turn the spigot off whenever it wants. It only has to find 120 petajoules to supply all the gas-fired power stations on the east coast, not just New South Wales. We need to find a tiny fraction of gas on the east coast for that supply.

We do not need to proceed with Narrabri or, as my bill rules out, with coal seam gas on the Liverpool Plains. Narrabri will not stand up on its own; it has to expand. Remarkably, 800 wells are not enough. It needs to expand into those petroleum exploration licences to the east across the Liverpool Plains. That is absolute madness. In an age of climate change, to green-light a new fossil fuel project is madness. I call on the Government to put our water resources, soil and biophysical strategic agricultural lands first. The communities across the country want this to end and want to join with the traditional owners, who are aghast that we would upend the Pilliga and destroy this incredible ecological and economic asset for a few short years of gas.

It is a Ponzi scheme. They come in and drill the wells and then they move on. They are retiring wells all across Queensland. What is the legacy? It is well pads, destroyed vegetation and roads, dislocated communities, a boom-bust of fly-in fly-out workers, and massive holding ponds of toxic brine-filled coal seam gas water. I urge honourable members to look at what places like Roma look like from space using Google Maps. It can be seen from space because the industry is absolutely gargantuan. It is going to leave a legacy that we will deal with in geological time frames: fracked coal seams, destroyed aquifers and a landscape in which billions of tonnes of toxic salt has been brought to the surface at the very headwaters of the Murray-Darling Basin.

To proceed with coal seam gas when we do not need it in New South Wales is madness. Every place in this State that has had this project foisted upon them has looked at the detail and said, "No way, unnecessary." The Liverpool Plains is the last stand. Narrabri is the last stand of CSG in this State. It is incumbent on the Government to end the war and tell the Private Nakamura CEO Kevin Gallagher that it is over, to fly the flag, to come out of the bunker, to stop wasting money and to stop causing enormous grief to the farmers of New South Wales, the traditional owners and the community, who want to get on with their lives. They want to deal with the other key issue that they are involved in, which is feeding us every day. They produce the food and fibre that keep us alive every day. They will do that for millennia to come if we make sure we protect that land.

The communities out there do not want the Hunter Gas Pipeline. They know that Santos has to get 700 landholders to approve the survey and the pipeline. There is no way. Only over their dead bodies will they let that happen. They want the Government to be a breath of fresh air and end the crisis and the war that has been going on for a generation. The Liverpool Plains farmers were blockading their land before some members in this Chamber were born. They have been fighting against BHP, coal and now coal seam gas for more than 20 years. I am talking about the Hon. Jacqui Munro.

The Hon. Cameron Murphy: And me. I'm young.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: That's right. You are a spring chicken. They have been doing it for far too long. The introduction of the Petroleum (Onshore) Amendment (Liverpool Plains Prohibition) Bill 2023 is the opportunity to end it. The environmental argument has never stacked up, particularly for anyone aware of the fugitive emissions, the volumes of water used and the destruction of vegetation. Wherever the industry operated—in the United States, South America, eastern Europe and Australia—the economic argument has never stacked up. At best, Narrabri and any future development on the Liverpool Plains will produce a tiny fraction of east coast gas supply.

The Hon. Mark Latham: New South Wales has nothing!

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: New South Wales does not grow pineapples. That is how the economy works. We buy them from where they are produced. The Hon. Mark Latham should go back to school and learn how the global economy works. We buy a lot of things from other jurisdictions. We are not self-sufficient in absolutely everything. We have always been completely dependent on Victorian and Queensland gas. That will remain the case. The Federal Government has the capacity to cap prices and ensure that we have supply. The economic argument for the Pilliga and the Liverpool Plains is absolutely dead on arrival. The O'Reilly report says that, the ACCC says that, Lock the Gate says that and the farmers of New South Wales say that. Any sane person in this State says that.

The Hon. Mark Latham: That's not true.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: The only person not prepared to say that in public is the Hon. Mark Latham. He is blowing his economic and energy policy credibility on a Ponzi scheme brought to this

State by the skills at Santos. The news for Kevin Gallagher is that it is over. He should get out of the bunker and surrender. We are going to save the Liverpool Plains. We are going to stop him in his tracks.

Debate adjourned.

Motions

STATE CREDIT RATINGS

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (15:58): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) the Standard and Poor credit rating agency downgraded New South Wales in 2021;
 - (b) other States like Queensland have a lower credit rating than New South Wales, yet pay less interest to borrow than New South Wales does, in the recent past;
 - (c) all rating agencies use certain metrics to determine the credit ratings of sub-national governments; and
 - (d) the three rating agencies will continue to assess the balance sheet of New South Wales like they do for many of the world's borrowers.
- (2) That this House further notes that downgrades from a score of triple-A by rating agencies is possible given the unprecedentedly high levels of debt accumulated by the former Government, at a time of high inflation and rising interest rates.

Credit ratings are often not a reliable measure of the performance or creditworthiness of an investment. Let us never forget that it was the major credit rating agencies' absolute failure to properly rate mortgage-backed securities that directly led to the global financial crisis. Those credit rating agencies gave the green light to credit derivatives. They allowed good debt to be swapped with dubious debt, underpinning those investments that ultimately led to that crisis. We should never forget that more than a trillion dollars were lost in that crisis by major banks.

Many well-meaning institutions lost their money invested through managed funds because of their misplaced trust in credit rating agencies. A lot of entities in this State were affected, including local government councils throughout New South Wales, which genuinely thought that they were investing in safe and secure assets. They were not; they were being taken for a ride because of the rating agencies either failing to do their jobs or deliberately certifying those securities to earn money for their rating services.

Many financial institutions owned investments whose value was based on home mortgages, such as mortgage-backed securities or credit derivatives used to ensure them against failure, which then declined in value significantly. Not even the lenders themselves believe in those credit rating agencies anymore. If they did then we simply would not have the situation where Queensland can borrow money for a cheaper rate than New South Wales even though it has a much worse credit rating. In my view, rating agencies are a fraud and a sham and cannot be trusted. They are hopelessly conflicted because they earn a crust from their rating work, and they have demonstrated that they cannot be independent in their rating assessments. If they were, we would never have had the global financial crisis.

Opposition members should be on the same page as me on that. They should be expounding the same view—the view that the credit rating agencies are a fraud—because under the custodianship of the now Leader of the Opposition in this House, New South Wales lost one of its triple-A credit ratings in 2021. I am certain that the Leader of the Opposition—here he comes now—will vigorously and forcefully argue that he did everything right when he was in charge of the State's finances. I, for one, would not agree with that, and I suspect neither would the Treasurer. But the point is that even people who do everything right cannot trust credit rating agencies to do the same.

As I said, the former Government already lost one of the State's three triple-A credit ratings, from Standard and Poor's. At best the rating agencies' work, in my view, is murky and subject to the vagaries of their own business interests, and they are not a proper measure of financial performance or security. The former Liberal-Nationals Government, of course, left this State in a perilous position, overspending to the point that our new Labor Government inherited the highest debt in history—some \$187 billion. If we are to have further downgrades in credit ratings, I am sure that debt bomb will be responsible for that.

The rating agencies use three metrics to assess their ratings: general government sector interest expenses as a percentage of revenue, non-financial public sector cash operating balance as a percentage of revenue and total State debt as a percentage of general government sector revenue. The last one was already breached by the former Government during COVID. Those breaches do not guarantee that New South Wales will lose its remaining triple-A credit ratings with Moody's and Fitch because those agencies use a wide range of qualitative and quantitative metrics. We do know, though, that the credibility of those agencies is so diminished that they are

verging on irrelevant. We need to look at alternatives like the important work of Dr Katherine Trebeck, who is advocating for a wellbeing economy. In the future, other alternative measures outside the work of those credit rating agencies ought to drive Government policy.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (16:03): It is an afternoon for voodoo economics, because the Hon. Cameron Murphy has moved quite a sound motion. There is nothing wrong with the motion, but he has gone on to shoot the messenger. The villain is not the credit agencies, which legitimately would have concerns about the extraordinary level of New South Wales debt, but the former Government that ran up that debt. As the Treasurer—who is now at the table—has pointed out, the interest on New South Wales debt exceeds the budgets of TAFE and the New South Wales police. So why would taxpayers and credit agencies not have concerns? The solution is quite simple. The problem was that Matt Kean went on a spending spree to try to buy the election. I do not think he bought a single vote in adopting all those Commonwealth responsibilities.

If New South Wales just stuck to its own responsibilities—stuck to its knitting and did not fund Commonwealth responsibilities like university R&D, GP clinics covered by Medicare, labour market programs, capital and recurrent funding for child care that we have never done in the past and, I would argue, the climate change programs that are supposedly saving the planet—the budget would easily come back into surplus. It is not that hard for New South Wales to say, "We fund State responsibilities; Canberra funds Commonwealth responsibilities", and the budget easily comes back into surplus.

That is the challenge for the Government in its budget next Tuesday. If it bakes those extra Commonwealth spendings into the New South Wales budget, they will never come out. There is a one-off opportunity to get them out of the budget and to take the pressure off the debt and the interest on that debt. Whether people like credit agencies or not, if they are sitting in New York thinking, "Do we lend these galahs money? Do we lend Matt Kean money?", they would be worried about \$185 billion worth of debt, would they not?

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey: It's \$187 billion.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I am corrected—\$187 billion. It is going up by the day, so there are genuine problems. Part of the problem that any credit agency would look at is the anti-development attitude, where New South Wales does not maximise its economic growth and productivity. Members heard the most bizarre speech earlier from the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham. I said earlier on that the cannabis party has a comprehension problem, particularly after lunch when the bongo juice is clearly flowing, because I can assure the House that as certain as night follows day, nothing in the O'Reilly report says that the Narrabri Gas Project should not go ahead. In fact, it says New South Wales needs more gas production and gas storage to support the seven peaking plants that are coming online to keep the lights on.

I suppose if one has enough of the bongo juice, black looks like white, night looks like day and Narrabri looks like something that is undesirable. In fact, it is essential for keeping the lights on and maintaining prosperity, jobs and income in New South Wales. I sort of felt like saying the bloke has misrepresented the House, but I will give him a leave pass given all that cannabis stuff that would be wafting up and down the corridors. But, for goodness sake, at least give your speeches earlier in the day when you have some common sense about you.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (16:06): I am delighted that the Treasurer is now in the Chamber, having sent one of his lackeys in here to talk down the credit rating in circumstances where he will have the ultimate responsibility for what occurs as a result of the decisions that he will take. I invite him to talk to the credit rating agencies about how he will treat the unfunded wage commitments in the budget papers, not only now but also going forward. It is appalling for members opposite to bring a motion to the Chamber to pour fuel on the fire that the Treasurer has already lit by talking down the State's economy and credit rating. The Treasurer's economic statement earlier this year was an open invitation to the rating agencies to downgrade New South Wales' credit rating. "Please do it," he said. Instead of providing an assurance to the market, the Treasurer whinges about the job he always wanted and says it is all too hard for him. Well, give it to someone else.

The former Government responsibly managed our economy in accordance with the object of the Fiscal Responsibility Act 2012, which is to maintain our triple-A credit rating. When New South Wales lost its triple-A credit rating from S&P Global, it was in response to increased spending that arose as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic—spending that those opposite supported every step of the way. Add to that the spending relating to drought relief, bushfire relief and flood recovery. If those opposite now say they do not support those measures, then the hypocrisy of their position is just so apparent. The Government had to take those measures, which did have an impact on debt.

As at the half-year review, the State's net debt is currently 10.2 per cent and is projected to stabilise at 14 per cent of gross State product by 2026. Compare that to the projected 26.5 per cent for Victoria in 2026 and one gets a better picture of the excellent economic management of the former Government. The biggest risk to

this State's credit rating is Labor's policy of busting the wage cap. That is not just the opinion of the Opposition; it is the view of the rating agencies. I have said this before, but Martin Foo of S&P Global warned of the "downside risk to the rating from potentially higher overall spending on public sector wages. This spending represents the State's single largest outlay." Our credit rating matters because it impacts the cost of borrowing, yet the Treasurer was flippant about the risk to the budget when he said that maintaining those credit ratings is by no means the be-all and end-all of budget policy. [*Time expired.*]

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (16:09): On behalf of The Greens, I support the motion. With all respect, I do not think it really does very much; it just sort of states some facts. The motion does not get Standard and Poor's name right, I would add—fine. But I am bemused because, as members have talked about before in this House, we have the Fiscal Responsibility Act, which is solely focused on triple-A credit ratings. We are in the middle of an inquiry into consulting firms, which are often referred to as the high priests of capitalism. What too often gets completely neglected as an absolutely unaccountable, unregulated part of the system is the rating agencies.

As I have said many times, I worked for 20 years in corporate finance and banking regulation. I am more familiar than I would like to be with rating agencies, the way that they work and the hoops one has to jump through in order to get a certain rating, particularly in the context of financial markets and capital bonds. We have three major rating agencies. Standard and Poor's was set up by a couple of dudes back in 1900. The agencies are not regulated; they just make up their own rules. The financial system gives them an authority because we rely on them. The financial markets do look at a rating and decide, on the back of that, what they should be pricing debt at. I get that. That is how the current system works.

The agencies escaped relatively unscathed during the financial crisis. When I was working in financial markets in London, companies were paying these rating agencies something like £120,000—maybe \$250,000 in Australian terms—to get a particular rating for a particular product. These are paid-for ratings, on the whole, for the companies that rely on them. The agencies are profit-making, they are not regulated and they were found to be hugely responsible for the problems that we had during the global financial crisis. Yet, despite all of that, we rely on these unaccountable, unregulated entities to such a humungous degree. It is no surprise to me that despite our credit rating being different to Victoria, when investors come to look at the actual worthiness of the New South Wales Government in terms of its ability to repay debt, they do not necessarily look at the S&P Global rating. There is nothing wrong with the motion, but the focus on credit ratings instead of the actual material impact on people's lives is a continuous mistake of this Government and the ones before it.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (16:12): I did not expect the debate on this motion to go into such detail about the value of credit rating agencies. I put on record that New South Wales has two triple-A credit ratings from Moody's and Fitch—and, yes, one double-A plus rating. On the whole, I would say that we are at a triple-A rating overall, and that is very important. The Fiscal Responsibility Act was passed when former Premier Mike Baird was Treasurer in 2012. As has been mentioned, the objective of the Act is to maintain the triple-A credit rating for New South Wales. That is part of the job of the Treasurer of New South Wales. Let us be realistic. The debt burden at the moment is largely driven by pandemic spending, which has already been referred to and which was supported by all sides of the House as a necessary part of getting businesses and individuals through a totally unfamiliar and fairly terrifyingly tough time. It was necessary to manage the State through and out of the contraction in the economy and the economic activity and opportunity that was the reality at the time.

The hypocrisy of the motion is clear. On one hand, those opposite seek to draw attention to one credit rating agency's downgrade to embarrass the Coalition and, on the other, they are tilling the soil for further downgrades while they are in power. What is the biggest threat to our future credit rating? As has been mentioned, it is unbridled wage increases that are not linked to productivity. Despite the Labor Government saying that there would be productivity gains associated with those wage rises, where are the productivity gains? Where are the measures? We have not seen them yet. Union demands have prevailed over reason once again, and the security of the rest of the State is at stake. The Treasurer has spent more time in the media talking down the economy than he has spent talking about investment and plans for the people of New South Wales.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Old habits die hard.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That is right—old habits die hard. When a government is in power, good governance is about the spending and investment of money for good order and good service delivery to the State. When the requirement to maintain a triple-A credit rating was formalised through the Fiscal Responsibility Act, a former member of this place, the Hon. Walt Secord, warned that the Coalition Government would turn to slashing services and programs and hiking up taxes. In fact, we did the opposite. But his words were very prescient when we consider the actions of the current Government: hiking up taxes or royalties while slashing services and programs. Do we think it will get better on Tuesday after the Treasurer delivers his first budget? Not if we ask him.

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) (16:15): I make a brief contribution to debate on the motion, only to mark an auspicious occasion. I had never heard those words cross the lips of the Leader of the Opposition conceding that, in fact, New South Wales did lose the triple-A credit rating from Standard and Poor's. I had never actually heard him say those words in all this time—and I have been paying attention too. Members may recall me winding him up about the State's credit rating. We have debated it many times in this Chamber, including referring to the work of former Premier Dominic Perrottet. "Perrottet" is spelt with a double R and a double T but, as I observed previously, he is tragically "double-A Perrottet". I had never heard the Hon. Damien Tudehope actually concede that the Standard and Poor's credit rating had disappeared, so I was pleased to hear those words pass his lips. It is the first time I can recall since 7 December 2020, when the credit rating was lost. It is a welcome concession. We have had some very frank exchanges, but to date I had never heard those words uttered in this Chamber by the Leader of the Opposition.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (16:17): I think that we, in this State, are coming out of the pandemic in a far better position in terms of debt and deficit than every other State in the Commonwealth. That is because we went into the pandemic in a far better position in terms of debt and deficit than every other State in the Commonwealth. If you compare us to Victoria, we are building twice as much infrastructure with half as much debt. What position would we prefer to be in, in terms of debt and deficit? Would we prefer New South Wales, which had a very successful Liberal-Nationals Government over the past 12 years, or Victoria under Daniel Andrews? I know where I would prefer to be.

Let us look at some of the expenditure that those opposite like to say was clocked up under the Coalition's watch. Well, they voted for all of it. They voted for the COVID relief programs, for the bushfire relief programs and for the flood relief programs. They voted for all of the vouchers. They voted for the renewable energy zones. They supported pre-K education. They had the opportunity to vote against those programs if they really believed in fiscal discipline—but they did not. Time after time, they turned up in this Chamber and in the other place and voted for every increase in spending. Now they have the audacity to come here and completely jettison all the spending programs that we put in place when we were in government. It is a little bit rich.

I do like that it is the Ferguson left moving this motion. Together with The Greens, they are belittling and casting doubt on the credit rating agencies and calling them the "high priests of capitalism". I support the high priests of capitalism that are the credit rating agencies. They get it right. People should not listen to the Ferguson left or The Greens; they should listen to the credit rating agencies. They have got it right when it comes to these things—not that Martin Ferguson is all that bad. He supports electricity privatisation, so there is something to be said of the Ferguson left.

New South Wales went into the pandemic in a far better position than the other States. There were surpluses as far as the eye could see. There was no net debt. That is why the State is in a far better position today than a State like Victoria. It was because of the heavy lifting done since 2011 with Treasurers like Mike Baird and Gladys Berejiklian and with finance Ministers like Greg Pearce. He did much of the heavy lifting in the early days. The Government's response to some of the issues regarding debt and deficit is to drastically increase spending by getting rid of the wages cap and then, in return, abolishing cost-of-living programs and some of the important infrastructure programs that have been in the pipeline. It is a disgrace. The Government should not belittle the credit rating agencies for its own faults.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (16:20): I commend the Hon. Cameron Murphy for bringing this issue to the attention of the House. It is a timely motion ahead of next week's budget. It is important to draw attention to some of what I had to say in the June economic statement. I put a couple of facts on the record. It is fascinating to all who are watching markets, as I do, that Queensland is currently borrowing at a cheaper rate than New South Wales, despite Queensland having a lower credit rating than New South Wales. That spread matters a great deal. The second point that I make when it comes to credit ratings is that, between the June economic statement and now, the United States has been downgraded. The biggest issuer of government debt in the world, the most important bond instrument that benchmarks absolutely everything, has been downgraded.

As a result of that particular downgrade, we are seeing all government debt reprice itself. That is part of the reason the Government is pointing out the consequences of \$187 billion worth of debt and part of the reason this Government is taking a responsible and balanced position towards fiscal repair. When the Government hands down the budget next week, members of this House and the other place will see that the two big steps the Government is taking to reduce debt are, firstly, to fix the disaster that is the Transport Asset Holding Entity and, secondly, to not play around with the State's credit card in global markets by borrowing \$8 billion and depositing it into the NSW Generations Fund. Once upon a time, honest accounting and unlevering your balance sheet were associated with the conservative side of politics. That is no longer the case.

Unfortunately, we saw, particularly in the dying years of the former Government, a massive ramping up of spending after the pandemic. There were \$27 billion worth of promises made by the former Treasurer in the nine months after the pandemic. To put it simply, the former Treasurer signed New South Wales up to Scandinavian-style policies, which some would welcome, to be paid for with Mississippi levels of taxes. That is not a sustainable position. It does not matter what side of politics you are on. That is why the Government is methodically working through how to get the State's finances back on track—so it can get on with the job of rebuilding essential services. The one thing this Government will not do is say to the State's police officers, nurses, paramedics and other essential workers that it is their fault and that their wages have to be suppressed because of our problems— [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (16:23): This has been a worthwhile debate, and I am glad that the Treasurer has gone on the record, but there is only one reason why this is being debated today. It is because next week New South Wales is going to lose its triple-A credit rating from the two agencies where it still exists—Moody's and Fitch. The Government has been preparing New South Wales for this for some time. There is one reason why New South Wales will lose its triple-A credit rating. That is because of the unfunded public sector wage rises that the Government has embarked upon. Those wage rises are disingenuous. When the Government went to the election, it submitted its costings, which had zero as the budgetary impact when it came to those wage rises. That is disingenuous to the people of New South Wales. As we will see in the budget next week, those wage rises will cost the State a significant sum of money. But they are also going to cost the State its triple-A credit rating.

It is one thing for the Treasurer to stand there and talk about what happened under the former Government, but these are his decisions. These are his markers when it comes to the budget next week. We all look forward to seeing the budget next week. But there is one reason this is being debated today, and that is that New South Wales will lose its remaining triple-A credit ratings. It will be on the Government's watch, it will be on the Government's head and it will be the Government's responsibility.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (16:25): I did not intend to make a contribution but, after listening to members opposite lecture us about unsustainable spending, I feel compelled to set the record straight. The idea that the sole reason the State is on track for record levels of debt is because of COVID spending completely neglects the \$27 billion worth of spending that the previous Government pushed out the door in the nine months prior to the election in an attempt to buy the election. For observers of political parties and election campaigns, there might be common expectations that a conservative Liberal-Nationals government would usually have less spending commitments than a Labor government. Labor actually had far fewer election commitments. The reason for that, and the reason the Treasurer, in leading those costings with the Parliamentary Budget Office, was particularly prudent about it, was that he knew about what was on track.

But let me be clear about what the Government did not know. Members opposite are lecturing us about being disingenuous to the people of New South Wales, while the budget is filled with line item after line item that simply drops off after June 2024 because, conveniently, that is the period after which they thought they had been re-elected and could stop fooling the people of New South Wales. That is a bit disingenuous in itself. It takes a certain amount of audacity to come in here and lecture a new government, after those opposite were the ones that lost the credit ratings and set us on a debt projection—

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Is this a new narrative?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: The Leader of the Opposition had 12 years in government and has now had five months in opposition, but he consistently wants to provide a diatribe across the table. Now that Labor is in government, it is absolutely committed to doing this in a careful and methodical way to repair the mess and rebuild essential services in New South Wales. The Government makes no apology for that. There are productivity gains, but the Government knows that investing in the wages of the State's valuable public servants is the way to get better outcomes for the people of New South Wales.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The time for debate has expired. I call the Hon. Cameron Murphy in reply.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (16:28): In reply: I start by thanking all honourable members for their contributions to the debate. It has been a wonderful debate. I must say the most memorable contribution was that of the Hon. John Graham. I have never heard Perrottet spelt with a double A before, but it was wonderful. I thank him for that. I conclude the debate by saying that the critical thing here that we cannot forget about is that, if there is going to be any loss of triple-A ratings, it is because of the memorable "you can have it all" attitude that we heard from the former Premier in the 2019 election, which then carried through to the last State election.

There was a view that the former Government could fund everything and mislead the public of New South Wales about privatisation. The former Premier said after the election that he had changed his mind. He ruled it out at first and then said, "I have changed my mind; we will privatise." It is exactly the sort of attitude referred to by the Minister for Finance when she talks about these unfunded programs. It looks to me like the now Opposition, the Liberal-Nationals Coalition, only funded things like nurses, the First Lap program and these other voucher programs up to the period after the election—to 30 June—in the expectation that they would be selling assets to cover them for another year afterwards. The whole premise of their "you can have it all" mentality was about using the silver—the State assets that we own—to pay for ongoing expenses like nurses, voucher programs and other things.

So if we find ourselves in the position where we lose the two remaining triple-A credit ratings, it will not be because of anything that this responsible Labor Government has done; it will be because of the decisions of the previous Government in not funding these programs and not managing the economy responsibly. A litany of unfunded government programs has been left to us to clean up, to put proper controls on and to find the funding to keep some of them going in some form so that people who genuinely need them get access to them. That is what this Government now has to deal with, and if credit ratings get downgraded it will be because of that. Despite all that, we need to come up with better measures that look at a wellbeing economy rather than these credit ratings. *[Time expired.]*

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

The House divided.

Ayes25
Noes 15
Majority..... 10

AYES

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

NOES

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

Motion agreed to.

WAMBERAL SEAWALL

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (16:40): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
- in 2022, Central Coast Council Administrator Rik Hart resolved to build a terminal protection structure [TPS], also known as a seawall, along the entire length of Wamberal Beach from Terrigal Lagoon to Wamberal Lagoon;
 - in 2023, council and a group of pro-seawall Wamberal Beach property owners prepared and presented a joint development application [DA];
 - thousands of surrounding lagoon and wider district residents have objected to the construction of a seawall for years;
 - the proposed Wamberal TPS seawall does not satisfy the State environment policy or the Coastal Management Act 2016 objects (part 1, section 3), the objective of which is "to manage the coastal environment of New South Wales in a manner consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development for the social, cultural and economic well-being of the people of the State"; and

- (e) ample scientific evidence concludes that seawalls can obstruct habitat migration, negatively impact biodiversity and result in habitat loss, result in major disturbances in sediment transport sea flow, block access to people living with disabilities in the area, and drive sea surges into surrounding lagoon properties.
- (2) That this House notes the Stop Wamberal Seawall campaign by community group Wamberal Beach Save Our Sand [SOS] which calls for:
 - (a) a comprehensive State Government environmental impact study [EIS] to be ordered into the flooding effects that a proposed Wamberal Beach seawall would have on Terrigal and Wamberal lagoon environs;
 - (b) a thorough State Government investigation of how the proposed Wamberal Beach TPS (seawall) progressed to its current status and investigate council's apparent dismissal of advice by Professor Andrew Short, USYD, and the Jacob Marsden 2017 New South Wales State Government *Wamberal Beach Cost Benefit Analysis* that seawall end effects would cause increased lagoon flooding;
 - (c) the New South Wales Government to act to prevent the Central Coast Council proceeding with their joint seawall development application until the abovementioned EIS and administrative review have been conducted and publicly reported, and a newly elected council is put in place in September 2024;
 - (d) the New South Wales Government to immediately stop the transfer of public land along Wamberal Beach to council, noting that council requires ownership of that land for its TPS DA co-application;
 - (e) upon completing the abovementioned EIS and review, an investigation of all possible solutions to sustain Wamberal Beach, including adaptive approaches, that would not increase risks to beach amenity or lagoon properties and ecosystems;
 - (f) the New South Wales Government to work with council to ensure council provides the community with more economically sustainable adaptive strategies that satisfy the objects of the Coastal Management Act 2016, including expert consideration of natural dune stabilisation and sand nourishment options; and
 - (g) an appeal at the Land and Environment Court to overturn existing Wamberal Beach seawall, DAs that contravene case law such as *Egger v Gosford Shire Council*, as those developments would endanger adjacent dwellings, and because the previous decision to consent to seawall DA was not made on merits.
- (3) That this House calls on the Government to act urgently in response to the Wamberal SOS petition by taking the actions requested.

Yesterday I tabled a petition in this House calling for the proposed Wamberal seawall put forth by Central Coast Council administrator Rik Hart to be halted. That petition was backed by the calls of thousands of Central Coast residents whose homes and community are under threat. Wamberal has been vulnerable to coastal erosion for years as one of 15 coastal erosion hotspots in New South Wales and one of hundreds across Australia. The Central Coast Council, which is currently under administration and has been prevented from democratically holding local elections for several years, is tasked with managing accelerated coastal erosion caused by climate impacts and rising sea levels. A high seawall was proposed by a few select property owners and supported by council after the beach and nearby homes experienced significant dune erosion in 2020, but a seawall is so clearly not the only option, and it is far from the right option.

Back in the 1970s when Wamberal was thrashed with storm-induced coastal erosion, the State Government had the then more cost-effective opportunity to buy back the land and restore it as a frontal dune. This idea was buried along with the problem at hand, and developers continued building more properties on the coastline. Today we are faced with the same problem, but we have a greater understanding of the full spectrum of coastal erosion and predicted sea level rises—and increasing houses at risk. One thing that has remained constant is that no wall will ever stop the ocean. It will not stop the ocean's currents from reaching the shore. A seawall is intended to reflect incident wave energy back into the sea to prevent coastal erosion hitting a certain area of the shore and the homes that surround it. But a seawall only directs that energy, the current and thus the associated coastal erosion further along the coastline to the end of the seawall, making it someone else's problem. How can anyone possibly think that spending millions of dollars to shift erosion to a different part of the beach is a sensible option?

The Wamberal Beach management options report prepared for the Office of Environment and Heritage in 2017 to analyse cost-benefits of options to manage erosion delivered several recommendations. The key recommendation was that a seawall should not go ahead because it is one of the most costly options. The report found that of all the various types of seawalls, none of them would provide any net public benefit for the Central Coast community. It concluded that a planned retreat is the only sustainable, cost-effective and sensible way forward. It has a cost-benefit of seven to 10 times more than any of the other options. Not only is it cost effective but also, instead of attempting to control the current—to control nature—a managed retreat allows the shoreline to move inland and ensures that natural coastal habitats are preserved.

We can look at seawalls in Stockton, Collaroy, Byron Bay, the Gold Coast and Harvey Bay in Queensland, Bridgewater Bay in Victoria and Henley Beach in South Australia to see that a seawall is not wanted by the broader community and actually ends up destroying the beach. In all those cases communities furiously objected to seawall proposals for clear and obvious reasons. But the bureaucrats decided that they knew what was best for the beach and, more accurately, wealthy landowners, and pushed it through anyway. The difference here is that

the proposed Wamberal Beach seawall is not just a couple of hundred metres along. The proposal is for a massive seawall stretching over a kilometre across the entire Wamberal coastline. If this seawall gets built, what is next? The erosion will only get pushed further down the coastline. It will only kick the can down the road. Is the Government going to build a seawall across the entire east coast of New South Wales or just across the entire Central Coast?

The requests of the Central Coast community are very clear: The State Government must intervene and ensure that the effects of a proposed seawall have been thoroughly investigated through an environmental impact study and must take the lead with a sustainable coastal adaptation plan that looks after the environment and community in the long run. I thank community group Wamberal Beach Save Our Sand for its tireless dedication to this issue. Its members have been staunch advocates for the Central Coast community and environment in the stark absence of a council that democratically speaks for the community. We cannot continue to put the interests of private property above public beaches and public needs. A seawall would have devastating long-term impacts in completely eroding the entire Wamberal Beach and beyond. The science before us has indicated for a long time that the only sustainable, long-term solution to managing coastal erosion is a planned retreat. It is well past time that the Government began acting in the best interests of the community and the environment, and recognise that building a seawall at Wamberal is madness. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (16:45): On behalf of the Government, I thank the honourable member for bringing this issue to the House. It is a complex issue and there are divergent views on how to resolve what I consider to be a wicked problem. The New South Wales Government acknowledges the diversity of views regarding the proposed seawall at Wamberal. We also acknowledge the advocacy of community groups on the issue, including Wamberal Beach Save Our Sand led by local residents Mark and Corinne Lamont. The Minister for the Central Coast met with them recently to hear their concerns, and he continues to speak with them.

The Government cannot support the motion in its current form due to the planning process inaccuracies contained within it. The Government is seeking to amend the motion to urge Central Coast Council and its administrators to work constructively with all residents, particularly around Terrigal Lagoon, to address community concerns. On that basis, I move:

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

this House notes that:

- (a) in 2022, Central Coast Council resolved to build a Terminal Protection Structure [TPS], also known as a seawall, along the entire length of Wamberal Beach from Terrigal Lagoon to Wamberal Lagoon;
- (b) there are a range of views regarding the situation at Wamberal relating to beach erosion, with some Wamberal residents signing a petition opposing the proposed structure;
- (c) a group of Wamberal property owners and the Central Coast Council intend to lodge a development application that will go through an independent assessment process under New South Wales planning laws;
- (d) as part of that independent assessment process, extensive public exhibition and consultation are required, including relevant environmental studies; and
- (e) urges Central Coast Council to work constructively with all residents, particularly around Terrigal Lagoon, to address community concerns.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (16:47): I lead for the Opposition in debate on this motion and confirm that the Opposition will support the Government's amendments and therefore will support the amended motion. For the benefit of the House and members who may not be aware of the intricacies of the issue, I provide some background information on the Wamberal seawall. Wamberal was highlighted as a coastal erosion hotspot in the early 1970s and is highly vulnerable to coastal storms and their impact on housing along the beach, public infrastructure including roads and, notably, the Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club. A conservative estimate of the value of the infrastructure and assets in the area is \$750 million—no small sum.

In 2016 and 2020, large storms caused the partial collapse of homes, significant damage and the exposure of asbestos dumped in the ground below houses. The continuation of that scenario is clearly unacceptable and mitigation processes need to be implemented. Through the Coastal and Estuary Grants Program, Central Coast Council received \$207,500 in 2018 for assistance in designing a seawall and the implementation of beach nourishment programs. Subsequent to that funding being provided to council, in the 2020 storm event the beach was left covered in hazardous rubble and debris.

The seawall has had a long history, and it is good to see that the Government has finally come around to common sense on the issue. However, during the last election, the Labor candidate in the Terrigal electorate ran a disingenuous scare campaign around the seawall, posing for Instagram photos in front of other successful seawalls with a thumbs-down gesture, leaning into an anti-wall stance that was repudiated by the electorate in

March and even campaigning with signs during the election, including waving placards on Terrigal Drive saying that he would stop the seawall. Obviously, being a government comes with more responsibility than being a candidate, and waving anti-seawall corflutes on the side of the road just is not enough. I am glad to see that the Government and, indeed, the Minister for the Central Coast, are acting more responsibly than some of their former candidates on what is an important issue for the Central Coast community, and particularly for the electors of Terrigal and the residents of Wamberal.

To address the 2016 storm, the Gosford Beaches Coastal Zone Management Plan was certified in May 2017 to address coastal management actions for Wamberal Beach. The plan recognises the need for a terminal protection structure and sand nourishment. The process certainly has not been rushed. Studies for the Wamberal seawall were finalised in 2021 after three rounds of community consultation, with the key point being engineering design requirements for a constructed seawall. Manly Hydraulics, after its engagement to develop concept plans for solutions, including coastal assessment and a cost-benefit analysis, developed engineering design requirements for the seawall, which have been adopted by the Central Coast Council. The engineering design requirements for the seawall are extensive. If any of the criteria are not met, the proposed seawall will not be approved by council.

The seawall proposal is a matter for a joint development application between council and landowners. The New South Wales Government has no legal authority to interfere with development applications for the Wamberal seawall, which is why the motion in its original form would be entirely inappropriate. The seawall petition aims to illegally influence council's decision-making and development application process by calling for State Government intervention. The local community will have ability to make their voices heard in the usual fashion once development applications are lodged during the statutory 28-day exhibition period. It is most likely the project will go to an independent Joint Regional Planning Panel, absolving council of any conflict of interest as per the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Conflict of Interest) Regulation.

The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (16:50): I will be supporting the motion, if the Government amendment is successful. A seawall at Wamberal has been a long-term issue. Homes were in danger of falling into the sea during the July 2020 storms. A massive emergency response was required, which involved 2,400 tonnes of large rocks, over 2,000 tonnes of rock bags and 4,000 tonnes of sand being placed along Wamberal Beach in an emergency situation. The foundations of some homes were visible, hanging above the ocean just metres below, while others had damage to their backyards and decks. This was not the first time that storms had threatened homes at Wamberal. It happened in 2016. It happened in 1978 and resulted in great devastation that many local people remember, with homes falling into the sea.

The issue is well known to the Government. One of the homes there at one stage belonged to Eddie Obeid and was where the so-called Terrigal sub-faction was formed back in the day. Some of the problems of asbestos on Wamberal Beach have been traced back to that property, according to media reports over the years. As a regular swimmer and surfer, and having been on surf patrol at the other end of the beach at Terrigal, I personally made numerous calls to the Central Coast Council over the years to report exposed fragments of asbestos on the beach and in the water. One time on the beach, I ran into a mother whose young daughter had taken fragments home and used the asbestos as chalk on her driveway, which was extremely distressing.

The building of a terminal protection structure, or seawall, along with sand nourishment is the adopted solution to coastal erosion at Wamberal Beach. It is described in the Gosford Beaches Coastal Zone Management Plan. It is my understanding that the seawall is to be located as far landward as possible, to reduce interaction with coastal processes and maximise the available beach width. The homes adjacent to the beach are not the only properties that will be protected by a seawall. There are hundreds of homes behind the beachfront row, and three-quarters of a billion dollars in public assets, including electricity, NBN, water and sewerage, roads, and of course the Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club that will also be protected by this terminal protective structure or seawall. Studies were finalised in 2021 after three rounds of community consultation.

I understand that some local people, including the Wamberal Beach Save Our Sand [SOS], are concerned about potential impacts of a seawall. I know the member for Terrigal is supporting those people and those groups to ensure that their concerns are heard by council. He has been an exceptionally strong voice on this issue for a while now. I also understand the State Government intends to have a review of the proposed wall, although when I put a question on notice in regards to this in July, the Government could not, or would not, say when the review would be conducted, what the terms of reference might be, who would be chairing it or how long it would take. I understand the Wamberal Beach Save Our Sand group were contacted by the member for Gosford, who said that is not actually the Minister's view; that is just a departmental response. At its core we need to ensure that individuals have the opportunity to protect their own home and the beach that we know and love.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (16:54): In reply: There are times in this place when the disconnect between what political parties and politicians are thinking and what the community is thinking and feeling is so stark. Obviously,

I live right near Wamberal Beach. That is my community and my area. When I walk along and I speak with people in my area, there is not a single person I come across who does not understand what is happening when it comes to climate change and the oceans and our beaches. Yet in this place there is this continued obsession with trying to control nature, to ignore the science and to double down on the mistakes that we have been making decade after decade, failing to recognise that we have a situation here that we cannot, and should not, be seeking to control. That is why we got into this mess in the first place. We need to accept the science. We need to look at the evidence, and the evidence is telling us that if we build a 1½-kilometre seawall along this precious, beautiful beach, we will push the problem up into Terrigal, to businesses, to other houses, and to all of the houses around the lagoons.

I have spoken to my children. I love doing this because they give the best answers. If water is hitting a beach and it is eroding the sand, and then we put a wall there, what will happen to that water? The water gets shifted down until it gets to whatever other bit of sand it is going to erode. It is just being pushed down. Unless the Government's plan is to have a seawall for the entire length of the New South Wales coast, setting up at Wamberal a 1½-kilometre seawall will erode that beach so that no-one else can use it, and wreck the shops at Terrigal and wreck everyone else's homes, just to protect a handful of very nice homes on the top of a sand dune—homes that should never have been built there.

It is complete madness for the Opposition to say that the Government has no legal authority to intervene, as though the Government does not make laws in this place. That is absurd. The Government could pass a law this week or next week that actually prohibits the building of seawalls because the Government has spoken to the community, listened to the scientists and spoken to the average year 4 child and asked them what they think would happen. The Government should realise that this is not what it should be doing. A seawall is absolute madness to anybody who is not in this place. I think people need to get out more. The Greens will not support Labor's amendment. It completely undermines the basis of the original motion; it just undoes it.

To rely on a planning system as though it is some independent thing that the Government has no control over and cannot change is ridiculous. To think that that will somehow deliver the right result, given the previous planning decisions under the current planning laws, is absurd. Then to be hiding behind an administrator of the council, who has been appointed by the government of the day and can be removed by the government of the day—because we do not have a democratically elected council on the Central Coast—is absurd. It is incredibly disappointing that the parties in this place cannot recognise common sense and science, and cannot listen to what the community is telling them.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): Ms Abigail Boyd has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Penny Sharpe has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): The question now is that the motion as amended be agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

Documents

POLICE TASER USE

Production of Documents: Further Order

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (17:00): I seek leave to amend private members' business item No. 377 for today of which I have given notice by inserting at the end of paragraph (4):

- (j) any documents captured by this order of the House that form part of the brief of evidence in related legal proceedings against Senior Constable Kristian White, are to be laid upon the table of the House once those proceedings are concluded, notwithstanding that all such documents are to be listed in the index of documents to be tabled with the return to order.

Leave granted.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Accordingly, I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on 28 June 2023, the House ordered the production of documents relating to the draft of the first police media statement in the matter of the Cooma incident involving Clare Nowland;
 - (b) on 13 July 2023, the House received a return to the order from the Cabinet Office providing documents from the Office of the Premier, the Office of the Minister for Police and Counterterrorism, the Department of Communities and Justice and the NSW Police Force; and
 - (c) the return contained seven documents, four of which had a claim of privilege on the grounds of personal information.

- (2) That this House notes that:
- (a) on 4 July 2023, the office of the Leader of the Opposition made an access application under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 [GIPA Act] to the Cabinet Office requesting access to all documents relating to the critical incident involving the tasering of Mrs Clare Nowland in Cooma;
 - (b) on 24 July 2023, the office of the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism and the office of the Premier acknowledged receipt of the application;
 - (c) on 1 September 2023, the office of the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism and the office of the Premier responded to the application; and
 - (d) that the returns had a total of 11 documents provided 22 documents with significant redactions made and several documents excluded.
- (3) That this House notes with concern the lack of transparency by the Government in relation to the critical incident involving the tasering of Mrs Clare Nowland in Cooma.
- (4) That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 14 days of the date of passing of this resolution all documents, excluding any documents previously returned under an order of the House, created since 17 May 2023, in the possession, custody or control of the Premier, the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism and Minister for the Hunter, the Premier's Department, the Cabinet Office, the Department of Communities and Justice, or the NSW Police Force relating to the incident involving the tasering of Clare Nowland in Cooma, including:
- (a) all text messages, messages sent on other messenger services and any attachments to those messages;
 - (b) all versions, including draft and final versions of departmental briefings, documents relating to media releases and talking points;
 - (c) all emails and attachments;
 - (d) all drafts of documents intended to provide information to the public about the incident, whether prepared by officials in the NSW Police Force, the Premier's Office or the Minister's Office;
 - (e) all briefings, file notes or other documents about, and/or notifications of, meetings held between any of the NSW Police Force, members of the family of Mrs Nowland or the aged care facility, including any documents disclosing the dates and times of those meetings, who was present and what was discussed;
 - (f) all briefings, file notes or other documents received by the Premier, the Minister and/or their staff in relation to the incident;
 - (g) all communications to or from the Premier, the Minister and/or their staff regarding the incident or developments in relation to the incident;
 - (h) all documents relating to a request for access to information under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009;
 - (i) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House; and
 - (j) any documents captured by this order of the House that form part of the brief of evidence in related legal proceedings against Senior Constable Kristian White, are to be laid upon the table of the House once those proceedings are concluded, notwithstanding that all such documents are to be listed in the index of documents to be tabled with the return to order.

This motion for an order for papers comes in light of the lack of transparency being displayed by this Government. As members would well know, in late June the House considered an order for papers regarding the tasering of Clare Nowland, which was amended to reduce the scope down to the draft of the first media statement. That order produced seven documents, four of which were privileged. In July the office of the Leader of the Opposition put in an application under the Government Information (Public Access) Act to the Cabinet Office requesting all documents created between 17 and 31 May 2023 regarding the tasering of Ms Clare Nowland, which occurred on 17 May 2023. On 1 September the office of the Premier and the office of the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism responded to the application. The return contained no documents from between 17 and 19 May.

The Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism has told the other place that she was briefed on 17 May and that she briefed the Premier on the same day, and yet no documents have been provided, nor has their existence been disclosed as part of the application. Further, the documents provided were significantly redacted, with large slabs of text redacted on the grounds that they were covered by privilege. It is important for the sake of transparency in this incident that all documents, both privileged and non-privileged, be produced to the House, in order to properly understand what occurred in this tragic incident.

In respect of the amendment, we accept and acknowledge that, because of the proceedings against Senior Constable Kristian White, the production of some documents may give rise to some concerns about the proceedings. The purpose of this amendment is to ensure that those documents are indexed but not produced to the House until such time as those proceedings have been concluded. We suggest that, in the circumstances, that constitutes a reasonable response to those concerns in respect of any prejudice to Senior Constable Kristian White. I urge members to support the motion. Appropriate measures have been included in the motion to ensure that there

is no prejudice to criminal proceedings against any person. However, transparency of how the Minister's office and the police department conducted their correspondence through those documents should be before this House. I urge all members to support the motion.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (17:04): The Government supports the amendment moved by the Opposition. It is a sensible approach to dealing with this sensitive matter, which is before the courts. It is appropriate and important that this House deal with the matter in the proper way so as not to jeopardise any of the proceedings. The Government and the Minister have nothing to hide in relation to this matter. Transparency is important, and we are being appropriately transparent, but this matter is before the courts and needs to be dealt with appropriately. The officer involved has been charged with three serious offences and is facing court. I do not know what people think a cover-up is. It is literally before the courts. We appreciate the amendment, but the call for papers is still inappropriate, given the nature of the matter. Nonetheless, we will comply and be transparent.

Detectives from the homicide squad have been working around the clock on this case, travelling back and forth from Cooma to take witness statements, collect evidence and talk to the family of Ms Nowland, and are preparing the court case of the accused. Our elite detectives are doing the State an extraordinary service by thoroughly investigating this incident. We need to allow them to do their job and the court to do its job. It could not get further from a cover-up or a lack of transparency in relation to this matter.

A category 1 critical incident was declared, with the homicide squad sent from Sydney to investigate. The Law Enforcement Conduct Commission team has been overseeing the investigation from the beginning. The man in question was charged with three serious offences and is now before the court, where all of the evidence and information about what took place will be fully ventilated. Finally, a full coronial inquiry will follow. That is transparent. That is appropriate. That is the process this matter should follow. The Government has nothing to hide here, but we need to ensure that the processes are followed so that justice can be served.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (17:07): The Greens support the Opposition's motion calling for papers relating to the critical incident involving the police tasering of 95-year-old dementia patient Clare Nowland in her care home. It is important to recognise that there are now two problems before us in this House: the Government's response to the incident, and the Government's response to the call for papers by order of this House of the Parliament. The incident was deeply distressing and should never have happened, and the Government's response was concerning and regretful. The documents we have from the previous order under Standing Order 52 relating to this incident told a story in themselves—a story of avoidance, deferral, a lack of transparency and an unwillingness to take actual responsibility for how this tragic event was handled. This story came through not only in the correspondence included in the return of documents but also in the lack of documents returned.

It is clear that we have a police problem in this State. Whether she likes it or not, that problem begins and ends with the current Minister. The only way to deal with it is through accountability and transparency. Since the death of poor Clare, there have been many more incidents of violence and death at the hands of the NSW Police Force. A First Nations teenager with a disability was leg-swept by police while he was having a seizure, and a person experiencing mental distress was shot dead by police officers when they were called out to do a welfare check. There have been countless other tragic incidents where police officers have responded with violence when they were asked for help. We do have a police problem, but the Minister seems intent on avoiding it and covering for police instead of accepting responsibility and allowing accountability and reform that would follow with full transparency. There was an omission of documents in the return for the previous Standing Order 52 motion, consistent with the handling of this incident.

The apparent strategy is "If I don't move, maybe they won't see me," but the problem is not going away no matter how much the Minister wishes it would. In fact, the more the problem is deferred and deflected, the worse it gets. The inadequate response on the part of the police and the Government to this tragic incident is wrong and regretful, but not complying with an order from this House calling for papers is contempt. It may be that the leaders of the Government in this House need to have a long, hard schooling of their Cabinet colleagues in the other place or they might find themselves being disgracefully removed from this place. The Greens support this further call for papers. The Government, the Minister and the Police Force should be willing to provide full transparency and commit to undertaking the reform work of fixing the systemic and rooted police problems that we have in New South Wales, for the sake of us all, but especially for members of the Police Force. There is a slight tone-deafness and we want to get to the bottom of it.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (17:10): I thank the Opposition for moving the amendment to the motion. I have welcomed, and always will welcome, the important role that this House plays in accountability and maintaining the public trust in our institutions. I acknowledge that requests for information play a key, vital role in that process. The original motion was, however well intentioned, dangerously misguided, in that it would have swept up all of that information that needs to be contained in a criminal brief. As has been discussed by other

speakers, there is a person accused before the courts at the moment. In its original form, the motion would have had significant consequences in the pursuit of justice over the death of Ms Nowland. The production of that information should occur, but it was a matter of timing as to when that should occur.

Originally the motion would have put us in a dangerous position where, ultimately, information would have leaked, which could have tainted potential jurors and had us in the position where justice was delayed or denied in those criminal proceedings. That is why I am so grateful that the Opposition has moved an amendment to the motion that will exclude documents that may form part of those criminal proceedings. Because of that, the motion will provide accountability. As the Minister has said, the Government is happy to comply and to provide information, but we should be careful of this House attempting, in some way, to become judge and jury and run its own criminal proceedings into those matters.

I am on record, in my inaugural speech in this place, saying that I fundamentally believe in the independence of the criminal justice process and in the presumption of innocence. We all have to remember that there is somebody accused of three serious criminal offences, who is entitled to that presumption. We need to allow the courts to conduct their processes. Once that is complete, the House can debate accountability measures over the way the matter was handled by all levels of the police, the public sector and the Government. It just would not have been appropriate to do it now in its original form. I thank the Opposition for amending the motion; I can now wholeheartedly support it.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (17:13): The position of the Opposition on the production of documents and video footage in this matter, I would describe as having been quite unseemly from the beginning. A lot of us probably recall the first week that the House sat after the incident and the position of the Opposition that week that the taser footage should be released. That was an extraordinary position to take and the order for the production of documents, while supported by the Government, is also, as the Minister has said, inappropriate. So I sound some notes of caution about it.

It seems all in service of a conspiracy theory—a theory that the Minister's office played some role in the wording of a press release that has apparently been the subject of criticism. The Minister has consistently and persuasively denied that, and there is no evidence of that whatsoever. If the motivation for the motion is something else—some broader allegation of a cover-up—then that too is completely ridiculous. There is no evidence of that at all. Indeed, all the information in the public domain would suggest that the matter has been treated as one would expect. A category 1 critical incident was declared, the homicide squad was sent from Sydney to investigate the matter and the man in question, as has been said, was very quickly charged with three serious offences. That is quite a departure from what occurred in the dark past, when police officers were often immune from such accountability. He was charged very quickly indeed, so it is hardly a cover-up.

We should also reflect on the Pandora's box of documents we are about to open. It is commendable that the Opposition has limited the call for documents to exclude the brief evidence itself. But we should be clear that the documents will contain material derived from the brief of evidence. It will almost certainly contain, for example, briefings for senior police that have been prepared by investigating officers. If that material is leaked while the case is on foot, then that could do significant damage to the criminal justice process. There simply does not seem to be sufficient reason for such an exhaustive call for documents. There are none of the protections that documents have if they are subpoenaed, for example, in criminal proceedings, where there is implied undertakings, and the like. In my view, the motion simply bears no regard to what we are dealing with, which is footage of a woman being tasered and dying, and evidence relating to someone charged with a homicide offence. There are reasonable limits to transparency in this context and the Opposition should reflect on how it is using these processes of transparency.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (17:16): In reply: I welcome the contributions from Minister Moriarty, Ms Sue Higginson, the Hon. Cameron Murphy and the Hon. Stephen Lawrence. The contributions seem to indicate that there is now support for the motion. I take on board the caution of the Hon. Stephen Lawrence. I expect every member in this place to be cognisant of the caution he has raised regarding documents that may be sensitive, and to make sure that any prosecution is not prejudiced as a result of the production of those documents. He suggested the type of document that may give rise to concerns and I expect any member who had access to those sorts of documents to be aware of the potential for prejudice. If it is a document that is included in the police brief, then I do not anticipate it would be included. He has the view that it is all part of a conspiracy theory, but I beg to differ.

The Hon. Stephen Lawrence: Pursuant to a conspiracy theory.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: We're not pursuing a conspiracy theory. I thank members for their contributions, and I anticipate that the motion will be supported.

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

Motion agreed to.

Business of the House

POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I postpone private members' business item No. 376 until the first sitting day in October 2023.

Motions

BODY IMAGE AND EATING DISORDERS AWARENESS WEEK 2023

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (17:20): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) over one million Australians suffer from an eating disorder every year;
 - (b) rates of eating disorder symptoms and related symptoms such as body image concerns, depression and anxiety increased by more than 50 per cent during the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - (c) eating disorders are associated with the highest mortality rates of any mental illness.
- (2) That this House notes that 4 to 10 September 2023 was Body Image and Eating Disorders Awareness Week.
- (3) That this House acknowledges:
 - (a) the importance of the 2023 Body Image and Eating Disorders Awareness Week as the major launch of the National Eating Disorders Strategy 2023-2033; and
 - (b) the tireless work of the National Eating Disorders Collaboration in developing and promoting this crucial strategy.

I highlight that 4 to 10 September 2023 was Body Image and Eating Disorders Awareness Week. In recognition of that, I will run through some of the information about eating disorders for the awareness of honourable members present. Eating disorders are common and are increasing in prevalence. They have a lifetime estimated prevalence of 8.4 per cent for women and 2.2 per cent for men. Eating disorders do not discriminate, and they can occur in people of any age, weight, size, shape, gender identity, sexuality, cultural background or socio-economic group.

A person with an eating disorder may experience long-term impairment to social and functional roles. The impacts may include psychiatric and behavioural problems, medical complications, social isolation, disability, an increased risk of death as a result of medical complications, and suicide. Suicide is a major cause of mortality for people with eating disorders. It is up to 31 times more likely to occur for someone with anorexia nervosa and 7½ times more likely for someone with bulimia nervosa than for the general population. The impact of an eating disorder is felt by not only the individual themselves but also their entire family, their circle of friends and their extended network of support. It may lead to caregiver stress in some instances, and it may lead to a loss of family income due to caregiver stress or other matters. It can have an impact on family relationships in general.

There are many different types of eating disorders, and we now know a lot more than we used to about them. They are classified according to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, which is the DSM-5, and include binge eating disorder, other specified feeding or eating disorder, bulimia nervosa, anorexia nervosa, avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder, unspecified feeding or eating disorder, pica and rumination disorder. It is worthwhile noting there are early warning signs of an eating disorder, which can be physical, psychological, behavioural or any combination of the above. They may include but are not limited to dieting behaviours; avoiding eating meals in a social setting; wanting to control the types of food eaten and cooked at home; weight loss, gain or fluctuation; changes in sleep pattern and/or changes in mood; and many others.

Whilst the statistics for eating disorders are still not good—and, as I have said, their prevalence is increasing—work is being done here in New South Wales to invest across services and the workforce to better help people who are being impacted by that complex and debilitating illness, along with their families and communities. People with an eating disorder are likely to require quite specialised and integrated care, more so than those with any other illness. They will often need simultaneous services across multiple different clinical specialities to ensure that their mental and physical needs are addressed, hand in hand.

Every year, more than 6,400 people with an eating disorder seek care from a New South Wales hospital, mental health service or emergency department. It is a growing issue with, unfortunately, a significant increase in emergency department presentation rates for eating disorders over the past eight years. Our plan here in New South Wales is focused on embedding eating disorder services as core business in our local health districts [LHDs]. Although that plan has had good effects so far, there is more work to do. NSW Health provides recurrent funding for eating disorder identification and treatment and supports eating disorders coordinators in all LHDs

and a frontline clinician attached to those eating disorders coordinators. I commend the work of previous members in this space and also the current eating disorders coordinators, who are out there doing tireless work and championing the cause for the people of New South Wales.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (17:25): This is an important debate, and I thank the Hon. Emily Suvaal for bringing it on. This House is taking note that over one million Australians suffer from an eating disorder every year. I think we need to sit with the size of that figure for a while, because it is not a figure to be brushed over lightly. The often-misunderstood and under-recognised disorders affect one in 25 Australians and, of course, everyone who knows and loves those who suffer. Eating disorders disproportionately affect women, and it is estimated that at least 15 per cent of all women will experience an eating disorder in their lifetimes. But it is not about gender, because eating disorders do not discriminate. The Butterfly Foundation states:

Everyone's experience of an eating disorder is unique. Eating Disorders aren't a lifestyle choice, or a cry for attention.

It is not about teenage girls on a diet, as it is often stereotyped; it is a serious disorder that is associated with the highest mortality rate of any mental illness. For those whose eating disorder manifests as anorexia nervosa, cardiovascular complications are the leading cause of death. That is symptomatic of what anorexia nervosa does to the body: If you starve yourself for long enough, your brain stops working well, your heart struggles and your kidneys start to shut down because they are not receiving what they need.

Eating disorders need recognition, research and a respectful approach and, thankfully, they are starting to receive that. The InsideOut Institute, established by State and Federal Coalition governments, is Australia's first institute for research and clinical excellence in eating disorders. In government, I am proud to say Coalition members developed and implemented the *NSW Service Plan for People with Eating Disorders 2021-2025*, embedding service provision for eating disorders as core business for local health districts, and I recognise the funding delivered by the Hon. Bronnie Taylor to allow those suffering in New South Wales to receive the specialist services offered at Wandi Nerida on the Sunshine Coast. That was a game changer. Queensland is a lot closer to home than the treatment centres in Scandinavia, Europe and America that New South Wales sufferers often needed to access.

I welcome the launch of the *National Eating Disorders Strategy 2023-2033* and the approach that it offers, but I note the individuality of the disorders and recognise that treatment for them should never be simply a one-size-fits-all approach. It is not addressed by just handing over responsibility to the healthcare system. It affects all of us, and so it requires from all of us recognition, understanding, research and support for all those who suffer.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (17:28): Before I begin, I acknowledge the input of the current intern in my office, Maddie Olney, in the preparation of this speech. I speak in support of this motion and thank the Hon. Emily Suvaal for the work she is doing to bring awareness to the issue of body image and eating disorders, particularly by sharing her own experiences in her inaugural speech. The concept of beauty and what makes someone beautiful has continually evolved. Fashion and beauty ideals have historically had the ability to shift rapidly, but generally provide a narrow representation of physical appearance and beauty. In no one place do we see this more than on social media, where the current beauty ideals of toned stomachs, full lips and blemish-free skin abound. But what many do not realise is that much of what we see on social media is edited by powerful filters powered by artificial intelligence.

Filters provided by short-form content apps, namely Instagram and TikTok, have become far harder to detect by consumers of this content than ever before. These filters are currently being used to enhance and alter video and image-based content, providing hyper-realistic face and body filters to better align with contemporary beauty standards. When this content is perceived as unedited and natural by viewers, the impact of the augmentative filters is only exacerbated and can have adverse effects on body image, including appearance satisfaction, mood and self-objectification. This kind of appearance dissatisfaction is strongly linked with adverse mental health effects that could result in depression and potentially the development of eating disorders.

A study at the University of New South Wales found that when women aged 17 to 28 were shown filtered ideal appearance content on social media, regardless of the medium, the participants compared their own bodies to those of the women in the content being examined and judged themselves to be less attractive, negatively impacting their mood and increasing body dissatisfaction. All of that was found to occur within only a minute and a half of exposure to such content. Considering that the average young Australian consumes two to three hours' worth of social media content each day, the true effect that such AI altering software is having on the mental health of our young people, including its contribution to eating disorders, is incalculable.

Platforms including Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and YouTube that see a large number of minors and young people engaging with their content do very little to counteract the pervasive nature of algorithms that promote unattainable appearance standards and aim to keep viewers wanting more of this content. More must be

done to combat the harmful cognitive and emotional effects of this type of software on Australia's young people. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (17:31): I contribute to debate on the motion of the Hon. Emily Suvaal, and commend the member for bringing the issue of eating disorders to the attention of the Chamber. Eating disorders are a significant health issue in Australia, affecting individuals of all ages and genders. As mentioned by my colleague the Hon. Susan Carter, recent studies have estimated that over one million Australians are living with an eating disorder. Among those affected the mortality rates are alarming, with anorexia nervosa having the highest mortality rate of any mental illness.

One of the contributing factors to the high prevalence of eating disorders in Australia is the pervasive influence of media and the societal emphasis on thinness and unrealistic beauty standards. We do not have to look far to see examples of this every day, or to see the audience that those examples are attracting, whether it is in movies, television, magazines or just in the general community. Body image dissatisfaction is deeply intertwined with eating disorders, as individuals strive to achieve the perceived ideal body shape and weight. To address the issue of eating disorders and body image, various efforts have been undertaken across Australia to raise awareness and support young people affected by these conditions.

One key strategy is the implementation of campaigns and initiatives aimed at promoting positive body image and self-esteem. I join with the Hon. Emily Suvaal in recognising the important work undertaken by the Butterfly Foundation, Australia's national eating disorder charity, which is behind Body Image and Eating Disorders Awareness Week. Schools and educational institutions play a key role in prevention and early intervention. Support services and helplines across New South Wales also play an important role in providing assistance for individuals struggling with eating disorders or body image concerns. I commend the passion, dedication and professionalism, which I have seen firsthand, of the many case workers, specialists and volunteers who provide these critical support services across New South Wales.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast) (17:34): I support the motion moved by my colleague the Hon. Emily Suvaal, and I join others in congratulating her on her advocacy. In an earlier discussion about mental illness, something that the Hon. Susan Carter said stuck with me. She said that it is great to have bipartisan conversations about issues like mental illness, but it sometimes means that they lack a champion. The Hon. Emily Suvaal is that champion, particularly for this issue. It is great that we are able to have a bipartisan conversation about such an important issue, without losing the passion and the advocacy for change. I think that the Hon. Emily Suvaal has already shown in her time in the Chamber that she is the champion that this issue needs.

It is a really important issue. It was great to visit a facility last week as part of Body Image and Eating Disorders Awareness Week. I give credit to the former Government and the Hon. Bronnie Taylor for initiating a public health facility, which we hope to open next year, in Charlestown for people experiencing eating disorders. As part of that visit, which occurred as part of Body Image and Eating Disorders Awareness Week, I talked to my daughter about my day and the visit to Charlestown with the Hon. Emily Suvaal. That conversation is an incredibly valuable one. I am sure that all of the mothers and a lot of the fathers in the Chamber—particularly parents of young girls, but acknowledging that boys suffer as well—know that those conversations can be difficult. Young girls are exposed to so many harmful images on social media. I really valued the opportunity to have a conversation with my daughter during Body Image and Eating Disorders Awareness Week about the things that she was feeling and experiencing.

It saddened me to hear my daughter, at 11, talk about diet and body image and peer pressure in a way that really showed me that while we have made progress, there is still a long way to go. Motions such as this one and opportunities like Body Image and Eating Disorders Awareness Week should be grabbed with both hands as a chance to have those conversations with those around us. The impact of an eating disorder on individuals, their families and the community has been well outlined by other speakers. It requires specialised care. It is a challenge in terms of some of the other areas of mental health for which we are trying to improve our services.

One of the most prevalent uses of restraint in mental health facilities is in relation to eating disorders and the administration of feeding tubes. That is the reality of the specialised challenges that we are facing. It is really important that we have these conversations about how we can ensure that the model and level of care is adequate and responsive. The voice of lived experience is incredibly important for that. We hear those voices. We are proud and pleased to be part of this conversation. We know there is more work to do, but we are up for doing it.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (17:37): I congratulate and thank the Hon. Emily Suvaal for bringing this motion to the House. It is such an important issue. Body shaming is wrong; it always has been and it always will be. As a father of two young children under 10, a boy and a girl, almost every day I see the enormous pressure

that social media puts on my children with images of the so-called perfect body that they are supposed to live up to—both my son and my daughter. It is much more of an issue for my daughter, but it still happens in relation to my son. I am having to spend an enormous amount of time talking to them about how the images are fake, how people are not actually like that and how it is an unrealistic image for somebody to live up to. It should not be like that. We need to be in a position where we accept that there are bodies of all shapes and sizes, that everybody is different and that it is normal, attractive and valuable. We should not be trying to live up to unrealistic, idealistic notions of what some people shove down the throats of our kids and the rest of society through social media.

I thank the Hon. Emily Suvaal because the Body Image and Eating Disorders Awareness Week is important. It will draw attention to the issue and help to remove the stigma associated with not only people who might not fit the "perfect" body image but also the eating disorders associated with it. We know that they are coupled with and often lead to other mental health disorders. We need to reduce that stigma. We need to eliminate it and ensure that we provide appropriate support for people. Often that is just the things we do in our own community by having conversations in our family, calling out body-shaming when we hear it or see it and making our communities much better places to live in. It starts with things like the awareness week and motions like this one. The Hon. Emily Suvaal has done an enormous amount of work on these issues. I place on the record my congratulations and full support for the great work that the Hon. Emily Suvaal does. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, and Minister for Natural Resources) (17:41): I take this opportunity to commend the Hon. Emily Suvaal for bringing this important motion to the House and acknowledge the earnest and excellent contribution from both sides of the Chamber this afternoon. It is important that we put this information on the record. There are alarming statistics, particularly those that the Hon. Emily Suvaal spoke about in her contribution, around the effect of eating disorders on not just individuals but also families and communities. The Minister for Mental Health was right about having an incredible champion in the House, and she spoke about her personal insight about being able to speak to her own family and daughter about how this is an intensely personal issue but has huge ramifications across society. The thing that concerns me, which everyone has alluded to this afternoon, is the increase in prevalence for both men and women. We traditionally saw this in women, but there is certainly an emergence of men struggling with this.

The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine made an incredibly insightful contribution about the intersection between social media and eating disorders. What we see on social media is not real. It is a small slice and, as the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine said, it is highly filtered. There is a "best foot forward" kind of approach. But trying to explain that and unpick that, particularly to young minds, is a huge challenge for us all. This is an important issue. There are a lot of important issues out there. Motions like this one show the important contribution that members of the Chamber can make when they are working together. We have a real capacity to do that, particularly in this place.

I touch on the point that the Minister for Mental Health made. We need a champion. The Hon. Emily Suvaal showed extraordinary strength in her inaugural speech and in sharing her intensely personal story. We were friends before she came into this place, but I had no idea. I said to her afterwards that I always knew there was an incredible strength in her. I thought about how she was a paediatric nurse, a mum to two small boys and living in a regional area. But her amazing strength to recover through such an extraordinary journey and then, on top of all of that, to share that in such a moving and considered way in her first introduction to the House is remarkable. The Hon. Emily Suvaal is making an extraordinary contribution in so many areas, but it is a powerful thing and is an amazing example for other young women and men—particularly young women—who are facing their own struggles.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (17:44): In reply: I thank all honourable members who have contributed to today's debate. I particularly mention the Hon. Susan Carter and her "bi-champion" stance. It is wonderful. As the motion suggests, over one million Australians have an eating disorder. Further to that, it is worth noting that in terms of the average of the statistics, 4 per cent of the population have an eating disorder. The number of people who have approached me in this place to share their own stories since I shared mine has been remarkable. There are many other champions in this place. It is true that it is not just teenagers on a diet. In fact, there are many at-risk populations for an eating disorder. The highest-risk groups includes females, especially during biological and social transition periods, which includes the onset of puberty between the age of 13 and 17. They also include people going through a change in relationship status, during pregnancy, postpartum, during menopause or a change in social role.

Other high-risk groups include those in competitive occupations. It would not surprise many in this place that a perfectionistic trait is common amongst many who have an eating disorder. Competitive occupations, sports and the performing arts emphasise body weight and shape. There is also a high risk within LGBTQIA+ communities that is worth noting. I thank the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine for her contribution, particularly in underscoring the impact of social media. One thing that we can all do that has an immediate protective impact is

to talk about and address weight stigma. The role that social media plays in emphasising that weight stigma is not something we can ignore.

I also acknowledge my colleague the Minister for Mental Health, who talked about her 11-year-old daughter. That struck a chord with me as someone who was 11 when they were diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, and that began the journey of my rollercoaster. That was remarkable. I also talk about the administration of restraint. We cannot shy away from that. The restraint rates are too high. As someone who was physically restrained many, many times under the treatment of the Mental Health Act, had a nasogastric tube inserted and was scheduled and transferred from a private hospital to a public one, the use of restraint is something that has stuck with me. It is not acceptable to have rates as high as we do. I know that is something the Minister is working hard on. There is compelling evidence that indicates there is a strong genetic component that influences the onset of eating disorders. There is more work to be done. I congratulate all members of this place for their contributions to ensuring that work gets done.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Documents

BRUMBIES AERIAL CULLING

Return to Order

The CLERK: According to the resolution of the House of Wednesday 23 August 2023, I table additional documents relating to an order for papers regarding the aerial culling of brumbies, received on Wednesday 13 September 2023 from the Deputy Secretary, General Counsel of the Cabinet Office, together with an indexed list of documents.

Claim of Privilege

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

Claim of Personal Information

The CLERK: I table a return identifying additional documents received on Wednesday 13 September 2023 that are subject to a claim that they contain personal information and should not be made public or tabled. I advise that pursuant to standing orders the documents are available for inspection by members of the Legislative Council only.

GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

Return to Order

The CLERK: According to the resolution of the House of Wednesday 23 August 2023, I table documents relating to an order for papers regarding public forest harvesting operations in New South Wales, received on Wednesday 13 September 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 documents received on Wednesday 13 September 2023 that are claimed to be privileged and should not be made public or tabled. I advise that pursuant to standing orders the documents are available for inspection by members of the Legislative Council only.

Claim of Personal Information

The CLERK: I table a return identifying documents received on Wednesday 13 September 2023 that are subject to a claim that they contain personal information and should not be made public or tabled. I advise that pursuant to standing orders the documents are available for inspection by members of the Legislative Council only.

*Committees***SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE FEASIBILITY OF UNDERGROUNDING THE TRANSMISSION INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS****Establishment, Membership, Chair and Deputy Chair**

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (17:48): I seek leave to amend private members' business item No. 404 by omitting in paragraph (2) (a) "two Government members" and inserting instead "three Government members".

The Hon. Rose Jackson: Three of us have got to waste our time.

Leave granted.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Accordingly, I move:

- (1) That a select committee be established to inquire into and report on the feasibility of undergrounding the transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects, and in particular:
 - (a) the costs, benefits and risks of underground versus overhead transmission lines, particularly with regard to bushfire and other weather-related events, ongoing environmental impacts, and community mental health and welfare;
 - (b) existing case studies and current projects regarding similar undergrounding of transmission lines in both domestic and international contexts;
 - (c) any impact on delivery timeframes of undergrounding with broad community consensus versus overhead transmission with large scale opposition; and
 - (d) any other related matters.
- (2) That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the standing orders, the committee consist of seven members comprising:
 - (a) three Government members;
 - (b) two Opposition members, one being the Hon. Wes Fang; and
 - (c) two crossbench members, being Ms Cate Faehrmann and the Hon. Rod Roberts.
- (3) That the Chair of the committee be Ms Cate Faehrmann and the Deputy Chair be the Hon. Wes Fang.
- (4) That, unless the committee decides otherwise:
 - (a) all inquiries are to be advertised via social media, stakeholder emails and a media release distributed to all media outlets in New South Wales;
 - (b) submissions to inquiries are to be published, subject to the Committee Clerk checking for confidentiality and adverse mention and, where those issues arise, bringing them to the attention of the committee for consideration;
 - (c) attachments to submissions are to remain confidential;
 - (d) the Chair's proposed witness list is to be circulated to provide members with an opportunity to amend the list, with the witness list agreed to by email, unless a member requests the Chair to convene a meeting to resolve any disagreement;
 - (e) the sequence of questions to be asked at hearings alternate between Opposition, crossbench and Government members, in that order, with equal time allocated to each;
 - (f) transcripts of evidence taken at public hearings are to be published;
 - (g) supplementary questions are to be lodged with the Committee Clerk within two business days following the receipt of the hearing transcript, with witnesses requested to return answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions within 21 calendar days of the date on which questions are forwarded to the witness;
 - (h) answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions are to be published, subject to the Committee Clerk checking for confidentiality and adverse mention and, where those issues arise, bringing them to the attention of the committee for consideration; and
 - (i) media statements on behalf of the committee are to be made only by the Chair.
- (5) That the committee report by 31 March 2024.

I acknowledge the interjection by the Minister that three Government members have to waste their time on this select committee. The motion seeks to establish a select committee into underground transmission lines because in the past few weeks the Standing Committee on State Development issued its Government-dominated report into underground transmission lines and it was, frankly, a sham. The committee was set up deliberately to make one finding: HumeLink should be built with overhead transmission lines. It ignored much of the evidence and the community concerns presented at the inquiry. To be honest, we are wondering why the inquiry took place. The select committee is being established to ensure that community voices are genuinely heard and acted upon and, importantly, that all members give all of the evidence relating to underground transmission lines versus overhead transmission lines adequate consideration and deliberation.

HumeLink, which will be 360 kilometres long at this stage, looks as though it will be built with overhead transmission lines. That is incredibly controversial. It will have enormous environmental impacts and present huge risks in terms of bushfire and other weather-related events. Not only that, but the Australian Energy Market Operator has indicated that 10,000 kilometres of transmission lines will be needed in the transition to renewable energy. Much of it will be built in New South Wales and, if the sham of the Government-dominated committee inquiry is anything to go by, underground transmission across New South Wales will not get a mention.

At the inquiry Government members just sat back and listened to Transgrid witnesses, who, for whatever reason, seemed extremely ideologically opposed to underground transmission lines. Transgrid gave evidence that the experts quickly refuted, but that did not find its way into the report's findings or recommendations. That is why it is so important for the select committee to be established. It is a really serious thing. Considering the impact of overhead transmission lines, the Government has to get it right. Unfortunately, it is backing last-century technology when what we need is technology for the future that can withstand climate-related events.

Opposition members and crossbench members have talked, and they are very unhappy with the final report. But the thing that really convinced me of the need for the select committee was the evidence about the bushfire risk of overhead transmission lines. If there is a fire, aerial firefighting must be completely stopped. Firefighting personnel and volunteers cannot go around lines. The lines cause fires by arcing. Transgrid witnesses said there were no incidents and they had no knowledge of any transmission lines ever causing fires, but multiple witnesses, including volunteer firefighters, said they had witnessed it. They had seen it. There was evidence.

After the inquiry reported, I did some research and found that Transgrid, in fact, published a report about the impact of the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfire season on its transmission infrastructure. Hundreds if not thousands of kilometres of its infrastructure was damaged. Poles were damaged. None of that made its way into the inquiry, despite multiple questions put to Transgrid about bushfires. I found out later that Transgrid also commissioned a report into bushfires, called a red hat review. Transgrid did not bother to inform the committee about any of that. I would say that Transgrid did not give us all the information it should have. The select committee will forensically examine the matter and produce something that is of benefit to the community, not like the Standing Committee on State Development report. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. WES FANG (17:54): I lead for the Opposition in debate on the motion, and I congratulate Ms Cate Faehrmann on moving it. As a member of the Standing Committee on State Development, I witnessed what was nothing short of a railroading of non-Government members who tried to provide some balance within the report and increase the amount of evidence cited that was contradictory, effectively, to what Transgrid wanted the report to say. All of that was rejected by the Government. When Ms Cate Faehrmann, the Hon. Emma Hurst, the member for Murray and I are in the same room with the same message it shows how important something must be.

The Hon. Rose Jackson: Clowns to the left and jokers to the right.

The Hon. WES FANG: I hear Government members joking.

The Hon. Rose Jackson: It is not a joke.

The Hon. WES FANG: I acknowledge that interjection; it is not a joke. We saw the ramming through of a report that did not reflect the evidence that we heard as a committee. It did not reflect the risks to the environment and native animals or the risk of bushfire. I said earlier that we have concerns when the Minister who is in charge of the provision of energy in the State is also in charge of things like brumbies. Both damage the environment, but one is okay and the other is not. It is a position that I think the committee tried to find some balance on, including members of The Greens, the Animal Justice Party, the Liberal Party and The Nationals, but all of those things were rejected. The fact that we have had to go to this extreme points to how important this issue is to rural and regional communities. We have spoken today about how rural and regional communities are feeling abandoned by the Labor Party. It is important, because their voices were not heard. The select committee will listen to those voices. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (17:57): I oppose the motion. The Government does not support another inquiry into transmission lines. I am disappointed that we are debating this. The Standing Committee on State Development produced an important report following many submissions and many public hearings on the issue. The real risk here is climate change. We need to take action, and we need to do it as quickly as possible. One of the most important ways we can do that is to decarbonise our energy system, and that requires transmission lines. There is no way we can transform our electricity system without that. That is the reality that we are dealing with.

I understand that the National Party is dissembling all over the place on its position on renewable energy. If the Hon. Wes Fang had his way we would be heading towards using small nuclear reactors, because that is the flavour of the month. We would have nuclear reactors in our backyards. I am told every single day that the reality is we need to get to net zero as quickly as possible. The Greens have a bill before the House that talks about getting to net zero by 2035, and I know they do not support any extension of coal-fired power. That is great, but the harsh reality is that if we do not get the transmission lines built before 2030 we will not get to net zero and we will not hit a 50 per cent reduction by 2030 either. That is the reality. None of these are easy choices. They are all very difficult.

I expect it from the Nats, because they have never really believed in it. We know half of their support for the road map was just a deal done between Matt Kean and John Barilaro on a whole range of issues. But the issues around overhead transmission are serious. They were taken very seriously by the committee, and they were examined carefully. The Greens are now going to ask communities yet again to make a whole lot of submissions about those issues. That is okay, and they will do that. But we are going to get on with doing the job of making the necessary transformation of our electricity system.

We need to understand that putting transmission underground will add years to the time frames for delivering the projects. If The Greens really cared about this issue—if they cared about closing Eraring as soon as possible—they would know that installing transmission lines could take two, three or four times longer and guarantee that we will need coal-fired power for longer. Underground transmission lines cost significantly more. That means that consumers pay more. I am grappling with this every day, as we try to have equity in the transformation.

What The Greens are putting up would cost between two and 20 times more, but that is not something this Government is prepared to contemplate. The disturbance of land is much greater with undergrounding cables, and it also sterilises a lot more farmland than currently. We understand that this will be discussed and will probably be passed by the House, but it is a great disappointment that we are going to be looking at this again when there are very clear facts. Those of us who are trying to get this work done will have to wait while this committee continues to get in the way.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (18:00): Along with my colleague the Hon. Penny Sharpe, I oppose the motion. As the Chair of the Standing Committee on State Development, I am aware of the rigorous process that we put those inquiries through and the process of the report. It is worth mentioning at the outset The Greens' position on undergrounding and that they have campaigned on closing all New South Wales coal-fired power stations by 2030. Just last week, they heavily criticised this Government's decision to engage with Origin Energy about the future of the Eraring Power Station. They constantly talk of the need to accelerate the energy transition. In fact, they have a bill before this Parliament to reach net zero by 2035.

On 24 August Ms Cate Faehrmann's colleague Ms Sue Higginson posted herself on Instagram with the member for Balmain spruiking the merits of the climate change Act that they were preparing to introduce. Their proposed Act would legislate 2035 as the year to reach net zero emissions, but apparently we are going to get there with no new transmission lines. According to Ms Sue Higginson, we need to take radical and urgent action but, again, just not with transmission lines to connect clean power to the grid.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): The Hon. Emily Suvaal will resume her seat. The Hon. Wes Fang will resist the temptation to interject. I understand that there is an interplay at the table. Everyone at the table will refrain from interjecting so that we can hear the Hon. Emily Suvaal.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: It is also nice to see The Greens lining up with the National Party, who would rather we have nuclear reactors in people's backyards. I believe the Hon. Wes Fang has volunteered for one, and I am sure his neighbours in Wagga Wagga will love that. Do The Greens also agree with Barnaby Joyce that renewables are a great energy swindle, I wonder? They want us to shut down New South Wales power stations tomorrow, but they are not interested in doing the hard work required to replace them. As usual, it is all talk, all grandstanding, and no responsibility. There is no easy road to net zero. We acknowledge that. The Greens pretend we can close our eyes, tap our heels and wish our way there. The truth is that this Government was left with an absolute mess—an energy road map that needed to be rescued. We are getting on with the job of keeping the lights on for the people of New South Wales and ensuring that their power bills do not go through the roof. Undergrounding powerlines is just a farcical idea—too long; too costly. [*Time expired.*]

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (18:03): I support the motion of my colleague Ms Cate Faehrmann to establish a select committee. It is important that we do this and do it the best way we possibly can. In doing the transition in the best way we possibly can, we need to interrogate properly all of the options. Before I became a member of this House, I was part of a law editorial team working with professors of law at the University of Sydney. We were looking at climate resilience when it comes to the new energy system. Unfortunately, I needed to pull out of

that project because I ended up here. But we were looking at research from across the world about how we could possibly, and properly, make this transition in the public interest and in the long term.

We need to be serious about what we are talking about. It is not just a matter of doing this the way we planned to in the last Parliament, with low targets and renewable energy zones, before we realised just how significant the climate breakdown that we are experiencing was going to be and how fast it has happened. Where we are right now, and how fast we got there, has shocked all of us. It is a simple fact that the infrastructure of yesterday will not necessarily be fit for purpose for the climate breakdown of today, tomorrow, the next decade and the next generations.

We need to have a proper forensic interrogation of what we are doing. We honestly and sincerely cannot just assume that the infrastructure of yesterday will serve us properly. Undergrounding could be and should be on the table in certain places and circumstances. If we do this properly and do it well, then we will have infrastructure that is fit for purpose. We have seen what has happened in the Northern Hemisphere during our winter and their summer. I have already seen what has happened in my community of Lismore, where the infrastructure of yesterday literally melted down and crumbled under the extreme weather circumstances that we experienced. We have to do this—yes, fast. But we also have to do it properly, and if it costs a little bit of extra money today so that we save it in the future, that is absolutely something we should be looking at sincerely and with a forensic eye, today.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (18:06): As somebody who served as a member on the Standing Committee on State Development inquiry, I want to say that this motion is completely unprincipled. It is pure politics, and it will be at the expense of all the good, honest landholders who turned up to that inquiry. I say that because no case was made in the inquiry by either Ms Cate Faehrmann or the Hon. Wes Fang against the core findings. There was plenty of cherry-picking of the evidence, but no case was made. I was there for the examination of the witnesses from Transgrid, the Australian Energy Regulator and the Australian Energy Market Operator, and there was, in effect, no substantial challenge.

I urge honourable members to read the transcripts and the dissenting statements. If you do so, you will see no challenge to those core findings—firstly, that undergrounding would cost somewhere between two and 20 times, and most importantly perhaps, that even Amplitude Consultants, who were in favour of undergrounding, said it would not be approved by the regulator. We have a national electricity law in Australia. There was no engagement by those two members with the rather broad question of how we would now, in retrospect, amend the National Electricity Law? I say "in retrospect" because one of the important pieces of evidence was that if one were to pursue undergrounding, it would have needed to have been done by the previous Government, it would have needed to involve it putting in many billions of dollars, and it would only be in those circumstances that it could be approved by the regulator. That evidence was completely unchallenged.

If we turn to the facts of what the previous State Government did, it approved the above-ground transmission lines in the Kosciuszko National Park. I would be interested to know what the Hon. Wes Fang said about that. That was the policy of the previous Government, but now he is willing to play politics with the hearts and minds of those people when he knows it is never going to happen; it is just pure politics. He says that there is something to be discerned from the fact that The Greens and the National Party are a unity ticket on this. I will tell members what is to be discerned: It is pure opportunism. It is not going to happen. The evidence does not support it. The Hon. Wes Fang mounted no rigorous challenge to those findings. I urge people to read the full content and the minutes. Now the Hon. Wes Fang turns up to this Chamber to support this motion and it is pure opportunism. It will probably pass, but it really should not pass. It is at the expense of the landholders. It is simply disgraceful. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (18:10): I am suffering from déjà vu. I just cannot believe this. It must be weird Wednesday in this House because when I checked my diary I was with the Hon. Mark Buttigieg on 27 July attending a hearing on exactly this issue. The hearing was in Armidale and I was listening to evidence about this matter by Webex. Just because someone does not like the result does not mean they should be allowed a do-over. Let us have another inquiry! Let us put the public and the Parliament to all the time and expense of preparing submissions and organising the hearings. There was an opportunity for The Nationals and The Greens in that committee to challenge the report and the result. As the Hon. Stephen Lawrence said, they just did not do that. It is clear they do not like the ultimate outcome. I know that the House will probably support yet another inquiry.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): The Hon. Wes Fang will cease interjecting.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Let us be clear about what this is. This is a stitch-up between the National Party and The Greens to hold another inquiry into something that has already been tested—for no other reason than they just do not like the result. All this will ultimately do is make it harder for us to transition to renewable energy. The evidence was clear. I read the report. We are stuck with above-grounding if we want to

make that transition quickly. It is not just a matter of the expense, as Ms Sue Higginson raised, and spending extra money. It is that it will delay the transition and we will be in a position where coal-fired power plants, non-renewable energy, will be there for much longer unless we put those lines in.

That was the conclusion of the committee in its report because that is what the evidence was. If The Nationals and The Greens do not like the evidence, they should have challenged it in that hearing. They should have mounted a case. They should have put a properly reasoned argument, which may have been adopted by the committee. But they just did not do that. That is the way I read the report. There is nothing of substance in the dissenting reports that would lead to a different conclusion. If this motion is passed it will waste a lot of people's time. It is an abuse of process, and it should not be supported by this House.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (18:12): As my colleague pointed out, I was also a member of that committee and it was emphatic. I was taught at TAFE when we did this back in the eighties about relative cost comparisons between the overhead network and the underground network. Back then they told us that, as a rule of thumb, to underground a network it costs four times as much. In an ideal world, if we had bucketloads of time and money, we would look at it more seriously, but we are constantly told by The Greens that we are in a climate emergency. Our Government is in the sensible centre, where it always is, and we are trying to navigate us to net zero by 2050 by making good on the energy road plan with renewables. We are trying to get us there by accepting the reality that, if we are going to do it, it has to go overhead. It is a no-brainer.

What my colleagues have pointed out is true. We have this unholy alliance between The Greens, who actually believe in climate change, and The Nationals, who are backing in their constituency and riling them up. They are playing each other off so that they can both pitch to their own constituencies to say that somehow we have to get there in a pure way. The whole project will be jeopardised if it continues to be politicised in that fashion. If in some sort of parallel universe we have a situation where they were able to force the Parliament into approving underground and we did not get there by that time, the whole project would go south and the public would lose faith in our transition to net zero.

We have community consensus around the Labor Government having a sensible plan whereby we are keeping Eraring open because we do not want the lights to go off and we do not want public confidence to be undermined in our transition to renewables. I believe the public understands that we have to transition and we have to do it as quickly and as efficiently as possible. The inquiry showed emphatically that the only way to do that is to go overhead. Now, because The Nationals and The Greens do not like the outcome and they do not like that they have not wound up their constituencies to a sufficient degree, let us have a select committee inquiring into it because we can get it up and make merry again. That is just not good policy. The Nationals and The Greens might think it is good politics but, in the long run, all they are doing is jeopardising their own causes. The Nationals will do what they always do, which is play politics.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (18:16): In reply: I thank all members who contributed to debate. I briefly address some of the issues that were raised. Let us be clear that the inquiry into transmission lines will not halt the deployment and uptake of renewable energy. It will enable this Parliament, through the upper House committee, to genuinely examine the benefits of underground transmission. That is not what the Standing Committee on State Development did. It went in with a predetermined agenda to find that overhead transmission lines were where they needed to go. That was very clear from the start. It was very clear from the questions that Government members asked witnesses.

I point out my concerns that in her contribution the Minister for Energy seemed to continue the same old misinformation about underground transmission lines that Transgrid kept posing to the inquiry that was debunked and refuted by experts who had more combined experience in underground transmission lines than anybody else pretty much in the country. To hear that it would take two, three or four times longer to do underground transmission lines is just not true. It is just not what is happening with laying underground transmission lines. To hear it was two to 20 times greater, again, was not the evidence. That is why this select committee has to be established. It is really important to get the information out there, as my colleague Ms Sue Higginson said, around the need for underground transmission and why it is so important that we futureproof our energy infrastructure. We also heard that disturbing land is greater by undergrounding, which is simply not true.

The Hon. Emily Suvaal did a fantastic job chairing the Standing Committee on State Development and I thank her very much for her work. However, The Greens position on this inquiry does not mean that we do not want new transmission lines. That is just ridiculous. But why do we not look at whether we can have safer transmission lines? Why do we not look at whether we can build lines that will, as Ms Sue Higginson said, be there in 50 years' time? If we look at the climate disruption that we are faced with now, heaven help the transmission infrastructure with what it will have to withstand in 2040. I commend the motion to the House.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine): The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Bills

EXPLOSIVES AMENDMENT BILL 2023

First Reading

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

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

Statement of public interest tabled.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I move:

That standing orders be suspended to allow the passing of the bill through all its remaining stages during the present or any one sitting of the House.

Motion agreed to.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I move:

That the second reading of the bill stand as an order of the day for the next sitting day.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

TRIBUTE TO JEREMY JONES, AM

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (18:21): I move:

- (1) That this House notes with sadness the death of Jeremy Jones, AM.
- (2) That this House notes that:
 - (a) Mr Jones was the director of international and community affairs at the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council and a life member and former president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry;
 - (b) his work in promoting interfaith dialogue and community harmony was recognised by the award of the Australian Human Rights Medal in 2007, the Stepan Kerkyasharian, AO, Medal for Community Harmony in 2016 and when Mr Jones was made a member of the Order of Australia;
 - (c) Mr Jones was a world leader on racism, especially antisemitism; and
 - (d) he was the first Australian to serve on the board of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations and was the chair of Interfaith Dialogues.
- (3) That this House recognises that this outline of his work captures only a small part of the great contribution Jeremy Jones made to his community, both locally and internationally, and that he will be missed by all who knew him for his warmth, his kindness, his genuine respect for others and his intellect.
- (4) That this House expresses its condolences to his widow, Naomi, and his children, Gidon and Galit.

Last Wednesday, a week ago today, Jeremy Jones died—a significant loss for his family, his community, his country and the world. He was an intellectual in the best sense of that word and was an articulate defender of respect and justice for all. Jeremy had an international reputation as a considered and articulate opponent of racism and antisemitism in all its forms. His voice was constantly raised, throughout the entirety of his life, in defence and in support of those who were discriminated against, overlooked or disregarded, not for anything they had done but just because of who they were. He was that rare combination of a great mind and a great heart, and he put all of his gifts at the service of those who needed them.

Jeremy was raised in a Jewish family, and this faith and community remained an important part of his life. As a schoolboy he faced the difficult issue that the competition for the debating he loved was on a Friday night, the Jewish Sabbath, which he wanted to observe. Jeremy's solution was to start his own debating competition so that he could do both. He was always a problem-solver. Jeremy was also a committed Australian and was deeply committed to the recognition of Aboriginal peoples and to closing the gap. When he travelled the world, as he often did, he was always to be seen in his matching kippah and tie featuring Indigenous patterns—a fashion choice some of us doubted, but we could never question his sincerity. Jeremy became a leader in the Jewish community, both nationally and internationally. He served in a number of capacities but was best known as the director of international and community affairs at the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council, and he was a life member and former president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.

Jeremy Jones was that rarest and best of leaders. He led not just by position but also by example. He was a genuinely good man who showed us by his professional life and also by his personal life how we can all live best together, with understanding and respect. He was a leader in interfaith dialogue because he understood the importance and the power of faith, and he lived his faith daily. Jeremy saw interfaith dialogue as an important key to achieving true, long-lasting community harmony. He was the first Australian to serve on the board of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations and was the chair of Interfaith Dialogues. His work in promoting interfaith dialogue and community harmony was recognised by the award of the Australian Human Rights Medal in 2007 and the Stepan Kerkyasharian, AO, Community Harmony Medal in 2016. Jeremy's contribution was further recognised when he was made a member of the Order of Australia.

Jeremy was a serious man who thought deeply about serious issues and loved to inform himself about political theory and the events of the day. But he did not live only for the life of the mind. He truly valued all those people he was with, and he was able to connect with them personally, possessing that rare skill of being able to communicate his ideas widely and well to a range of different audiences. This made him an effective campaigner against racism. I had the privilege to meet Jeremy Jones at university, where we were both involved in student politics, usually on different sides but occasionally on a unity ticket. I have been fortunate to be able to call him a friend ever since. As fellow members of the "number every square below the line" league, the joy of every election campaign was lunch with Jeremy when we knew we would be numbering the first squares differently but would tease out exactly who should be awarded those important last five votes and why.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: It is a tough choice.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER: I acknowledge that interjection. Conversation with Jeremy was often challenging but always joyful. Jeremy leaves behind a lasting contribution to public life but also his widow, Naomi, and his children, Gidon and Galit. May his faith be a consolation to them and to all who will mourn him.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (18:26): I thank the Hon. Susan Carter for bringing this motion before the House. I was sad to hear of the passing of Jeremy Jones. He is not a man I knew well, but I knew him well enough to have been touched in a range of different ways as we interacted over many years during my political life. In his interfaith work around community harmony, he was always a faithful servant to the Jewish community but also a faithful servant to the people of New South Wales.

He was genuinely interested in the people he met, the thoughts they had and how they could contribute with him to making New South Wales a better place for all of us to live. He was a strong fighter against racism and particularly antisemitism. He was generous with his time and, as I said, was always curious about others. He was committed to young people. The work he did for many years with various young people—bringing them in, talking about their faith, sharing their ideas and understanding the very basic human truth that really we are all just the same—he did in a kind and funny way, and he managed to win friends wherever he went. Vale, Jeremy Jones.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (18:27): I speak on the occasion of the passing of Jeremy Jones, AM, a distinguished stalwart of the Jewish community in New South Wales and Australia. Jeremy dedicated his whole life to the Jewish community, promoting interfaith dialogue and fighting against antisemitism and racism. Jeremy was a leader in the community since his time at university, where he held roles on the Sydney University and national executives of the Australasian Union of Jewish Students. His work continued for decades. He acted as director of international and community affairs at the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council, and as president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, where he was also recognised as a life member. Jeremy fought strongly against antisemitism, notably in long-running litigation he pursued in the Federal Court on behalf of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry against notorious antisemites and Holocaust deniers.

He was the first Australian to serve on the board of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, where he worked on establishing dialogues between different faiths. It is striking and important that Nur Munir of the Nahdlatul Ulama, one of the world's largest Muslim organisations by membership, paid tribute to Jeremy for his work on interfaith dialogue. That is so important in our community. His interfaith work is critical in our harmonious, multicultural community. I am glad that his extensive work was recognised during his lifetime. We often recognise such things only after the fact.

He was the recipient of the Australian Human Rights Medal, the Stepan Kerkyasharian, AO, Medal for Community Harmony and was made a Member of the Order of Australia. Jeremy Jones received tributes from across the Australian community. Themes about his warmth, his eagerness to teach and mentor—critically important to the next generation—and his ability to put greater causes above his own personal needs were common throughout.

I am so pleased to be able to stand in support of the condolence motion. As co-chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Israel and former chair, I extend my deep and sincere gratitude and condolences to his wife, Naomi, children Gidon and Galit, and members of the wider Jones family for their loss. People of Australia and New South Wales mourn the loss of someone who was a thought leader, who exercised great work and who took great strides towards peace in our harmonious multicultural community we live so well within. May his memory be a blessing.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (18:30): I pay tribute to Jeremy Jones, AM, a beloved member of our community who died last Wednesday after a battle with cancer. As Director of International and Community Affairs at the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council [AIJAC], Jeremy was a leading light of the Australian-Jewish community and a driving force for tolerance and multiculturalism. The outpouring of sorrow following Jeremy's untimely passing has been overwhelming. From Federal and State parliaments, to leaders around the world, tributes have poured. I echo those sentiments today.

Jeremy was one of a kind. His contributions were incredibly wideranging and too many in number to begin to do justice to in my limited time. However, to give the House some sense of his influence, he was the founder of the first Jewish and Christian dialogue group in Sydney, he was one of the group of experts that helped formulate the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism, he was the plaintiff in two key court cases establishing that antisemitism was covered by the Federal Racial Discrimination Act and that Holocaust denial violated that legislation.

Expressing their utter devastation at Jeremy's loss in their tribute to him, AIJAC chairman Mark Leibler and executive director Colin Rubenstein called Jeremy "a one-man rolodex and intelligence agency, who knew almost every person of importance in Australian politics, religious communities, the media and other areas of public life and was almost universally liked and respected". Beyond his role at AIJAC, Jeremy served as vice president, and later president, at the Executive Council of Australian Jewry. He was at the forefront of the battle to expose and combat antisemitism, racial hatred and bigotry. He was notably a genuine supporter of Indigenous Australians. He was also a member of the Australian Labor Party as a young man, was instrumental in setting up the New South Wales Labor Friends of Israel, and was active on the foreign affairs, immigration and multicultural ALP committees too.

Jeremy played a unique role in Australia-Asia and Australia-Israel relations. His work on the Jewish-Muslim dialogue opened doors to meaningful engagement in Indonesia. I recognise too Jeremy's unwavering commitment to confronting the biased treatment of Israel within international bodies. As a member of the Australian Government United Nations delegation, he was at that particularly interesting Durban conference, and has stood against such behaviour ever since. The New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies president, David Ossip, called Jeremy a "mensch par excellence" and so he was. In his words of condolence on behalf of the New South Wales Government, Premier Minns said, "His efforts have had a tangible and lasting impact on community cohesion in New South Wales, Australia, and globally. Jeremy leaves behind a loving family and a tremendous legacy, and he will be missed by us all."

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (18:33): I acknowledge the work of Jeremy Jones, particularly his work in promoting interfaith and intercommunal harmony. I express my condolences to his family on his passing. In this place we have a mandate to act in the best interests of the residents of our State, which requires us to reflect on the views and needs of a diverse population and to do so in a way that is respectful and encourages social cohesion and intercommunal harmony. Jeremy Jones's work embodied that mandate in his commitment to building bridges between communities and religious groups. His commitment was clear. He was recognised with the Australian Human Rights Medal 2007 and a harmony award in 2016, both in recognition of his work promoting multicultural interfaith dialogue. The statement regarding the award of the Australian Human Rights Medal read:

Mr Jones is an advocate who has dedicated his life to promoting freedom from racial discrimination, persecution, harassment and freedom of religion. [He] has tirelessly undertaken voluntary work within Indigenous, Jewish and Muslim communities as well as other minority groups ... his cross-faith work had been integral in building bridges between communities and minority groups throughout his career.

In recognising his contributions in Federal Parliament last week, Senator Deb O'Neil paid tribute to Jones's deep commitment to defending the inalienable rights of all people, which saw him encourage and establish dialogue among individuals and groups of different faiths. While I did not know Mr Jones personally, his legacy goes beyond those he had personally met. What I take as a lesson from his life is commitment to antiracism, Indigenous reconciliation, interfaith dialogue, multifaith collaboration and promotion of a kinder, more caring Sydney, New South Wales, Australia and the world. That is something that many of us would do well to imitate.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (18:35): I have the great fortune of knowing Jeremy Jones since I started working as a staffer for Peter Debnam in Vaucluse in 2005. Jeremy came from the other side of the political divide but he was a warm to person to anyone, whatever their politics, sexuality or racial background, and I always respected him for that. Jeremy lived a life of inclusion and was somebody known throughout broader society, not

just the Jewish community, as somebody who brought people together. He was a true humanitarian. I am glad the Hon. Daniel Mookhey reflected on his commitment to Indigenous Australia. I will always remember Jeremy in his Indigenous kippah. That was the symbol of Jeremy in many ways. It was not at Jewish functions that I would see Jeremy most often but at other cultural events. The Indian Independence Day function was one such event. I was thinking that I had not seen Jeremy there this year, and it was quite sad because I always enjoyed Jeremy's company.

Jeremy was a great advocate for the Jewish people, for Israel and for the whole Jewish community in his roles at the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council [AIJAC] and the Executive Council of Australian Jewry. As a former chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Israel, I appreciate what Jeremy did to better inform parliamentarians in New South Wales about Israel and Jewish affairs, but also about antisemitism, which really did touch Jeremy. We had lots of conversations about the evolving role of antisemitism in our society. I know he was very happy to see the Nazi symbols bill pass this place in last year. In our last conversation, we reflected on that and how it was something the Parliament could own and show throughout the world.

One thing that Jeremy would see as his legacy is being able to bring the Jewish community to all other communities throughout New South Wales. I see through the outpouring of grief that has occurred since Jeremy's passing that other communities New South Wales felt the same way about Jeremy, in particular the Muslim community where there were many challenges over many years. Jeremy always sought to bridge that divide. I send my condolences to his family, to all of the team at AIJAC who are mourning his loss, including our former colleague in this place the Hon. Walt Secord and to the broader Jewish community. Vale Jeremy Jones.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (18:37): In reply: I thank the members of the House for a very fitting tribute to the life of Jeremy Jones. It is wonderful to see his legacy remembered in the way that it should be, by people from different walks of life, of different persuasions thinking very different thoughts, but all united in recognising the contribution he made. I particularly thank the Hon. Penny Sharpe, the Hon. Natalie Ward, the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine and the Hon. Scott Farlow for their contributions. I take the liberty of expressing the condolences of the House to his family, his friends and all those who will miss him.

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

Motion agreed to.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): I shall now leave the chair. The House will resume at 8.00 p.m.

Bills

SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK AUTHORITY AMENDMENT (HILL ROAD UPGRADE) BILL 2023

Returned

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly returning the bill without amendment.

Motions

QATAR AIRWAYS

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (20:01): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) increasing flight capacities in Australia for international airlines creates a more competitive flight market, reducing travel prices for everyday Australians; and
 - (b) the recent decision by the Commonwealth Government to reject Qatar Airways' application for an additional 21 flights to Australia is anti-competitive and contributes to artificially increased airfares.
- (2) That this House calls on the Commonwealth Government to overturn its monopolistic decision with respect to Qatar Airways' application for greater flight capacity in Australia.

There have been many times in politics when the Labor Party has been caught saying one thing and doing another. It spent much of the last Federal election campaign promising that it would fight the cost-of-living pressures facing everyday Australians. Labor has, however, consistently failed to deliver on that promise. Over the past 12 months, to June of this year, households of working employees experienced the largest annual rise in living costs on record, with the Australian Bureau of Statistics recording a nationwide 9.6 per cent increase in their living cost index. One would think, naturally, that Labor would try everything within its power to relieve Australians from increasing everyday prices. It certainly said as much. After all, Labor is supposedly for the worker.

However, when an opportunity arose for the Albanese Government to directly address cost-of-living concerns by a very simple decision, Labor demonstrated that it does not really care. That decision was the rejection of the Qatar Airways application for an additional 21 flights to Australia. It is anti-competitive, encourages monopolistic business behaviour and is a betrayal of the interests of Australians who are struggling with cost-of-living pressures. Increasing flight capacities in Australia for international airlines creates a more competitive flight market. It would create a system wherein rivalrous carriers would need to compete to provide the greatest quality of service at the best price in order to attract customers. It may very well be that Qatar Airways would not succeed in filling its seats or peeling away customers from Qantas. In that case, we have the status quo. However, in the alternative case, Qantas would be forced to respond by offering either a more affordable service or a higher quality of service. That is the benefit of competition.

It is for that reason that Qantas invests significantly in its government engagement. As it stands, Qantas has air superiority, in quite the literal sense. In the words of former Treasurer Peter Costello, Qantas is "one of the most powerful players in Canberra", allowing it to regularly make submissions in opposition to capacity increase applications such as Qatar's. The reality is that when we protect monopolistic business models and reward their efforts to maintain the status quo, we create businesses with a keen interest in lobbying the government and little interest in improving their service delivery. By contrast, increased flight traffic shared among a range of airlines would lead to more competition, lower fares, better services and lower inflation. Industry research suggests that the Qatar Airways decision could have brought the economy an additional \$788 million per year in economic activity. Further, it is estimated that the decision could have cut some international airfares by an estimated 40 per cent. Australia deserves to know more as to why the Commonwealth Labor Government did not act in the interests of everyday Australians.

For the purpose of the Legislative Council, I have drafted this motion in order to ensure that the people of New South Wales can have confidence that their State representatives disagree with the conclusion arrived at by the Federal transport Minister. The State Government does not have to stand by the decision made by the Albanese Government. It can differentiate itself from Federal Labor. Perhaps one theory as to why the Government rejected the Qatar Airways application for additional flights is that it has something to do with the supply of special perks for Government members of Parliament and Ministers in particular.

The elusive Qantas Chairman's Lounge membership has, to my understanding, been offered to nearly every Labor Minister at both a State and Federal level. I note that, joining Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his son, a number of New South Wales Ministers—indeed, in this place—are holders of Chairman's Lounge memberships. It is there for all to see in the recent supplementary returns. Nothing says working-class representatives more than forcing back all of that French champagne and eating all that caviar while simultaneously pretending to stand up for workers' rights in the exclusive Chairman's Lounge. It is complete hypocrisy. If NSW Labor members are even half genuine about their claimed interest in representing workers and alleviating cost-of-living pressures for everyday Australians, they would vote to distance themselves from the decision of their Federal counterparts.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (20:06): I will not be taking a lecture on workers' rights from the Hon. Christopher Rath. I admire his curiosity.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: His obsession.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: No, his free-ranging spirit should be encouraged. He is unafraid to constrain himself to State members and, on this occasion, he ventures into Federal territory. I do have to inform him that the Government will not be accepting his invitation to venture into the Federal area. We will be opposing the motion. The airline industry is very complex, and the member has attempted to summarise its operations within this two-part motion. It does not do justice to the complexity of the issues. Obviously, the New South Wales Government takes a close interest in the allocation of airlines to New South Wales, but it does not have a role in the allocation of overseas airlines' access to Australian airports.

These matters have been well debated. These air services agreements are not commercial agreements but are, rather, treaty-level agreements between countries and determined by countries. More than 100 countries around the globe have them with Australia and I can inform the House that in the first week of September there were around 1,857 international flights in through Sydney. But the motion simplifies that, so it will not have the support of the Government, although the member is entitled to bring any matter to the House that he wants. In fact, as a member of the Government, I was concerned when I saw that he had moved this motion and perhaps tapped into the populist mood against Qantas and Alan Joyce.

It has been a very unpopular couple of weeks for them and the member really tapped into that mood with this motion—picked up, I suspect, not at the pub or on the picket line but perhaps from the back page

of *The Australian Financial Review*. I am sure he is a close reader, and there is nothing wrong with reading from the sports pages backwards, which I say in reference to the column, "Rear Window", which has been running a strong anti-Qantas critique. I am a fan of the *Fin Review* and I often read backwards, too, just like the member. My concerns about his populist bent were relieved, though, when I recalled his comments in an earlier debate in this Chamber when we touched on Qantas. On 24 May he said:

Alan Joyce is a legend. Members should look at the great reforms he has implemented at Qantas. He is an absolute legend for the way he has turned around that company, and Qantas is a great Australian icon. I would happily have dinner with Alan Joyce.

So rather than saying one thing and doing another or making an accusation, I would stick to the basics.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (20:09): I am pleased to speak in support of the motion concerning the Albanese Government's decision to deny Australians access to cheaper airfares. The Qatar Airways application was a genuine opportunity to cut the cost of airfares by up to a third for Australian consumers. Here was a chance to bring some further competition to a stagnant market where Qantas' dominant position has meant consumers have faced high prices, declining performance and low customer satisfaction. Here was an opportunity to put the interests of consumers and our tourism industry first.

Instead, the Federal Labor Government has decided to block Qatar and prioritise the commercial interests of Qantas, an airline that recorded an after-tax profit of \$1.7 billion dollars in the last financial year, based on the shonky excuse that this was somehow in Australia's national interest. Qantas' commercial interests are not the national interest. Qantas has a proud history, but it is certainly not the airline of years gone past. Hiding behind a few choirs singing *I Still Call Australia Home* and throwing around a few million frequent flyer points to a frustrated public does not make up for the abject decline of the airline.

Under the outgoing leadership, we have seen thousands of jobs outsourced and made redundant, despite the airline receiving a staggering \$2.7 billion in taxpayer-funded subsidies during the pandemic. Today Qantas was found to have illegally sacked almost 1,700 workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The High Court dismissed the airline's appeal over the illegal sackings. The workers included baggage handlers, cleaners and ground staff. We have seen service levels decline with an almost one-in-10 cancellation rate on the Sydney to Melbourne route alone.

Two weeks ago we saw the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission launch action in the Federal Court alleging that Qantas engaged in false or misleading conduct by advertising 8,000 flights that had already been cancelled but not removed from sale. We have seen an airline leadership focused on woke ideology, using shareholder dollars to be a partisan political player. We recently saw Qantas' decision to ignore the views of many thousands of customers and advocate for the yes campaign for the Voice. Competition brings innovation, choice and lower prices. The motion rightly sends a firm message to the Government to put the ideology and the commercial interests of one player aside, and put the interests of the Australian consumer first and foremost. I commend the motion.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (20:12): The Opposition has no shame—no shame at all. They are the people who, only a few weeks ago, were criticising the union movement and supporting Qantas as a wonderful national institution. Now they are doing the opposite. We need to hand out membership applications for the Transport Workers' Union and the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union for all of those opposite, who can now join up because of the extraordinary position that they have taken on this issue. I say at the outset, I support competition. It is very important that we have competition, particularly in the airline market, which is far too narrow. I am one of those recent customers of Qantas who has been treated appallingly, with flights delayed and cancelled for no reason. I even had one cancelled immediately after I purchased it and then saw it was available for sale again on the website, so I can completely understand and support the action the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission is taking against Qantas.

What I cannot countenance in this motion is why anybody would support making concessions to Qatar Airways. Of all the airlines, that is the one that we should not assist. The reason for that is I cannot ever forget the appalling circumstances that 13 Australian women were put through on 2 October 2020 when they were, in a frightening fashion, forcibly removed, one at a time, from an airline and subjected to a degrading and humiliating inspection to determine whether they had recently given birth, in some exercise to find the mother of an abandoned baby. That is what you get with an airline like Qatar Airways. The industry is not a free competition; airlines are supported by the State. They are State-owned institutions, and it is a regressive State with an appalling human rights record.

As I said, I am all for competition. I just do not think it should be that airline. I think it is appalling that Virgin has made the decision to partner with it, given its human rights record. When that occurred I went to the effort of writing to the Sydney Swans—that is my Australian Football League team—and said, "Why do you have these people as sponsors?" To their credit, they wrote back and said, "We are reviewing it." And they dumped

them as sponsors as a result of that. The Opposition should not be supporting Qatar because of its behaviour. *[Time expired.]*

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (20:15): I support the Hon. Chris Rath on the motion, but it was not the cost-of-living argument that won me over. I do not know if that is the best argument to get the motion across, because a lot of punters in New South Wales are worrying about more important matters at the moment than whether they can fly out overseas. I have been watching this issue closely in the past month or so. Why the decision has been made and the way the Federal Labor Government has handled questions has been interesting. We have a Senate inquiry now too, so I acknowledge that there is an inquiry on foot.

It is worth exploring why the decision was made, in light of the fact that we want as much competition as possible when it comes to flights, including international flights. There is a very unhealthy relationship with the former CEO of Qantas and the way they have lobbied and worked around the Federal Parliament. I do not know if that is just about the Labor Party; I think it is about all the major Federal political parties. There is a longstanding relationship where Qantas has lobbied the government of the day. Whether it is the Coalition or Labor, it makes no difference. All the Ministers, whether they are Labor or Liberal, have been offered Qantas Club memberships. I do not think it is a surprise. It is not just Labor; the Liberals have enjoyed the luxury of that access for many years too.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: The Greens too.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: I suspect The Greens have too. If the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham ever makes it to Canberra, he might join the lucky Qantas Club. Take the Legalise Cannabis Party to Canberra. I am glad the inquiry is on foot federally. I will watch it closely. I acknowledge that a number of crossbench parties, including my own—Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party—have certainly supported the Senate inquiry into the decision to block Qatar Airways. It is worth exploring. It is a good, strong message that we need to stop the level of lobbying that is happening around Canberra. Let us hope New South Wales does not get to that stage. The reason I am supporting the motion brought by the Hon. Chris Rath is that it is about supporting competition. But it is also about understanding why this has happened and getting the truth out, because I suspect there was some unhealthy lobbying in Canberra.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (20:18): I must confess that I was not intending to be in the Chamber for this debate. But watching the proceedings in my office, I was absolutely astounded at what I was hearing and seeing. In fact, the Minister spoke about the Hon. Chris Rath's comments about Alan Joyce, which I remember were in response to a speech I made about the sacked Qantas workers. The Hon. Chris Rath said that Alan Joyce is a legend and that he went out to have dinner—all the things that the Minister said—and I am astounded today.

The Hon. Chris Rath: And now you are defending them. You are defending Qantas.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: I am not defending Alan Joyce at all. I am really astounded and calling out the behaviour. Hypocrisy does not even begin to describe it. It is a bizarre turnaround that we have heard from the Hon. Chris Rath and from the Hon. Rachel Merton. I wondered whether the Hon. Rachel Merton had stumbled on my speaking notes. Her speech sounded very much like a speech I would give about Qantas not treating its workers right, and Qantas being found today to have illegally sacked its workers. I wonder if the shock of that High Court decision had somehow tampered with the very good brains of Opposition members because it seems to have flicked a switch in them. I do not support the mission, but I support the change in heart and I support the Hon. Rachel Merton's condemnation of the behaviour of Qantas over a very long time, including its taking a whole lot of taxpayer money during COVID and then mistreating its workforce so monumentally. While I do not support the motion, I support some of the sentiments that I have heard expressed in the Chamber—as bizarre as they might have felt coming from the members they have.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (20:20): I have been enthused by the previous contributions to the debate and cannot help myself. The Opposition's doyen of free market competition suggests that if we let a government-owned monopoly into Australia—and let us not forget this airline is propped up by the Government of Qatar and is fully owned by Qatar—and it creates some sort of competition, Qantas would be on a hiding to nothing.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): The Hon. Wes Fang will cease interjecting.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: The real issue is the rogue and derelict behaviour of that once great company, Qantas, that has been the subject of motion after motion in this House about the way it treats its workers. Today a monumental decision in the High Court found that Qantas had illegally and capriciously sacked 1,700 workers. Time after time those opposite, led by the Hon. Chris Rath, would not agree to the motions relating to Qantas that came before this House. Now Opposition members want to hold up a model of competition backed

in by a foreign government. The inconsistency is breathtaking. Motions like this, which are opportunistically designed to capriciously criticise the Federal Government, are based purely on the opportunism at the time, lack credibility, as other speakers have pointed out, and should be voted down for the demerits they represent.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (20:22): In reply: It was a little bit cheeky to move this motion; I will accept that. I thought there would be an opportunity for the New South Wales Labor Party to join their Labor colleagues in Queensland and South Australia and support more competition in the airline industry, but tonight they have not taken that opportunity. They are sticking with the Albanese Labor Government, not their comrades in Queensland and South Australia. I thank the Hon. John Graham, the Hon. Rachel Merton, the Hon. Cameron Murphy, the Hon. Tania Mihailuk, the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine and the Hon. Mark Buttigieg for their contributions to the debate.

I stand by the fact that Qantas is a great iconic Australian company. I am a huge supporter of Qantas. In many ways we all have great stories of the national carrier from over the years. The motion is important to ensure that while Alan Joyce is a CEO who does what CEOs do, which is to look after their bottom line, the Government is an umpire. The motion is not about Alan Joyce. It is about the fact that the Government is the umpire and should have a level playing field on these matters. No CEO wants more competition. Does one business or one CEO say to the Government, "Please, give me more competition in the market." Of course they do not, but we expect better of our governments.

The motion is not about Qantas. It is about the fact that the Albanese Government did not allow new entrants into the market to allow for competition. Hawke and Keating would have allowed more competition in the market. I did not move this motion from a sense of populism, as the Hon. John Graham suggested. I moved this motion from a sense of rationalism, not populism, because more competition in the market leads to better services and lower prices. In many ways there is a little bit of hypocrisy on both sides of the Chamber tonight. Only a few months ago it was Government members who were attacking Qantas, but they now are defending the decision by the Albanese Government to prop up Qantas. I will admit that the tables have turned, but the Government's role is to ensure a level playing field and to have more competition. It is not about Alan Joyce or Qantas. It is about lower prices, more choice and better outcomes for consumers in the airline market.

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

The House divided.

Ayes18
Noes19
Majority.....1

AYES

Banasiak	Latham	Munro
Borsak	MacDonald	Rath (teller)
Carter	Martin	Roberts
Fang (teller)	Merton	Ruddick
Farlow	Mihailuk	Tudehope
Farraway	Mitchell	Ward

NOES

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

PAIRS

Maclaren-Jones	Houssos
Taylor	D'Adam

Motion negatived.

LANDCARE WEEK

The Hon. BOB NANVA (20:33): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) Monday 7 August 2023 marks the start of Landcare Week, and this week celebrates the achievements of Landcare volunteers across Australia; and
 - (b) the 2023 theme of Landcare Week is to "Be inspired, be empowered and be a landcarer".
- (2) That this House thanks the 60,000 Landcare volunteers across 2,400 registered groups in New South Wales for the work that they do to support the State's natural environment, agricultural lands, and rural and regional communities.
- (3) That this House affirms the Government's continued partnership with Landcare with a commitment of \$59 million over four years to Landcare programs.

I draw the attention of the House to Landcare Week, which this year was held from 7 August, and to the tireless and sustained efforts of Landcare's volunteers. Landcare is a community movement like no other, proactively safeguarding our precious natural environment by taking a grassroots approach to conservation. It was born out of an alliance in the eighties between the National Farmers' Federation and the Australian Conservation Foundation, two very different organisations brought together by an ambition to restore the natural environment and improve the sustainability of agricultural practices. That ambition underpinning the alliance of disparate organisations and individuals at a local level has ensured that, decades later, Landcare remains an effective force for good. In 1989 the Landcare movement was officially recognised and supported by the Hawke Government, and it became a national program on 20 July of that year. But it would have been and is nothing without the unsung heroes who comprise it.

Over the past 30-plus years, Landcare has evolved to become one of the largest volunteer movements in Australia. New South Wales alone has over 2,400 registered groups, made up of around 60,000 people who care for our land and our environment not only by planting trees—although environmental rehabilitation is an important part of what they do—but also by working with various industry groups, community groups and traditional owners on productivity measures, the health of our waterways and the conservation of threatened species. Landcare Week not only acknowledges those hardworking volunteers but also rightly honours the trailblazers who started this movement at the grassroots level all those years ago. The theme for this year's Landcare Week is, "Be inspired, be empowered, be a landcarer." I thank the volunteers for their amazing work in restoring, enhancing and protecting the natural environment in their communities, often without fanfare. I think I speak on behalf of the House when I say that we are indeed inspired by them.

Landcare has always relied on good faith collaborations between the Government and the community. That is why I am pleased that this Government has made a \$59 million commitment over the next four years to support Landcare's crucial activities. While the decades-long environmental and agricultural impacts are widely understood and appreciated, it is also an investment in the lesser appreciated but still important economic, social and cultural impacts of Landcare. I am looking forward to watching the volunteers' sustained efforts as they deliver positive, on-the-ground outcomes over the many years ahead.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (20:37): The Greens support the motion acknowledging the work of the incredible Landcare volunteers across the State. Landcare is a democratic, grassroots movement that brings together—through the land—people of all ages, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds, including First Nations people, and encourages the development and implementation of local processes to shift attitudes and practices towards sustainable use and management of resources and the care and regeneration of the land. The work of Landcare is critical to the ongoing health and resilience of our landscapes and communities. It is the most important work being done right now as we face the worsening impacts of the climate crisis. Landcare volunteers are on the front lines of the changing climate. Right now in my own community of the Northern Rivers, the Landcare networks are literally rebuilding our landscape and rivers after we were smashed and changed forever by the floods of last year.

Landcare networks are the pioneers of sustainable and regenerative models of agriculture, food systems and land management, which better prepare our landscapes to endure the floods, droughts and fires that are now routine seasonal occurrences across the State under climate breakdown. An estimated 60,000 landcarers are in New South Wales alone. Landcare's vision is to have one million landcarers by 2040. The returns on investment in Landcare are exponential. A 2022 independent assessment found that, from a \$22.5 million investment, Landcare returned \$86 million in benefits attributable to the program. The Greens fully support the Government's commitment of \$59 million over four years to Landcare programs, but it is an underinvestment because \$14.7 million per year is not enough for Landcare to do the regeneration and care that we need it to do and it is not enough to grow that incredible movement. Four years does not allow it to be as strategic and secure as we need it to be. Landcare deserves increased, secure recurrent funding.

Landcare's Eat Dirt project, involving Bellingen High School, is a community initiative that is reimagining education in Australia by facilitating student learning through connection to country, nature and each other. It is aimed at improving youth mental health by taking young people outside to help with habitat restoration and spend time in nature. In this program young people are connecting with First Nations teachers and Elders and learning about traditional knowledge and practice and caring for country. It is a preparatory program to ensure that children have strong mental health as they face the escalating distress of living under the conditions of the extinction and climate crisis. I acknowledge the incredible and powerful work of Gumbaynggirr Elder Uncle Micklo Jarrett, and I acknowledge the pain and mistreatment he has recently experienced from this Government while on the front lines of Newry and Oakes State forests, as it has destroyed the forest and the critical habitat on his country. The Greens stand in full support, respect and gratitude of Landcare— *[Time expired.]*

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (20:41): I support the motion of the Hon. Bob Nanva regarding Landcare Week. One Landcare organisation, Southern New England Landcare—or SNELC for short—does great work in the country north province. Its stated mission is to lead, connect and enable local communities to reach their sustainability goals in a changing environment, which I am confident is a mission we should all support. In my own community, and throughout the New England regions, I have seen firsthand the wonderful work that Landcare carries out. In fact, next month Landcare is running workshops in Armidale for landholders who wish to understand the water cycle and improve resilience of their rural landscape. Through teaching the participants about the role of the water cycle and plants in the farming landscape, these workshops will help equip landholders with the information, knowledge and skills necessary to apply sound planning and design principles to give landscape rehydration projects the best chance of success.

That is just one example of the great work that Landcare does in our region. I recently spoke to one of the Landcare network presidents and he told me that, sadly, the volunteer base is aging and new and younger volunteers are not readily forthcoming. It is important that the Government continues to support Landcare and to encourage the younger generations to get involved, as was reflected in the 2023 Landcare Week theme. In this sunburnt country of ours we are rich in natural resources but we must work carefully to protect those resources and to use the land respectfully and responsibly. That is why organisations such as Landcare are so important. They have a long-term vision of sustainability and working through action and education to ensure that our environment is protected. I extend my thanks to the thousands of volunteers within the organisation that make the work possible. The Government continuing to support Landcare is a step in the right direction when it comes to looking out for the interests of the regions. I support the motion.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (20:43): I speak for the Legalise Cannabis Party and commend the Hon. Bob Nanva for bringing this important motion to the House. Landcare has been important for two generations. It has played a pivotal role in habitat restoration, sustainable agriculture and education in this country. It had its genesis in the Potter farms in the western Victoria district and the alliance between the Australian Conservation Foundation and the National Farmers' Federation. When I was doing my studies at Charles Sturt and Sydney universities, it was the work of Landcare that inspired me to get involved in conservation. In fact, in politics, I was a member of the Daroo Urban Landcare Group in Orange and the Bellingen Landcare Group in Bellingen. In my previous term in Parliament, I reactivated the Parliamentary Friends of Landcare, which did so much to get some funding for Landcare back on the table.

A bit of politics is that, if you look at the history of Landcare, the people that disliked Landcare the most was the National Party. The funding was directed away; it went to the National Heritage Trust. The National Party did not like Landcare because it brought the conservationists and the farmers together. They learnt they had a lot more in common in terms of caring for their country than people would have thought. It is that educative role that we need to be reminded of—working with landholders and communities in the city and the country to change our attitudes to our landscape. Landcare is absolutely fundamental in helping farmers identify the productivity of our native plant species; consider the symbiotic relationships between native plants and agricultural productivity; learn about cell grazing; understand the different fencing regimes; learn about identifying weeds; and manage pests in new, innovative ways that sustain the soil and protect water resources.

I welcome the news that the Government is committed to funding Landcare. It is an absolutely pivotal organisation in the community that delivers real results in ecological restoration, plants billions of trees and shrubs across the country, and makes a real difference to changing attitudes to our country by helping us understand and work with the ecological cycles. Landcare is an absolute blessing and an icon. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (20:46): On behalf of the Government, I thank the Hon. Bob Nanva for bringing the motion, and Landcare Week, to the attention of the House. It is important that we celebrate the work of Landcare in New South Wales and recognise not just Landcare Week but all the amazing volunteers and people who work in Landcare and the fantastic work they do across New South Wales. Landcare has over

2,400 registered groups in New South Wales and over 60,000 people who volunteer to care for our land and our environment. That gives some indication of how significant the organisation is and how significant the grassroots movement is, with the local groups, the local decision-making and the work that people do in their communities to improve local land. They are involved in vital work, including revegetation, farm productivity, regeneration, threatened species conservation and Aboriginal land management techniques.

The Government recognises the vital work that Landcare does. We understand that Landcare needs sustainable, long-term funding so it can get on with its significant and important work. That is why we committed such a significant amount of money—\$59 million—to fund its operations over the next period of time. That will ensure more programs in more local communities and include 84 full-time equivalent local and regional Landcare coordinator positions being filled across New South Wales. It also means that there will be more positions for First Nations people to help drive greater engagement with traditional First Nations values and land management practices, which is an important thing to invest in.

I am delighted to be the Minister responsible for rolling out that package. It is a significant commitment from the Government to invest in people in local communities who are volunteering and committed to making sure that their local lands are treated the best possible way that they can be and reinvested in and reinvigorated as necessary. It is local people, local farmers, and people from a cross-section of society who get together and make sure that they are doing the right thing by their local environment. We are very pleased to assist them financially, and also structurally, to be able to deliver that work across New South Wales.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR (20:49): The Opposition supports the motion, and the Liberal Party and The Nationals are really strong supporters of Landcare. The partnerships and bipartisan support for Landcare are crucial to sustaining the vital grassroots movement. Every weekend across New South Wales, groups of people of all ages and backgrounds are doing their bit to look after our environment, and it is important that the Government continues the investments that we made in office to support that invaluable organisation. Landcare Week 2023 was just over a month ago. From everything I have seen, it succeeded in showing that Landcare is for everybody, whether they are from the city or whether they are a farmer or whether they are a student learning about biodiversity. Over 60,000 volunteers is pretty amazing.

I give a big shout-out to farmers, who make up a great proportion of Landcare. There are no greater environmentalists than farmers because we understand looking after the environment on our farms and properties. We care about the environment and are very connected to it; we live there and it is a part of us. We run a more sustainable business, a better business and a business that everybody can be proud of when we look after our environment and work with it. We allow our land and the animals that we are breeding on that land—whether for meat production, for wool or whatever it may be—to actually reach their full potential. We know how important it is, and it is great to see. I really commend the Hon. Bob Nanva for bringing this motion forward. I think he is a metropolitan person and lives in the city.

The Hon. Bob Nanva: In the foothills of the mountains.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: That is fantastic. I think it is great that he has introduced this motion for us to talk about. It is good to have motions that every member can agree on and see the value in, and that is exactly what we are seeing in this place today. Landcare is so successful because it is generated by local community groups. As the Minister just said, local community groups in local areas, made up of local people who understand their environment and the differing things that may challenge them, are coming together to look after that land. It is wonderful. It fosters and encourages active participation, where everyone can be involved. It creates a platform where everyone can be a steward for the environment, no matter who they are or where they live. I say well done to the Hon. Bob Nanva. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (20:51): Everybody loves Landcare because Landcare works. Landcare is about community and about bringing people of the land, the dunes, the coast and the bush together to do voluntary work to restore our environment. I reflect very briefly on some of the history of Landcare. It is often said that Bob Hawke really got Landcare going, and that is indeed true. That was after the dearly departed Rick Farley from the National Farmers' Federation and Phillip Toyne from the Australian Conservation Foundation spoke to Bob Hawke in 1989, and he agreed that it was time for Australia to invest in the type of work that Landcare does.

I also reflect on the little-known history, which is not repeated very often, of the two very important women who started Landcare and coined the name in 1986. That was, of course, the dearly departed Joan Kirner, who stood on the side of the river with her friend and colleague Heather Mitchell from the Victorian Farmers Federation. Although they coined the term in 1986, it took until 1989 for the boys to get on board and for Bob Hawke to come to the table. The point that I really want to make about Landcare is that in every corner of

the State, once a week, people are toiling. They plant, share, grow seedlings, clean, get rid of weeds and join with the community to improve soil and water. It is genuinely a movement of enthusiasts, and long may they continue their work. Landcare is going through an evolution as a result of the investment that this Government has committed to, doubling its funding over the next four years. That will be absolutely life changing for the organisation.

Some of the volunteers are a bit older, and they really want to branch out now through a network of full-time coordinators who can bring all of that volunteer energy and excitement to younger people in our communities, working closely with landholders no matter where they are. Landcare is worth every cent that we invest in it because we make much more out of it. The final point I make is that I am glad there is support across the Parliament for Landcare. That is extremely important, but I cannot let the debate go past without recognising that, before the last election, The Nationals, who profess to support Landcare, did not have one cent committed for its ongoing funding.

The Hon. WES FANG (20:54): I contribute to debate having had some practical experience with Landcare. My parents had a property—probably not as big as the Hon. Bronnie Taylor's properties.

The Hon. Bronnie Taylor: Do not ask me about that, thanks. Members opposite already have; it's all right.

The Hon. WES FANG: I somewhat regret having made that reference. My parents had a block of land, and Dad called it his little oasis. It was on the side of a hill, so some erosion issues arose. I remember Dad was thinking about how we would tackle it, and someone suggested that we get in touch with Landcare. Sure enough, a team of volunteers turned up and worked miracles in the way that they approached the care of the property. Things like a lack of greenery in certain places were contributing to the erosion, and so they used their expertise and their knowledge to help my parents with that issue. So I have seen firsthand the work that is done by the amazing members of Landcare, and I think that it is quite right that the Parliament acknowledge that work and acknowledge Landcare Week.

Noting the contributions from members on all sides of this Chamber, it is quite important that we come together as a House and acknowledge that. Looking at some of the people who have served in Landcare and noting some of the earlier debates that happened today, it is important that some of the really strong women leaders in Landcare were recognised through any number of awards that were available to them. It just shines a light on why it is important to have awards for rural and regional women, and that might put in context some of the other issues that we have discussed today.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (20:57): I support the motion of the Hon. Bob Nanva concerning the important role of Landcare in New South Wales. Landcare volunteers play a crucial role in protecting and enhancing the natural environment and agricultural lands. Those dedicated individuals, approximately 60,000 strong across 2,400 registered groups in New South Wales, deserve recognition for their remarkable achievements. The theme for 2023, "Be inspired, be empowered, be a landcarer", encapsulates the spirit and purpose of the Landcare movement. It aims to inspire and motivate individuals to engage in landcare activities, empowering them to make a positive difference in their communities and the environment.

The work of Landcare volunteers is invaluable in preserving the natural environment. They contribute to crucial activities that we have heard of tonight, such as preventing erosion, managing soil health, restoring habitats and protecting biodiversity. Their efforts have a direct impact on the resilience and sustainability of rural and regional communities across New South Wales. I have personally witnessed the incredible work of Landcare volunteers across Greater Western Sydney in the Winston Hills and Toongabbie Bushcare group. I have joined their efforts related to preserving Toongabbie Creek and surrounding bush care. In Wingecarribee, Berrima and Moss Vale there is an active Southern Highlands Landcare network.

Further afield, I have seen the work done by Landcare groups in the Central West. Their work to address erosion through the implementation of control measures such as revegetation, contour ploughing and the construction of retaining walls has been remarkable. They have effectively mitigated the damaging effects of erosion on the region's landscape and agricultural productivity. It is essential to acknowledge the tireless efforts of these volunteers. Their work has far-reaching consequences for the natural environment, agricultural lands and the broader community. Their contributions are vital in ensuring the sustainable management and conservation of our land and resources. I thank all our Landcare volunteers for their dedication, passion and commitment to be inspired, empowered and responsible. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (21:00): I am very happy to speak in support of the motion and I commend the mover, the Hon. Bob Nanva. A lot of people are involved in Landcare in my home community of Dubbo, and I know how hard they work. The area of Dubbo around the Macquarie River, where I walk my dogs

as often as I can, has been the beneficiary of a lot of work by the Dubbo Landcare group. I have seen dramatic improvement in so many ways over the 10 years or so that I have been using that particular part of Dubbo. There can be no doubt about the incredible work that Landcare does across the State. As I said, I have witnessed it in my home community.

Landcare is a movement that allows everyone who chooses to be actively involved in land management, improving biodiversity and promoting sustainable agriculture. The NSW Landcare Program empowers people to take action on local problems, delivers outcomes across local and regional issues and unlocks the potential of the extensive volunteer network and Landcare movement right across the State. We heard from earlier speakers about the \$59 million commitment over the next four years to supercharge Landcare and Landcare activities in New South Wales. That is twice the funding of the previous Government and certainly something that the Labor Government is very proud of. It will see Local Land Services and Landcare NSW continue to work together to deliver the program across the State.

Local Land Services and Landcare NSW are working hard to design a new program to ensure that record funding best meets the needs of land carers to undertake on-ground work. Collaboration throughout the program design will ensure that work by Landcare and Local Land Services is coordinated to avoid duplication and that it aligns with relevant natural resource management plans. The additional funding will result in more local programs for more local communities that will care for our land and environment. Most importantly, perhaps—and this has been spoken of already—it will pave the way for 84 full-time equivalent local and regional Landcare Coordinator positions, which, under the current program, are only retained on a part-time basis.

Coordinators play an incredibly important role and do a lot of hard work. They enhance the capacity of Landcare groups and networks by sharing best practice, providing a professional resource that allows land carers to spend their valuable volunteer time delivering projects that enhance our natural environment. The change will give coordinators more time to do their jobs and will result in improved facilitation and delivery of on-ground projects.

The Hon. BOB NANVA (21:04): In reply: I thank all members for their contributions to debate on the motion. The breadth of support for the motion in this House reinforces the point that Landcare truly is for everyone and it is a conduit for people from all backgrounds, persuasions and localities to care for their environment. It is quite fitting that an organisation built on alliances can bring such unity to this House. The contributions to debate reminded me of something Prime Minister Hawke said many years ago—and I never miss an opportunity to quote the great man. He said:

It shows in a graphic way that the degradation of our environment is not simply a local problem, nor a problem for one State or another, nor for the Commonwealth alone. Rather, the damage being done to our environment is a problem for all of us—and not just governments—but all of us individually and together.

It was as true then as it is today. In that spirit, and with the goodwill that has been shown across the political spectrum, I think we should conclude this debate with the knowledge and acceptance that all members in this place have a responsibility to ensure that Landcare continues to receive the financial and operational support it needs now and well into the future.

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

Motion agreed to.

DWELLING VACANCIES

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (21:06): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) the 2022 New South Wales population projections show that New South Wales is expected to grow on average by over 85,000 people each year until 2041;
 - (b) research from the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales indicates rental vacancy rates for April 2023 are:
 - (i) 1.8 per cent across Greater Sydney, the lowest in over a decade;
 - (ii) 1.3 per cent across the Hunter; and
 - (iii) 1 per cent across the Illawarra.
 - (c) research from the University of New South Wales suggests "there were well over 200,000 New South Wales households with an unmet need for social or affordable housing in 2021";
 - (d) the Australian Bureau of Statistics census is the only public dataset used to estimate residential dwelling vacancies in New South Wales;

- (e) 2021 census data indicated there were 299,524 unoccupied private dwellings in New South Wales on census night;
 - (f) there is currently no accurate reported indication of residential dwelling use in New South Wales, particularly relating to vacancies;
 - (g) there is currently no accurate understanding of why residential properties are unoccupied on census night or more generally; and
 - (h) the Audit Office of New South Wales, the NSW Productivity Commission and NSW Fair Trading would be appropriate organisations to source and compile datasets capable of estimating dwelling usage accurate to weeks and months, rather than years, particularly relating to dwelling vacancies.
- (2) That this House calls on the Government to:
- (a) urgently conduct a residential dwelling use and vacancy audit to accurately estimate the usage of residential properties across the State; and
 - (b) investigate the causes of residential dwelling vacancies.

I am very pleased to bring this motion before the House because it is part of a suite of measures and is a critical step to understanding the current housing and planning landscape that we find ourselves in. To make meaningful policy in this space, we must understand from whence we came. If we do not understand how land is being utilised, how can we plan adequately for the future? This is not intended to be a political motion; this is about the people of New South Wales having confidence that this Government—and obviously if the Opposition was in government it would have to do the same thing—is making policy for reality. That is important because there is a lack of clarity about how residential properties and dwellings are being used.

At the moment there are roughly 400,000 vacant dwellings in New South Wales—a little less, but it is easier for the maths. According to Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] datasets taken from the census, there is about a 10 per cent vacancy rate—which equates to about 400,000 vacant homes in New South Wales. There are different measures as to how that can be broken down in terms of what actually constitutes a vacancy because, of course, 400,000 vacant homes is a lot of homes. When we consider that tens of thousands of people are on the housing waiting list and possibly 200,000 people are on the edge of homelessness or would be eligible for social and affordable housing but are not currently accessing those services, 400,000 vacant homes could go a long way to housing people who need accommodation.

We do not understand in great detail exactly how those vacancies are broken down because some of them might be short-term rentals, some of them might be investment properties owned by overseas buyers and some of them might truly be vacant. But the problem is that we do not know. There are some estimates from private organisations. SGS Economics and Planning suggests that, of that 10 per cent, 10 per cent are true vacancies. So that would be 1 per cent of the total, which would mean there are about 40,000 truly vacant homes in New South Wales. That is still quite a lot, but we do not really know. Since I put the motion together, new data has come out that suggests the 1 per cent figure is possibly accurate if we consider electricity use statistics.

The ABS is endeavouring to use as much information as it can get through electricity companies to estimate that. The data that the ABS has put out is based on 2021 data to try to ensure that it is able to be cross-referenced with the census data that the ABS already has. It is a dataset that is still being refined; it is very new. This is important for the New South Wales Government because there have been new targets placed on the State's housing and building requirements through the National Housing Accord. I think 387,000 houses need to be built by 2029. At the moment, the Department of Planning suggests that the State is on track to build half of that by the end of 2026. A lot of work needs to be done to understand how that huge increase in housing can be delivered.

The population of Greater Sydney is expected to grow by one million people by 2041. The reality is that we need to understand what is on the ground and how we are using our space and our land before we can make a real start on how we deliver new housing. New South Wales is facing a cumulative shortfall of around 95,000 houses by some estimates. Some work has been done around the difference between population projections and building commencements. The reality is that building commencements, building completions and building approvals are all currently declining, so a lot of work needs to be done to address that side of how to get people into homes as the population grows. As I said, this is important because it is the start of how we plan and use land in New South Wales.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast) (21:11): I indicate on behalf of the Government that it will be supporting the motion. The motion has two parts. The first part is a statement of facts, and those facts outline some of the challenges that the member articulated in her contribution. Those facts are not new; they have been the facts for some time. The second part of the motion calls on the Government to do a residential vacancy audit. That is something that the Government is prepared to add to the list of things that it is doing to confront the housing crisis.

I know the member said that the motion is not intended to be political. I will give the mover of the motion the benefit of the doubt and say that she was not a member of the party room of the former Government. Perhaps those opposite did not have the benefit of this idea, which, of course, they could have had at any time during their 12 years in government. The member was not there to make that good contribution in the then government party room, so that is not on her. But, of course, a lot of the other people who are now in opposition could have done this—any one of them who was involved in planning, housing or better regulation. They did not do that because they did not take the housing crisis seriously. This Government does, so it is willing to not be petty and political about it.

When a good idea is put forward, this Government is willing to take it on, but it has to be added to the list of other things. The Government is fixing the plane while it is flying it. This is not a situation where the Government can say, "Let us do all of this work and then get on with the job of building the houses and delivering the stock." This is urgent. The Government is making the planning reforms that are needed to deliver housing. It is doing the land audit of government land to identify where housing can be built. It is figuring out how to make 30 per cent of that social and affordable housing. It is creating Homes NSW. It is spending \$610 million of the Commonwealth accelerator. The Government is now figuring out how to get the best for New South Wales out of the Housing Australia Future Fund, which is going to pass this week. It is making changes to rental laws. It is trying to address increasing homelessness.

The Government is doing a lot of work. Addressing what is happening with residential vacancies is an important part of that suite of work. Once the Government has that information, then there are some decisions to be made. What does the Government do to address the fact that there are vacant, under-utilised properties that should be and could be on the long-term residential market but are not? That is going to be an interesting discussion to have, and I welcome the good spirit, creativity and intellect of the member who has moved the motion. We support this. We will add it to the list. There is a lot of work to be done and we are getting on with doing it. I welcome a partnership, and I welcome some of the difficult conversations we need to have over the time to come.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (21:14): This is a great way to see how the House works. We have a motion moved by the Hon. Jacqui Munro, a new member of the Coalition and a new member of the Opposition who comes forward with great new ideas like this one. I commend the Minister for adopting the idea in a bipartisan fashion. We need a lot of good ideas on the table to address the housing crisis in New South Wales. It is not a crisis that is found only in New South Wales. We have a National Housing Accord because it is a national problem, and it is a global problem as well. We see the problem manifest particularly in English-speaking countries around the world, like the United States, New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom. Understanding the problem and how we can best utilise our properties is part of how we can address it.

We need to build 380,000 homes over the next five years under the National Housing Accord, which the Hon. Jacqui Munro has outlined in her contribution. We also need to make the best use of the properties we have. We have seen in the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data that the vacancy rates of homes is of concern, but we have to understand what the reasons for those vacancies were. Were those 400,000 people away from home on census night? Were those people overseas at the time, which, considering the pandemic, may have been for a very long time? Were they people who were cohabiting?

I commend the Government for taking the step it has indicated it will take tonight in undertaking the audit and getting to the bottom of those figures. Over the past four years between censuses we have also seen in the Greater Sydney region an increase of 200,000 homes that have a spare bedroom. Fewer and fewer people are living in each home. When it comes to dwellings, a whole range of things are happening in our society that we need to look at and understand if we are to come up with solutions to address the housing crisis we find ourselves in.

This problem is not something that has been identified only in New South Wales. It is felt by other States as well. I do not want to make a good idea too political, but I have concerns that this Government is making the problem worse by making those who are supposed to be delivering homes do so in an unaffordable way through more taxes and charges. As we have seen recently reported, up to \$110,000 of taxes and charges on new homes is being put in by this Government. When we want to supply more homes, that measure does not help to make them more affordable, which puts home ownership out of reach of people across New South Wales. That is something we have to address. We need to make sure that houses are not just plentiful but affordable as well.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (21:17): I thank the Hon. Jacqui Munro for bringing this motion to the House. I honestly was not intending to be political, but I have to respond to those last comments from the Hon. Scott Farlow. This is something that is in everybody's interest to fix. Everybody wants to ensure that there is a roof over people's heads and that everyone has access to housing, but, frankly, this problem developed over a long time when the now Opposition was in government. In relation to the motion, it is vitally important that we

have that data so we can figure out why properties are vacant and what is causing that, and whether it is any of the number of factors that have already been mentioned. Understanding that can help develop policy. But this Labor Government can walk and chew gum at the same time. We are not only collecting the data but we are out there fixing the problem.

We are doing that in a range of ways. We are making it easier for people to access social housing. We are looking at the changes that can be made to planning controls to encourage more housing to be built. We are a government that takes housing very seriously. I congratulate the honourable member on bringing this motion, but it is important that we understand the data, and try to figure out why those homes are not being used. We need to understand whether there is a particular reason for that, or whether they are being used and we are just not picking it up in the way that we are measuring it.

I am almost astounded, because I think we are very close to the Opposition suggesting that we should be telling people how to utilise those homes. It is almost socialist. I believe in housing as a right, but I am just astounded to hear the Opposition talking about spare bedrooms that could be utilised or the way people use particular homes. This Wednesday, I tell you, it is almost like there has been a revolution in this House. As soon as members are in opposition, all of the ideology and political philosophy they stuck by for 12 years goes out the window. Suddenly they are socialists. Earlier tonight we heard them supporting workers against Qantas. I think it is important that we get the right data, but I do query this revolution in their thinking about the way we might use housing. I welcome it. I would love to see them talk about the way we can put those empty homes to good use. *[Time expired.]*

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (21:20): I speak in support of the motion but, before I say too much about that, I congratulate the Minister for Housing on her approach. While the motion of the Hon. Jacqui Munro is commendable, I think that the Minister's approach to the motion speaks volumes about her willingness to engage with the substantial and important housing issues facing residents of New South Wales. I congratulate her on her commitment to doing everything possible to improve the housing situation. Her passion and commitment is evident every time she stands up to speak.

Agree with her or not, that passion and commitment is obvious to everyone who hears her speak on this. I think that is commendable. The Minister made the point about her willingness to support the Hon. Jacqui Munro's motion but also noted that a lot needs to be done in addition to collecting data. I am an unreformed researcher, so the idea that we go out, collect the data and use it to make sensible decisions is instinctively appealing. But there is a long list of things that need to be done. We should also recognise that, as well as what is yet to be done, including the appropriate collection of data, there is a lot that has already been done by this Government.

It is not enough, and one of the things that most appeals to me about the Minister is that she is the first to admit when there is still work to do. We acknowledge that. But we have done a lot in this area in the short time we have had. We have scrapped rent seeker diaries. We have lifted caps on temporary accommodation from two days to seven so that people who need accommodation can have a little bit of extra certainty when they are in those quite desperate situations. We have extended contracts for specialist homelessness services by two years. They are some of the things that we have already been doing to ensure that the crisis in social housing, which everyone is talking about, does not get worse and that we address it and deal with some of the most pressing needs of those seeking housing and not able to source it at the moment.

We have also—and while we do not want to get political, we will not go too far into it—done things with regards to causing the sale of public housing, stopping and reconsidering redevelopments in particular areas, fast-tracking approvals of social and affordable housing and, as the Minister noted, working with the Commonwealth. I commend the Hon. Jacqui Munro for her motion, but I also very much commend the Minister for the spirit in which she is supporting it.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (21:24): I acknowledge the Hon. Jacqui Munro for bringing this motion to the House and all the other contributions she has made in the housing space. It is clear to all members in this place that she feels strongly and passionately about this issue. Obviously that is welcome, and we encourage debate about this topic. However, it would be remiss of me not to mention the work done by my colleague the Hon. Rose Jackson as the Minister for Housing. As the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine touched on in her contribution, the Minister has introduced a number of measures—very swiftly, I must say. All members acknowledge that there is no silver bullet to address this issue. It is complex and many levers need to be pulled. To the Minister's credit, she has gone in there with gusto, addressing as many issues as possible with the enthusiasm and determination that this matter warrants.

It is worthwhile reflecting on what we do know. Renters in New South Wales are doing it very tough. Increasing housing supply is a big issue, but it is a complex matter. Unlike the former Government, though, the Minns Labor Government recognised the problem and is working quickly and doing whatever we can. As the

Minister said, we are fixing the plane as we are flying it—I quite liked that analogy—to implement solutions. It is unacceptable that the housing situation got as bad as it did. Maybe if the Hon. Jacqui Munro was in this place while those opposite were in government it would not have happened—but here we are.

The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine touched on some of what we have done. We have done a government land audit to find out where we can build more social and affordable homes. We have moved to publishing social housing figures monthly instead of once a year. That is a simple but necessary measure; this is a government that believes strongly in transparency. We fixed the former Government's unacceptable proposal at Waterloo, increasing it from 34 per cent to 50 per cent social and affordable housing. That equates to an extra 500 social and affordable dwellings.

The Hon. WES FANG (21:27): As members often say, I was not going to contribute to debate on this motion; however, I was somewhat provoked to do so. I think the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine was the one who provoked me the most. She suggested that the Minister—and I thank her for staying in the Chamber to hear my contribution—was doing a good job in relation to housing. I recall the conversation that I had with my good friend Gurmesh Singh, the member for Coffs Harbour. He said that last week the Minister was in Coffs Harbour announcing that she was cancelling a social housing project there. I have pulled up the Land and Housing Corporation press release announcing that the Argyll Estate plans have been scrapped by the Minister. I note that there are comments from the Minister, the Hon. Rose Jackson, and Coffs Harbour councillor Tony Judge. The only other person that she could get to endorse the plan was the failed Labor council candidate. Nobody else would put their name to it. The Minister is being congratulated by those opposite on cancelling rural and regional housing projects. I did not want to get political.

The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine: Point of order—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The member will resume his seat.

The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine: I question the relevance of the contribution from the Hon. Wes Fang and ask that he stick to the topic of the motion.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): There is no point of order. I have allowed wide latitude for a previous speaker; I will allow the member to continue. There are 46 seconds to go. I do not think he can do too much more damage in that time.

The Hon. WES FANG: I take up your challenge, Mr Deputy President. The Minister is more focused on city projects than on rural and regional communities. We know there is a housing problem, but it is a problem across the State. For the Minister to be congratulated by those opposite, acknowledging that the projects that are being done—

The Hon. Rose Jackson: I was in your community in Wagga Wagga, at Tolland Estate. How long has that been dragging on? What did you ever do on Tolland? I am fixing that. That is in your home town.

The Hon. WES FANG: My home town could do with more social housing and so can Coffs Harbour. *[Time expired.]*

The Hon. BOB NANVA (21:31): I do not know that I can match the contribution of the Hon. Wes Fang or do the issue justice in the way that he has. I thank the Hon. Jacqui Munroe for the motion, which I think was moved in good faith, notwithstanding the decade of inaction by the previous Government. I do not question the good faith with which this motion was moved, but there is a peculiarity in the vacancy figures that are referred to in the motion, particularly in a number of regional and seaside holiday towns. It is pretty self-evident what might be going on there.

The conversation about vacant homes is one conversation in dealing with the housing crisis. It is not the be-all or the end-all of solving the catastrophic housing crisis that we now have in this State. That said, in many of the towns, a number of people with jobs cannot find homes. It does not stack up that homes in those towns are vacant for no good reason when people like teachers and nurses cannot find places to live. So it is part of the solution, but it is not the whole solution. This State has lacked creativity for far too long on the issue of housing supply. It has lacked creativity for far too long with respect to structural reform of a flawed housing market. In dealing with that lack of creativity that has built up over a decade and has resulted in the current crisis, we cannot flick a switch and expect to have a resolution within six months.

The only other point I raise with respect to vacant homes is that, frankly, if owners leave their houses empty that is probably not the most efficient use of those homes. But they are still private dwellings. This is a complicated area of policy, and there is not a special fix. One thing that can and should be done—and there were plenty of missed opportunities to do it—is to focus on supply. This Premier has shown a strong desire to think laterally and

take bold steps to improve supply in metropolitan areas, regional areas and all across the State, in a way the former Premier never did. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (21:34): I speak in support of the motion and commend the mover, the Hon. Jacqui Munro. It seems a sensible idea to have a comprehensive audit of unoccupied private dwellings. It was interesting to see the 2021 figure in the motion. As the Hon. Bob Nanva was alluding to, one could imagine that online services like Airbnb probably have a large role to play in that. The former Government introduced a regulation that councils could apply to their areas which capped Airbnb to 180 nights a year. It remains the case that can be done in many places, certainly in my home community of Dubbo. More can be earned using Airbnb for 180 nights than private rental.

This might be a situation where we get some insights into the problem but we do not get a particular answer from it. It could lead to all sorts of new initiatives about how we react to the reality of all these vacant homes on particular nights. In her inaugural speech, the Hon. Jacqui Munro spoke about these matters. She has a strong interest in them, and I have learnt things from her. I commend the Minister as well, who, rather than simply opposing the motion on political grounds, saw fit to support it. Hopefully it will lead to something useful that will inform public policy in New South Wales.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (21:36): In reply: I thank the following members for their contributions and support of the motion: the Hon. Rose Jackson, the Hon. Scott Farlow, the Hon. Cameron Murphy, the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine, the Hon. Emily Suvaal, the Hon. Wes Fang and the Hon. Stephen Lawrence. It seems like it was the Claytons political speech. The political speech you have when you are not having a political speech was on show tonight. I will acknowledge some of the things that the Coalition did when in government. I was not a member of that Coalition government. Over the past 10 years, with the Coalition in government, more than \$9 billion was invested in housing. The Coalition delivered the largest social housing portfolio of any jurisdiction in the country, larger than Victoria and Queensland combined. The New South Wales social housing portfolio increased by 10 per cent—which is 4 per cent ahead of the national total—over the past 10 years. In New South Wales we have over 154,000 properties. The next best State is Victoria, with 76,000 properties. I could go on.

The reality is there is no silver bullet. As I said in my inaugural speech, I believe very firmly in private property rights. This is about ensuring that our policy is based on reality and understands the ways that people are using their dwellings in New South Wales because there is a housing crisis—whether it is renting or buying. Unfortunately, the Government decided to scrap the very good idea of introducing optional land tax, which was taken up with great enthusiasm by thousands of first home buyers, in favour of stamp duty. The Government called that tax a forever tax on the family home. That flies in the face of good policymaking.

Over the years, Treasury officials such as Ken Henry have argued that land tax is a way to smooth out our housing system, smooth out supply and have better fairness in access and affordability to housing. It was a sad moment for this State when that policy was scrapped. I also make the point that in Portfolio Committee No. 7, of which I am a member, the Hon. Scott Farlow and I made a dissenting report about the application of infrastructure charges. The reality is that if you are making homes more expensive to build they will be more expensive to buy. The dissenting report that we gave—

The Hon. Rose Jackson: Recommended by the Productivity Commission, advocated by Rob Stokes when he was the Minister.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Actually no. I acknowledge that interjection.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Order! The Hon. Jacqui Munro will continue.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I seek leave for an extension of 30 seconds.

Leave granted.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: The reality is that the Productivity Commission suggested that those infrastructure charges be charged at the occupation certificate phase, not the construction certificate phase, because it would save thousands of dollars in developers building those houses. Those are the kinds of measures that we have tried to ensure are part of our planning system so that houses are cheaper to build and, therefore, are cheaper to buy. As I said, this is just one part of a range of measures that can be used to make housing more affordable and policy better in New South Wales.

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

Motion agreed to.

TRIBUTE TO JOY MCKEAN

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (21:40): I move:

- (1) That this House:
 - (a) notes with sadness the death of Australian music trailblazer Joy McKean on 25 May 2023 at 93 years old;
 - (b) notes that Joy McKean was born in Singleton in 1930 and was a true musical partner to her husband, Slim Dusty, writing many of his iconic songs and managing his career;
 - (c) further notes the many achievements of Joy McKean's career, including:
 - (i) winning the first Golden Guitar ever awarded in 1973 for writing *Lights on the Hill*;
 - (ii) being a founding member of the Country Music Association of Australia;
 - (iii) being awarded an OAM in 1991 for services to the entertainment industry;
 - (iv) receiving APRA's Ted Albert Award for Outstanding Service to Australian Music in 1991 and becoming the APRA Award's oldest ever nominee in 1999, 60 years after she started performing; and
 - (d) That this House sends its sincere condolences to Joy McKean's family and friends.
- (2) That this resolution be communicated by the President to the family of Joy McKean.

Mildred Geraldine Joy Kirkpatrick, known professionally as Joy McKean, was born on 14 January 1930 in Singleton, New South Wales. As the daughter of a public school teacher, she grew up all over the State in small country towns and the suburbs of Sydney and learnt to read sitting in the classroom with the older children while her dad taught the lesson. At the age of five, living in Balmain during the Depression, she contracted polio, which required the little girl to spend three years away from her family being treated. Many more treatments followed for many more years. One of her legs never fully recovered.

With her younger sister, Heather, she started performing publicly from the age of 10, playing guitar and ukulele, singing and yodelling in matching cowgirl outfits. Working at Alert Radio and Music Store in Parramatta led to The McKean Sisters hosting the Melody Trail Show on 2KY, then broadcast out of the Dymocks Building in George Street. They played the latest country hits and hosted live performances. Jimmy Little made his first radio appearance on their show at the age of 19. Despite the stereotypes, Sydney had a vibrant country music scene in the forties and fifties, as it still does today.

Then Joy McKean met David Gordon Kirkpatrick, who was combining work on the Kempsey shire road gang with a country music career under the name of Slim Dusty. It was not love at first sight. He thought she was a "stuck-up city piece who wouldn't be interested in a bloke straight from Nulla Creek" and she thought him too much of a larrikin. Thankfully for Australian music and for all of us, they got past first impressions and married in 1951. They were a team until Slim's passing in 2003.

It would be impossible here to summarise this extraordinary Australian story. Suffice to say, their musical partnership led to over 100 albums, over seven million sales, over 70 gold and platinum albums, not to mention thousands of kilometres driven to every corner of Australia year after year with their travelling music show. Joy managed Slim's career, and many credit her for being the reason the boy from Nulla Nulla Creek was able to have such a long and lasting career when many others had faded away. Slim won 38 Golden Guitar Awards, a record broken by Troy Cassar-Daley only last year. But it was Joy who won the very first Golden Guitar 50 years ago this year, in January 1973, for Song of the Year: the iconic tale of a doomed but philosophical truckie, *Lights on the Hill*. Joy McKean was an inspiration to many, particularly to women, as she blazed a trail of professional and artistic success in an era and an industry that was dominated by men. On behalf of Parliament, I offer our condolences to Joy's daughter, Ann, and son, David, and Joy's four grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (21:45): I lead for the Opposition to support the condolence motion moved by the Hon. Emily Suvaal because members of the Opposition also think that the life of Joy McKean should be recognised and celebrated in this Chamber. As we all know, Joy was not only a gifted singer and songwriter but also became an icon of Australian country music. Her career spanned several decades and her impact on the genre was profound. She was a trailblazer at a time when she described the music industry as chauvinistic. As the Hon. Emily Suvaal mentioned, Joy McKean was born in Singleton in the Hunter region and lived on a dairy farm belonging to her mother's family. Joy and her sister Heather taught themselves to play various instruments and yodel, and they started a duo and began performing publicly, contributing to the war effort of the 1940s.

Joy married Slim Dusty in 1951, six years before he became the first Australian to have an international number one with *A Pub with No Beer*. Joy's musical partnership with Slim produced more than 100 albums, 45 Golden Guitars and total sales of more than \$8 million. As the honourable member also indicated, Joy also wrote Slim's most famous song *Lights on the Hill* and in 1973 she won the first Golden Guitar Award at the

Tamworth Country Music Festival for that song. Joy was a driving force behind the scenes, managing Slim Dusty's career and helping to shape the Australian country music landscape, and in doing so she proved that women could not only be equal but also instrumental in the success of their male counterparts.

Joy was also the founder of the Tamworth Country Music Festival, and in 2019 she was recognised with a lifetime achievement award at the Australian Women in Music Awards. I note that in the great city of Tamworth, not far from where I live in Gunnedah, a statue of Joy and Slim on Peel Street was unveiled in 2014, and it remains a very popular monument for people visiting, not just during the world-famous country music festival but also many times throughout the year. Joy's impact extended beyond the stage and recording studio. Her tireless dedication to preserving the traditions of Australian country music led to the establishment of the Slim Dusty Centre in Kempsey. She wanted to make sure that the legacy of Australian country music would live on for generations to come.

My knowledge of both Slim and Joy's music was enhanced significantly when I worked for Mark Coulton, the Federal member for Parkes. Mark is a very big Slim fan. He and his wife, Robyn, recently dressed as Slim and Joy for a dress-up party, and I have seen the photos. On the many road trips across the vast parts of the electorate, I learnt very quickly that Joy and Slim rewarded value for money for their CDs with many tracks per album, and it gave me an appreciation of their incredible legacy and their contribution to country music. As we mourn the loss of Joy McKean, we must also remember to celebrate the incredible legacy that she leaves behind. She was a true pioneer of Australian country music, a gifted songwriter and a trailblazer for women in the industry, and her music and contribution will forever be a source of joy and inspiration for generations to come.

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) (21:48): I thank the Hon. Emily Suvaal for bringing this motion to the House. I pay tribute to one of New South Wales and Australia's musical pioneers Joy McKean. I am delighted to do that as the State's first Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy. Before the travelling musician's life pulled her away, Joy McKean studied for a time at the University of Sydney where, in the student review of 1948, she and sister Heather performed their, to quote an impressed reviewer, "polished brand of hillbilly high jinks". That reviewer was none other than Neville Wran, future Premier of New South Wales and a hard man to please. The McKean sisters were off to a good start.

In Joy McKean's career, we see so many aspects of a working musician's life. She had the dream of her musical career and the grit required to follow her dream. Before she and Slim left on their first tour in an old caravan, she wrote in her diary:

We have gambled everything but our home, I wonder how it will turn out?

It turned out okay for them, but these are the risks artists face. She had the desire to give voice to universal life experiences. Joy's songs such as *The Biggest Disappointment*, *Lights on the Hill* and *Walk A Country Mile* are short, three-minute stories that have touched generations of people. Through their songs and shows, she and Slim truly gave voice to life in the bush. But, as working artists know, creative brilliance can take you only so far. They are also small business people. In 2019, at the star-studded concert for Joy in Tamworth for her ninetieth birthday, Australasian Performing Right Association CEO Dean Ormston met Joy, and she quizzed him on registering catalogues and tracking songs. Even at that age, the business brain that managed Slim Dusty's career for 50 years was still at work.

That same year, I was honoured to be there when Joy McKean was awarded the lifetime achievement award at the Australian Women in Music awards. Not only country music stars such as Keith Urban, Kasey Chambers and Troy Cassar-Daley were influenced by Joy's trailblazing example, but artists across the genres. The day after her passing, the songwriter Paul Kelly wrote:

I'm very sad today ... mourning the loss of Joy McKean, one of our great songwriters and music pioneers. My deep condolences go out to her family. She was a no-nonsense, warm-hearted, eagle-eyed woman. My friendship with her over many years has been one of the treasures of my life.

We are all grateful for Joy McKean's enduring contributions to Australian music.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (21:51): I make a short contribution to this motion and thank the Hon. Emily Suvaal for bringing it to the House. I offer my condolences on the passing of Joy McKean. I am a well-known lover and fan of music, and of country music from time to time. The Hon. Emily Suvaal only the other day was commenting on my weird and eclectic taste in music blaring out from my office, which she could hear in stereo next door. Joy's story is just such a great New South Wales and Australian success story. This is the woman who was behind Slim Dusty but organised the business, wrote the music and made that success story happen. She ought to be congratulated for the wonderful work she did. She overcame polio as a child, growing out of that disability into one of the most successful songwriters and part of one of the most successful duos in not only country music but all Australian music.

I remember watching the documentary *Slim & I*. If my memory serves me correctly, Paul Kelly did a cover of *A Pub with No Beer*, which was a song made famous by Joy McKean's husband. I think that song was the first international hit and success story of that duo. There is a wonderful version with Paul Kelly and Joy doing *The Sunlander*. I pay tribute to her wonderful career. She lived a great life and has left a legacy that will live on beyond her, with wonderful music that will be around for generations of people to enjoy. We need to celebrate success stories like this in the music industry and the country music industry. It is certainly a wonder that in New South Wales we have people like this, who can produce so much in a long and dedicated life of music.

The Hon. WES FANG (21:54): I associate myself with the motion, and I thank the honourable member for bringing it forward. It is appropriate for the House to acknowledge a person who has been described as the queen of country music in Australia. Joy McKean was, in her own right, somebody who established country music and fostered country music. Through her love for and her partnership with Slim Dusty she promoted country music and embodied the things that we love about it. I myself enjoy a little bit of country music, but my mother is a connoisseur, and that came from her father. I remember visiting my grandfather on the farm in West Wyalong. There would always be records playing, and it was always Slim Dusty and Joy McKean. To this day when I hear those sounds of my childhood it takes me back to where I was when I first heard them. That experience is so iconically Australian—almost like the iconic brumbies, but that is another issue. It is something that a lot of people in this country would have experienced.

Joy McKean imparted her gift for songwriting and gift for country music, and that is reflected in things like the Tamworth Country Music Festival, which she played a huge role in establishing. She was the recipient of many Golden Guitar awards through her career. I wanted to share those memories and associate myself with the motion moved by the Hon. Emily Suvaal. It is a nice way to finish this Wednesday, which some people have noted has been somewhat different. It is good that we can end on a bipartisan note, honouring an iconic Australian who has made such a big contribution to the way we enjoy music and live in this great country and State.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (21:57): In reply: I thank all honourable members for their contributions and fitting tributes to such a wonderful woman. I thank the Hon. Sarah Mitchell. I acknowledge her stories of country music around New South Wales and the fond memories she associates with Slim Dusty, Joy McKean and their music. I thank my colleague the Hon. John Graham, who is the first music Minister. What an important portfolio that is and how fantastic that we have a music Minister in this place. I acknowledge the Hon. Cameron Murphy, who some may have guessed I share an adjoining wall with. He has quite an eclectic taste in music and one that I quite admire. I have heard the odd Slim Dusty song, but sometimes music that I have not heard before comes through the wall.

I also acknowledge the Hon. Wes Fang for his contribution in rounding out the debate and his articulation of what a wonderful and remarkable woman Joy McKean was. What an amazing life story and what a remarkable woman. One can only aspire to have left such a legacy behind. It is what we all aspire to in this place, to leave the world a better place and to have made a meaningful contribution of some sort. She was a no-nonsense, warm-hearted, eagle-eyed woman. Those are all attributes I deeply admire and respect, but also, in a way, aspire to: to be a no-nonsense yet warm-hearted and eagle-eyed woman.

It is no wonder that is a summary of Joy McKean given the upbringing that she had. She was brought up by a teacher, travelling around our beautiful State. One could not possibly imagine what Joy went through, having experienced polio as a five-year-old and being separated from her family for three years. It is true that that had lifelong impacts on one of her legs but, in spite of that, the contribution she went on to make in New South Wales, in Australia and around the world put country music very much on the map. So many Australians have memories and stories of Slim Dusty's songs. It is the beauty of music and the beauty of country music. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): According to standing order, it being 10.00 p.m. proceedings are interrupted.

Adjournment Debate

ADJOURNMENT

According to standing order, members made the following statements.

BANK BRANCH CLOSURES

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (22:01): I talk about bank branch closures across New South Wales and the corrosive impacts on communities. In the past almost every town was guaranteed to have two things: a pub and a bank. But in the past 25 years major banks having been leaving regional Australia in droves, hurting local communities, creating huge service gaps and putting local communities under severe pressure. In recent years we have seen suburban branches across Sydney follow a similar path as the big four banks have endlessly cut networks built up in our communities over generations. COVID, in particular, provided the perfect opportunity for banks to, purportedly, temporarily close branches for what they claimed were public health reasons, only to quietly dispose of them once the pandemic was over. That is totally disingenuous behaviour.

The Financial Sector Union—and I commend the work it has done in keeping a spotlight on the issue—reported that between June 2017 and June 2022 over 1,600 bank branches were closed. Recently I met with its national policy officer, Angela Budai, and recorded my thanks. The Australian Prudential Regulation Authority reports that the number of bank branches in New South Wales has dropped by over 28 per cent between June 2017 and June 2022. The decline has occurred at similar rates across metropolitan, regional and remote New South Wales. There are now many examples of local government areas in New South Wales without a single bank branch. Bank branch closures are having a disproportionate impact on regional New South Wales.

Recently I was in Mudgee for Small Farms Field Days—a great annual event that I commend to everyone—and noted that the ANZ bank had closed its branch and now expected its customers to travel to Dubbo. On the way home to Sydney I stopped at Lithgow, another town of significant size, and noted that ANZ had just closed the branch there and expected customers to travel to Katoomba. Mudgee to Dubbo is an hour and a half's drive and Lithgow to Katoomba, on a good day, is 45 minutes. Is this big-four-style customer service in 2023? The big four banks are indirectly forcing loyal customers into banking practices they do not want or may not be able to access.

There are entirely legitimate reasons why many people in our community—the elderly, the isolated and the vulnerable—are unable to use the digital services that the banks loudly proclaim can provide service equal to that of a bricks and mortar branch. Communities find particularly grating the fact that even though banks are closing branches by the dozen they are still enormously profitable, as we see every year, and have endless budgets to lecture and campaign customers and the wider community about political issues such as the Voice. I submit that customers would much rather an open and functioning branch than another glossy brochure from the bank's corporate affairs staff.

Let us not also forget the final blow we often see the big four deliver when they leave a community—they not only remove the branch but also take the ATM. The space is often filled by a non-bank ATM, charging exorbitant fees for simple withdrawals that used to be free of charge. The issue of branch closures is currently being considered by a Senate inquiry. It is alarming to see some of the issues raised in that inquiry. While New South Wales families face cost-of-living pressures, the big four banks report record profits. It is expected that for the 2022-23 financial years the big four banks will post combined profits of over \$30 billion. It is time for the banks to get back to basics, get back to work and meet their licence to operate in our communities. I will have more to say on this issue in this place and beyond in the months ahead.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (22:06): This week deadly supercharged storms have hit the North African nation of Libya, destroying buildings across the coast and hitting the nation's second-biggest city of Benghazi. At least 2,000 people are confirmed dead and two of Libya's major but ageing dams have broken, causing floodwaters to wipe out entire neighbourhoods. Those impacted say that the only warning they had that the dams were breaking was the explosive deadly sound of them collapsing. Libya's political situation prevents the upgrading of critical infrastructure or delivering an emergency response appropriate to the scale of a disaster such as this, and that is the reality that we now face. We are all vulnerable to the impacts of the climate crisis, but people in communities without the resources to build resilience and respond to emergencies are disproportionately dealing with the tragedies, loss and trauma of climate-induced extreme weather events.

The same storm that brought that destruction brought floods to parts of Greece. While central towns were collapsing under the floodwaters, firefighters continued to battle wildfires on the other side of the country. Those wildfires have burned more than 93,000 hectares, making it the single largest blaze to hit a European Union country since it began. Greece's Prime Minister has rightly blamed the climate crisis. The United Nations released a statement last week saying that, after the hottest three months on record, we have now entered climate breakdown. August was the hottest August ever on record, and by a large margin. It is considered to have been 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the threshold that we legally bound ourselves to avoid in the Paris Agreement.

The breakdown that is designating communities across the planet is hugely on us in New South Wales because we continue to fuel the climate crisis through the extraction, burning and export of fossil fuels. Our coal is fuelling the climate crisis and we are shipping it through the world's largest coal port every day on behalf of the serial climate deniers, the fossil fuel industry. We need to be real and honest in New South Wales. Our policy settings are not commensurate with the challenge for the people of New South Wales and those who we share the planet with.

The Minns climate policy—as far as I can ascertain is not that clear—to get the Coalition's renewable energy zones on track to achieve net zero by 2050 is not a small target; it is part of the suicidal impasse that we are on, described last week by former chair of the Australian Coal Association Ian Dunlop. He noted that current global warming is very dangerous—two degrees would be extremely dangerous and three degrees would be catastrophic. It is now impossible to limit temperature increases to 1.5 and also to two unless leaders take emergency and radical action to address climate change.

Dunlop and other climate leaders know that the widespread target of net zero emissions by 2050 is totally inadequate. He says the objective must be to reach zero emissions as close to 2030 as possible. We need the Minns Government to go further and faster on climate—to embrace the vision and leadership that we require to survive, to navigate through climate breakdown, and to take responsibility for our part globally. We need to end coal and gas, including exporting it. Announcing a \$1.8 billion boost to renewables at the same time as expanding the life of Eraring—a filthy, dangerous coal-fired power plant—and exporting coal like there is no tomorrow will not cut it. Alex Smith, State political editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, wrote last week about this Government:

A small-target strategy may have won them the election, but it should not be the blueprint of government.

This Government's small-target strategy on climate is the same as its strategy on the environment and even koalas. The delivery of its election commitment to the Great Koala National Park is incomprehensible. Suggesting that it is tenable to create a Great Koala National Park but carry on logging it, devastating critical koala habitat until at least 2025 and making a small-target announcement that it will not log 5 per cent is political failure. This Government needs to absolutely cut its small-target strategy on climate and environment if it and we are going to survive.

QANTAS

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (22:10): Today the full bench of the High Court unanimously dismissed a Qantas appeal concerning its illegal sacking of almost 1,700 ground workers at the height of the pandemic. The decision means that Qantas has now been found on three separate occasions to have illegally sacked those workers—twice in the Federal Court and today in the High Court. Qantas funded three appeals despite taking \$2.7 billion in taxpayers' money to supposedly keep people employed and the airline running during the pandemic. The importance of the outcome in the High Court today cannot be overstated. By dismissing the appeal by Qantas, the High Court has sent employers all around Australia a very clear message that they cannot opportunistically prevent workers from exercising their legal rights to bargain and take industrial action.

I congratulate the Qantas workers, led by Don Dixon, on their incredible perseverance over a three-year period. I congratulate the Transport Workers' Union, led by national secretary Michael Kaine, on its unrelenting advocacy to make it possible. It is a monumental win for those workers, who have been through so much personally and financially because of Qantas' atrocious behaviour, but let us not forget that some of the damage to the workers is irreversible. They have lost their jobs and, because of the time elapsed and the changed circumstances of both the airline and the workers, the court will not allow reinstatement. The Transport Workers' Union will now pursue compensation for them in the Federal Court.

The decision today is yet another blight on the already severely damaged reputation of Qantas. Let us recall the litany of atrocious acts Qantas is responsible for. The airline is currently the subject of a workplace prosecution by SafeWork NSW for standing down a health and safety representative, Theo Seremetidis, after he spoke up for his fellow Qantas workers who were cleaning planes at the start of the COVID pandemic without adequate personal protective equipment and cleaning equipment. The courage of Theo in standing up to that corporate bully should be acknowledged.

Between May and July last year, Qantas allegedly accepted bookings for flights that had already been cancelled and delayed telling customers about it. That impacted thousands of customers. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC], which has taken legal action against Qantas on that issue, notes that tickets remained available online for at least two weeks on average after Qantas had cancelled the flights. The ACCC also claims that Qantas delayed updating customers about the status of their cancelled flights for an average of 18 days. In August a class action was launched claiming that many customers entitled to receive a cash refund for flights cancelled because of COVID instead received flight credits or vouchers that were worth far less than the value of the cash refunds they were entitled to.

Despite this trail of destruction left behind by outgoing CEO Alan Joyce, he is expected to take home \$24 million in salary and bonus this financial year. On 24 August, Qantas announced that the company's profits for the 2022-23 financial year were \$2.47 billion. The public have patently—and rightly so—lost faith in the once great Qantas airline, which has had more complaints about it made to the ACCC than any other company in Australia. One can only hope that the incoming CEO, Vanessa Hudson, finally gets the message and undertakes a thoroughgoing cultural change that finally places Qantas workers at the centre of their business, instead of at the edges.

This is a monumental landmark decision by the High Court of Australia. It says that if anyone tries to opportunistically use circumstances, as Qantas did under the cover of COVID after taking billions in taxpayers' money, or to foreclose the rights of working people in Australia to participate in the life of their union and to take industrial action, they will be caught out. It is a monumental decision. I thank the workers and their union for standing up.

AMANDA FAZIO COMMENTS

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (22:15): I wish I could have given a speech on another topic tonight, but I have a moral obligation to draw the House's attention to these incidents when they occur, especially as we approach the Jewish High Holiday period, a time when the Jewish community unites across the world. We also approach a period of heightened antisemitism, not just here in Australia but everywhere. Antisemitism has no place in modern Australia. It is tragic that we have witnessed rising antisemitism in our country, with the latest Executive Council of Australian Jewry report on antisemitism in Australia showing that 478 antisemitic incidents occurred in the 12 months to 30 September 2022. A recent Australian Jewish University Experience Survey showed that 64 per cent of Australian Jewish university students have experienced antisemitism on campus, with 88 per cent of those having experienced it within the past 12 months.

I am proud to have been a Minister in the former Coalition Government, which banned the display of Nazi symbols. Those symbols represent an anathema to the values of freedom, tolerance, acceptance, liberty and equality that we hold dear in this State and in this country. Antisemitism is a disturbing issue that shows the worst in humanity that has ruined lives and taken lives. It is of the utmost importance that we continue to call out and denounce antisemitism. This should be common sense, especially to those who have had the honour of serving in this place. It is disturbing to me, then, that a former Labor member and former President of this House recently made comments on social media calling the Jewish people a "race of whingers".

Those comments from former member Amanda Fazio are blatantly prejudiced, bigoted and should not be tolerated. In her inaugural speech, Ms Fazio stated, "I do not support discrimination against any section of the community"—a sentiment reiterated in her valedictory speech. It is not consistent, then, that Ms Fazio holds and publishes on her social media this view of the Jewish community, a people who have experienced discrimination from antiquity to the modern day. Ms Fazio's comments have been rightly condemned by Jewish community organisations, including the Australian Jewish Association and the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies. I echo the comments of David Ossip, President of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, who stated:

These bigoted comments are nothing short of despicable and seek to silence the Jewish community by making it seem as though there is something untoward, problematic or unusual about Jews engaging in public debate.

Ms Fazio holds an important position within the New South Wales branch of the ALP, as a member of its Rules Committee—the body that is "responsible for considering proposals to changes in the Rules" of NSW Labor. The rules include the NSW Labor Code of Conduct, which sets out the expectations for all people involved with NSW Labor. It applies to the conduct of anyone involved in NSW Labor, including party officials, who must "agree they are familiar with and are bound by this Code". The code is prefaced by its principles and purpose that "All people are entitled to respect, equality, dignity and the opportunity to participate in society free of harassment". Under section 5.1.8, the code goes on to list situations that breach the code, one of those being when someone "behaves in a manner that constitutes discrimination ... which includes discrimination or harassment towards a group of persons on the basis of race".

Ms Fazio's comments are a blatant breach of the code of conduct that she is bound by and has agreed to as an official of NSW Labor. Her comments are antisemitic and should not be tolerated in modern-day Australia. I condemn them and I stand for our harmonious multicultural and multi-faith community in New South Wales. I call on NSW Labor to condemn and expel that bigoted person. She should do better. As a former member and President of this place, she should apologise, withdraw and resign now.

KANGAROO SHOOTING

The Hon. EMMA HURST (22:19): We might be the only country in the world that has built an industry of brutally killing its beloved national icon. Ask anyone overseas: When they think of Australia, they think of

kangaroos. But what they do not know is that the killing of kangaroos is the largest slaughter of land-based wildlife on the planet. The world needs to know that. It is legal in Australia to bash a joey to death. It is not a crime; in fact, it is the recommended guideline. It needs to be known that severing the head of a small, furless baby kangaroo while alive is lawful and that those laws are not even monitored for compliance. How can that kind of violence be sanctioned by law but be left completely unmonitored? It is a disgrace and beyond belief.

Here is how it plays out. Kangaroos are most active at night, so shooters go out under the cover of darkness. The code of practice requires adult kangaroos to be killed by a single shot to the centre of the head. But how is that possible with a small, fast-moving target at night? Even the most experienced shooters miss and, when they do, the outcome is horrific. I have seen footage of a kangaroo who cannot eat because his jaw is dangling from the side of his head. I have seen footage of a mother kangaroo whose joey is dying in her pouch because she has been paralysed from a shot to her neck and cannot bend to tend to her baby. I have seen firsthand headless kangaroos hanging at the back of a truck, their heads cut off further down the body depending on what has to be removed to hide that the shot was not a clean kill. None of that is uncommon. A former commercial kangaroo shooter describes their firsthand experience:

The mouth of a kangaroo can be blown off and the kangaroo can escape to die of shock and starvation. Forearms can be blown off, as can ears, eyes and noses. Stomachs can be hit expelling the contents with the kangaroos still alive. Backbones can be pulverised to an unrecognisable state ... hind legs can be shattered with the kangaroo desperately trying to get away on the other or without the use of either. To deny that this goes on is just an exercise in attempting to fool the public.

The code of practice requires shooters to ensure that a kangaroo is dead before moving onto another target but, again, the shooting happens in remote or rural places at night with no oversight. There is no inspector at the point of kill. No-one can make sure that even the most minimal welfare requirements are complied with. The violence is bad enough when there is compliance, but it gets worse. Too often we see footage of shooters who do not comply, footage of undeniable cruelty and illegal behaviour. The ABC published footage from April this year of a commercial shooter in New South Wales. He drags an injured kangaroo to his truck. The kangaroo is alive and struggling to escape. The shooter picks up the kangaroo and hangs him from the back of the truck by forcing a metal hook through the kangaroo's leg. The kangaroo is thrashing desperately. The shooter then cuts the kangaroo's throat, gets in his truck and drives away as the kangaroo, who is still alive, bleeds out in the back.

What is all that for? The pet food industry? A pair of shoes? Bludgeoning a joey to death is a terrible price to pay for a pair of shoes. There is no pride in kangaroo meat or kangaroo leather, and big companies know it. Prada, Versace, Nike, Puma—those global brands have committed to protect kangaroos and stop using kangaroo leather. As people all over the world learn the truth about that industry, they are horrified. We are seeing massive support for legislation that bans the importation of kangaroo products. That pressure is essential. We need countries to care about our wildlife because our own Government fails to. They are on our coat of arms, our currency, our stamps and our national airline. They are our mascots at international sporting events. Australians are quick to criticise the bludgeoning to death of baby harp seals, but the bludgeoning of joey kangaroos in industry is no different. It is time to give those incredible animals the respect they deserve. It is time to end the commercial kangaroo-killing industry.

CRITICAL MINERALS AND HIGH-TECH METALS

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (22:24): I speak on the importance of critical minerals and high-tech metals. Critical mineral mining is crucial for regional jobs and for our transition to a clean energy future. We have a unique opportunity in New South Wales. Looking forward, this is the future of mining in the State. Critical minerals and high-tech metals will provide the underlying technologies that we need to power New South Wales into the future. They enable renewable energy, enable us to launch new products and are also key components in many modern medical advances. The path to net zero is through electrification. What are key components for this? They are copper and silver. Why? Let us start with solar panels. Solar panels already consume 20 per cent of the world's annual industrial silver. However, solar panels also contribute only 1 per cent of the world's energy. We must dramatically ramp up the production of silver to meet the challenges of an energy future where solar is to play a key role.

What about when the sun does not shine? Let us talk about batteries. What are key components of batteries? It is critical minerals like copper, for example, which the CSIRO advises is needed in almost every single renewable energy technology and will likely continue to play a big role into the future. In fact, copper is in very high demand globally. An estimated 10 million tonnes more copper will be needed to meet market requirements over the next 10 years. An electric vehicle alone requires 10 tonnes of copper ore or roughly 53 kilograms of copper, give or take. It is fair to say that in New South Wales we have a natural resource advantage that we must harness. I welcome the Government's recent announcement on consultation for the development of a new critical minerals and high-tech metals strategy. Critical minerals are the future.

New South Wales has deposits of 17 of the 26 nationally identified critical minerals. We have abundant resources of copper, silver and scandium. As I have already mentioned, these are all crucial components in ensuring that we get to net zero emissions. New South Wales also has incredible reserves of rare earths, which are critical components of electric vehicles. There is a unique opportunity for the State to leverage its natural abundance of materials to create economic growth and employment opportunities and to ensure that we keep up with global demand for these critical minerals and high-tech metals.

I welcome the steps that the Government has taken so far with respect to critical minerals and high-tech metals. The recently announced strategy is one step on a path that will provide certainty and direction for this industry as it continues to grow and flourish in New South Wales. The industry provides thousands of jobs in the State—currently 4,000 direct jobs—and will undoubtedly expand by many thousands more. As one would expect, there are also tens of thousands of indirect jobs in regional areas. They are well-paying jobs, and many workers live locally and give back to regional towns. In our path to net zero, critical minerals are key. Copper and silver are key. Ensuring a stable supply of critical minerals and high-tech metals is necessary to translate the State's natural competitive advantage into economic growth and regional employment. Doing so will also safeguard our clean energy supply chain and sovereign capacity, now and into the future.

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (22:29): I want to talk about the important issue of subscription traps, which many consumers in New South Wales have fallen victim to. Subscription traps occur when one signs up for a trial on a service such as an app on one's phone or a subscription to a music service, and that service is free for a short period of time, but afterwards one must pay and people become trapped. They may try to get out of those subscriptions by giving notice and following all of the right instructions—doing everything they possibly can—but they are unable to exit paying for those services. That is a massive problem. According to Assistant Treasurer Stephen Jones in the Commonwealth Parliament, last year that problem cost Australians more than \$4 billion.

Other estimates suggest that up to \$8 billion was taken from consumers through those scams and tricky business practices. I congratulate the Assistant Treasurer because on 31 August this year he released a Treasury white paper that goes through some of the issues and looks at ways in which it can be regulated. I note that this is not a problem in other jurisdictions. Europe, the United States, Singapore and other places around the world have outlawed those practices so that companies cannot engage in them. We have had horrible examples of companies like Amazon Prime not releasing people from their subscriptions. There is community consultation on the matter until 29 November. I urge everyone to look at it and put in a submission.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The time for the adjournment debate has expired. The House now stands adjourned.

The House adjourned at 22:31 until Thursday 14 September 2023 at 10:00.