



New South Wales

Legislative Council

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)

**Fifty-Eighth Parliament
First Session**

Wednesday 18 October 2023

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday 18 October 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

BICENTENARY CONCERT SERIES

The PRESIDENT (10:02): I advise members that from 12.45 p.m. to 1.30 p.m. today talented musicians from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music will be performing in the Fountain Court as part of our special bicentenary concert series. The series is inviting everyone at New South Wales Parliament to reflect on our past, celebrate our progress and imagine our future. Today's musical program will be brought to life by an esteemed and accomplished classical guitar duo; in fact, they are two of the best in the nation. Members are encouraged to reflect on the theme of representation and diversity across our membership and the State of New South Wales.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Will they play Acca Dacca?

The PRESIDENT: I acknowledge that interjection.

Motions

PARKRUN

Dr AMANDA COHN (10:02): I move:

- (1) That this House acknowledges that:
 - (a) parkrun celebrated its nineteenth anniversary on 2 October 2023;
 - (b) parkrun is a free, weekly five-kilometre run or walk that brings together local communities around the world, embracing consistent participation in physical activity and volunteerism;
 - (c) in the 19 years since its inception, parkrun has expanded to over 2,300 locations worldwide, including communities across New South Wales and Australia;
 - (d) participation in parkrun has grown from 13 to over 8.5 million participants worldwide; and
 - (e) parkrun's success is built on the core principles of being free, being open to everyone and remaining that way forever.
- (2) That this House further notes that:
 - (a) in addition to the traditional model, parkrun now runs junior parkrun events to introduce youth to the benefits of physical activity and volunteering;
 - (b) parkrun is supporting marginalised people with its expansion into prisons both in the United Kingdom and Australia;
 - (c) parkrun has joined with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners to establish the parkrun Practice Initiative, a scheme allowing doctors to prescribe parkrun; and
 - (d) independent survey findings have highlighted the significant and positive health impacts of parkrun, including 81 per cent of parkrunners experiencing a positive improvement in their mental health and 85 per cent experiencing improvements in their physical health.
- (3) That this House acknowledges and thanks parkrun organisers, volunteers and participants for their contribution to physical and mental health and community spirit.

Motion agreed to.

GEORGES RIVER ASSOCIATION MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL GALA

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

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) on 16 September 2023 the Georges River Association held the Mid-Autumn Festival Gala in Hurstville, and the Hon. Mark Buttigieg was honoured to attend alongside the following guests:
 - (i) the Hon. Chris Minns, MP, Premier of New South Wales;
 - (ii) Mr Jason Yat-Sen Li, MP, member for Strathfield;

- (iii) councillor Nick Katris, then Mayor of Georges River Council;
 - (iv) councillor Ben Wang, Georges River Council;
 - (v) councillor Natalie Mort, Georges River Council;
 - (vi) councillor Peter Mahoney, Georges River Council;
 - (vii) Mr Mark Steed, Principal of Hurstville Public School;
 - (viii) deputy principals from Hurstville Public School; and
 - (ix) representatives from Hurstville Salvos.
- (b) the Mid-Autumn Festival attracted hundreds of attendees with delicious food, interesting speeches and engaging performances from a folk music ensemble and local school children;
 - (c) the Georges River Association is a community hub that coordinates many events to connect the community and celebrate multiculturalism, as well as acts as an advocate for local residents; and
 - (d) the night was capped off with a fun activity whereby special guests had 15 minutes to take photos with all 28 tables of attendees.
- (2) That this House congratulates the Georges River Association, including the President Jun Qi, for hosting the great event.

Motion agreed to.

Petitions

RESPONSES TO PETITIONS

The CLERK: According to sessional order, I announce receipt of the following response to an ePetition signed by more than 500 persons:

- (1) Government response from the Hon. Tara Moriarty, MLC, Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales to an ePetition presented by Ms Sue Higginson on 12 September 2023 concerning Ourimbah State Forest logging, received out of session and authorised to be published on 17 October 2023.

Documents

THE HON. SAM FARRAWAY QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Disputed Claim of Privilege

The PRESIDENT: I inform the House that on 17 October 2023 the Clerk received written correspondence from the Hon. Sam Faraway disputing the validity of a claim of privilege over documents lodged with the Clerk on 12 October 2023 relating to questions on notice submitted by the Hon. Sam Faraway. According to standing order, the Hon. Keith Mason, AC, KC, was appointed as an Independent Legal Arbiter to evaluate and report as to the validity of the claim of privilege. The Clerk released the disputed documents to Mr Mason.

LOCAL AND COMMUNITY GRANTS

Variation of Order

The PRESIDENT: According to standing order, I advise the House that the Clerk has received a request from the Deputy Secretary, General Counsel of the Cabinet Office requesting that the scope of the following order be varied:

- (1) **Local and community grants decisions**, requesting that the due date for documents be captured by paragraph (b) be 15 November 2023.

I table the correspondence. I further inform the House that the member who moved the motion for the order has not agreed to the variation.

Bills

PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS AMENDMENT (INDEPENDENT OFFICE OF ANIMAL WELFARE) BILL 2023

First Reading

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

Second Reading Speech

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (10:15): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Independent Office of Animal Welfare) Bill 2023 on behalf of The Greens. The bill is in substantially the same form as a bill I introduced in this place in 2022, so elements of this speech may be familiar to a keen listener. The bill establishes an independent statutory body to undertake key regulatory and administrative responsibilities relating to animal welfare and protection, constituted to ensure independent oversight and review of animal welfare in New South Wales in line with scientific knowledge, technological advances and community expectations. It subsequently removes responsibility for animal welfare from the Department of Primary Industries.

Some 75 million animals in the agriculture industry, some nine million companion animals, around two million animals used in research, thousands of exhibited animals and uncountable billions of native and non-native wild animals are affected by animal welfare laws in New South Wales. Over the past 40-odd years, our animal welfare and protection regime has become increasingly out of date. Contemporary scientific knowledge about animals and animal welfare, advances in technology, and community expectations and values favouring greater regulation have all progressed and evolved while our laws have stagnated.

Unfortunately, when we look at the state of politics, it is easy to understand why there has been a lack of leadership on animal welfare by the governing parties. The majority of political parties are captured—or at least heavily influenced—by those that profit directly or indirectly from animals, and so the laws they enact and the departments they administer are skewed in favour of industry, even when that may not be in the best interests of the animals for which they have responsibility. The Department of Primary Industries, which is overseen by the Minister for Agriculture, administers three of the four pieces of primary animal welfare legislation, including the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979. The department's strategic plan for 2022-30 states that its purpose is:

To maximise outcomes for NSW primary industries, the communities they support and the resources they rely on, both today and for the future.

The 2020 Select Committee on Animal Cruelty Laws in New South Wales, which inquired into the effectiveness of arrangements for the administration and enforcement of the laws of New South Wales for the protection of animals from cruelty, explored the question of potential, perceived and actual conflicts of interest in relation to animal welfare matters. While industry bodies and the previous Government were united in the position that no conflict arises when a single department is tasked with both overseeing animal welfare outcomes and promoting and growing agricultural industries, the reality of the situation is that, where money is concerned, maximising outcomes in animal agriculture is rarely—if ever—the same as ensuring genuine welfare outcomes for animals in the industry.

I do not doubt that very good people with genuine expertise in and care for animal welfare are in the department. Unfortunately, however, that is not good enough if the department is answerable to a Minister whose primary interest conflicts with animal welfare by virtue of their position. That was a finding of the Commonwealth Productivity Commission's inquiry into the regulation of Australian agriculture, which stated:

Representing the interests of the industry that a government department is tasked with addressing is not of itself a concern, it is consistent with its objective. However, issues can arise when that department is also responsible for implementing a regulation that has broader community interests that may conflict with those of the industry.

The Greens, Labor and the Animal Justice Party all concluded the select committee's inquiry with the view that the Department of Primary Industries has an inherent conflict of interest in its role of supporting agricultural industries while at the same time being responsible for farmed animal welfare matters. The committee ultimately recommended that the New South Wales Government move responsibility for animal welfare matters out of that department and establish an independent statutory body to oversee the animal welfare framework. The committee report states:

... we are of the view that the Department of Primary Industries views the concept of 'animal welfare' within the context of agricultural industries as being synonymous with 'quality of stock'. The community, however, increasingly views animals as sentient beings, regardless of their use to humans. Given the Department of Primary Industries' role in supporting agricultural industries, the committee is concerned that the Department of Primary Industries risks maintaining a narrow and outdated view of animal welfare matters which is out of step with the broader community.

Given our concerns, we therefore recommend that the NSW Government move responsibility for animal welfare matters out of the Department of Primary Industries to avoid any potential conflicts of interest in relation to animal welfare.

That commitment from Labor was reiterated during the most recent election campaign. Labor confirmed to the Australian Alliance for Animals, for instance, that its policy position was to establish an independent animal welfare authority. I note that this reform would be best accompanied by the creation of a dedicated animal welfare ministerial portfolio separate to the Agriculture portfolio to ensure a more fulsome eradication of any actual or perceived conflicts of interest inside Cabinet. Of course, that is a matter for the government of the day and cannot be legislated, but I would urge the current Government to give it serious consideration.

Animal welfare matters are not limited to animal agriculture or actions designated as cruel under the law. Even with the conflict of interest issue to the side, the administration and enforcement of animal welfare spans various government agencies and charitable organisations granted enforcement power under ministerial order. In addition to the Department of Primary Industries, the Office of Local Government has responsibility for most companion animal matters, while animal racing issues sit with the Office of Racing and native animals are the responsibility of the Minister for the Environment.

Under the administration of those four different Ministers and associated departments, the enforcement of various animal welfare matters falls to each individual local council, to the NSW Police Force, to Racing NSW and the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission, and to the RSPCA and the Animal Welfare League [AWL]. No one body has ultimate oversight of all animal welfare matters in the State, and as a result there is huge room for improvement in inter-agency communication and coordination, and a vacuum of strategy and leadership. That is not necessarily the fault of any of these organisations, but a structural failure that lies at the feet of successive governments.

I take a moment to speak to the work of the RSPCA NSW and the Animal Welfare League NSW. Those two organisations are responsible for the lion's share of animal welfare enforcement, despite being the only two organisations I have named that are not statutorily constituted or part of government. In fact, the vast majority of their work enforcing the animal welfare laws of this State is not publicly funded, with the core operational funding provided by the Government to both the RSPCA and AWL put together totalling, in most years, less than half a million dollars. That means that both organisations are reliant on charitable donations and other revenue streams to operate, which reasonably raises questions about perceived conflicts of interest. The RSPCA and AWL work incredibly hard within the confines of a flawed system and inadequate laws, and ultimately report to a Minister who has little interest in advancing animal welfare through policy or resourcing.

Establishing an independent office of animal welfare would create a single government body to act as a point of nexus for those various government bodies and charitable organisations, allowing coordinated progress on animal welfare through centralised independent oversight and a strategic framework focused solely on animal welfare outcomes. In addition, the independent office would also be responsible for liaising with all bodies responsible for national animal welfare policies and guidelines, and for educating the community on animal welfare issues. There would also be a role for the office to advocate for animal welfare in other governmental policy development, such as feeding into disaster planning or planning policy reform.

The establishment of an independent statutory body with responsibility for animal welfare and protection issues is something that the animal welfare sector has been united in advocating for for many years. In response to the Senate inquiry into former Greens Senator Lee Rhiannon's Voice for Animals (Independent Office of Animal Welfare) Bill 2015, all animal welfare organisations that made submissions to the inquiry, including Humane Research Australia, PETA Australia, RSPCA Australia, Animal Liberation, Sentient: The Veterinary Institute for Animal Ethics, Lawyers for Animals, Animals Australia, Voiceless, and World Animal Protection, supported the introduction of a national independent statutory body responsible for animal welfare.

More recently, the Australian Alliance for Animals, whose core members are Animals Australia, Compassion in World Farming, Four Paws, Humane Society International Australia, Voiceless, and World Animal Protection Australia, was launched last year. Its core campaign is a push to establish a truly independent national commission for animal welfare alongside a separate ministerial portfolio for animal welfare and improved processes for the creation of animal welfare standards. Those calls have been echoed in New South Wales over the past five years, with literally hundreds of submissions from animal welfare organisations and advocates to both parliamentary and departmental inquiries and review processes calling for an independent statutory body responsible for animal welfare at the State level in New South Wales.

The public agrees with animal welfare experts. For example, the consultation paper for the previous New South Wales Government's attempts at animal welfare reform noted significant support voiced for the establishment of an independent office of animal welfare in submissions and survey responses, with an independent office the key issue raised in the context of enforcement arrangements. It is clear that establishing an independent office of animal welfare is both popular and best practice.

I turn now to the specifics of the bill. Schedule 1 [4] establishes and confers functions on the independent office of animal welfare, the Chief Animal Welfare Officer and the office's advisory committee. The main objects of the independent office of animal welfare are to promote knowledge of animal welfare issues; to improve animal welfare outcomes; to ensure the State's animal welfare policies and guidelines are independently reviewed and developed having regard to contemporary scientific knowledge about animal welfare, advances in technology and community expectations and values; and to ensure the independent review of the administration and enforcement of the State's animal welfare laws.

The functions of the independent office of animal welfare include assisting the Chief Animal Welfare Officer in the exercise of their functions. Those functions include developing the State's animal welfare policies and guidelines and liaising with bodies responsible for national policies and guidelines; reviewing and monitoring, including conducting inquiries, commissioning research and preparing reports on the State's animal welfare laws, policies and guidelines; developing an animal welfare strategy that provides for a statewide framework for identifying and prioritising animal welfare issues; and ensuring compliance with, and the enforcement and effectiveness of, the State's animal welfare laws. That includes oversight of the treatment of animals in a particular industry or sector, including greyhound racing, horseracing, agriculture and medical and scientific research.

Further functions include improving consistency across all industries and sectors that use animals; collecting and disseminating information about animal welfare issues in the State; and, where appropriate, working towards possible harmonisation of the State's animal welfare laws with similar laws of the Commonwealth, other States and the Territories. The advisory committee is made up of three representatives of non-government animal welfare organisations, two representatives of RSPCA NSW and the Animal Welfare League NSW, two animal welfare scientists, one animal welfare ethicist, one representative of consumer rights organisations, one representative of the commercial animal industry, one government representative, and one local council representative. The function of the committee is to give advice and assistance to the Chief Animal Welfare Officer in relation to the exercise of their functions.

Schedule 1 [5] provides that the advisory committee must be given an opportunity to review and comment on animal welfare codes of practice, guidelines and standards, and must publicly report its comment and suggested amendments before the document can be adopted. That replaces the current process, which provides representatives of relevant livestock industries and the non-statutory Animal Welfare Advisory Council the opportunity to review and comment on codes of practice, guidelines and standards relating to farm and companion animal welfare before the regulation is made. Schedule 1 [5] also creates the power to designate a provision of animal welfare codes of practice, guidelines and standards as a mandatory provision, and makes it an offence for a person to contravene a mandatory provision. Finally, schedule 1 [1] changes the definition of approved charitable organisations to recognise the RSPCA NSW and the Animal Welfare League NSW in the Act, and schedules 1 [2], 1 [6] and 1 [7] make consequential amendments.

Currently, charitable organisations given enforcement powers under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act are exclusively appointed by order of the Minister. Their status as approved charitable organisation can just as easily be withdrawn by the Minister by a simple order, without any power of Parliament to disallow the change, let alone vote it down. This change recognises that the RSPCA NSW and the Animal Welfare League NSW have for decades been enforcing animal welfare laws in the State, and their inspectorate programs should not be at risk of dissolution by the simple flick of a ministerial pen. The change is in line with the definition of approved charitable organisations in the Companion Animals Act, and will provide those important organisations with the security to fearlessly advocate for animal welfare without concern for bad-faith retaliation by the Government, but while retaining necessary oversight and accountability through the independent office of animal welfare.

I thank the many animal welfare organisations that have assisted in the development of the bill in preparation for its introduction last year and its reintroduction this year. In particular, I thank the Australian Alliance for Animals and the RSPCA NSW. I offer my heartfelt gratitude to Dr Jed Goodfellow and Dr Meg Good of the Alliance for Animals for their expert advice on what a best practice independent office of animal welfare would look like, and also again to Shakira at the Parliamentary Counsel's Office for her continued patience with the many revisions that this process has necessitated over the past two years. The establishment of an independent office of animal welfare to oversee and review, and ultimately improve, animal welfare in the State, will mean that for the first time New South Wales is on track to have an animal welfare regime that aligns with scientific knowledge, technological advances and community expectations. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Motions

GAZA CONFLICT

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (10:30): I move:

- (1) That this House condemns antisemitism in all of its forms, including rhetorical or physical incitements of violence.
- (2) That this House reaffirms its commitment to a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine.
- (3) That this House condemns the "from the river to the sea" chant displayed at the pro-Palestine rally on Sunday 15 October 2023, which actively rejects the two-state solution and calls for the erasure of the State of Israel.

Every person in New South Wales deserves dignity and the right to worship, associate and respectfully engage with whoever they want. I have always known that every person holds intrinsic value. I have also always known

that this value precludes hatred toward or vilification of others. It is therefore a great shame that I felt compelled to move this motion. The first section of the motion speaks to the unfortunate reality that antisemitism still exists, both in our State and beyond. It is a particularly heinous evil. Disgracefully, it has a long history of varied forms and intensity, including in our State.

In April of this year, a well-known Sydney private school had a student group chat exposed, with screenshots displaying students discussing not "being cool" with Jews and "hating Jews". In August of this year, polling from one source revealed that more than two-thirds of Jewish university students had experienced antisemitism on their campuses in Australia. I am deeply distressed by those statistics. My good friend in the other place the member for Holsworthy, Tina Ayyad, said:

Our strength lies in our unity, and it is our shared duty to foster an environment where every individual can practise their faith freely, without fear or prejudice. These reported incidents of antisemitism should serve as a reminder that the principles of compassion, respect, understanding and tolerance are universal and should guide our actions.

I proudly quote a person of Muslim faith, as a Christian myself, in defence of the rights of Jewish Australians to go about their lives, faith and culture without fear or prejudice. It is for that reason that the events of Monday 9 October distressed me. Antisemitic chants that call for the extermination of an entire people have no place in New South Wales. I am also concerned by the reality that the Jewish people of this State were told that the streets of Sydney were not safe for them. When the Sydney Opera House, one of our national icons, was lit up in support of the Jewish community of New South Wales and those affected by the Hamas terror attack on Israel, Yasmin Catley told them to stay at home. The chanting and thuggery that took place on 9 October was appalling. It was highly antisemitic, and it was wrong. It frustrates me that such a march would take place in our pluralist society.

As someone who holds a deep-seated belief in a two-state solution for the people of Israel and Palestine, I have also been concerned by the events of the past fortnight more generally. Peace will only be a realistic prospect when it can be envisaged by those on both sides. Simple tribalism that attempts to demonise the entire peoples of Israel or Palestine will not accomplish anything. Israel should not be destroyed. Equally, the civilian population of Palestine are not less than Israelis. Over the previous days, we have observed a retreat to ill-informed, hardline positions. On Sunday a rally for Palestine took place featuring the chant "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free." I have included that chant in my motion because it is perhaps the clearest example of a disturbing hardline motto. The chant calls for a Palestinian state that includes all of the territory from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. By necessity, such a proposition would require the erasure of the State of Israel. It is for that reason the chant is often employed by terrorist groups such as Hamas.

I struggle to conceive of another chant that I have heard repeated in Sydney that also serves as a rallying cry for a terrorist group. I emphasise this in the context of the motion. We must be able to condemn those who actively subvert the prospect of a two-state solution, which includes through the repetition of this chant. Demanding justice for the people of Palestine or calling for a sovereign Palestinian state should not, by necessity, mean negating Israel's existence. What do those chanters suggest Palestine do with those Jews who currently live between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea? The reality is that underlying most arguments against Israel is a basic lack of belief in the two-state solution. Those arguments involve an all-or-nothing mentality that views the futures of Israel and Palestine as a zero-sum, winner-takes-all game. Instead, I hope their futures are of peace, compassion and harmony.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (10:35): I move:

That the question be amended by inserting at the end:

- (4) That this House condemns all forms of hate speech.
- (5) That this House calls for the upholding of international law standards and the protection of human lives.

A week ago the House canvassed and condemned the atrocities that were committed by Hamas. I reiterate that condemnation. Equally, the House condemned the display of the hate speech we witnessed on the streets of Sydney last week. Again, I condemn that. At this time we have to accept that our responsibility as a Parliament is to ensure cohesion in the community and that all of us, as political leaders entrusted with immense responsibilities, discharge our obligations to unite the community rather than divide it. We must not see the events of the weekend as an opportunity to play politics with each other, because we have a higher responsibility to the people of New South Wales, be they Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu or of no faith whatsoever. It is important that the House accepts that responsibility.

The amendment makes it clear that the hate speech we witnessed last week has no place. But, equally, if we were to see displays of hate speech like that directed at the Islamic community, the Hindu community or the LGBTI community, we would condemn that too. To make it abundantly clear, that is a responsibility that we have as freethinking human beings who recognise our solidarity with each other. The Premier has said, and will

continue to say, that no matter who hate speech is directed at, it will be condemned. It is not how we do democracy here in New South Wales. We do not want to import some of what we have seen in other jurisdictions.

We should take the opportunity to express our solidarity with the New South Wales police, who are enforcing the law. On Friday we witnessed an outrageous display of antisemitism at the Sydney Jewish Museum that was led by the far right. That had to be condemned too, and the police are acting on that, which is why it is important. Equally, we should acknowledge the news that we are receiving this morning of another tragedy in the Middle East to do with the hospital in Palestine and the Gaza Strip. We will let the authorities work through how that happened, but we should say that we have those people at the forefront of our minds too. A lot of people have lost their lives. The Government's amendment improves the motion.

Dr AMANDA COHN (10:38): I, and The Greens, condemn antisemitism in all of its forms. Rising antisemitism is an extremely serious and important matter, and it should be discussed on its own merits. I am disturbed by the politicisation of the issue by attaching it to deliberately controversial statements like the interpretation of the phrase "from the river to the sea" so that it gives the appearance that condemning antisemitism may somehow be controversial.

I have my own personal experiences of antisemitism. As deputy mayor of Albury, I received threats from a neo-Nazi group organising locally in our region that I was required to report to police. I am not going to name that neo-Nazi group, because I do not want to give it the publicity that it wants, and I am also not going to repeat in this Chamber the hate speech that it sent me. I think it is very important that when we are trying to show solidarity with a marginalised group of people who are grieving, in mourning and under attack that we do not contribute to their trauma by repeating hate speech in this place or by sensationalising the violence that they have experienced in a clickbait style of politics. I have been really disappointed by the quality of some of the debate in this Chamber.

As the Treasurer pointed out, we have had neo-Nazis outside the Sydney Jewish Museum, which is terrifying and should absolutely be condemned. We have also had neo-Nazis parading in the streets of Melbourne, which is terrifying and should be condemned. We need to be talking about the very real and tangible impact of antisemitism on people's lives here in New South Wales, for the communities that we represent. I move:

That the question be amended by omitting paragraph (3).

That will enable this House to take a strong and unified stance that condemns antisemitism in all its forms. Finally, as this motion substantively includes the current situation in Israel and Palestine, I will restate the position of The Greens: To achieve a just and lasting peace, there must be an end to the occupation of the Palestinian people.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (10:40): I commend the Hon. Chris Rath for bringing this motion today. I condemn the neo-Nazis and those who have also protested in such a way and—while I respect Dr Amanda Cohn's comments about this place—said dreadful things about the Jewish community and the state of Jewish people in New South Wales. There are 16.1 million Jews across the world. That is 0.2 per cent of the world's population. New South Wales and Australia account for 1 per cent of that population worldwide. It is very important for us to be able to protect this marginalised community. Of course, the Jewish people have a yearning for a homeland, and that homeland is Israel. That is an internationally recognised and established nation. Comments like "from the river to the sea" mean only one thing, and that is the abolition of Israel and the people who inhabit that land, who are the Jewish people. Those people have been there for thousands of years.

I have spoken in this House many times when it comes to my concerns about antisemitism, whether it comes from the far right or the far left, from fundamentalist Christians or fundamentalist Islamists. There needs to be a respect for Jewish people in New South Wales and worldwide, and I would hope that all in this House can respect that and stand with our Jewish community at this time. Following the September 11 attacks, I remember watching people at my school celebrating the fact. Unfortunately, those people were misguided. I hope, at this stage in their lives, that they have seen the error of their ways. I saw Jewish people at my school who were—funnily enough, even though that was an attack on the US—targeted at that time. Sadly, we are hearing of more incidents occurring in our communities where Jewish schools are under siege in Sydney and people are not wearing their kippahs to school. A Jewish student told me previously, in a much more peaceful time, that he would not wear his kippah out of school for fear of being targeted. That is a sad state of affairs in New South Wales. It is a state of affairs that I think nobody in this House should tolerate.

The same goes for our Islamic community. We should not see any reprisals in New South Wales for what is happening on the other side of the world. People should be free to express their opinions, as long as those opinions do not impinge on anyone else's rights to freedom or security within our State. That is something we should all be standing for at this time. We should be particularly mindful of all the communities across New South Wales and that we do not have any hate speech in our State.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (10:43): I unequivocally condemn antisemitism in all its forms, but the motion is not really about antisemitism. Its political intent is something quite different. It is actually a sleight of hand by the Coalition to try to conflate antisemitism with a position of being critical of Israel or even daring to question the validity of the Israeli state. That is a legitimate position that can be articulated in a democratic society. Citizens have the right to say, "We do not agree that the State of Israel should exist." It is not unreasonable for our society to tolerate that position being articulated. The fact of the matter is that the political intention—

The Hon. Mark Latham: That's your position.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: Well, I think the real question is whether we can imagine a solution to the conflict in Israel and Palestine that might enable Jews and Arabs to coexist in one country. That is not an unreasonable proposition. It is not antisemitic to suggest that. Already 20 per cent of the Israeli population are Arabs. What if 50 per cent of the Israeli population were Arabs? Do we think that situation is an unreasonable proposition? It certainly is not. I think that the idea that we do not believe that Jews and Arabs can live together in peace is a profoundly distressing view. Obviously, the prospect of a two-state solution is looking pretty grim, and the Opposition has raised this motion at this particular point in time, when the very viability of a two-state solution is in question and the Israeli army stands poised to drive the Palestinians out of Gaza. I cannot believe the base, absolutely disgraceful politics that underpins this motion and that the Opposition would sign up to such an agenda.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (10:46): I also signal my disappointment at the wording of the motion before us today, because how we conduct ourselves and what we say in this place matters; it has real-life consequences. But we continue to see members use this extremely complex and sensitive situation to weaponise people's grief, suffering and despair for their own political advantage and public profile. What happened to the people of Israel on 7 October was horrific. I was as sick to the stomach as anyone else at the indiscriminate slaughtering of so many innocent people.

What has also made me sick to the stomach is the grandstanding, virtue signalling, and ignorant and irresponsible statements made in this place that conveniently ignore the human rights abuses that have occurred for decades in Gaza and the West Bank; that conveniently ignore the news overnight of the bombing of a hospital in the centre of Gaza city that has killed potentially more than 1,000 people, with many still trapped beneath the rubble; that conveniently ignore the fact that there are more than two million people—one million of them, at least, are children—trapped in Gaza. They are trapped in an unimaginable nightmare they cannot escape from, with bombs dropping indiscriminately, rubble all around them, hospitals full, with no food, no shelter, no electricity, no communication with the outside world and bodies all around them.

Imagine being Palestinian in Australia right now and seeing how some members in this place are responding by bringing motions like this with the purpose of fuelling division and turning people in this State against each other; turning people against those who are coming together in shock and grief to legitimately protest what is happening to their families and their homeland. We do not condemn Israeli Australians coming together to grieve over the attacks of Hamas on Israel. We grieve with them. Our responsibility as politicians should be to work for peace and de-escalation in the region that includes an end to the illegal occupation of Gaza. Yes, we condemn terrorism. Yes, we condemn antisemitism. We also must condemn Islamophobia in the same breath. We need to stop bringing these divisive motions to this Parliament, because what is happening here is fuelling division and actions outside this place. That is why The Greens do not support this motion as it stands.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (10:49): Antisemitism is a form of racial hatred that leads to acts of violence. It is a scourge that has no place in any civilised society. And yet, at the rally held in Hyde Park on Sunday the crowd was told:

The attack on Israelis was said to be unprovoked, but was, in fact, a desperate breakout from a concentration camp ... what did Israel or the world community expect?

The cognitive dissonance between this attempted justification and the cold-blooded killings and kidnappings perpetrated on elderly grandmothers, infants and 260 young people participating in a dance festival is so obvious it is hard to believe that anyone could say it seriously. The description of the events of Saturday 8 October as a prison breakout echoes the appalling sentiments of Sheikh Ibrahim Dadoun, the Public Relations Director of the Australian National Imams Council:

I'm smiling and I'm happy. I'm elated, it's a day of courage, it's a day of pride, it's a day of victory ... What happened yesterday was the first time our brothers and sisters broke through the largest prison on earth.

How is breaking out of a prison a justification for mass murder? Terrorists killed Jews on Simchat Torah because Hamas is an antisemitic death cult, committed to the obliteration not just of the State of Israel but of the entire Jewish people. As co-founder Ibrahim Quqa states, Hamas is the "party of God" in a religious war against "evil

incarnated ... the party of Satan", represented by the Jewish people, who are the "enemies of God and of humanity".

Article 22 of the Hamas charter fully endorses the fraudulent claims of the seminal document of modern antisemitism, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. It further claims that the Jews were behind World War II, through which "they made huge financial gains by trading in armaments and paved the way for the establishment of their state". Those calling for Palestine to be free "from the river to the sea" are effectively calling for the destruction of the Jewish people and the establishment of a terrorist State based on religious hatred.

The Hon. Anthony D'Adam: That's so dishonest. Stop being dishonest.

The Hon. Stephen Lawrence: You don't even know what you're talking about.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I absolutely do.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): Order!

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: As we stand here today to consider this motion, we ought to reflect on exactly what has happened and not— [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (10:52): Will everyone just calm down? These matters are very serious. We have spent a lot of time talking about them. What is clear is that antisemitism has a long history, and it is wrong in all of its forms. What is also clear is that none of us agree with the loss of innocent life. We have a responsibility here as our very diverse community, which has different views on those matters, is struggling with connections to home, to family members, and with how this conflict is going to be dealt with. We are not going to fix the issues in the Middle East through the New South Wales Legislative Council, but we can take responsibility for the words that we use, the way we operate and how we speak to our own community and understand the challenges they are having.

The emotive language being used by some members on this matter is unhelpful. We have a responsibility as members of Parliament to work closely with our communities who are in extreme distress around this. It is not getting better any time soon. We are not going to fix it, but we can take some responsibility. We are not disagreeing with the things that the Opposition is saying about those matters, but I ask members opposite to think about the way in which they are bringing them forward. We know that some of them are amused by the fact that some of us find this to be a more nuanced argument that is challenging for us to work through. We understand that you think that that is funny.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: No, we don't think it's funny.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It is not funny. We stand here and condemn antisemitism and hate speech where we see it. We call on every single person in a position of leadership to stand up for unity and nuance and calm reflection as we manage what are extremely difficult circumstances for some of us who do not have a direct connection here. We have Jewish friends and Palestinian friends who are in a great degree of distress and some of the ways this issue is being dealt with do not help.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (10:55): I make a contribution from a different perspective. The Hon. Chris Rath replaced the Hon. Don Harwin as a member of this place, and one of the wise things the Hon. Don Harwin always impressed upon this Chamber is that we do not have a constitutional or any other power for foreign policy; that resides in Canberra. He often made the point that perhaps in State Parliament we should stick as much as possible to State issues—solving the multitude of issues that are all over New South Wales. I think this Chamber would be wise to stick to its State powers, leave foreign policy to the Parliament in Canberra, and only in the most extraordinary of circumstances delve into foreign policy issues.

I disagree with everything Ms Cate Faehrmann just said, except her point that it is quite possible, with emotions running high in the different communities in New South Wales, that things that are said here are followed closely and could stoke those emotions in negative ways. Last week there were some extraordinary circumstances—the lighting of the Opera House is a State responsibility, the policing issues surrounding the protest that took place is a State responsibility—and we all had a really good lash at them. But is it a bridge too far to move a motion involving the difficult question of how to settle the conflict in the Middle East? We cannot settle energy policy here—

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Yes, we can. We're doing alright with that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Not with any degree of success. We cannot settle Indigenous issues and problems in New South Wales. We should not be delving into the Middle East, which is not our constitutional duty or responsibility. Unless it is an extraordinary circumstance—the events of last week qualify as extraordinary,

and everyone had their say—it goes a bridge too far to be debating foreign policy in this Chamber on private members' day, when it is not strictly necessary. It is true that we are not going to solve the problems of the Middle East, and perhaps we need to keep the wise counsel of the Hon. Don Harwin, a former Leader of the Government, in mind.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: I'll tell him that you said that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: I have not often said this, but Don was right—even a broken clock is right twice a day. He was a former President of the New South Wales Legislative Council, a former Leader of the Government, and he knew his stuff. I agreed back then with what he said about this Chamber and foreign policy, and I still agree with it today.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:57): I am just appalled that at a time when the Government has been trying over the past couple of weeks to build community harmony, to look after the interests of all members of the New South Wales community in extraordinarily difficult times, there is yet another divisive motion from the Opposition. I have many friends who are Muslim. I have many friends who are Jewish. They have all been deeply affected by this situation, and it is our job as political leaders in this House to work towards building community harmony. In contrast to that, at every point in the many debates we have had on this matter over the past couple of weeks the Opposition has been seeking to find ways to politically pointscore, to divide or to inflame. It is unnecessary, it is unwelcome, and it is doing absolutely nothing to assist any member of the New South Wales community who is deeply affected by this.

I condemn hate speech in all its forms, including antisemitism and Islamophobia. I stand with the innocent civilians on all sides who have been affected by this conflict. People are being forcibly mobilised from one end of Gaza to another and cannot stay in their own homes. People have been kidnapped and taken into Gaza. We need to support international humanitarian law and all of the innocent civilians affected by the conflict, without seeking ways to further divide or inflame the situation. That is why I support the proposed amendment to the motion.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (10:59): I support the motion. I am on the record as co-chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Israel. I commend the motion and thank the honourable member for moving it. It is disappointing that there is dispute over it and blaming and shaming of the Opposition for raising what is a valid motion. Government members would do well to address the content of the motion, not criticise members opposite. I commend the motion and support it wholeheartedly.

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

Questions Without Notice

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (11:00): My question is directed to the Special Minister of State. Yesterday the Minister informed the House that it was the Premier's office that transmitted to the Premier's Department details of the election commitments made by Labor candidates for community projects to be funded under the Local Small Commitments Allocations. How did the Premier's office become aware of the election commitments, and who collated those commitments on behalf of each Labor candidate?

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 his question. I advised the House yesterday that I believe that these were election commitments and that they were transmitted in the usual way from the Premier's office to the then Department of Premier and Cabinet. I was also asked a question in writing to which we have responded this morning. That question was who in the incoming Government provided the Premier's Department with a comprehensive list of election commitments made by individual Labor candidates under the Local Small Commitments Allocations? Now that we have had time to check the record and come back to the House in writing, the answer is simply that it was advisers in the Premier's office. That is exactly what I informed the House of yesterday. I confirm that today. That is the usual process for any election commitment, whether small or large, and that is the way it happened on this occasion.

[A member interjected.]

I will not name the advisers. I do not think that is an appropriate path to go down. It is appropriate for members to ask how it was transmitted. I answered that yesterday based on the way I understood it to have occurred. I went back and checked, and the answer is precisely as I advised: advisers in the Premier's office.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (11:02): I ask a supplementary question. Was the adviser in the Premier's office Cherie Burton?

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) (11:03): I have indicated that I do not think it is appropriate to name specific advisers in the Premier's office. We have generally not done that. I would want to know the reason the Opposition thinks we should act differently in this case.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: You called staff to estimates hearings. Do not claim the moral high ground.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I acknowledge the interjection from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I think this is an important issue. Sometimes advisers have been called before the committees of this House, but it has been done very sparingly and cautiously.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Courtney Houssos and the Hon. Wes Fang will cease interjecting. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: These are important issues for the House to consider. There was one specific instance when a Minister—in that case, the then Premier—was not available to attend an upper House committee. That committee then called advisers in order to answer questions about where the paperwork was relating to a particular grant process.

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

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It turned out those documents had been destroyed; they had been shredded. It was only because the then Premier was not available that the House took that option. It should be used sparingly. That is my view in this case. The Opposition is entitled to ask where the details of the election commitments came from. I have answered—from advisers in the Premier's office.

TRANSMISSION INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (11:05): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Climate Change, and Minister for Energy. Will the Minister update the House on the implications for emissions reduction of delaying transmission lines?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:05): I thank the honourable member for his important question and for his work on the various parliamentary inquiries relating to it.

[Opposition members interjected.]

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Leader of the Government will resume her seat until members come to order.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: As I have said to this House many times, we are in the race to reduce greenhouse gasses on our planet so that we can survive into the future. It is as basic as that. A key part of that, which we are committed to, is New South Wales pulling its weight in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Greenhouse gas emissions need to come down particularly within our electricity system. We need to decarbonise our system. We also need to realise that 70 per cent of our electricity comes from coal-fired power. So the challenge we are undertaking is extreme. It is fast, but it is absolutely doable if we stick to the plan. The plan was designed by this Parliament through the road map and supported by all sides of the House, except the Hon. Mark Latham and the Hon. Rod Roberts.

The Hon. Mark Latham: We told you so.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I acknowledge their ongoing dissent. It was supported because it is what we need to do. It is not a "want to do"; it is not an ideological obsession. We need to reduce greenhouse gasses to make our planet liveable into the future. New South Wales needs to do it properly, through the road map. Part of that road map acknowledges that if we put in wind and solar we need to transmit it to houses, businesses and industry. The way to do that is through transmission lines, which are extremely important.

I bring to the attention of the House the recent information provided by the International Energy Agency, which warns that delays to the global effort to build new transmission lines will add 60 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere between 2030 and 2050. It is essential that we deliver that infrastructure in New South Wales as quickly as we can to meet our own targets. But doing that is also essential for the whole project of global decarbonisation.

The Hon. Wes Fang: Put them underground.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: We have had the first inquiry. Again, I encourage members to listen to the experts on the issue. Yes, we could underground the lines. But let us understand it: It will take four to five years longer and cost three to five times more.

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

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It will cost consumers more money. More importantly, it will delay emissions reductions that we cannot afford to ignore. We need to work carefully in building transmission lines. We need to do it quickly and work very closely with the affected landholders. I call on members on the other side of the House to understand the implications of what they are doing. More importantly, I call on The Greens in relation to this. [*Time expired.*]

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:08): My question is directed to the Special Minister of State. Did the details transmitted by the Premier's office to the Premier's Department of the election commitments made by Labor candidates for community projects to be funded under the Local Small Commitments Allocation include records of any declarations of conflicts of interest made by those candidates in relation to the projects?

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) (11:08): I thank the Hon. Sarah Mitchell for her question. The answer is these details were transmitted by the Premier's office to the department, so I am not sure what was included in that. I have not seen it. That information goes to the agency and then any information on this comes up to the relevant Minister to sign off in briefings. That paperwork is the basis on which any of the grants will be decided. I do not know exactly what was included in that information.

Any decisions I make as the responsible Minister will be based on the advice of the agency. I will either agree or disagree with that in writing, as is required under the grants guide. That is consistent with what I told the House yesterday. These are election commitments made in the ordinary way—commitments of an equal amount for each electorate. That is the issue that Opposition members are having trouble getting their heads around. I can understand why, given that the Liberal Party allocated 96 per cent of the Stronger Communities Fund to their own electorates.

The Hon. Chris Rath: Point of order: The question was not about grants programs under the previous Government. The question was very specific about the conflicts of interest regarding the Local Small Commitments Allocation.

The PRESIDENT: I uphold the point of order. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I indicate to the House that, yes, there is a conflict of interest process in place and, yes, there is a probity adviser in place. I encourage members to read the guidelines that have been tabled in the House. It is the case in this scheme that these are allocated equally. That was not the case when the National Party ran bushfire assistance emergency grants, rolling them out around the State but not to bushfire-affected areas. That is what was going on.

The Hon. Damien Tudehope: Point of order: Mr President, the Minister is now flouting your ruling by referring to what was done under the previous Government. This is a very specific question relating to conflicts of interest in respect of the Local Small Commitments Allocation grants. The Minister should address that issue and that issue alone.

The PRESIDENT: I instruct the Minister to remain directly relevant. If he has anything further to add, he may do so.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I encourage members opposite to read those guidelines and examine the conflict of interest process, which is in place for this program.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Hon. Sam Farraway, the Hon. Wes Fang and the Hon. Courtney Houssos are not helping.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I assure members that where those matters are drawn to my attention, I will take them seriously.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:12): My question is directed to the Leader of the Government.

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

The Hon. Wes Fang: Point of order: Mr President, you have just called me to order for the second time. The Leader of the Government has interjected as many times as I have. You have not even given her a warning yet. I ask you to consider your approach to calling people to order.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Are you moving dissent from the ruling?

The Hon. Wes Fang: I may do, in a second.

The PRESIDENT: Screaming across the Chamber—

The Hon. Wes Fang: Mr President, the Leader of the Government is also engaging in the same behaviour so if you are going to be equitable about this—

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Wes Fang will resume his seat. Screaming across the Chamber to the Leader of the Government by her first name is unparliamentary. I have worked very hard at giving the member latitude. I understand that he is an enthusiastic member, as are many other members of this Chamber. I understand also that last week and this week tensions are high. I am trying to do my best in giving everyone latitude, and that includes the Hon. Wes Fang. But there has to be a limit for everybody, and the limit is that we must have an operable Chamber. Members must respect each other and treat each other with dignity and with as much grace as they possibly can muster. I understand that this is a problem on all sides of the Chamber, so I ask all members to please remember that as we continue through the next 24 to 48 hours. The Hon. Mark Latham has the call.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM: My question is directed to the Leader of the Government. Does the Government accept the results of Saturday's referendum in which over 2½ million New South Wales electors voted against the Voice proposal—that is, by a margin of 60 per cent to 40 per cent? Given that clear expression of democratic will and opinion, will the Government now avoid the folly of the South Australian experience where a State-based voice was legislated, even though the people do not want it in any State of the Commonwealth, including here in New South Wales?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:14): I thank the Hon. Mark Latham for his question. Of course the Government accepts the will of the people. We live in a democracy. That is exactly the point of having a referendum. Some of us are quite sad about the outcome and wish that it had gone a different way, but we of course accept the outcome of the referendum. The Hon. Mark Latham would be aware that this Government is committed to starting a process to talk about treaty-making with First Nations people in New South Wales. In relation to a voice, that is not our current policy, but we expect to have a lot of reflection in time about what is next. The issue for this Government is that we are absolutely committed to ensuring that Aboriginal people and First Nations are recognised and included, and are able to fully participate in the decisions that impact on them so that we can do what is needed, which is to overcome disadvantage.

It is more than overcoming disadvantage, though. It is also understanding the inalienable rights of Indigenous people who have been on this land 60,000 years longer than the rest of us have been here—in fact, much longer than that. I understand that there is a special place for those people and the impacts of colonisation have been immense. This Government is absolutely committed to what we have signed up to in relation to Closing the Gap. We are absolutely committed to progressing discussions with Aboriginal people across New South Wales. We need to do that and we absolutely will do that. Of course we accept that, but we do not move away from our responsibility to ensure that every person in New South Wales can get the education and health care they need, can live in decent and reasonable housing and can fully participate as an equal member of our community. We understand and we spend a lot of time in this place working with overcoming disadvantage, no matter where it is, and we will continue to focus on that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:16): I ask a supplementary question. The Leader of the Government mentioned the Government's policy for treaty, which it did take to the last election. Does the Government have a timetable for the completion of that process? Does she expect it would be completed in this term of Parliament?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:17): I thank the Hon. Mark Latham for his supplementary question. I will look for the note I have on that matter, but the point is that our view is that the issue cannot be rushed. The Victorian experience of developing its treaty took place over five or six years. This is not something that the Government wishes to impose; it is something that we wish to work on very closely with Aboriginal people. I know that the outcome for Aboriginal people at the weekend was very challenging for many. It is absolutely the case that there were some that did not support the Voice from both the progressive and conservative sides of politics, as is absolutely right. But I make the point that the Aboriginal people who I know overwhelmingly supported the Voice. The organisations that they represented did. They are taking some time this week to reflect on what that means for them.

This Government respects the need to work through these matters. We will take the time to work carefully with Aboriginal organisations, individual communities, native title holders, traditional owners and all groups and people, which is absolutely appropriate. I will take on notice the timetable. I believe that consultation is due to start next year. As for the end point, my understanding is that we are trying to work through this. We will take the time we need to get it right as we work extremely closely and rededicate ourselves to the Closing the Gap targets and to making sure that we can deliver on those.

STATE BUDGET AND DISASTER READINESS

The Hon. BOB NANVA (11:19): My question is addressed to the Minister for Roads. Will the Minister explain how the Minns Government is building back better roads in Western Sydney for future floods and fires?

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) (11:19): I thank the honourable member for his question. I am delighted to update the House on some of the budget measures. They have been the source of public discussion. In particular, I will update the House on the infrastructure that is ready in case the State faces the test of either fire or flood. I acknowledge the huge amount of damage done over the past three years around the State by natural disasters.

That damage is why, as part of the Urban Road Fund, the Government committed more than \$200 million in the budget to developing and delivering major flood evacuation routes. Five key projects are part of that. There is a \$15 million commitment to the roundabout at Londonderry Road and the Driftway. Hill Road, which will receive a \$50 million injection to improve flood resilience, is one. The Government has committed \$285 million to improving Richmond Road between Townson Road and the M7. Garfield Road East will receive \$100 million for widening and duplication works as a key flood evacuation route. The Pitt Town bypass, which members have asked about, will receive \$100 million, the full commitment made by both sides of politics, to provide better connectivity for people living in and around Pitt Town.

Upgrading these roads is good for traffic capacity. This is good news for people moving around these areas day-to-day. But it is crucial for flood evacuation. It ensures that those roads are built to increase resilience against flood events. Working with City of Parramatta, the Government will commence detailed planning for an upgrade of Hill Road in Sydney Olympic Park. That will improve resilience to localised flooding. The roundabout works at the Driftway and Londonderry Road will commence late next year. The Driftway will become a key access road to the new Richmond bridge, which is currently in development. I updated the House on that project last sitting week.

We will also undertake investigations at several locations along the Northern Road, between Richmond Road in Richmond and Dunheved Road in Jordan Springs, and Londonderry Road, between the Driftway in Richmond and the Northern Road in Cranebrook. This money committed in the budget is in addition to the Albanese and Minns governments' \$260 million commitment announced last Friday. A total of 136 projects across large parts of the State will repair or build back essential public and community assets to a more resilient standard, funded jointly with the Commonwealth through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. It is even better news on top of the serious commitments made to flood resilience in this budget. [*Time expired.*]

The PRESIDENT: For the benefit of all members, I inform them that the crossbench provides me with a schedule of who is asking what questions when. The next on the list was the Hon. Tania Mihailuk, which is why I was looking to her. But, in her absence, I go to the next on the list, which is your good self, Mr Deputy President.

HOUSING SUPPLY

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (11:22): My question is directed to the Minister for Housing. I refer the Minister to the Government's stated ambition of sustainably increasing housing stock in New South Wales to ease the housing affordability crisis. Major private sector property developers have said that they will not invest in New South Wales because of the slow pace of rezoning and development approvals and have taken their money to the fast-track system in Queensland. Has the Minister met with these developers? What is the Government doing to draw lost housing investment back to New South Wales?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast) (11:23): I thank the Deputy President for his question. I absolutely have met with so many stakeholders involved in delivering housing and I hear their concern that the current planning system in New South Wales is not fit for purpose. I have met with the Urban Development Institute of Australia, the Property Council multiple times, the Urban Taskforce, and individual developers and their representatives. I take the role of being part of the team that delivers housing in New South Wales incredibly seriously. I absolutely hear their concerns, including the specific concern that the honourable member raised, which is that they are leaving this jurisdiction to take up opportunities in other

jurisdictions because their settings are more optimal. That is why we have already started the process of reforming the planning system in New South Wales, and there will be more to come.

To refresh the honourable member's memory, I will say that we have made a series of changes to the planning system already, including, importantly, from my point of view, self-assessment powers for our Government housing delivery agencies—Landcom, the Aboriginal Housing Office, and the Land and Housing Corporation—and incentives for those large residential builds with over \$75 million of capital investment. If they deliver the 15 per cent of affordable housing, which we desperately need, they get the 30 per cent bonuses. Those are changes we have already announced.

Will that be enough? Absolutely not. Developers have continued to raise with me that there needs to be more reform of the planning system. This week my colleague the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces is having conversations with the community about the insufficient engagement with R2 and R3 zones at the local government level. I think that 6 per cent of R2 zones allow dual-occupancy buildings, such as duplexes and terraces. Only 39 per cent of R3 zones, medium-density zones, allow mid-sized apartment buildings. So the Minister is out there and drawing attention to these failings in the planning system. He is doing that deliberately. As I said, it is about R2 and R3 this week. Other conversations have been happening to bring the community along with the conversation we are leading about fixing the housing crisis. That does mean reforming planning. We have heard those concerns. We have already acted. We will do more to reform the planning system in New South Wales to make sure that we are confronting the housing crisis and delivering our commitments under the Housing Accord.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (11:26): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate her answer where she talks about reforms her Government will be adopting? Will her Government adopt the Queensland model, where DAs are deemed approved within 12 months?

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) (11:26): I will take the specific consideration of the Queensland model on notice for the Minister. He is leading the reform of the planning system. I will get back to the honourable member. But to give him comfort, I say that, as he knows, we have already indicated that we are willing to reform the planning system. Another example is the work that the Minister for Local Government and I, as the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, have done on the number of DAs that are being withdrawn through local governments. Again, we have made changes recently to try to work with local governments to ensure that they are not implementing systems in which DAs are taking so long to be assessed and then at the end of the day being withdrawn, which is another failing of the planning system, another reason why we are not getting the housing we need and another area of reform.

We have looked at and seen the very high number of DAs being withdrawn in certain local government areas. It is a mixed bag. Some are better; some are worse. Some are very bad, though, and we have taken action to try to ensure that, when you submit a DA, you can move it through the system and ensure that the link between DA submission and housing completion is as short as possible. I will take the specifics of the Queensland reforms on notice. My area is social and affordable housing. Community housing providers talk to me all the time about how long it takes to get similar proposals approved in Queensland and in New South Wales, and we are losing the race to Queensland in New South Wales. We should be leading. We have the highest population, and we are taking the highest number of new migrants, but we have the most unaffordable housing. We are coming last on the eastern seaboard. We are aware of those issues. I will take the specifics on notice.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:28): I ask a second supplementary question. Will the Minister elaborate on the work she is undertaking with the Minister for Local Government? We are losing housing investment to Queensland. We are non-competitive against the Queensland model. What action is the Government taking about nimby councils like Parramatta and Randwick, which are deliberately obstructing housing supply? Will the Government intervene to make sure that the developments can be approved?

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) (11:29): As I have explained, the answer is absolutely yes. We want to bring people along the journey. We do not want to waste time, energy and effort fighting with people who should be part of the movement for change. Our arms are open and our hands are outstretched to local government. Partner with us. Come along the journey with us and be part of the solution. Do not be part of the problem. It is our preference to say to people, "This is an incredibly important issue for our State. There is simply not enough affordable housing in New South Wales and we want you to be part of the solution."

Having said that, if local government areas refuse to accept that they are part of the work that has to be done, we will start calling them out. I call out specifically The Hills council. For starters, it is one of the only

councils in New South Wales that refuses to do an acknowledgement of country—which is just ridiculous. Also, despite infrastructure delivery in that area, it consistently describes new housing as an attack on the character of their area. Housing is part of building a better character for an area. We will call out local governments that refuse to be—

The Hon. Scott Farlow: Point of order: The question specifically referred to both Randwick and Parramatta councils. I ask that the Minister be relevant in her answer to those councils that she was asked about.

The Hon. Mark Latham: To the point of order: This is a great answer. As the person who asked the question I said, "such as Parramatta and Randwick", but there are many others. I was about to mention The Hills but I did not want to take up too much time of the House. I have got a few others. The Minister is totally in order.

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

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I take the tenor of the interjection to suggest that this Government is less likely to call to question Labor councils. That is just not true. I have criticised Bayside Council, a Labor council. I do not care if they are Labor, Liberal or whatever. I care about housing. When it is a Labor council I will tell them, "Come on, guys. Get with the program." When it is a Liberal council that describes housing as an attack on the character of an area, I will call it to question too. When it is The Greens that are being a bunch of nimbys against building new housing in Leichhardt, I will have a go at them. It does not matter to me what your politics are; what matters to me is housing. [*Time expired.*]

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (11:32): My question is directed to the Special Minister of State. The Premier has stated that the member for Camden "made a declaration prior to the election" in relation to the conflict of interest arising from her being a founding member and a long-serving committee member of the Camden Musical Society and her election commitment promising up to \$75,000 to that society. Who did the member make that declaration to and what steps were taken to manage that conflict of interest?

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (11:32): I thank the—

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: Point of order: There is argument in the question that there is a conflict of interest. I ask that you direct the honourable member to use the words "potential conflict of interest" or to strike out that part of her question.

The Hon. Wes Fang: To the point of order: The Minister had already started to answer the question.

The PRESIDENT: I will entertain the Hon. Emily Suvaal's point of order because she was on her feet as the Hon. John Graham started to answer the question.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: To the point of order: There is no argument. The question clearly states that the Premier stated that the member had made a declaration of a conflict of interest prior to the election. There is no argument.

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: Further to the point of order: A declaration, by its very nature, does not denote that there is a conflict of interest. A declaration is made to manage a potential conflict of interest.

The PRESIDENT: I instruct that the word "potential" be inserted into the question. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I thank the member for her question and I congratulate the member for Camden. She is a very successful member who is working hard for the people of the Camden electorate. The member has asked me about a specific project and a specific declaration. I cannot provide more information about it because it is yet to come to me for assessment. I cannot provide more detail about that particular project. Given that she said the Premier put it on record, it is reasonable for me to take the question on notice and seek more information.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: It comes back to the point that I am making. They were election commitments being made in the ordinary way, costed by the Parliamentary Budget Office—which the Leader of the Opposition did not seem to be aware of yesterday—and released. They were costed by the Parliamentary Budget Office ahead of the election in a public way. Election commitments are made, but then, in government, we have applied an extra level of probity to make sure that they are in line with the *Grants Administration Guide*. That is appropriate so that there is a process to check that they are the right organisations, their details are correct,

and they have got the capacity to deliver on those commitments. That is appropriate checking done in the past by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and it should be done for these commitments.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: Point of order: The Minister is now straying far from the question, which was about a specific project and a specific declaration. It was not about the program generally or about declarations generally. It was not about any of those things. It is specifically about the member for Camden making a declaration on a particular project for a particular amount. I ask you to draw him back to the specifics of this question. If he cannot, he should take it on notice or finish the answer.

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

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I have answered the question directly. I make this point: We make election commitments but when in government probity checks will take place for each grant. I make it clear to the House that if it is not ticked off by the expert independent assessment panel—if it is not given the all clear by the independent probity advisers—I will not sign them off. They will need to get the all clear through those people. That may mean that some projects do not survive that process because I will not sign them off. Part of the objection of the Opposition is to the idea that each of the electorates is getting an equal amount. That is, the number of electorates that are won is in proportion—

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: Point of order: I am interested in the answer but I cannot hear it for all the noise from members on the other side. I ask that you call them to order.

The PRESIDENT: I agree. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members will try to restrain it for the next 11 seconds.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: There was an equal amount for each electorate with the money allocated in proportion to the electorates won by Labor. The Opposition is claiming 51 per cent went to Labor electorates. We would be in majority Government if its claims were true. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (11:38): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate that part of his answer—

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Leader of the Government and the Leader of the Opposition will cease speaking to each other across the table. If they would like to continue their conversation they can take it outside the Chamber. The member has the call.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I dread to see what might happen outside. In relation to the part of the answer where the Minister talked about probity and the comprehensive way in which he will assess each of the grants, given that the project has been announced, can he give an undertaking that if a conflict is discovered and he is uncomfortable with that conflict that he will withdraw it and not approve the project?

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) (11:38): As I have indicated, there will be a conflict of interest process that will be oversighted by independent probity advisers. It will be appropriate to consider those conflicts of interest when making a decision. I will certainly do so as I am required to by the guide. I give that commitment to the House.

SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST MUSIC FESTIVAL

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (11:39): My question without notice is addressed to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer inform the House of the economic value of the South by Southwest festival coming to Sydney and whether, by chance, he can school the House on any specific events?

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:39): I thank the Hon. Mark Buttigieg for his question. I am delighted to report that Sydney's newest festival, South by Southwest, is on this week, and I am very pleased to say it will include a celebration of 50 years of hip-hop. As the Telegraph has dubbed me the hip-hop Treasurer, that brings me great joy. The great Lauryn Hill said, "Hip-hop started out in the heart" and "Music is supposed to inspire." From its humble beginnings, hip-hop has become a global phenomenon that has transcended generations. Born from struggle, it has evolved into a powerful voice of expression and a vessel for change. Tupac Shakur gave those opposite this advice:

We gotta make a change
It's time for us as a people to start makin' some changes

Festivals like South by Southwest are vital to keeping music and artistry alive, supporting our creative industries and shining a spotlight on rising young talents. I am pleased to say that the festival will provide a significant boost to the New South Wales economy. I am reminded of the words of Inspectah Deck from the Wu-Tang Clan, who said, "Cash rules everything around me." As my colleague the Hon. John Graham has previously said, the festival

is an opportunity for New South Wales to cement itself on the world stage again. After all, this is the "concrete jungle where dreams are made of", where "there's nothing you can't do".

But an international event like South by Southwest is much more than that. Tomorrow I will have the privilege to join another legend of hip-hop at the festival, Grammy Award winning artist Chance the Rapper. I note—and this is true—that Chance the Rapper is a part of the Chicago collective called Savemoney, so I hope to exchange ideas on both music and fiscal responsibility. My colleagues always say I am "all about the money" and, yes, it is true. I keep my "mind on my money and my money on my mind". That is why this world-renowned festival is really worth celebrating. It will attract thousands of visitors, rollin' down our streets. An expected 27,000 visitors will arrive in Sydney from across the Asia-Pacific and around the world to attend the festival. "Everybody got they cups", and I hope they chip in. I am sure they will, and every dollar they spend will go to supporting our local venues and our night-time economy.

In the words of Kendrick Lamar, "A dollar might turn to a million". In fact, South by Southwest is expected to inject \$24 million into the New South Wales visitor economy. "I know you thinking now, 'When all the ballin' stops?'" It will not. "Ten years from now we'll still be on top." We have secured the festival for 10 years, and it is expected to generate more than \$169 million in the next four years alone. I am ready to "get this paper". To return to Inspectah Deck:

Get the money
Dollar, dollar bill, y'all

The PRESIDENT: I welcome to the Parliament students from Arthur Phillip High School, who are participating in the Legal Studies and the Legislature program conducted by the parliamentary education team. They are all most welcome.

TEACHER POLITICAL DISCOURSE

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (11:42): My question is directed to the Minister for Finance, representing the Minister for Education and Early Learning. Given the plethora of political discourse around issues such as the Voice that dominate our daily lives, will the New South Wales Labor Government ban teachers from expressing their personal political beliefs to students and finally keep politics out of the classroom?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:43): I thank the Hon. Tania Mihailuk for her question to me in my capacity representing the education Minister in this place. I too welcome the legal studies students to question time today, and it is an astute and timely question. It was a few years ago now that I studied legal studies, and I know that other members in this place studied legal studies. But it is an important reminder of the intersection of current affairs and our curriculum.

The member has indicated that she will move a private member's bill on this subject, and we look forward to looking closely at that bill. There is a delicate balance between ensuring that our students can have a conversation that is relevant to the current goings-on in society and ensuring that it is within the school curriculum. The Deputy Premier is well across the issue and is in constant contact with the Department of Education about it. It is important that we ensure that our teachers are given the opportunity to teach our students in the most relevant way possible, within the confines of the curriculum, and I am very confident in the ability of the Deputy Premier to provide direction and support to our teachers to ensure that that occurs. But I will take the specific question on notice and come back to the member.

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (11:45): My question is directed to the Special Minister of State. In relation to election commitments made by unsuccessful Labor candidates, what probity advice has the Minister received to ensure that all potential conflicts of interest are identified and appropriately managed?

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) (11:45): I thank the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones for her question. As I have indicated, there is independent probity advice in place about the guidelines, including on management of conflicts of interest. General probity advice will be provided, and I have indicated I will accept that advice. I would have to take on notice the specifics of what the member is asking, and I am happy to do that and return to the House with a response. But each of those projects are coming to me on a rolling basis, and that advice is being provided.

As I have indicated to the House, I have tabled the guidelines, and members are entitled to look at those guidelines. It is part of a series of protections—an equal amount to each electorate. The grants are delivered regardless of the electorate result in the election. They were costed by the Parliamentary Budget Office. I have

tabled the guidelines in the House. I have indicated that the grants will be released ahead of time on the grant finder website—after 30 days rather than after 45 days. I have indicated that MPs will be notified before the announcements are made and the actual grants roll out the door. That is unusual and I can understand why members opposite, who did not apply that standard in government, would find it difficult to understand. That is important for those grants, and we will do so. It is in line with the guide.

There will be probity advice and there will be written recommendations, and I will respond to those. I also indicate that I will keep a register of any MPs or other people who I consult with in making those decisions, and that information will be available as well. They are some of the protections in place for that program. Fundamentally, the program is designed to avoid pork-barrelling and the idea that one part of the State gets funding and one part does not. Everyone gets an equal amount, and that is at the heart of the program.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister will resume his seat while members come to order. The Minister now has the call.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: That is why the Opposition's confected numbers—like the claim that 51 per cent went to Labor electorates—are totally untrue. How could that be true if this is a minority Parliament? It just does not make sense. Members opposite should do their maths again. It is just unbelievable, and it goes to show exactly how far off the mark their analysis is.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (11:48): I ask a supplementary question. Of the funding announcements that the Minister has reviewed, will he clarify whether he has received any advice regarding probity or conflicts of interest?

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) (11:58): Yes, I have.

TEACHER WORKFORCE

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (11:48): My question is addressed to the Minister for Finance, representing the Minister for Education and Early Learning. Will the Minister update the House on how the Minns Labor Government is rebuilding our essential services by providing more secure employment for teachers?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:49): I thank the honourable member for his question. One year ago to the week, the Premier, then Leader of the Opposition, made the announcement at the NSW Labor State Conference—my colleagues in the Chamber will recall it was a big week for us—that Labor would convert 10,000 temporary teacher positions and 6,000 temporary support staff positions to permanent positions. Let us compare the pair. During the first five of those 12 months, the previous Government converted exactly zero teacher and support staff to permanent employment. In the following seven months, as the Deputy Premier announced yesterday, this Government has delivered on the crucial election commitment to convert 16,000 workers across the education system to permanent employment. That is an essential part of rebuilding the public service in New South Wales.

Under the previous Government we saw an explosion of temporary and casual employment across our schools. That resulted in more than 2,000 teacher vacancies and a record 1,854 resignations across the school sector last year. For the first time, teacher resignations outstripped teacher retirements. What did it lead to? It led to the fastest falling education outcomes in the world. The Government supports our teachers; it wants them to have secure employment that allows them to plan their lives. But that security also has a crucial impact on student outcomes. We know that the teacher at the front of the classroom—as the student visitors from Arthur Phillip High School would understand—is the single biggest factor affecting student outcomes. We want that teacher to know that they have secure employment year on year so that they can plan their lives—so that they can buy a house, put down roots in a community and start their own family. In that fundamental way, in just seven months this Government has delivered on a crucial election commitment.

Members need not take my word for it; the OECD said that a high proportion of temporary contracts causes adverse effects for schools, teachers and students. It found that casualisation is a barrier to retaining graduate teachers and negatively affects their motivation. That is one reason behind the growing number of newly qualified teachers leaving the profession. This is an important step. In addition to taking teachers in New South Wales from the worst paid to the best paid, we are now giving them more permanent employment. That will have real outcomes for our teachers. Most importantly, it will have real outcomes for our students.

HOUSING SUPPLY

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (11:52): My question is directed to the Leader of the Government, representing the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. According to the *Granny flats* report released yesterday

by Archistar, Blackfort and CoreLogic, over 242,000 properties in Sydney are ripe for building a granny flat. That is almost 20 per cent of residential properties in Sydney. I applaud the Government's commitment to increasing housing supply. Is the Government considering clearing away endless red tape and letting home owners develop their properties to increase their asset and income protection, and alleviate the housing crisis?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:53): I thank the honourable member for his question. It is an important question with respect to dealing with the housing crisis that we face. The New South Wales Government and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces are working closely across government, along with the Minister for Housing, on how we deal with issues like granny flats, or secondary dwellings.

I give a shout-out to the group of young people from the South Coast who met with the Minister and me last night. They have put together a film and are demanding accommodation types like granny flats, caravans and other temporary accommodation so that they can have roofs over their heads. They are calling for councils and governments to get out of the way so that such accommodation can be delivered. As a result of the floods and other disasters, some really good examples have occurred after some loosening of rules about how those dwellings can work. The Government is interested in continuing to pursue that. I give a shout-out to the member for South Coast and the member for Bega for bringing those young people to Parliament so we could hear from them. They are demanding change in a way that I have not seen before.

To return to granny flats more specifically, secondary dwellings give landowners the opportunity to help family members, including those seeking urgent or emergency accommodation. Let us also understand that they allow families to be multigenerational, keeping elderly parents close, and dealing with teenagers—and young people in their twenties—who may be coming and going in and out of the house. The Government supports the use of secondary dwellings by ensuring that planning mechanisms make it as easy as possible for landowners to deliver them where it is possible to do so. The State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021, known as the Housing SEPP, establishes a consistent set of statewide development standards for that type of housing. Those standards ensure that secondary dwelling developments respond to the surrounding area and site constraints while protecting local amenity.

A secondary dwelling can be approved as a complying development by a registered certifier or by lodging a development application with the local council. Whether approved by council or a registered certifier, all complying development for secondary dwellings must satisfy the general requirements of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008 and the development standards in the Housing SEPP. Those development standards seek to balance the rights of landholders to build property and the protection of neighbourhood amenity. Close attention is being paid at every level across government. A key priority is to get rid of the red tape that is unnecessary, to make sure that we build fit-for-purpose houses that landholders can use, that families can access and that young people can afford. We are looking at all aspects of planning and implementation to make sure that we can get off the ground houses that will work to house people in New South Wales.

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (11:56): My question is directed to the Special Minister of State. Is the Minister aware of any conflicts of interest declared by the member for Newcastle in relation to the nine community projects he selected to receive funding under the Local Small Commitments Allocation?

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) (11:56): I thank the member for his question.

[Opposition members interjected.]

The PRESIDENT: Order! An Opposition member has asked a question; Opposition members will listen to the response. Government members will also cease interjecting. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I do not believe that any of those projects have come to me yet, so that information would not be available to me at this point. However, I neglected to mention to the House one protection that may be relevant to the member, which is that the Government has supported the tabling of a range of papers relevant to the decision as part of an order for papers. As a result, the member will have the opportunity to look at the grants that have been signed off. I have indicated that the Government will make those projects public earlier than would normally happen.

The Government has also indicated that it will table those grants and the decision-making paperwork in the House. The member should look at those papers, which will also indicate who has been consulted as part of

the decision and will give the member some guidance. I do not believe those specific projects have come to me, so I cannot give the member more information on those, but all of those documents—that decision-making paperwork—will be tabled, in contrast with what happened when Government members, when in opposition, asked about the Stronger Communities Fund and the decision-making process for that. Those documents were not tabled.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: Point of order: Mr President, this is the third time that the Minister has flouted your ruling in relation to answering the questions that have been asked of him and not referring to programs that were funded by the previous Government. I ask that you call the Minister back to the very specific question asked by the Opposition Whip.

The PRESIDENT: A member can only flout a ruling on the specific question that is being asked and answered. Nonetheless, I uphold the point of order. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: I understand why the member is sensitive, so I will not go into those earlier documents. I think I have answered the member's question, but I do encourage him to examine the paperwork that is tabled about those decisions. I think it will give members additional information about how the decisions are being made. That is appropriate, and that is why the Government supported the call for papers. I am happy to answer questions, particularly after members have had the benefit of seeing that additional paperwork.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (11:59): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate whether he stands by the decision to hand over \$400,000 of taxpayers' money to the member for Newcastle to spend on his favoured projects?

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order: First, the question is argumentative; secondly, it seeks an opinion; and thirdly, it does not seek an elucidation of the answer that was given in the first place.

The PRESIDENT: I uphold the point of order.

STOCKTON BEACH

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (11:59): My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional New South Wales. Will the Minister update the House on the progress that has been made on the Stockton Beach renourishment?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (12:00): I thank the member for her fantastic question. Stockton Beach has been battling serious coastal erosion for many years now. Despite the previous Coalition Government convening the Stockton Beach Taskforce, the former Government ignored the issue. No action was taken; no progress was made. It became beyond frustrating for the Stockton community and the broader community of Newcastle. It was an ongoing issue for the beach—until now. I was delighted to take over as Chair of the Stockton Beach Taskforce three months ago. I am determined to take action on this long-term issue that has been ignored for too long.

On Monday I was pleased to stand with the Minister for the Hunter and the Lord Mayor of Newcastle on Stockton Beach, where we saw the dredge rainbowing the first 100,000 cubic metres of sand onto the beach to rectify a long-term issue. After years of talk by those opposite, our Government has put sand on the beach within six months. Over the next few weeks, the dredge will deliver the first 100,000 of 300,000 cubic metres of sand for the first stage of the replenishment of Stockton Beach. I thank all levels of government and the local community for their dedication to the massive breakthrough in dealing with this issue.

My department is currently leading the delivery of the \$4.7 million Coastal and Estuarine Risk Mitigation Program, with funding from the Australian Government, and an additional \$1.5 million co-contribution from the City of Newcastle. The community will be kept informed of progress as the nourishment of Stockton Beach continues. I look forward to updating community representatives at the next meeting of the Stockton Beach Taskforce, which will take place in November.

The PRESIDENT: The Minister will resume her seat. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. There is 58 seconds left. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: As this challenge evolves, the New South Wales Government will tailor its response to meet the needs of the environment and the people of Stockton and Newcastle. For far too long, this project was in the too-hard basket. The Government is getting on with the job of replenishing the sand at Stockton Beach. I am pleased to deliver the first round of the program nice and early in this term of government. I look forward to continuing the work to replenish Stockton Beach for the future.

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

Supplementary Questions for Written Answers

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (12:03): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Special Minister of State. Who gave the advisers in the Premier's Department the details of the election commitments made by Labor candidates for community projects to be funded under the Local Small Commitments Allocation?

ABORIGINAL CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (12:03): My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Leader of the Government. With the Minister's comments about Closing the Gap, what action is the Government taking about the very high levels of child sexual abuse in western New South Wales whereby, to escape predators, Aboriginal children spend their nights on the street and then sleep by day and do not attend school, which is evident in the low attendance rates at high schools in Bourke and Walgett? For instance, at Walgett Community College High School, only 3 per cent of students attend schools for nine days or more per fortnight. Does the Government acknowledge that this problem is destroying young lives in New South Wales every night? What is being done to overcome this social tragedy, which is the worst in our State?

Questions Without Notice: Take Note

TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I move:

That the House take note of answers to questions.

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (12:04): I take note of answers given by the Special Minister of State. There were a number of questions directed to the Minister today, and he admirably sought to answer those questions, albeit not satisfactorily. We are dealing with the circumstances around the Local Small Commitments Allocation grants that were available to Labor candidates prior to the election so that those candidates could identify community groups for the purposes of seeking support for their election campaigns. The process for making an application was not advised to local members or to local community groups. Those grants were advised to Labor candidates for the purposes of politicking as part of their election campaign. They then collated those commitments and, under the guise of election commitments, are now saying that those grants will be made available in every electorate and, thereby, are not part of a pork-barrelling process. That fundamentally misunderstands the process of pork-barrelling. Pork-barrelling is saying to the local Labor candidates—

The Hon. Cameron Murphy: You are an expert at it. You are an expert.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Listen, Dennis Denuto: Do not try to give me advice. Dennis Denuto over here has got every legal opinion in the book. We were faced with the spectacle of the member for Camden, who was the founder of her local musical society, promising that musical society \$75,000 as a component of this allocation grant. The Minister came to this Chamber today and had no idea of those circumstances or, alternatively, of the declaration of conflict of interest that the member signed relating to the grant. It underpins the sham nature that the Labor Party engaged in for the purposes of having its candidates identify grants for their election campaign. They said, "Vote for me, and you get the money." That is the nature of what occurred. The Minister should front up to the House and be transparent and honest about whether this was being collated in the Labor Party head office for the purposes of these grants— [*Time expired.*]

TEACHER WORKFORCE

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (12:08): I take note of answers given by the Minister for Finance in her capacity representing the Minister for Education and Early Learning, where she talked about today's announcement that the Government has hit the milestone of 16,700 permanent teachers and support staff being made permanent. As part of this conversation, it is important that we do not forget where those teachers are and where they are living. I was particularly alarmed to see the numbers of teachers in regional areas that have been left languishing on temporary contracts, as articulated in a speech that the Hon. Peter Primrose gave in the House recently.

The numbers are much higher in our regional areas. For all the talk about the Government not looking after our rural and regional areas, I think that speaks for itself on where we stand on advocating for those areas. For

someone living in regional New South Wales, the difference between a temporary contract and a permanent contract is life changing. It means that they have the capacity to look at buying a house. They can enrol their children in the local day care. They can put down roots in the area. They can join their local sporting clubs. Having permanency in their lives is enormous, and that is particularly the case in our regional areas.

Under the previous Liberal-Nationals Government, we also had a teacher shortage crisis. Teacher resignations were at record highs, as articulated by my colleague. They quadrupled over its time in government. The resignation rate of early career teachers was also at a record high. It was more than teachers retiring. I commend the work of our Deputy Premier, the Hon. Prue Car, for her work in delivering on that commitment and I again highlight how important that is to our regional areas. We have chronic teacher vacancies and shortages in regional areas, which are, again, overrepresented in the number of vacancies. Ensuring that we have permanency for teachers and attracting teachers to those regional areas is a huge step. It does a lot for regional areas and towns. I commend the work of the members in doing so.

TEACHER POLITICAL DISCOURSE

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (12:10): I make a brief contribution in today's take-note debate on the question that I asked the Hon. Courtney Houssos, representing the Minister for Education and Early Learning. I note that the Hon. Courtney Houssos has previously been a member of Portfolio Committee No. 3 - Education and would recall report 44. It cited a number of examples of political influence and discourse happening in the classroom, often to the complete detriment of a child's learning. It is imperative that the New South Wales Labor Government has a closer look at what teachers are doing in the classroom. Huge issues, such as the Voice referendum, have been dominating our daily lives. I take the opportunity to congratulate the people of New South Wales on overwhelmingly rejecting the Voice to Parliament. It is absolutely critical that the Minns Government now rules out any possibility of a Voice to the New South Wales Parliament. Having said that, it is also important to understand that political discourse will continue to dominate our daily lives; there is no question of that.

The Government has made the right decision in banning mobile phones from the classroom. As the mother of a couple of high school kids, I am delighted that the mobile phone is banned from the classroom. But, equally, the greatest influence on a child, throughout the day is, in fact, their teacher. It is not the mobile phone. It is the teacher who stands at the front of the classroom—who should be focusing on maths, science, English and a whole plethora of subjects—who has the greatest influence over what occurs in the classroom. There is no question of that. Parents directly raised with me a few examples, from both regional New South Wales and Sydney, where political discourse occurred in the classroom in recent months. In one example—I will not cite the school, but it is in the St George area—the teacher engaged in a debate about the Voice in the middle of a year 8 maths class. So it does happen, and it is wrong.

While we have banned mobile phones, we need to take the next step and send a strong message to teachers that we want them focusing on the basics. We want to keep politics out of the classroom. Their personal political beliefs and views should not be shared with students, neither throughout the school day nor in any school arranged activities. That is an area that I think the New South Wales Labor Government has to pursue in due course, because we are now seeing big political items dominate our daily lives. They should not be dominating our schools. *[Time expired.]*

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (12:14): I take note of the Special Minister of State's answers to questions put properly by the Opposition today about the Local Small Commitments Allocation. We have asked a number of questions in a number of ways, as we are right to, and it would seem that the answers are not sufficient. The level of enthusiasm that was displayed by those members prior to the election has somewhat waned after the election. It is surprising. It seems, from the answers, that there was no process to that fund.

These projects were identified by Labor candidates in Labor seats, with no-one else given the opportunity to apply. There was no clarity or transparency around the process and no discussion with anybody other than the particular Labor candidate. The answers seem to indicate that it has been made up afterwards. That is retrofitting 101. To try to retrofit probity around these projects beggars belief, particularly from those who talked such a good game about transparency and accountability before the election but are now reluctant to answer questions, produce documents and share information that they were so hot to trot about before the election.

We saw a candidate like Sally Quinnell make an announcement in Camden—that announcement was a confirmation not subject to probity, to guidelines, to review or to any of the things that the Minister assured the House about today—that said:

Huge boost for the Camden Musical Society. I am so excited to announce that a Minns Labor Government will deliver \$75,000 for the Camden Musical Society ...

She did not say that she was a member of that society or offer up any opportunity for anybody to look at her election commitment or a conflict of interest—that we hear so much about today—until we asked the questions. The announcement continued:

... towards the staging of costs of musical performances right here in Camden.

"So vote for me, and you will get some dough." That is what it is: Vote for me. There is no equivocation. It is not subject to anything. The Minister says he will review the applications, he will check the probity and he will tell the House. But we want to understand whether projects will be cancelled. If probity levels have not been met and there are conflicts that have not been managed, how will he deal with that? It is not just declaring them. It is not the potential for them; it is the management of them. How will the Government, which was so hot to trot for that fund before the election, deal with this? This was a Labor Opposition slush fund to get into government. We can see that very clearly. The Labor Party did not say before the election that it would be opening up to anybody other than Labor candidates for the purpose of getting elected, and we know exactly what that is. It is disappointing that we have to keep asking those questions, particularly from those members, but we will continue to do so. That is our job. That is why we are here. And for those communities who have missed out, it is very disappointing.

Finally, I wish all those students who sat HSC legal studies today the best of luck. I hope they do well, particularly my daughter.

TEACHER POLITICAL DISCOURSE

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (12:17): I make a few comments in relation to the contribution of the Hon. Tania Mihailuk. I urge the Government to be very cautious in heeding her advice, because the fact of the matter is that teachers can have a profound influence and the classroom has to be a place where students feel they can have open discussions. Often teachers get asked political questions, and they often provide appropriate responses. In a quirk of fate, the Hon. Matt Kean and I were both students of an exceptional history teacher, Michael Turner.

He encouraged both Matt Kean and I to get involved in politics. I do not necessarily agree with all of the ideas that Mick Turner talked about in class, but having that furtive, political-type discussion with a teacher was very important in terms of my engagement with public policy and the political process. I know it was a similarly instructive experience for Matt Kean. It would be very unwise to try to micromanage what goes on in the classroom. Those kinds of discussions can often have very beneficial effects for our community, and I think the fact that Matt Kean and I ended up in politics is a good thing. Well, maybe it is not a bad thing! I certainly think it was good that both of us were encouraged towards political participation.

HOUSING SUPPLY

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (12:19): I take note of the answer provided today by the Minister for Housing. It is quite apparent to me that housing is the current crisis of our time. It is nearly impossible to afford to buy a home or even to find one to rent. Something needs to be done. I was heartened by the Minister's response that she will not play politics with local governments—including Labor or Liberal governments. She said she will hold them to account, and rightly so. I will hold the Minister to account, making sure she does that, because we need to do something. The time for talk has long passed. Young people look to us to assist with housing affordability and availability, and we need to do that.

There is an answer to the housing problem, and that is supply. Housing is a supply and demand issue. I have spoken in this Chamber many times about the rising demand for housing due to migration. There appears to be no appetite from the Government to reduce migration. The only solution then is to increase housing supply. That is what needs to happen. I congratulate the Hon. Christopher Rath, who is present in the Chamber, on his statement the other day. I know that took fortitude and courage in the face of—

The Hon. Chris Rath: Nimbyism.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: —nimbyism and other political argy-bargy. I acknowledge his courage. About 18 months ago I met with Harry Triguboff and the management of Meriton Group in their Sydney office. Mr Triguboff explained to me why he was building in Queensland. He said, "I'm not building in New South Wales, I'm building in Queensland. If I put a DA in in Queensland and it's not approved within 12 months, or if I don't hear from the council within 12 months, it is deemed approved and I can start turning dirt." There are many Meriton apartments under construction along The Esplanade at Surfers Paradise.

The dollar talks and the dollar has walked—all the way to Queensland. It has left New South Wales, and we need it. We need to encourage these developers to build in New South Wales. The only way to do that is to ensure that our planning decisions are quicker, more efficient and less restrictive. I note how far New South Wales housing construction has slumped. The Hon. John Ruddick spoke today about granny flats. I encourage that.

I think it is great. But what standard have we fallen to where our solution to our housing crisis is to plonk tiny units in the backyards of homes?

SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST MUSIC FESTIVAL

TRANSMISSION INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (12:22): I take note of answers given today by the Treasurer. I think they demonstrate a fundamental difference between the Coalition and the Labor Party. When he chooses to sing to the House, the shadow Treasurer has a much more classical repertoire than that which appears to be favoured by the Hon. Daniel Mookhey. I would say his economic inspiration is more Adam Smith than Kendrick Lamar. If the budget has truly been put together on the basis that "a dollar might turn to a million", then we also need to acknowledge that perhaps it might not. Is Lamarenomics how the Treasurer found the putative \$7 billion black hole? I sincerely hope that the rest of the budget was not put together on the basis of Lamarenomics.

As for the Treasurer's hip-hop idol, 2Pac, if he were still with us he would certainly be very comfortable ringside at the first of the Government's Ultimate Fighting Championship events. One of 2Pac's more popular songs, *I Get Around*, is unlikely to ever become a feminist anthem, given its description of the use of women as sexual objects for the gratification of men. It includes the memorable lines:

It's a lot of real Gs doin' time,
'Cause a groupie bent the truth and told a lie

This demonstrates a spectacular lack of respect for women who are coming forward to report sexual assault, so I hope that 2Pac and other rappers have limited influence.

I also take note of the answer given today by the Leader of the Government, who discussed the urgent need to decarbonise, describing this as "imperative" and not as a choice. She acknowledged that we continue to have a 75 per cent reliance on coal. What I found surprising about her answer, and all of the other answers to similar questions, is the refusal to acknowledge nuclear power as part of the solution. We all want a liveable environment, but liveable includes affordable. The example of Ontario in Canada demonstrates that we could achieve a liveable and affordable environment, and decarbonise, by at least exploring nuclear. Canadians pay the equivalent of one-quarter of our energy price. If we are serious about a green future, we need to at least make nuclear part of the discussion.

SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST MUSIC FESTIVAL

TEACHER WORKFORCE

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (12:25): I take note of the answers given by the Treasurer today about the South by Southwest festival, or SXSW, and the answer given by Minister Graham to a question about SXSW last week. Hip-hop music has been around for 50 years. I am a big fan of hip-hop. It is one genre of music that I absolutely love, and it is fantastic that we will have such an important global festival like SXSW in New South Wales for the next decade. I want to reinforce some of the things that the Treasurer said. This festival will attract more than 27,000 visitors and is going to bring in \$27 million in revenue over the course of its duration this year, and \$165 million over the next four years. It is so valuable in an economic sense to the State to have SXSW here. But economic value is only a tiny part of what this festival brings. It brings cultural interaction, wonderful performances and events that people can go to and, more importantly, it includes intellectual seminars, bringing together great minds from around the world to talk about important issues.

I am a member of Portfolio Committee No. 1, which is conducting an inquiry into artificial intelligence [AI]. A number of the seminars scheduled to be held at SXSW Sydney 2023 are looking at some of the issues that we confront in relation to AI. How is machine learning going to operate? What are the extents of AI? What are some of the risks and dangers of AI? Those are all things that are being considered through the various seminars at SXSW.

I also take note of the answer given today by Minister Houssos in relation to teachers. I reinforce the Minister's answer that under this Government more than 16,000 teachers have had their position converted to permanent, and we have delivered a pay deal with the NSW Teachers Federation that means our State's teachers are going to be the best paid in Australia rather than being the worst paid. There is a lot more to do, but this Government is working to turn around the absolute crisis in the public system left to us by the previous Government, starting with teachers and our education system. I commend the Minister for it. [*Time expired.*]

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (12:28): I take note of answers given by Ministers to questions asked today by the Hon. Natalie Ward and the Hon. Sarah Mitchell concerning Local Small Commitments Allocation

grants. It appears that the grants program was somehow managed by Labor headquarters, giving candidates access to taxpayer dollars—I stress that this presents as a total misuse of public money—even before getting into government. The \$37.2 million fund gave each Labor candidate \$400,000. Grant applications had to be made before 25 March, the date of the election. The only people telling community groups that this money was available were Labor candidates. Labor is trying to tell us it ran a grant program, but it was anything but.

The program guidelines for the Local Small Commitments Allocation were released on 31 July 2023. As I said earlier, applications closed before 25 March 2023. Forget about the need for grants administration to be conducted honestly and impartially, and with integrity and accountability. Forget about establishing appropriate internal controls or adhering to transparent and systematic applications. And forget about guarding against actual or perceived conflicts of interest. Was this the grant program designed in the same Labor headquarters that received \$100,000 cash in an Aldi bag, as reported to ICAC? Labor designed a political slush fund for political purposes.

My colleagues have spoken about the candidate for Camden and the Camden Musical Society. I cite a media report where, following the announcement by the Labor candidate that funding had been awarded to a group, Murray Bishop of the Camden Community Band reported that it "did not go down well". He further reports, "There was a lack of transparency and a lack of a level playing field in terms of who was able to get the funding." There were no transparent processes to handle conflicts of interest and there was an inability to deliver equal money across all electorates. The people of Camden and communities across New South Wales deserve better.

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (12:31): I address some of the questioning of the Special Minister of State regarding the Local Small Commitments Allocation program. The Opposition attempted to superimpose its grotesque rorting, when it had control of the money, onto what this Government has done, which was to fairly and evenly allocate \$400,000 per electorate, regardless of who was in power in those electorates. Members opposite attacked a member who won an electorate from them by playing her representative role. Breaking news, "I'm going to represent my electorate by nominating a musical society for funding." She declared the conflict. What is the line of questioning? Where are members opposite going with this? The reason she is now the member for Camden is that she is an effective representative for the area and advocated for the funds to be delivered, amongst many other things.

I remind members opposite not to go down this path for too long. Talk about the pot calling the kettle black. Two wrongs do not make a right, but we have made it right, because we allocated \$400,000 evenly per electorate. I remind members opposite of the pork-barrelling of the bushfire funding in 2019. Then the Stronger Communities Fund saw 96 per cent of funding—that is \$252 million—go to Coalition-held electorates. It is not Mark Buttigieg or the Labor Government saying that; it is the Auditor-General of New South Wales. Who could forget the emblematic, exemplar rort of \$90 million to Hornsby Council? The money turned up in the account unsolicited. If members opposite want to lecture us about probity and equity, I suggest they take a good, hard look at themselves and see this grant program for what it is: the allocation of \$400,000 per electorate on an equitable basis, in a democratic process where local representatives advocated on behalf of their electorates. The member for Camden should be congratulated, not targeted.

TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (12:33): I close the take-note debate by commending the Deputy Leader of the Government on his series of very considered and thoughtful responses to a number of questions that can only be characterised as leading with your chin. This is the second day of this line of questioning from members opposite. Let us do a little recap of their record when they were in government.

Their Premier threw up her hands and said, "Everybody pork-barrels", and completely gave up. Members opposite politicised emergency bushfire funding for the first time, leaving communities in Labor electorates in the Blue Mountains and on the Central Coast devastated and without any funding, while providing the second largest funding pool to what can only be described as a pond in Kempsey. That project had shopped around grants programs at a Federal and State level, consistently failing to get funding until they identified emergency bushfire funding. Instead of going to devastated communities in Labor electorates, that funding was diverted to the pond program, which had failed the application process.

That brings me to the Stronger Communities Fund, a pool of funding that was designed for councils that had been merged by the former Government. While the single largest merged council was not told about the pool of funding, \$90 million—the single largest amount of funding—was diverted to a council from the former Treasurer's electorate that was not merged. It happened with a phone call the day before and saw the money

deposited for that council. Members opposite ask questions about a grants program to an excellent Minister, who is doing a fantastic job delivering on election commitments that this Government took to the public. We were open and transparent. We said, "Everyone gets the same amount of money and Labor candidates will identify the programs." Of course the Minister is doing it in an excellent way, and I commend him for that.

Attempting to smear the fantastic member for Camden, who saw a record 10.3 per cent swing, shows that members opposite are clearly smarting. Let me draw their attention to the Emerald Hills Community Hall, which swung against the former member by 20.1 per cent. They are clearly smarting from the loss when they attempt to make some kind of allegation under parliamentary privilege. This Government is committed to rebuilding public services. The Leader of the Government talked about our energy road map. We are rebuilding our local roads across New South Wales, rebuilding Stockton Beach and providing secure employment for more than 16,000 teachers and support workers. The Treasurer's fantastic answer combined two of his great passions: hip-hop and fiscal management. There were some great answers for the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Written Answers to Supplementary Questions

LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS ALLOCATION

In reply to **the Hon. NATALIE WARD** (17 October 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:

The Premier's Department was advised that all electorates had an allocation of \$400,000. Some of this allocation had been nominated for specific organisations and the remainder would be allocated to local councils for upgrades to playgrounds and parks.

Advisers in the Premier's Office.

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

REDBANK BIOMASS GENERATOR

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (14:00): I do not want to alarm the Chamber, but today I give my support to a net zero green energy initiative.

The Hon. Bob Nanva: I'm alarmed!

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Miracles will never cease. As a former businessman, I know a good deal when I see one and the biomass energy generator plant by Verdant Earth Technologies for the Redbank Power Station in the Hunter is a good deal for New South Wales. I believe there are only two forms of green energy—good green energy and bad green energy. The latter is the one I have been arguing against in Parliament for years. On the other hand, good green energy genuinely powers a country without financially destroying it. It is extremely resilient; it works no matter the weather or the time of day. It has minimal negative interference on the land, it is extremely productive, and it not only powers homes and businesses but can also drive a new technological frontier for Australia.

The proposed Redbank biomass generator is good green energy. Firstly, as a repurposed coal power plant it is already connected to the grid, which means it does not require hugely restrictive, expensive, and controversial transmission connection programs like the wind and solar projects being built across the State. It is basically plug and play. Secondly, it has a double mechanism for reducing CO₂ through cleaner green energy generation as well as the planting of over 10,000 hectares of purpose-grown energy crops that will act as long-term carbon sinks. To run, it will need only 700,000 dry tonnes of fuel annually, using 20 million tonnes of invasive species sourced already—including weeds, shrubs and so on—after which it will rely on purpose-grown fuels. It will deliver net zero power and carbon sinks without damaging or hurting any native bushland or plantations whilst providing farmers with the opportunity for additional income. It will provide one million megawatts of 24/7 renewable generation per year as early as December 2024 and it will do so without ruining coastlines, farmlands, or our State's budget.

This must be the least politically contentious green energy initiative there is. Best of all, it will require no new construction other than converting a decommissioned former coal-fired power station into a productive,

job-creating and innovative form of energy generation. I trust that the Hon. Penny Sharpe in her capacity as the Minister for the Environment and Minister for Energy will give this project the high level of interest it deserves. I implore the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Hon. Paul Scully, to do the same. I urge him to consider its merits for State significant development status. If the Government is adamant on delivering a green energy transition, at least transition into good green energy. I urge the Government to strongly consider Verdant's Redbank Power Station project.

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (14:03): I speak about the infrastructure record of the previous New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government. Let me look at the McKanes Falls Bridge, a \$12 million project to refurbish and restore a bridge over the Coxs River near Lithgow. This project was promised in 2013 with detailed designs supposedly available in late 2014. But in 2016 there were still no plans available; nor, as a consequence, had work started. Instead, construction was then promised for early 2017. When 2017 rolled around, still nothing happened. Instead, work on McKanes Falls Bridge was not started until three years later in May 2020. The long-promised bridge was finally progressively reopened to traffic in late 2022 and earlier this year. It took the Liberals and Nationals nine years from the much-publicised announcement of the bridge to its completion.

The restoration of the McKanes Falls Bridge took longer to open than it took to design and complete the Sydney Harbour Bridge. So is unbelievable to hear those opposite decrying recently announced infrastructure projects that Labor has committed to in its State budget, like the Rouse Hill hospital and the Pitt Town bypass. When the Rouse Hill hospital was initially announced, land acquisition and construction was supposed to start in 2018, with a completion date of 2022. But when the Liberals and Nationals 2022 budget papers came out, the completion date for the hospital drifted out to 2027. Yet again, nothing was certain.

As for the Pitt Town bypass, there was no start or completion date mentioned in the 2019 budget and no estimated total cost listed for the project. In the *2022-23 Budget Paper No. 3—Infrastructure Statement*, the Pitt Town bypass is missing. It had been deleted. Like McKanes bridge, the Liberals and Nationals kept reannouncing those two urgent and critical projects, but nothing ever happened. Although, I admit they put up some fancy plastic signs. It took this Labor Government to fund them in its very first budget.

REGIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (14:06): Today I wish to speak about a couple of recent events I had the privilege to attend as both the shadow Minister for Education and Early Learning and as a member of The Nationals. I begin by acknowledging my colleague from the other place, Paul Toole, the member for Bathurst. Recently I spent a couple of days in his electorate and had a chance to visit a number of great early childhood and education facilities with him. I give a shout-out particularly to Scallywags Long Day Care and Preschool, which is run by the local Bathurst Regional Council, and acknowledge the director, Pamela West, and her team, who welcomed us so warmly for our visit. We were able to see the children learning and engaging, and speak to the staff about some of the opportunities they are providing to the children but also some of the challenges that they are having, particularly around workforce. It was a really great way for us to understand some of the needs for families in the Bathurst community. I thank them for their time.

We also had the chance to drop into PCYC Bathurst during the school holidays, which was running its school holiday program. I give a shout-out to Lauren and the team as well as all the children, who gave us a lesson on how to make balloon animals. They gave us a few pink dogs that were made out of balloons to take home. They were having a great time. It reiterates the importance of having strong PCYCs in our communities and why we need to have good investment in not just before and after school care but also vacation care programs. A lot of families, particularly in regional New South Wales, rely heavily on organisations like the PCYC and those amazing holiday programs that run activities for children to enjoy.

I had the chance to call into Radio 2BS and I had an interview with Jac. I regularly speak to her and others at 2BS on the phone, so to be there in person to say hello and to speak about some of the local issues was important. I give a shout-out to radio stations in rural communities that provide up-to-date information for their local towns as well as the entire region. Many of them work tirelessly day in and day out, and they are an important part of the communications fabric for regional New South Wales. Finally, on Friday I had the pleasure to attend the official opening and blessing of new contemporary education facilities at St Xavier's Primary School in Gunnedah with guests, who included the Hon. Mark Coulton, the federal member for Parkes; Dallas McInerney, the head of Catholic Schools; and Chris Smyth, the director of Armidale Catholic schools.

I give a particular shout-out to Principal Jen Honner and the amazing work that she has done to lead the school through its transformative journey, starting with the updated pedagogy and teaching practice that took place well before any bricks and mortar were laid to upgrade the school. Their incredible school culture, the way

the children are engaging in their lessons and the way they work as a team is exceptional. It is a real credit to Jen and her team that the Gunnedah community have such a fantastic local Catholic school. I thank everybody for inviting me to be a part of it. I conclude by thanking the choir, ably chaired by music teacher Heather Sloan, who did a wonderful job on the day.

ANIMALS AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

The Hon. EMMA HURST (14:09): Two things of great importance happened on Wednesday 29 May 2019. That was the day I gave my inaugural speech in this place, which marked the start of my work to represent animals from within this Parliament. On the same day, a dog called Buddy was picked up from a medical experimentation facility. It marked the start of his new life. Buddy was eight years old at the time, and he had spent the entirety of his life as a test subject in medical experimentation. On that day, he became one of the first dogs used in research to be released and rehomed. Since then his story has made it into a new book by Laura Greaves, called *Amazing Aussie Dogs*. The book celebrates dogs everywhere by telling the stories of inspiring individuals. Buddy has his own chapter, which outlines how he came to be a loved and powerful mascot for change.

Buddy was adopted by Patrice Pandeleos, who patiently cared for Buddy as he learned how to be himself. Patrice had to sign a non-disclosure agreement in order to adopt Buddy, which means she will never know exactly what he endured at the facility. What she does know is that Buddy is proof of what is possible when animals are released from research. When Patrice brought him home, he did not know what treats or toys were. He ran and hid when she threw a ball for him. Buddy had to learn how to play, how to socialise and how to trust. Not only did he learn all of this, but he thrived. At 12 years old, Buddy is affectionately nicknamed the Dogfather at his local park, where all the dogs come up and greet him. He is nicknamed also the Legal Beagle because he and his mum, Patrice, have been integral to changing the law for dogs and cats used in experimentation.

Some members will remember meeting Buddy when he came to Parliament. I know that he won us over, because last year we successfully passed our right to release legislation, aptly called Buddy's Law. I thank Buddy and Patrice and other advocates in this space for making this possible. Because of them, thousands of dogs and cats used in experimentation have a chance of a love-filled life, which they never experienced before. I told Buddy during my inaugural speech that he was home and that he was loved. I repeat that: He is home now, and he is very loved.

MENTAL HEALTH

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (14:11): October is Mental Health Month in New South Wales, and 10 October was World Mental Health Day. These occasions encourage all of us to think about our mental health and wellbeing, regardless of whether we have a lived experience of mental illness. Yesterday the convenors of the Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health, the Hon. Emily Suvaal and the Hon. Susan Carter, hosted an event with WayAhead and Relationships Australia. It was great to see so many of my colleagues together to recognise the importance of mental health in our everyday lives and discuss how we each have a role to play as mental health allies.

Twenty per cent of Australians live with mental health conditions, which can impact their physical health, how they connect with others and their livelihoods. Good mental health enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, work well and contribute to their community. But unfortunately, there is still a stigma around mental illness. Many people feel uncomfortable, especially in their workplaces, with talking openly and without judgement about their mental health struggles. Mental health is a universal human right, and it should not be treated differently to physical health. Our social and emotional health are just as important to our overall wellbeing.

Moreover, psychological injuries sustained at work are just as serious as physical injuries. Recently Victoria's workplace health and safety regulator tightened the rules for mental health injury claims in reaction to payouts exceeding premium revenue. It is a shame that this approach has been taken. We should encourage injured workers with mental health claims to come forward, and we should attempt to tackle the root causes of the spike in claims. The rise of work-related mental health injuries has grown steadily across Australia in the past decade. According to Safe Work Australia, the proportion of claims for mental health conditions increased from 6.5 per cent in 2011-12 to 9.2 per cent in 2021-22. It is vital that we treat these cases seriously and improve access to mental health care. I encourage everyone at work and at home to check in on their friends and family, take the time to listen and validate their concerns. It is essential that we destigmatise how we approach and identify mental health issues in our society and not forget to prioritise our own mental health.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (14:13): On Saturday our State of New South Wales, like the rest of the Commonwealth, spoke clearly and decisively against the risky, divisive and unknown Voice to Parliament. Nearly 2.7 million or almost 60 per cent of the electorate voted no. This was a result that occurred despite the no campaign being up against the most well-financed and resourced campaign in history. The yes campaign had the support of big business, big unions and big celebrity egos. From Qantas flying armies of yes campaigners around Australia for free and endless LinkedIn lecturing of directors for the Voice, the yes campaign was a Goliath. The no campaign, by comparison, had limited funds and limited institutional support. What it did have, however, was the support of the quiet Australians: everyday people concerned about what the Voice might mean for our democracy. Today I would like to pay tribute to some of those great no campaigners I worked with across New South Wales. Their energy, commitment, drive and passion against the odds was simply epic. Firstly, I recognise the great Peter O'Hanlon, who coordinated so much of the New South Wales campaign.

I also recognise the enormous efforts of those I worked alongside, including Wendy Lindsay and Richard Noonan in East Hills; Michelle Verbloot, Jon Malotta, Glen Giffin, Kim Jacobs, Natalya Hards, Ritu Boyd, Katherine Deves, Alan R. M. Jones, Pallavi Sinha, Alex Dore and Chris Ashton in Warringah; Paul McKenzie and Courtney Nguyen in Cabramatta; Jennifer Bullen and Jan Mapledorum in Reid; Pradeep Pari in Greenway; Zoe Macartney and Jeannine Brown in Lithgow; James Holt, Geoffrey Wang, Martin Schuitema, Stuart Coppock, Stevie Khouw and Maria Chen in Willoughby; Ishita Sethi and Damian Pace in Epping; Hazel Polonium in Wentworth; Godfrey Franz on the Central Coast; Roza Sage in the Blue Mountains; Calvin Biag and Robert Jacobucci in Prospect and Fairfield; and James Flynn, who flew the no flag proudly at Australia House in London. Others who worked tirelessly for "no" include Angus Mackie, Michelle Moffatt, Alexandra Rafael, Charles Camenzulli, Brian Perrem, Geoffrey Pearson, Jon Martin, Felicity Finlay, Rosemary Elliott, John Moore, David Robinson, Livingston Chettipally, Haris Strangas, Ben Britton, Brian Perrem, Wayne Brown, Fiona Kotvojs, Dom Bondar, John Hughes, Elizabeth Levy, the Mayor of Hawkesbury—

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: Point of order: The standing orders do not permit the reading of lists.

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

The Hon. Robert Borsak: It is not a list.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: It sounds like a list.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON: It is a list of champions, of quiet Australians, middle Australia. It is on the public record. I also mention Scott Johnston; mayor of the Hawkesbury Sarah McMahon; mayor of the Hills Peter Gangemi; Samuel Uno; Pam McLelland; Julia Gold; Sam Kayal; David Morgan; Advance's wonderfully talented director, Matthew Sheahan; and our former Prime Ministers Tony Abbott and John Howard. There was some amazing work done by a number of New South Wales Federal Liberal MPs who were quite simply instrumental in ensuring the no case was front and centre— [*Time expired.*]

HEMP INDUSTRY

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (14:17): On 5 October I was pleased to host a hemp industry roundtable meeting attended by the Minister for Agriculture, the Department of Primary Industries and hemp industry representatives. Hemp is used as food for humans and animals and as insulation. Hemp is used to make rope, textiles and clothes, paper and bioplastics, cat litter and equine products. Hemp oil is used medicinally. Hemp has been used in these ways for thousands of years. Hemp is a huge crop in Eastern Europe, Asia and North America but in its infancy in Australia. Hemp is also a building material. It is breathable, so there are no issues with humidity, moisture or mould. It is an insulation product and a thermal mass product. As we act to deal with climate change and find smarter ways to build, hemp is one of the key solutions. One major benefit of building with hempcrete, particularly in rural locations, is that it is fireproof. It is carbon negative. If everybody built with it, we would be in a much better situation.

Industrial and medicinal hemp is an environmentally friendly crop. It requires less water and fewer agricultural chemicals than other fibre crops. There is a massive opportunity for the cotton industry in this State to use hemp as an addendum in its cropping rotations. We heard at the meeting that there is an opportunity to restart some of the redundant cotton gins in this State, especially the one at Carroll near Gunnedah, for the decortication of hemp for the building industry. At the moment, we are importing our hemp for the building industry from Queensland and France. A path needs to be cleared for the hemp industry to scale up to a point where large operations are secure to invest in hemp crops. One issue raised by the hemp industry representatives was that moving hemp between farms holding valid licences requires an application with fees, which costs both money and time. There should be a one-off permit to move plant material between licensees. There should be

support for the growth of hemp using cloning and propagating—not just from seed—because that would achieve a consistent quality product.

There is a prohibition on growing the plant within eyesight of the road, which is ridiculous given hemp has no drug properties at all. Due to confusion between cannabis used as a drug, cannabis used for medicinal purposes and hemp grown for industrial purposes, industry members described fighting banks to utilise EFTPOS machines and fighting advertisers to market their products. There are roadblocks in the way of a successful hemp industry. I am pleased that the Government is recognising the opportunities of the hemp industry and that the Minister is supportive of it. Hemp is the future. It is a great opportunity for our farmers and a great way to decarbonise our agricultural systems. Hemp is the future.

YOUNG LABOR AND YOUNG LIBERALS DEBATE

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (14:20): On Thursday 7 September I had the honour of chairing the annual Young Labor vs Young Liberal Debate. The topic was "That New South Wales and Australia are being well served by their new Labor Governments", so you can imagine that that got things stirred up pretty quickly. They were great; they were very lively and enthusiastic. It was heartening to see how engaged that group of young people are. To give members an idea of how lively, I was co-chairing and at one stage I had cause to be out on Macquarie Street. I know the other place has a reputation of being the bear pit and being quite lively during question time, but I could hear what was happening in the Chamber outside on Macquarie Street. Decibel-for-decibel, the Young Labor-Young Liberal Debate was probably the winner. Some of my colleagues who are here today walked past the Chamber and then came in to ask what the hell I was letting them do because it was quite lively.

Mr President, I was wondering whether I could make a request for an electric chair that goes back and forth and does the things that they enjoy in the other place. Those of us who sit in your chair would appreciate that.

The Hon. Natalie Ward: You don't find that kind of electric chair today.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: Not an electric chair. Sorry, I will rephrase that: A motorised chair.

The Hon. Scott Farlow: That would be one way to put a person on a call.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: Yes, it would. While the engagement of young people with politics is a good sign no matter which side of politics or whatever their political inclination, I was particularly heartened by the Young Labor speakers who contributed to the debate. It was great to see one of my duty electorates, Kiama, represented by Imogen Draisma, who is Deputy Mayor of Kiama council. It was great to see Laura Cook from my old union, the Australian Workers' Union. It was also great to see Jasper Thatcher, who has been an advocate for Australian-made ferries, given that he works on the ferries and is a proud Maritime Union of Australia member.

The future of the party is in great hands as evidenced by that group of young people. I do not have a list I am going to read out; I am just noting some of the people who were there. We also had two of our staffers, Max Kennedy and LJ Margeit there, as well as Dylan Shoesmith, Cynthia Wang, Bart Shteinman, Paige Sedgwick, Alisa Hamilton, Laine Fox, Keira Ademovic, Oliver Webb, Sabrina Yassine and Emma Hogan. I was immensely proud of them and also immensely heartened by the animation of both sides of politics.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (14:23): This Friday the Sydney Opera House celebrates fifty years since it was opened by Queen Elizabeth II on 20 October 1973. The Opera House stands as a shining light of our city to the world, an inspiring symbol of Australia, our most recognised man-made icon and a UNESCO world heritage site. Who would have thought when Premier Joseph Cahill commenced a design competition for the Opera House in 1955 that such an icon would emerge. It is near impossible to think of our city without it and more improbable to imagine Bennelong Point standing today as a tram shed. The vision of Jorn Utzon in designing the Opera House has left a legacy for our city and nation for which we will always be indebted.

There is no doubt that small-mindedness got in the way of Utzon's full vision being recognised and, like many artists, he was not given the deference and respect he deserved through his lifetime. It is a great tragedy that, due to the interference of politicians—and I acknowledge that they came from my side of the aisle—Jorn Utzon never got to see his realised vision in the flesh. It is something which we should remark and thank former governments for, including the Cahill Government, the Iemma Government and the Coalition governments that were able to reconcile that fact.

While it may have been the Askin Government that frustrated Utzon's vision, I am glad to have been a part of successive Coalition governments that invested \$239 million to see the renewal of Utzon's vision at the Opera House and lead to the moment of Sydney celebrating the Opera House's fiftieth year in all its shining glory. The

Opera House projects a vision to the world of a confident nation that has overcome the cultural cringe and is a beacon for arts and culture. It is an aspiration of many of the world's leading artists to perform at the Sydney Opera House and the building has hosted many of the world's greatest artists across many disciplines.

While the building's concert halls, theatres and studios are celebrated, many of the Opera House's most iconic events have also taken place outside of the Opera House. The venue is so iconic that some of the most acclaimed opera events use the Opera House as a background rather than as a venue, such as *Handa Opera* on Sydney Harbour. It is not just the high culture events that have taken the Opera House's attention. Many events have taken place on the forecourt of the Opera House. I can think of none better than Crowded House's final concert and *Don't Dream It's Over* being played on the forecourt. There have been many fantastic events on the Opera House forecourt, including the opening of the Invictus Games. Whether it be running around the Opera House, going to see Benny the seal on the northern VIP steps, or the TikTokers and the fitness gurus using the Opera House as a background in the morning, it is there for all to celebrate and share. It is iconic in our city and brings it together. Happy birthday, Sydney Opera House.

CONSERVATION HUNTING

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK (14:26): Two weeks ago in this place we had bipartisan support for my motion acknowledging the importance that hunting and fishing plays in the social, economic and environmental fabric of New South Wales. So why, we may ask, time and again are conservation hunters being sidelined and ignored when considerations are made about ridding the State of pest animals? Only recently the long-footed potoroo was sighted in New South Wales for the first time. Was it in a national park, which are so special and so hallowed, but so often locked up and left to weeds and pests and wildfires? No. Much to the chagrin of the loony left, the first sighting of the holy grail of native animals in New South Wales, the long-footed potoroo, was in Bondi State Forest.

The ecological jewel that is Bondi State Forest is a production forest. How can a fragile species like the potoroo survive under such significant pressure from feral predators and, much to the angst of The Greens no doubt, in an area where native timber harvesting occurs? Has the area been specifically targeted by The Greens and animal justice groups capturing and offering up the wild dogs, foxes and cats for adoption to caring and loving families in inner city Sydney? The answer is a big, fat no. It is because the area has good access, is managed for fire and, most importantly of all, is continually hunted and harvested. The animals that eat potoroos are pursued by licensed, responsible hunters on foot day after day after day. That is feral animal control.

It is time to set aside the outright lies of The Greens and their alternate reality. It is time to set aside the false so-called statistics of their cronies and the self-serving and self-appointed Invasive Species Council and embrace the truth in New South Wales. Recreational conservation hunters make a difference. They shoot and remove hundreds of thousands more animals than paid killers do each year with poison and from helicopter gunships. Hunters in New South Wales are simply the first in conservation. That truth cannot ever be denied.

Motions

GAZA CONFLICT

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (14:28): In reply: I thank all members who contributed to debate. To address some of the issues that emerged from the debate, Opposition members will support Labor's amendment because we also condemn hate speech in all of its forms and we also support international law. We will not support The Greens' amendment to remove paragraph (3) of the motion because we unapologetically support a two-state solution. Suggesting that that part of the motion should be removed goes to the very heart of The Greens, who do not support a two-state solution or who certainly do not enthusiastically support it like members do on this side of the House.

As I said in my speech, I have found that underlying most arguments against Israel is a basic lack of belief in a two-state solution. I suggest that The Greens look more to the German Greens. In one of her first acts after the atrocities last Saturday week, the foreign Minister, a German Green, paid a visit to Israel. The German Greens are unapologetically in support of a two-state solution, like the Government and the Opposition here are, but unfortunately not, it seems, The Greens in the New South Wales Parliament.

In another issue that came out of the debate, the Hon. Anthony D'Adam said that it is a legitimate position to oppose the State of Israel and to chant "From the river to the sea". Well, I do not think it is a legitimate position. It is certainly the position of members of Hamas—they certainly chant that disgusting phrase—but I do not think it is a legitimate position because Hamas is a terrorist organisation. Hamas has a moral equivalence with ISIS, not with Israel and not with the Jews, so I would seriously question the attempt to legitimise that chant. I do not think

it has any place in Australian society, and it was shocking to hear that on Sunday. I finish with a quote from the Hon. Ron Hoenig, because I think his words are probably better than mine. He said:

It is not a call for a two state solution where Israel and Palestine can live in peace. It calls for the establishment of a State of Palestine from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, erasing the State of Israel and its people. It is also a rallying cry for terrorist groups like Hamas and their sympathizers.

I think Ron Hoenig is absolutely correct about what the chant actually represents.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): The Hon. Chris Rath has moved a motion, to which Dr Amanda Cohn and the Hon. Daniel Mookhey have moved amendments. Because of the order in which they appear in the motion, I will put Dr Amanda Cohn's amendment first. The question is that the amendment moved by Dr Amanda Cohn be agreed to.

Amendment of Dr Amanda Cohn negatived.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): The question now is that the amendment moved by the Hon. Daniel Mookhey be agreed to.

Amendment of the Hon. Daniel Mookhey 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.

STRIP SEARCHES

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (14:33): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) girls as young as 12 and 13 are being stripsearched by the NSW Police Force;
 - (b) boys as young as 14 are being stripsearched by the NSW Police Force;
 - (c) strip searches were used on 107 children during 2021-22;
 - (d) 20 per cent of the children searched were Indigenous; and
 - (e) the number of strip searches of girls aged under 17 has increased by 30 per cent from 2022 to 2023.
- (2) That this House notes that:
 - (a) Associate Professor Liz Scott from the Brain and Mind Centre at the University of Sydney said forcing children to take off their clothes in front of officers was "draconian and totally heavy-handed" and "may cause long-term harm";
 - (b) Samantha Lee, Redfern Legal Centre senior solicitor, said the data showed strip searches were being used as a routine practice of police and not as the law intended; and
 - (c) a report released by the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission in September found fewer than one-third of NSW Police Force strip searches complied with the rules designed to protect privacy and dignity.
- (3) That this House further notes that:
 - (a) the NSW Police Force carried out 4,591 strip searches over the past two years;
 - (b) 40 per cent of those strip searches were of young adults aged 18 to 29; and
 - (c) in 58 per cent of strip searches nothing illegal was found.
- (4) That this House calls on the Government to ban child strip searches for suspected drug possession.

The motion is before the House due to the incredible work done by Dr Michael Grewcock and Dr Vicki Sentas in their report *Rethinking Strip Searches by NSW Police* and the work by the Redfern Legal Centre. They have highlighted the abysmal situation in this State where girls as young as 12 are being stripsearched by police in semi-public places and subjected to a practice that, in their report and in most reasonable people's opinions, is highly likely to leave them with PTSD and long-term trauma—and all on the basis of a false positive by a drug-detection dog or the inclination of a police officer. In the vast majority of cases, no drugs are found and no crime was committed by the child stripsearched. If any crime is found, it is for a minor, personal possession quantity of drugs.

The number of case studies in this State is absolutely appalling; strip searches are done on thousands of young people. Some young people who are incarcerated in juvenile detention are subjected to hundreds of strip searches by the time they are in their early 20s. The fact that children are being stripsearched on our streets in this day and age is absolutely appalling. The great work of the Redfern Legal Centre, using the Government Information (Public Access) Act, found that between July 2021 and June 2023 New South Wales police conducted

a total of 4,591 strip searches in public. Of that total, 54 per cent—or 2,489—strip searches resulted in nothing illegal being found. Over 40 per cent of strip searches were conducted on young people aged between 18 and 29 years old. Aboriginal people, who make up only 3.4 per cent of the New South Wales population, accounted for 14 per cent of all strip searches. There was a 30 per cent increase in the number of girls aged between 10 and 17 stripsearched from 2021 to 2023. That is absolutely appalling.

The NSW Police Force stripsearched 31 girls aged between 10 and 17 years between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2023. Three of those girls were aged 12 and six girls were aged 13. I imagine the impact on my own stepdaughter, who is 12 years old, if she was detained by the police at a train station and wrongly stripsearched, potentially naked, in front of police officers. In some strip searches they are forced to squat and cough in front of police officers and have their mouth cavity searched. It is absolutely appalling and has to stop. I am introducing a private member's bill that will ban strip searches of children when the prima facie cause for the search is drug possession, and I urge the Government to consider the bill. Redfern Legal Centre senior solicitor Samantha Lee said:

Subjecting children to strip searches is harmful. ... The law must change to protect children.

The significant increase in strip-searching girls is a matter of huge concern. Evidence demonstrates how traumatising such an invasive search can be.

The sheer number of strip searches indicates the law is not being applied as intended by NSW Parliament ...

I urge members to consider the issue and support the motion.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (14:38): I understand that the motion relates to data the NSW Police Force has released under a Government Information (Public Access) Act request relating to strip searches conducted in 2021-22 and 2022-23. I am also aware that the data shows that a number of strip searches were conducted on young people in both the 2021-22 and 2022-23 financial years. I understand that data may be cause for concern for some members of the community, and the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism shares some of those concerns—I indicate that on her behalf. The Minister wants to better understand the factors that led up to those searches being conducted, what the outcomes of the searches were and whether the policy settings in place are fit for purpose. She knows it is important to consider those issues in a measured way and to take a holistic look at the policy settings involved.

As has been noted in this place and in others, community concerns about strip searches of children have been well documented in the media. The Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism is not turning a blind eye to the concerns raised by community members and is planning to meet with key stakeholders in the coming weeks to probe whether the policy settings in place are fit for purpose. It is also worth mentioning that the definition of strip search includes incidents where a person might simply be required to move or remove a piece of their clothing. Not all strip searches involve the complete removal of all clothing. The Government will not support the motion as it proposes a policy change that has not been through the rigorous policy development processes we expect of government, and which the Government will undertake. The Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism takes this matter very seriously and looks forward to discussing it with stakeholders in the coming weeks.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (14:40): I am grateful that the honourable member has brought the issue of strip searches of minors to the attention of the House. It is an important issue, and I doubt that anyone would be comfortable with children, or any member of our society, being stripsearched without good reasons and adequate safeguards. Stripsearching is one tool that is available to police as part of their law enforcement task, and it is highly regulated. The Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 permits police to stripsearch individuals, but only in certain circumstances. There must be reasonable grounds, seriousness and urgency must co-exist and certain rules designed to preserve the person's privacy and dignity must be followed.

Importantly, those laws are not simply rules on a piece of paper consigned to the bottom drawer. The operation of those laws, designed to balance community safety, police enforcement and personal dignity, is reviewed—and not just by the police who are conducting the relevant searches. In 2020 the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission [LECC] conducted an extensive review of police strip search practices. The findings of that review were sobering, but police responded during and after the inquiry by introducing better training and more safeguards for those who are searched, including new record-keeping protocols and special protocols for searching patrons at music festivals. That was not the last inquiry into police strip search practices. The LECC continued to review samples of police records and there is clearly an ongoing discussion between the NSW Police Force and the body charged with its oversight as to how strip search powers are being used and are operating in practice. An evaluation framework has been developed with agreed indicators so that there is clear oversight as to what improved strip search practices would look like. Importantly, those reviews are public, as is the evaluation framework.

However, there is clearly room for improvement. Are we there yet? No. But is the appropriate response to ban strip searches of children suspected of drug possession, as this motion exhorts us? No. We need to keep working to ensure proper execution of strip searches for adults and children. There is also a risk in exempting children from strip searches for suspected drug possession. While undoubtedly well intentioned, it runs the risk of minors being targeted by gangs and unscrupulous adults, for they would become the perfect drug mules. Sadly we are too aware of the practice of babies' nappies being used to smuggle contraband into prisons. We do not want to provide a positive incentive for using older children to conceal drugs about their person and carry them for others. That would be more harmful than the risk of a strip search. Unfortunately, the Opposition cannot support the motion.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (14:44): We have heard the rhetoric from the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham; let us have some of the facts and evidence. A person who landed from Mars and sat in this Chamber today would think that every kid in the State was being stripsearched down to absolutely no clothing by the NSW Police Force. Let us look at the definition of strip search in the words of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission [LECC]. In its report of 2020, the LECC observed:

Generally speaking, if a search involves the officer doing more than running his or her hands over a person's outer clothing, or the person removing more than their outer clothing (outer clothing being a coat or jacket or similar article, gloves, shoes, socks and hat), then the search constitutes a strip search.

In reality, if I was an offender at an event and the police said to me, "Lift your shirt up", and I complied, that would be a strip search. It does not mean removing clothing. Let us look at section 33 of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act—

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: It does mean removing clothing.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: You had your turn.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: Don't mislead the House.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): Order!

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: It does mean that.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: It does not.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: It does.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: It does not.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): Order!

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: I should not react to interjections. Section 33 (1) provides:

- (a) the strip search must be conducted in a private area,
- (b) the strip search must not be conducted in the presence or view of a person who is of the opposite sex to the person being searched,

...

Section 33 (3) provides:

A strip search of a child who is at least 10 years of age but under 18 years of age, or of a person who has impaired intellectual functioning, must be conducted—

- (a) in the presence of a parent or guardian of the person being searched, or
- (b) if that is not acceptable to the person, in the presence of another person who is not a police officer and who is capable of representing the interests of the person being searched and whose presence is acceptable to that person.

If Jeremy Buckingham wants to do something, I suggest he goes—

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham—I apologise. I suggest he goes to the next festival and offers himself up as an independent person. He can go and watch those searches being undertaken.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: I have; I've seen them.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Well, you won't have. Let us go back to the member's motion, paragraph (2) (a) of which states:

- (a) Associate Professor Liz Scott from the Brain and Mind Centre at the University of Sydney said forcing children to take off their clothes in front of officers was "draconian and totally heavy-handed" and "may cause long term harm";

Where is the evidence that that is happening? Where is the evidence that those kids are being stripped naked? There is none. Paragraph (3) (c) of the motion states:

(c) in 58 per cent of strip searches nothing illegal was found.

What about the fact that in 70 per cent of those non-negative searches, the person admitted recently consuming or possessing prohibited drugs? We are on repeat in this Chamber. This was raised back in 2019 when Mr David Shoebridge gave notice that he would introduce a bill on the subject. I quote from my contribution to the adjournment debate in this Chamber on 26 February 2020 as recorded in *Hansard*. I said:

On 22 February—just this weekend gone—the Lost City music festival was held at the Sydney Showgrounds. This was an underage music festival for children aged between 13 and 18, with approximately ...

[Time expired.]

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (14:47): I support the motion of the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham. It is an absolute disgrace that police officers in this State stripsearched 107 children, including three 12-year-old girls and six 13-year-old girls. It is an absolute disgrace that more than 20 per cent of the 107 children searched were First Nations children. It is an absolute disgrace that in just one year the number of strip searches of girls aged 17 and under increased from seven girls in 2021-22 to 25 girls in 2022-23. Something must be done to rein in police powers in this State. If that data alone is not evidence enough that police powers must be reined in, I do not know what is.

Answers to questions on notice from my office in relation to strip searches revealed that since 2013 at least 94,535 searches have been undertaken in this State as a result of a drug dog indication. More than 70,000 of those searched had nothing found on their persons. That is an incredible statistic. When drug detection dogs were first introduced in New South Wales in 1995, the stated aim of the program was "targeting drug supply". No-one can tell me that this Government is targeting drug supply by searching 95,000 people, 70,000 of whom had no drugs on them, including 12- and 13-year-old girls. How has it come to this, where tens of thousands of innocent people are being subjected to humiliating and degrading strip searches in this State?

I note that the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission review into strip searches was mentioned by the Opposition. It is true that the review found that police were undertaking strip searches and did not adhere to safeguard requirements or report the way that they were conducting strip searches to ensure that people's dignity and privacy was maintained as much as possible. Unfortunately, a recent audit of 359 police records from five music festivals found that only 27 per cent of strip search records indicated that police followed the law. Some 25 girls under 17 were stripsearched and fewer than one in three police followed the rules for strip searches. Something must be done when it comes to law reform in this area.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (14:50): After listening to some of the earlier contributions, I contribute to debate. I have spent virtually my whole life arguing against drug-sniffing dogs. Nothing has changed in the way that I feel about that. Unfortunately, I have not been able to convince my party of the same position yet, but I think it will happen eventually. I remember the Redfern Legal Centre report from the 1990s entitled "The Cold Nose of the Law", which identified the fundamental problem that most strip searches arise as a result of the use of a drug-detection dog. In the early 2000s, dogs were deployed by the police, mostly around rail stations and other transport centres. Those dogs sniff everybody who goes through a train station and might then indicate that there is something to look at. The police then line people up against a wall in public and ask them to remove items of clothing. With the greatest of respect to the Hon. Rod Roberts, the rules—the law that he read during the debate—are not being followed.

Reading the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission report, it says that police followed the law in only 27 per cent of strip searches. They did not keep data for most of the others. They did not have information about what they did. In my view, that system is broken. My party does not share that view at the moment. But they are humiliating searches. The fundamental problem is that a dog cannot tell us what it is sniffing. One does not know the basis on which there is reasonable suspicion. The dog might be sniffing sausages or picking up a minor scent from somebody sitting on a park bench. All of those people will be subjected to humiliating and degrading strip searches, and the dog cannot explain why. It is not a proper basis for reasonable suspicion to then go and perform a strip search of somebody in public. I know that is not the prevailing view. My party's decision, which I will follow, is to vote against the motion. But I commend the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham for bringing the motion to the House, because it is an important issue that ought to be highlighted. I welcome the commitment of the police Minister to consult with stakeholders and review this. I look forward to the result of that.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (14:53): The Hon. Cameron Murphy is a man of deep and abiding principle. He showed that at the Labor annual conference where he bucked the system, and that is the reason he is in this place. Today, of course, he will be crossing the floor, following his principles and supporting the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham. He is opposed to strip searches; he does not want them. There is no point in him making a speech

unless he votes according to his word. His reputation was sky high coming out of the annual conference. We were all cheering on the great maverick rebellion that got him here. He has to follow it up. If not, he has to creep back to the caucus and get the numbers to convince his party that he is right. I look forward to him crossing the floor. It is a novelty for the Labor Party in this place. I am sure a man of principle will be doing that.

It must be noted that there has been a fair bit of hyperbole and the regular exaggeration that we get from the green left in this place about a whole range of issues. We also heard it from the Hon. Cameron Murphy. I once lived in Queanbeyan. There are not many cocaine sausages being sold at the butcher's shop in Queanbeyan. The dogs are not out there sniffing sausages; they are finding the drugs that they have been trained to identify. Let us deal with the facts. My colleague the Hon. Rod Roberts gave a practical example of the Lost City Festival during a debate in early February 2020. It was an underage music festival held at the Sydney Showground for children aged between 13 and 18, with approximately 12,000 patrons. There were 40 strip searches, so we are talking about 0.3 per cent. That is all we ever talk about in these cases.

Eleven of the children involved in those strip searches were found in possession of illegal substances. Of those 11 children, two teenagers were charged with drug supply, as they should have been. That included a 14-year-old girl who was allegedly caught with 31 MDMA capsules concealed internally and a 17-year-old boy who was allegedly caught with 75 capsules. Additionally, a knife was found concealed in his shoe. Those are the facts of what goes on. I know the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham is way too aged and ancient these days to be attending underage music festivals. When kids have drugs, strip searches help to identify the drugs and ensure that the law is in force.

Dog sniffing is only an indicator of what is going on; the police need a second reason to undertake a search. That might involve the way the child is acting or some of the aspects of their clothing. The dog-sniffing operation is only an indicator of what has been going on. The bottom line is that strip searches are a necessity in the police arsenal in the fight against illicit drugs in this State. No amount of exaggeration or puffed-up speeches, which are not supported by a member's voting intention, will change the decision of the Government. The Minister is having a look at it. I am glad to hear the Labor Government's policy remains unaltered.

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (14:57): In reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate. However, some of them were clearly misguided. I welcome the news from the Government that it will take a holistic approach, will not turn a blind eye and will meet with key stakeholders. But I am disappointed that the Government is not acting on this issue today. It has been before the House in the past. I am not saying that people should not be searched if there is an urgent and serious need relating to weapons. The police can still pat someone down. The Hon. Mark Latham was saying that he is concerned about children being used as drug mules. That is an outrageous proposition. Overwhelmingly, young people are erroneously stripsearched by the police in public and nothing is found. If something is found, it is a personal quantity of, primarily, cannabis.

It impacts young people, regional people and disadvantaged people the most. Looking at where some of these searches are, Taree was the fifth-most-searched place in New South Wales, with 271 searches. The working class is being targeted by these searches. That is who loses from the draconian drug laws in this State. Some people might think that a progressive social reform is off the agenda, especially after we have been bashed up a bit with the Voice vote, but I put on record that the working class supports progressive, commonsense drug law reform. They are the ones who are being dragged off trains, having their trousers pulled down in public and searched for a dime bag of pot.

That is what we are talking about. Either they have got nothing, or they have got a personal quantity of cannabis or other drugs at a music festival. The LECC report identifies that police—as Ms Cate Faehrmann has said—are not even applying the rules properly in over 70 per cent of cases, and tens of thousands of people are subjected to draconian, outdated and harmful practices. I welcome the contribution of the Hon. Cameron Murphy. I hope he is successful in caucus, and I welcome the review being conducted by the Government. I commend the motion to the House.

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

The House divided.

Ayes7
Noes32
Majority.....25

AYES

Boyd
Buckingham (teller)

Faehrmann
Higginson

Hurst
Ruddick (teller)

AYES

Cohn

NOES

Borsak
Buttigieg
Carter
D'Adam
Donnelly
Fang
Farlow
Farraway
Graham
Houssos
Jackson

Kaine
Latham
Lawrence
MacDonald
Maclaren-Jones
Martin
Merton
Mihailuk
Mitchell
Mookhey
Moriarty

Munro
Murphy
Nanva (teller)
Primrose
Rath (teller)
Roberts
Sharpe
Suvaal
Tudehope
Ward

Motion negatived.

DOWN SYNDROME

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd): I welcome to the gallery representatives from Down Syndrome NSW, who are the guests of the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones. I welcome CEO Emily Caska and Ellen Hester.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (15:08): I seek leave to amend private members' business item No. 533 for today of which I have given notice by omitting paragraph (2) (c) and inserting instead:

- (c) the majority of pregnancies in Australia that are screened as having a high probability of Down syndrome are terminated and that a survey by Down Syndrome Australia found:
 - (i) 69 per cent of families felt that more information is needed to support families to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of people with Down syndrome and their families;
 - (ii) 49 per cent of families felt pressure from their healthcare provider to terminate their pregnancy or received negative information about Down syndrome;

Leave granted.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Accordingly, I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month, which is an opportunity to celebrate people with Down syndrome and make others aware of their abilities and accomplishments; and
 - (b) the message from Down Syndrome NSW for this month is that "People with Down syndrome deserve to be valued and included members of society" and that we all have a role to play in raising awareness about Down syndrome and to promote inclusion and understanding in our society.
- (2) That this House acknowledges:
 - (a) Down syndrome is the most common genetic condition, resulting from the triplication of the twenty-first chromosome;
 - (b) approximately one in every 1,100 babies born in Australia, around 290 each year, is born with Down syndrome, highlighting the need for continued support and education in our community;
 - (c) the majority of pregnancies in Australia that are screened as having a high probability of Down syndrome are terminated and that a survey by Down Syndrome Australia found:
 - (i) 69 per cent of families felt that more information is needed to support families to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of people with Down syndrome and their families;
 - (ii) 49 per cent of families felt pressure from their healthcare provider to terminate their pregnancy or received negative information about Down syndrome;
 - (d) the employment challenges faced by individuals with Down syndrome, with only 34 per cent of individuals employed, of which just 8 per cent have open employment positions; and
 - (e) 45 per cent of people with Down syndrome are in mainstream school settings.
- (3) That this House recognises Emily Caska, Chief Executive Officer of Down Syndrome NSW, for her leadership in launching Australia's first Down Syndrome Institute on 10 October 2023 in the Parliament of New South Wales, which was attended by over 300 people and members from all sides of politics, including:

- (a) the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, MLC, shadow Minister for Families and Communities, Disability Inclusion, Homelessness and Youth;
 - (b) the Hon. Damien Tudehope, MLC, shadow Treasurer and shadow Minister for Industrial Relations;
 - (c) the Hon. Bronnie Taylor, MLC, shadow Minister for Regional Health, Trade and Seniors;
 - (d) the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, MLC, Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council and shadow Minister for Education, Early Learning and Western NSW;
 - (e) the Hon. Bill Shorten, MP, Federal Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Government Services;
 - (f) the Hon. Chris Minns, MP, Premier of New South Wales;
 - (g) the Hon. Ryan Park, MP, Minister for Health, Regional Health, the Illawarra and the South Coast;
 - (h) the Hon. Kate Washington, MP, Minister for Families and Communities and Disability Inclusion;
 - (i) ambassador and former Liberal leader Kerry Chikarovski, AM;
 - (j) ambassador and former Australian cricketer Michael Clarke, AO;
 - (k) ambassador and former Australian rules football player Brett Kirk;
 - (l) ambassador and former *The Block* stars Mitch Edwards and Mark McKie;
 - (m) ambassador and media personality Fuzz Ali;
 - (n) ambassador and celebrity photographer Jez Smith; and
 - (o) ambassador and renowned creative director Lyndal Frollano.
- (4) That this House further notes that:
- (a) the Down Syndrome Institute will partner with key health, research, and innovation entities, universities, corporate leaders, government agencies and experts both in Australia and internationally; and
 - (b) the Down Syndrome Institute is committed to establishing Australia's first annual Down syndrome register, a centralised repository of information promoting the Down Syndrome Medical Interest Group Australia, developing an innovation centre and striving to create Australia's inaugural Down syndrome clinic.

Each year during October, Down Syndrome Awareness Month is held to celebrate and acknowledge the remarkable accomplishments and abilities of individuals with Down syndrome. It is also an opportunity for Parliament and the community to reaffirm our strong commitment to inclusion and breaking down barriers by raising awareness, advocacy and providing support for individuals with Down syndrome, and for the organisations that work tirelessly to support them, their families and carers. I acknowledge Emily Caska, the CEO of Down Syndrome NSW, and Ellen Hester, who are sitting in the President's gallery. I thank them for their work and that of the organisation.

Down Syndrome Awareness Month was proclaimed in the 1980s following advocacy by the National Down Syndrome Society. Over the past 40 years, organisations like the society and Down Syndrome Australia have held multiple events in support of Down syndrome awareness. Down syndrome is the most common genetic condition, resulting from the triplication of the twenty-first chromosome. It is estimated that approximately one in every 1,100 babies born in Australia, or around 290 each year, will have Down syndrome. Unfortunately, there is no national data on the number of people with Down syndrome born in Australia. This reflects a broader issue: the potential under-representation of people with Down syndrome in Australia. Down Syndrome Australia estimates that in 2019 there were between 13,000 and 15,000 individuals with Down syndrome in Australia. What we do know is that people with Down syndrome are living longer and healthier lives than they have in the past.

Much of the statistics and research on Down syndrome has been collated by Down Syndrome Australia. I note their contributions to the recent royal commission and to the National Disability Insurance Scheme Review. Down Syndrome Australia estimates that 90 per cent of prospective parents in Australia choose termination following a high-chance screening result for Down syndrome. To better understand expectant parents' experiences of prenatal screening, Down Syndrome Australia conducted a survey in 2021. The survey revealed that 49 per cent of families felt pressure from their healthcare providers to terminate their pregnancy; 42 per cent of families received negative information about Down syndrome; 42 per cent of families were provided with incorrect information about Down syndrome by health professionals; 45 per cent of families felt unsupported during pregnancy; 47 per cent of families felt they did not receive adequate information to understand Down syndrome during pregnancy; and 69 per cent of families believed the information provided did not offer insight into the experiences of people with Down syndrome and their families.

That is why raising awareness of the work of organisations like Down Syndrome Australia and Down Syndrome NSW is so important. Last week, in Parliament House, Down Syndrome NSW launched Australia's first Down Syndrome Institute and announced the ambassadors for the Down Syndrome Foundation. The Down

Syndrome Institute, which is funded through philanthropic support—and I acknowledge all contributors—will collaborate with key health, research and innovation entities, universities, corporate leaders, government agencies and experts, both in Australia and internationally. The institute will establish Australia's first Down syndrome register to centralise much-needed data, as well as promoting the Down Syndrome Medical Interest Group Australia and the development of an innovation centre, with the aim of creating Australia's first Down syndrome clinic.

I also acknowledge Down Syndrome NSW for their Congratulations Initiative, which began in August last year. This initiative is funded by donations to ensure that a congratulatory message is sent for every diagnosis of Down syndrome, and not an apology. Furthermore, it provides up-to-date, evidence-based information on Down syndrome to expectant parents, offers support to new parents and medical professionals, and is working to reshape the narrative around Down syndrome.

Down Syndrome Awareness Month highlights the need to support individuals, families and carers, as well as organisations like Down Syndrome NSW, the Down Syndrome Institute and its initiatives. We all have a vital role to play in raising awareness about Down syndrome and a responsibility to advocate for an inclusive, compassionate and understanding society. We must challenge stereotypes and provide accurate, balanced and evidence-based information to parents. Our duty is to offer hope and possibilities, not despair and limitations. The message for this year from Down Syndrome NSW is simple: People with Down syndrome deserve to be valued and included members of our society. I am sure this message resonates with all of us, emphasising the principle that every individual should be embraced as an integral part of our diverse society.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (15:13): On behalf of the Government, I thank the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones for bringing this motion to the Parliament so members can spend time talking about the importance of the work of Down Syndrome NSW, its Ambassador Ceremony and, most importantly, to celebrate people with Down syndrome in our community. On Tuesday 10 October Down Syndrome NSW held its inaugural Ambassador Ceremony in the Strangers' Restaurant. The event was an incredible success. There were over 300 people in attendance, including many people with Down syndrome, their families and supporters. Down Syndrome NSW announced its ambassadors, who included in attendance former Australian test cricket captain Michael Clarke, AO, former Sydney Swans captain Brett Kirk, former stars of *The Block* Mitch Edwards and Mark McKie, media personality Fuzz Ali, celebrity photographer Jez Smith, renowned creative director Lyndal Frollano, and former Liberal leader Kerry Chikarovski, AM.

Down Syndrome Awareness Month celebrates the strengths and achievements of people with Down syndrome. The Ambassador Ceremony was an important way to bring those people together, and to highlight the incredible work done by Down syndrome organisations and how lucky we are as a society to have people with Down syndrome in our workplaces and families. I draw attention to some facts about Down syndrome. It is the most common genetic condition in the world, caused by the triplication of the twenty-first chromosome.

Approximately one in every 1,100 babies in Australia is born with Down syndrome, which equates to around 290 born per year. I note the comments of the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones that more data collection work is needed around this. It is important to note that 34 percent of people with Down syndrome are employed, of which only 8 percent are in open employment. We can do far more to reach employment targets in the public service. There are people who work in the public service who are great contributors to their workplaces—in fact, they are some of the best workers that we have. They just need to be given a chance. I call on all employers to think about the opportunities they can offer to people with Down syndrome.

Forty-five per cent of people with Down syndrome are in mainstream school settings. There is a lot of discussion about this. We want to have more children with Down syndrome being educated in our mainstream schools. My children benefited greatly from being able to attend primary school with their mates who have Down syndrome. They are still friends to this day. There is a lot of misinformation about Down syndrome. We need to pause and reflect, and to thank Down Syndrome NSW and other organisations for the work that they do to provide support and advice to not just parents but also the medical community. I give a shout-out to all of those advocates with Down syndrome who are working in health settings, employment settings and generally bringing attention to what they are able to do and how they want to be included.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (15:17): I speak on behalf of The Greens in support of this amended motion and thank the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones for bringing it. I acknowledge the representatives from Down Syndrome NSW who are in the gallery today, and all those who work so incredibly hard every day to raise awareness, increase solidarity and achieve real tangible improvements to people's lives across this State. Down Syndrome Awareness Month celebrates the strengths, achievements and contributions of people with Down syndrome in our community. It also calls on everyone in society to do better, to break down barriers to inclusive education, health services, employment, access to infrastructure like transport and housing, and all other areas of

society. Last month I attended the Disability Pride Festival, held in Ashfield Civic Centre, which had as its theme "Solidarity Not Charity". Members of the disability community spoke about how important this notion is and that what is needed is not virtue signalling or superficial words but real and direct action that is going to make a difference in people's lives.

I also had the pleasure of attending an event held by the Council for Intellectual Disability this morning here at Parliament House. We heard from people with intellectual disability and from advocates about the problems currently facing people with intellectual disability. As we have heard, Down syndrome is the most common genetic cause of intellectual disability. After 12 years of the former Coalition Government, I have been frustrated that we have not seen the attention on people with disability that those people—upwards of 20 per cent in this State—really need. I am looking forward to this Labor Government making inroads in this area. I have to admit, so far, I have been a little disappointed.

For example, we heard this morning about how within Transport for NSW there had been a change of the ferries icon to the letter "F" and trains to the letter "T". There was no consultation with people with intellectual disability when that change occurred. It has been incredibly problematic. I know that happens a lot in the Transport portfolio, but at every briefing we receive from the Government on bills these days I ask, "Have you consulted with representatives of people with disability in this State?" Unfortunately, the answer that keeps coming back is no. I hope that the disability royal commission and calls for inclusive education, inclusive employment, accessible housing et cetera will mark the turning point where we can work in a whole-of-government, cross-party way to finally achieve real change in New South Wales to help people with disability.

The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (15:20): "People weren't sure what to say to us. They mostly said they were sorry, which irritated. But we understood they meant well. Some said 'congratulations' and it was marvellous to hear", said Robin, mother to Sophie. Sophie has Down syndrome, and Robin and her family are members of Down Syndrome NSW. Led by Emily Caska, Down Syndrome NSW is an energetic, member-focused organisation seeking to provide practical support to its member families and lead the public conversation so that our stated goal of inclusion for all has a real and practical expression. A great example of the practical focus of Down Syndrome NSW is its "congratulations, not sorry" initiative, led by Melissa Cotterill. That is a direct response to stories like Robin's. It recognises the number of pregnancies with a diagnosis of Down syndrome that are terminated but also that that decision is often based on outdated information, unrelenting pressure to terminate and discussions about limitations, not possibilities.

The initiative aims to nurture, support, inform and connect families upon diagnosis through to the child being one year old, and to upskill and partner them with medical professionals so that they can provide accurate, timely and current advice. The initiative also aims to gather and share family stories to support other families, to ensure that we have statewide data on annual birth rates of Down syndrome and to ensure the very best start for all people with Down syndrome. Most importantly, when a pregnancy is confirmed and a diagnosis of Down syndrome is made, it aims to deliver a message of "congratulations, not sorry". Sean is the parent of a two-year-old boy with Down syndrome. He said, "It would have been such a great experience if we received a 'congratulations' from the medical professionals instead of an 'I'm sorry'. If I could change one thing in the system that would be a big one."

Through its practical, supportive work, Down Syndrome NSW stands with families and walks with individuals with Down to achieve that change. I commend and congratulate it on the quiet, constant, loving and supportive work it does. Our society is so much richer for its contribution and the way in which it shines a spotlight on the members of our society with Down syndrome—in Down Syndrome Awareness Month and in every month. I celebrate the effectiveness of its work and the tremendous feedback it gets from its initiatives. I congratulate Emily Caska, Melissa Cotterill and Down Syndrome NSW. Yet again, they identified a need and sought to practically meet it. I congratulate them on all the good they do in this and every other month.

The Hon. BOB NANVA (15:23): I begin by thanking the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones for moving the motion. We have come a long way from the time when people with Down syndrome were written off and seen as cases to be managed rather than possibilities to be nurtured. However, there is still a lot of misinformation about Down syndrome in our community. Those misconceptions provide an invisible barrier that can affect the day-to-day lives of people with Down syndrome, not because they cannot strive for greatness but because people's misconceptions get in the way. The network of parents, siblings and supporters of those with Down syndrome know it. If members are fortunate enough to know someone with Down syndrome, they also know it.

Most people with Down syndrome will say that it is not a condition they suffer from, and most people close to them will say that comments conveying sympathy or sorrow for them belie the joy that people with Down syndrome bring into their lives. That is why events like the Ambassador Ceremony are so important. I am so pleased that it was an outstanding success last week. It shone a light on the fact that today there are many people with Down syndrome who, depending on their ability, attend mainstream schools and that many adults with Down

syndrome provide labour with dignity in their communities. They have hobbies, passions and talents and a desire for self-determination that is as strong as anyone else's. In Australia many people with Down syndrome perform in roles as diverse as project managers, authors and artists, and they do an outstanding job. They do not just bring joy to the lives of their friends and family; they make very worthwhile contributions to our communities. We are all the better for the role they play in our lives.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (15:25): In 1958 the late Jérôme Lejeune discovered that Down syndrome was associated with an extra copy of the twenty-first chromosome. That extra chromosome is sometimes called the "happiness chromosome", reflecting the 2011 study that found that 99 per cent of people with Down syndrome indicated that they were happy with their lives. People with Down syndrome now have an average life expectancy of 60 years, a dramatic increase from a life expectancy of 25 years just 40 years ago. Sadly, Down Syndrome Australia reports that following a prenatal diagnosis of suspected Down syndrome 49 per cent of families felt pressure from their healthcare provider to terminate their pregnancy. And 42 per cent of families said they received negative information about Down syndrome from health professionals, including information that they now know to be untrue. What is wrong with those who are conducting a search and destroy screening program for Down syndrome that results in 90 per cent of those suspected as having that extra happiness chromosome being destroyed before birth? Who do they think they are?

Discrimination against those with disabilities takes many forms, but when it involves intentionally ending the lives of human beings because they have, or are suspected to have, a disability, then that discrimination is deadly. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has called for those countries with abortion laws that allow abortions later in pregnancy, specifically on the grounds of disability, to repeal those discriminatory laws. Heidi Crowter, a 27-year-old married woman with Down syndrome, who has led a series of legal challenges to the United Kingdom's discriminatory abortion law, poignantly stated, "The law that allows abortion up to birth makes me feel that I am not wanted and loved. It makes me feel not valued and that people don't want babies like me. I think the law is downright discrimination. People like me should not be discriminated against." I wish success to Heidi and all those from Don't Screen Us Out in their latest challenge in the European Court of Human Rights, and I wish every happiness to all those in New South Wales with Down syndrome, along with their families, friends and colleagues.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (15:27): I congratulate Down Syndrome NSW on its Ambassador Ceremony last week. I thank the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones for moving this important motion. The event last week was an incredible success. Several hundred people were there from all sides of politics. It was a wonderful occasion to highlight the importance of continuing this conversation and emphasising the possibilities. I was heartened to hear stories from former Australian test cricket captain Michael Clarke of his employment, his "boss", his experience and how much he had learned on his journey. He is now an ambassador for Down Syndrome NSW. I make particular mention of the CEO, Emily Caska. I thank and commend her for her incredible work in bringing together this event but also for the energy that she has brought to this organisation. I also acknowledge Ellen, who is in the Chamber today. I thank her for her advocacy and all her important work in helping to educate people like us in this place about all the possibilities that are out there.

Down syndrome is the most common genetic condition in the world, caused by the triplication of the twenty-first chromosome. Approximately one in every 1,100 babies are born with Down syndrome in Australia, which is 290 per year. Thirty per cent of people with Down syndrome are employed, of which only 8 per cent are in open employment. That really highlights the work we have to do to improve that statistic. Forty-five per cent of people with Down syndrome are in mainstream school settings, so we still have work to do there. Pleasingly, the life expectancy of people with Down syndrome is increasing—obviously thanks to advances in medicine. It is now at 60 years. People with Down syndrome have an enormous role to play in our communities, our economy and in all workforces. It is sad that misinformation is still rife, but I commend the work of Emily and Ellen for helping to correct a lot of that misinformation to ensure that the possibilities, and indeed the playing field, are equal for people with Down syndrome now and into the future.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (15:30): I too thank the Hon. Maclaren-Jones for moving the motion relating to Down Syndrome Awareness Month. I also attended Australia's first Down Syndrome Institute event last week in Parliament and was impressed by the work that is being done by Down Syndrome NSW. Its work includes education and training, support and advocacy, community participation programs, prenatal expert advice, new parent resources, and specialist employment preparation and connection. I was made aware of some very positive facts about the progress that has been made, particularly regarding the life expectancy for those with Down syndrome and the quality of life they can expect to have. As has been mentioned already today, the average life expectancy in Australia for a person with Down syndrome is 60 years. Thanks to advances in medical diagnosis and treatment, and changes to societal attitudes, people with Down syndrome are living longer and have more meaningful and fulfilled lives.

Children with Down syndrome are encouraged to attend regular schools rather than institutions. Many now learn to read and write, and enjoy life at school. Some people with Down syndrome have gone on to complete college degrees and hold regular jobs. Each person with Down syndrome, whilst having some level of intellectual disability, has the capacity for a full, joyful and meaningful life. Like all of us, they have different skills and needs for support. They also have the same need for love, connection, community and purpose. I thank the Down Syndrome Institute for the great work that it is doing. By sharing the wonderful stories of those with Down syndrome, parents can be equipped with facts rather than fear when dealing with a Down syndrome diagnosis. The termination rate for Down syndrome babies in utero is currently 90 per cent. It would not be so high if parents were empowered with resources and knowledge that a life with Down syndrome can be a very good life indeed. So this month let us celebrate people with Down syndrome and share the message that they deserve to be valued and included members of our society.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (15:33): In reply: I acknowledge members who have contributed to this debate: the Leader of the Opposition, Ms Abigail Boyd, the Hon. Susan Carter, the Government Whip, the Hon. Emily Suvaal and the Hon. Aileen MacDonald. Down Syndrome Awareness Month is an opportunity for us not only to celebrate people we may know but also to remember others. I remember my great Aunt Joyce and the happy times I had growing up with her when I was child. It also is an opportunity for members of this House to have discussions and debates to raise awareness.

I am proud of the fact that New South Wales led the way in rolling out the NDIS and also for implementing the disability inclusion plan. As the Leader of the Opposition said, there is always more that can be done irrespective of who is in government. That is important. This month is a chance to raise awareness and identify issues as well as highlight the work of organisations like Down Syndrome NSW. I thank it for its work and for establishing the Down Syndrome Institute. As has been highlighted, the more information we can gather from research, the more it will allow governments to make informed decisions about the services and funding that are needed. I again thank Down Syndrome NSW for all its work and I thank members for supporting the motion.

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

Motion agreed to.

Committees

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON PROTECTING LOCAL WATER UTILITIES FROM PRIVATISATION

Membership

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): I report receipt of the following message from the Legislative Assembly:

MR PRESIDENT

The Legislative Assembly informs the Legislative Council that it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

- (1) (a) Michael Joseph Holland be appointed to serve on the Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation in place of Steven James Robert Whan, discharged.
- (b) A message be sent informing the Legislative Council.

Legislative Assembly
18 October 2023

GREG PIPER
Speaker

Motions

ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPIONSHIP

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (15:35): I move:

That this House welcomes:

- (a) the success of the Ultimate Fighting Championship [UFC] event at Qudos Bank Arena on 10 September 2023 which drew 18,000 fans, a record Australian indoor gate-taking of \$10.8 million and an estimated 10,000 people from outside of Sydney to see the event, which boosted the New South Wales economy;
- (b) the way in which the Government has attracted three UFC events to New South Wales over four years, allowing New South Wales residents, especially young people, to watch and enjoy this internationally popular sport firsthand, with an estimated boost to the New South Wales economy of \$30 million for a public outlay of \$16 million; and
- (c) the way in which UFC provides lucrative career and income opportunities, particularly for young women such as Ronda Rousey, Amanda Nunes, Holly Holm, Miesha Tate and Cris Cyborg, who are competing in their chosen sport of competitive success.

It did not receive a lot of publicity at the time, but the Ultimate Fighting Championship [UFC] event at Qudos Bank Arena on 10 September was a raging success. It drew 18,000 fans—an Australian record indoor gate taking of nearly \$11 million—and an estimated 10,000 came from outside of Sydney to see the event, obviously boosting the New South Wales economy. I congratulate the Government for bringing this important event to our city for mainly the advantage and enjoyment of young people. UFC is a brutal sport.

I suppose for today's generation it is the equivalent of what I enjoyed with Ali versus Frazier and the Rumble in the Jungle—that sort of combat—but we should not be making a moral judgement on what sports people enjoy. There are many kinds of sport. Some people say that Rugby League is a contact sport. Ballroom dancing is contact sport. Rugby League is a collision sport where they knock each other over and out. We cannot make a moral judgement about the nature of the sport. In particular, young people love UFC. We have it in Sydney and more events are coming. I believe that the New South Wales Government outlay of \$16 million, which reaped an economy reward and boost of \$30 million, is a very wise public investment.

It is unusual for the Liberal Party to be wandering around with its Nick Greiner election loss review and the Hon. Chris Rath making comments that they are looking for the youth vote. Indeed, Mark Speakman has said he is after all those young'uns out there. He wants them to vote Liberal. What a strange way to attract the youth vote—to try to ban the number one event in Sydney that young men, in particular, want to see. They do not want to be crowded in a corner of their local pub watching it on pay TV. They want to be at the event and enjoying the spectacle of UFC in person.

The Liberal Party is throwing away the youth vote by throwing away the UFC. We have to wonder, "Why pick on the UFC? Why is there this unusual Liberal Party obsession that is always bagging the UFC?" Every second motion they move has something to do with the UFC, and we have been left wondering why. I can only assume it is because the new Government brought UFC to New South Wales and it is the big whale in sporting events and entertainment in Sydney that the Liberals missed. They are envious that the new Government has brought UFC to Sydney and that they missed out altogether.

The basic reality is that if a political and moral judgement is applied to every single sport that is conducted with elements of government subsidy, there would be nothing left in New South Wales. Today we have the news that a junior National Rugby League player has been convicted of murder, which was an underworld hit on a bloke called "Danny the Serb". Unfortunately, in the Illawarra a St George player has been convicted of a hammer attack on behalf of his dad to do with drugs. We have Josh Addo-Carr, who put a post out effectively in support of Hamas and who literally took the Koori Knockout by getting knocked out himself, and then deciding to take revenge by knocking out someone else and getting banned, so he will not be able to play for the Kangaroos.

What does that mean? It means that we would not have rugby league football in the State of New South Wales, that all the support the former Government gave to the building of Allianz Stadium and the Parramatta stadium was a waste and that all the money the Government is spending at Penrith in support of the National Rugby League [NRL] will be a waste. If you apply the same moral judgement to some of the players, the Government would be grossly embarrassed to have spent billions of dollars in supporting the NRL. I can list a whole range of players who have done things worse than anything to do with the UFC.

Then there is the big kahuna in this. Some MPs were at the Everest at Royal Randwick on the weekend, sipping their champagne and chomping their canapés. Even the Leader of the Opposition may have been part of that. I was there. I love the track. Liberal Party members were there. Of course, there are a lot of government subsidies for horseracing. Who owns the most racehorses in New South Wales and has a massive breeding establishment, Godolphin, in the Hunter Valley? It is Sheikh Mohammed of the United Arab Emirates. Two years ago in the High Court in London, Sheikh Mohammed was found guilty of kidnapping, female abuse and coercive control of his own female family members, particularly Princess Latifa. I brought this to the attention of the former Government, but it did not want to know about it. The members were too busy with the champagne and the canapés to take seriously the problem with Sheikh Mohammed.

If you apply moral standards, you must say that Sheikh Mohammed did something much, much worse than anything anyone in the UFC has done. The former Government did not want to know about it. The Liberal Party did not want to know about a person convicted in the High Court of coercive control, kidnapping and abuse of female family members. It is a massive act of hypocrisy to always be attacking the UFC and be like a Trappist monk about everything else. If you applied these moral and political standards to every sport in New South Wales, there would be nothing left. We would be twiddling our thumbs on the weekend or, even worse, trapped in this place, debating each other. If you are looking for entertainment, get out to the UFC and enjoy it. The young people do. The Liberal Party should pull its head in.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (15:41): I am not often referred to as a monk, but I will take it for now. The Opposition opposes the motion, but not at all because of a moral judgement on this sport. It is completely

misleading to say that we want to ban the Ultimate Fighting Championship [UFC]. In fact, it is quite the opposite: We would like to see the standard of behaviour improved. We would like to see more people able to enjoy the fruits and the spectacle of UFC. The Hon. Mark Latham spoke about some terrible behaviour participated in by sportspeople. I am pleased to say that that bad behaviour has led their being convicted of crimes and banned from sports. That is the appropriate response to bad behaviour in sport.

Of course, the Opposition welcomes economic growth in New South Wales and the job creation for women, which this motion refers to. What it does not welcome is the outlay of public money on an evidently lucrative activity with leaders who fail to uphold for their sportspeople a standard of behaviour that adheres to Australian values and laws. These values and laws include respecting women and respecting a person's right to walk down the street without being randomly punched by a passer-by. Economic value and economic impact cannot be the sole judgement of the value of sporting events. I will move an amendment to the motion. I move:

That the question be amended as follows:

- (1) Omit paragraph (b).
- (2) Insert at the end:
 - (2) That this House:
 - (a) condemns the racist, homophobic and misogynistic comments made by UFC competitors at the official media conference held in front of a screen covered with New South Wales Government and Destination NSW logos;
 - (b) notes the inadequate responses by UFC President Dana White to:
 - (i) homophobic comments made at Qudos Arena by Charles Radtke and Manel Kape, when he said "I think these guys get a little excited"; and
 - (ii) Sean Strickland boasting of assaulting a member of the public, in which he described Strickland as "a beauty" and stated that "we have people around him now, so he won't be punching people in the stomach anymore for fun or not for fun".
 - (c) calls on the New South Wales Government to ensure that before any further funds are handed over to the UFC, all necessary steps are taken to prevent any repeat of this unacceptable approach.

The Government's position of two more UFC events under the agreement should be called into question. I implore the Government and the female Ministers of this House to support the amendment and say to the people of New South Wales that they are committed to spending their money in a way that respects women. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (15:44): As a fan and a proponent of mixed martial arts [MMA], I support the Hon. Mark Latham's motion. I am not bad at the old triangle chokehold. I may be using it on the Hon. Mark Latham a little bit later. I commend the member for such a courageous motion in supporting what has been described as the most homoerotic of all sports. I bring to the honourable member's attention a *Daily Beast* article that reports that boxing promoters have decried the rise of MMA because it is for homosexuals and that, in boxing circles, they are talking about the rise of MMA being because of its gay fan base. Many people, especially gay men, are attracted to the physicality of two sexy men rolling around on the floor together, with pelvic thrusts, Brazilian jujitsu, chokeholds, submission and all of those things that I know the Hon. Mark Latham loves so much. I can just imagine him in a full lather, watching the Ultimate Fighting Championship [UFC], enjoying two men in a chokehold from behind, really enjoying the UFC.

It has always been that way. Wrestling has often been the domain of gay men. In ancient times, only gay men could participate. So the UFC has a huge support base with gay men. I welcome the member's conversion to supporting the gayest of sports, as described by actual proponents. In fact, the head of the MMA is the first head of a combat sport to come out and be openly gay. It is a blossoming there by the MMA. I welcome the Hon. Mark Latham getting behind the most homoerotic of all sports.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (15:47): Dare I say that Latham just got Latham-ed. I cannot but help observe that. The Government supports the motion. Bringing the Ultimate Fighting Championship [UFC] to Sydney is another example of how the Minns Labor Government has brought entertainment back to Sydney and how we are indeed putting entertainment back into the entertainment precinct. We took to the election a policy of bringing three UFC events to Sydney. Over the next four years, Sydney will play host to three UFC events. The first UFC event was held earlier this year and delivered a sellout crowd. I am anecdotally advised that it was the event that sold out the fastest at the Qudos arena.

Of course, we accept that UFC is not everyone's cup of tea. Like every sport, lots of people like it and lots of people do not like it. But the Australian events will showcase our amazing city to more than 100 million international viewers as this year's events are broadcast around the world. Dare I say that it is a cost-effective way

to reach that particular audience. Equally, I heard from quite a few hoteliers that the UFC matches usually pack out the pubs. In my own neighbourhood, all of the pubs were quite packed when the event took place.

The Hon. Jeremy Buckingham: The Colombian was roaring.

The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY: It was. The Warren View was going off. That is true. It is close to the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham's heart. The three UFC events are expected to inject more than \$30 million into the State's visitor economy over the four-year period. Of course, they give us access to a huge pay-per-view audience around the world. The Government does not support the amendment moved by the Hon. Jacqui Munro. Obviously, we are against any form of homophobia and misogyny in any forum anywhere, sport or otherwise. We expect sport organisers inside all codes to crack down on such behaviour if it emerges within any sport. It is generally not the habit of this body to police that, and we generally leave it to them unless there is evidence to the contrary that has been brought forward that requires more of a response.

Other members have been campaigning for the Government to apply its power to promote pay equity for female sportspeople relative to male sportspeople. That is something that this Government is taking seriously when it comes to how we invest public dollars. I also point out that the amendment to the motion makes reference to statements that apparently are homophobic and misogynistic. I would not mind if the Hon. Jacqui Munro, who moved the amendment, or another member could elucidate more about the context in which those comments were made because it is not apparent to us. I am sure there are other details which we will be informed of.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (15:50): I support the amendment moved by the Hon. Jacqui Munro. As a former sports Minister I have no issue with sport. I love sport. All sport is good and I love investment in New South Wales. I am on the record about that. I am also a former Minister for domestic violence and the prevention of domestic violence and I think it is key that we recognise that there has been a not insignificant investment by this Government into UFC. It was initially an election promise of \$8 million, which became \$16 million overnight—suddenly money was found. The Government has only offered a miserly \$39 million to domestic violence in New South Wales in its first budget, but it is happy to throw \$16 million at UFC.

The chief executive of Domestic Violence NSW, Delia Donovan, said, "\$16 million would have been better spent on frontline services to protect women." We are talking about investment and return on investment and there are other priorities that we would like placed on the record. That is not disparaging of sport and it is not disparaging of UFC or anyone's choice of the sport that they like to watch. Delia Donovan, who is well known to many in this place as an advocate for domestic violence in New South Wales, also said, "It could have funded the \$6 million we needed for the 27 women's domestic violence court advocacy services." Domestic violence court advocacy services have been the subject of significant discussion at estimates by the Leader of the Government and others in this place. She said, "It could have funded the \$12 million we needed for specialist legal services. We really need to be looking at our priorities. We have lost 35 women this year alone from domestic and family violence."

We cannot ignore the link between the UFC's fighters and its president and their involvement in domestic violence. It is on the record and it is clear. There are convictions. We need to recognise that the investment by this Government is to perpetrators of domestic violence. It is a serious matter that we should be aware of. The return on investment for those women's enfranchisement would certainly be greater than \$30 million, if we had put the money into domestic violence. If that is the Government's priority to have that return, then it is important that we have those priorities. If the Government instead thinks, "No, let's give money to a bloke who wants women back in the kitchen and thinks that they should not be allowed to vote", then that is demonstrating the wrong priority.

Was the Minister for Women consulted about this budget item? What would she have preferred to spend \$16 million on? The reality is that the Minister for Women has said, "It is imperative that sporting leaders and public figures model attitudes and behaviours that are respectful of women." We have fighters here who are not and I think we can do better. That is the purpose of our amendment. That is the reason that we moved the amendment to the motion. We have nothing against UFC and we have nothing against investment in sport, but let's be clear about we are investing in and what the return is.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (15:53): I want to respond to some of the issues that have been raised in the debate so far. Firstly, no-one is suggesting that homophobic behaviour and language is okay. We have talked a lot about hate speech today and we, on this side of the House, place on the record our condemnation of it. Secondly, no-one thinks that perpetrators of domestic violence deserve one second of time, but the Government's position on the amendment is that there are problems across all sports. There are problems with domestic violence, homophobia and homophobic language in a whole range of different places. That is not what the motion is about. The motion recognises that UFC has come to Sydney and that the New South Wales Government has made an important investment in its success. It has been, by any means, successful.

Thirdly, I want to comment on the contribution made by the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham, which I enjoyed a great deal. UFC is not the most homoerotic sport; it is roller derby, all the way. Roller derby has all genders, all players and all comers. It is awesome. It has very scary women with tattoos. It is very good. I want to draw the attention of the House to the women who are participating in UFC, many of whom are named in the motion and note how important that is. Finally, my 19-year-old son, who grew up in a household where there was not a lot of sport except for a little bit of roller derby, is involved with UFC and works as a security guard at a number of pubs around town. He said to me one evening, "Mum, you tell Chris Minns that it is the best thing that he has done to bring UFC to Sydney. It is the only thing that the guys I want to work with want to talk about."

The Hon. WES FANG (15:55): I want to briefly give—

The Hon. Greg Donnelly: A Nat perspective.

The Hon. WES FANG: No, it is not a Nat perspective. I want to provide clarification to the Treasurer. I have a piece of paper with some statements on it, but I am not going to read them in the House because I am not prepared to put them on the record. I will pass the paper to the Treasurer and ask him to look at the first one. That is exactly what was said by the UFC fighter. The Treasurer can understand now why I am not going to read that in the Chamber. I seek leave to table the document.

Leave not granted.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (15:56): I associate myself with the debate. I do not stand by misogyny in any way, shape or form. I do not stand by any of the comments or remarks and I do not support or protect the people that made them. That being said, it is pleasing to see events like the UFC supported by our Government. As members have articulated, it not only brings money into our State and creates jobs but also brings people together in a time like this. I confess that I do not watch UFC, but I have a family member—my younger brother—who quite enjoys it. It is putting entertainment back into our State. It is putting money, jobs and opportunities back into our State.

The first UFC event was held earlier this year and it was a sell-out crowd. It is important for our city, as it recovers from the COVID lockdowns, that money, business opportunities and attractions are brought back to town. I do not support, stand by or condone misogynistic comments of any kind but it is pleasing that our Minns Labor Government has brought the UFC to Sydney. It is another example of how the Minns Labor Government has brought entertainment back into our wonderful city.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (15:58): In reply: I have thoroughly enjoyed the debate but, in moving the motion, I never expected that it would come down to definitions of erotica. As a humble lad from Western Sydney, clearly I have been getting my kicks in the wrong places. The one thing I probably can relate to is the roller derby. The Leader of the Government has given us a few hints that have some validity. As for the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham, I suppose it is always the case with the Legalise Cannabis Party that if you look through a certain lens you will see anything. I have watched the UFC down at the Narellan Hotel. It did not seem overly homoerotic as we sat there cheering on the activity, but maybe I was missing something. I have to confess my only association with the homoerotic was once having a friendship with the great John Marsden, who used to explain the virtues of rough trade. Maybe that is what the honourable member sees in the UFC that the rest of us have missed. Maybe the whole debate should be referred to the Broderick review, because it has certainly outstripped the lumberjack fetish that got us in trouble the other day.

All those things aside, we still come back to the essential point that the UFC has been a great success. It is economically productive for New South Wales. As politicians, even if we were to make a moral and political judgement about the participants, what could we do about it other than banning the lot? We heard the Hon. Jacqui Munro's concern about certain statements and things that have gone wrong in the system, but the truth remains that the biggest, wealthiest and most prominent sports owner and entrepreneur in New South Wales—supported by lavish amounts of government funding—is Sheikh Mohammed, the head of the Godolphin horseracing operation and the stud in the Hunter Valley. I raised that in the last Parliament on several occasions, when the honourable member was not here. He was found guilty in the London High Court of coercive control, kidnapping and the abuse of female family members, but the former Government did nothing about it. It did not care two hoots about doing something about Sheikh Mohammed. He still stands today as a fit and proper person to be the leading participant in the New South Wales racing industry.

If members want to pick on the UFC, they have to wipe out some others. Maybe Sheikh Mohammed is just too powerful, rich and strong for the Liberal Party to take on. Maybe the smell of the canapés and champagne is too overwhelming at Royal Randwick to do anything about Godolphin. But the hypocrisy and the double standard is manifest, and it is not the role of politicians to make those judgements. We cannot do anything about them unless we want to ban the whole lot, which would be an economic and social disaster. Support the UFC for what

it is. We do not condone the comments that have been mentioned, but they occur right across the sporting—and indeed social—fraternity. Women should not try to rub out the opportunities of a Ronda Rousey, an Amanda Nunes, a Holly Holm, a Miesha Tate or a Cris Cyborg. Who wants to fight Cris Cyborg? Those women have chosen UFC as their sport and their income earner, and they have a right to go about their career just like anyone else.

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

The House divided.

Ayes17
Noes20
Majority.....3

AYES

Boyd	Farraway	Mitchell
Carter	Higginson	Munro
Cohn	MacDonald	Rath (teller)
Faehrmann	Maclaren-Jones	Tudehope
Fang (teller)	Martin	Ward
Farlow	Merton	

NOES

Borsak	Jackson	Nanva (teller)
Buckingham	Kaine	Primrose
Buttigieg	Latham	Roberts
D'Adam	Lawrence	Ruddick
Donnelly	Mookhey	Sharpe
Graham	Moriarty	Suvaal
Hurst	Murphy (teller)	

PAIRS

Taylor

Houssos

Amendment negatived.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bills

REVENUE, MINING AND ENERGY LEGISLATION 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.

*Documents***MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT OFFICE STAFFING****Production of Documents: Further Order**

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (16:11): I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 14 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents, excluding any documents previously returned under an order of the House, created since 28 March 2023, in electronic format if possible, in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Transport, the Treasurer, Transport for NSW, Sydney Metro, Treasury, the Cabinet Office, or the Premier's Department relating to department liaison officers in the office of the Minister for Transport:

- (a) all documents relating to the appointment, secondment or duties of department liaison officers to the office of the Minister for Transport;
- (b) 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 Treasurer;
 - (ii) the office of the Treasurer;
 - (iii) Sydney Metro Chief Executive Peter Regan;
 - (iv) any person employed by NSW Treasury; and
 - (vi) any person employed by Sydney Metro.
- (c) all communication created or sent by Kieran Ash, Camden Gilchrist or Anne Purcell when seconded as department liaison officers in the office of the Minister for Transport, not including ministerial correspondence concerning private individual constituents or representations on behalf of individual constituents by members of Parliament;
- (d) all documents received by a Transport for NSW or Sydney Metro employee from Kieran Ash, Camden Gilchrist or Anne Purcell when seconded as department liaison officers in the office of the Minister for Transport, not including ministerial correspondence concerning private individual constituents or representations on behalf of individual constituents by members of Parliament;
- (e) all documents created by a Transport for NSW or Sydney Metro employee which relate to documents received from Kieran Ash, Camden Gilchrist or Anne Purcell when seconded as department liaison officers in the office of the Minister for Transport, not including ministerial correspondence concerning private individual constituents or representations on behalf of individual constituents by members of Parliament; and
- (f) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

This motion is a simple further order for papers, following a previous order by this House that was agreed to by the Government and supported by the crossbench, and which pleasingly produced documents. The first order for papers was of significant concern to the Government, which engaged in a lot of lobbying. After that significant lobbying—the going back and forth—and the motion being moved in the House, there were additional amendments to that order for papers from this Government, which said it was going to be transparent and accountable, and which was the master of the Standing Order 52 motion when in opposition. We compromised. After that lobbying, the Opposition agreed to receive only a two-month sample.

We agreed to whittle the order for papers down and to look at the sample on the basis, as the Government suggested, that if there was more to see it would be open to supporting another order for papers. That is where we are today. Documents have been produced, and the Opposition seeks further documents. I put on record that the Government claimed there would be 10,000 documents provided under the first order for papers. That proved not to be the case. It turns out that only 1,000 documents were provided and we could get through those fairly quickly and simply.

The Hon. John Graham: Because it was a sample, wasn't it?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Yes, indeed. But it turned out to be surprising how few documents were provided by one of the departmental liaison officers [DLOs], and we have further questions to ask about that. It seems incongruous that so little was produced. I have reflected on the previous order. The Deputy Leader of the Government stated:

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.

For the sake of clarity, I put on record that this order for papers goes straight to senior staff and Ministers. After all, they are the ones who requested staff and pressured the department for extensions of those contracts, ignored concerns and then tried to make it appear as though there was nothing to see and swept this under the rug. The

Opposition has sought to confine the order to specific individuals, following the precedent set in the motion last week on Sydney Metro, in which individuals were named. As members of this House will recall, I deliberately did not name those individuals, and went to great lengths not to do so. I also worked closely with the Government to confine the documents by taking out briefs and correspondence. Here we are, yet again. There is something to see here. There are documents to be produced and the Opposition will continue to pursue those, as is its right and according to the great precedent set by those opposite when they were in opposition.

I also highlight the surprising picture that ran in the media last week concerning one particular DLO having a coffee with the Minister and then the Prime Minister-elect on the morning after the 2022 election. That information is in the media. It is out there. That person was quite happy to pose for photos with the Minister and the Prime Minister, and very happy to be in the media. They have already put themselves out there. Clearly they are in the inner sanctum of the inner west Labor Party. Again, that is not a crime. I do not begrudge anyone being a member of political party; in fact, I encourage it. But it certainly speaks to the relationship and therefore the Minister's role in getting this staff member into her office. If there is nothing to see, then the documents should be produced and we will move on. But due to the extent and energy with which this request has been obfuscated and delayed—tranches proposed and other items—I really must question it.

I hope that this order for papers will get to the bottom of things. I also highlight the 14-day period proposed in this order for papers, and there has been some discussion back and forth and amendments proposed. I, and I think other Opposition members, have worked diligently with members in this place to try to get to sensible amendments. We will work through those. The 14-day period is to ensure that the documents are available to all members of the House prior to the budget estimates hearing for the Transport portfolio, should the Minister for Transport choose to attend that session.

In response to the Government's concerns, we will deal with the amendments, but I have tried to work closely with the Government. It seems that there is a concerted effort to not name those individuals—to confine the documents and the period in which the documents apply. We have gone through this process already. We agreed to a sample. We have done all of that. We are now months down the track. It is time to come clean and produce the documents. It is only six months' worth. If the Government has no issue with those appointments, then it should stand by them. Last week the Government happily complied with the order for papers. Government members were happy to vote for the motion when Sydney Metro staff were named, and they should be happy to do so again. I will have more to say on the foreshadowed amendments. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (16:16): The Government opposes the order for papers, and I will indicate why. I reiterate the concerns I had with the first order for papers. In particular, the House must reflect on the fact that naming and homing in on individual public servants like this has a big impact on people's ability and willingness to serve. I acknowledge that members of the House and the shadow Minister have worked through the sample process. That was very helpful and appropriate. I respect the fact that the member has come back with another motion.

I foreshadow that the Government will move an amendment. I will then put some views on record as to why the Government is opposing the motion. Given the time and the significant objections, I may be assisted by my colleague the Leader of the Government in putting those issues on record. I move:

That the question be amended as follows:

- (1) Omit "within 14 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents, excluding any documents previously returned under an order of the House, created since 28 March 2023", and insert instead "within 14 days of the passing of this resolution the following documents created between 28 March 2023 and 31 August 2023, and within 28 days of the passing of this resolution the following documents created since 30 August 2023, excluding any documents previously returned under an order of the House;"
- (2) Omit "Kieran Ash, Camden Gilchrist or Anne Purcell when seconded as department liaison officers" wherever occurring and insert instead "department liaison officers named in Document ID Nos SO52001:00000295, SO52001:00000363 and SO52001:00000454, returned on 4 October 2023, when seconded at any time as department liaison officers".
- (3) In paragraph (e) omit "relate to" and insert instead "respond to".

I will explain the effect of the amendment. Firstly, it will move—sensibly, I think—to take out the names of the individuals. It will refer to the documents but keep the effect of the resolution. I hope that is agreeable to all members of the House, including Opposition members. Secondly, it will move to deal with this in two tranches on just slightly slower time lines than first proposed so that it can be responded to. We will limit paragraph (e), which is incredibly widespread and needs to be limited slightly.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): I ask the Minister to clarify the amendment with the Clerks, because it does not correlate with the amendment that they have.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (16:20): I speak on behalf of The Greens in support of the motion with amendment. There has again been a last-minute scramble to find an acceptable compromise on this order for papers, similar to the order for papers that was previously passed relating to this matter. I thank members for their attempts to again come together to find something that all members can agree on. There is a very real need to hold Ministers to account for the decisions they make about who they appoint within their offices. I acknowledge the importance of the work that the Public Accountability and Works Committee has been doing and plans to continue to do around ensuring that our public sector is robust, is independent and can be all of the things that we want and need it to be.

We are balancing the important role of holding the Executive to account with the need to ensure that we are not just going on a fishing expedition, particularly when it involves members of staff who are not senior members of staff. However, we went through a lot of this when we sought the sample for the last order for papers. In that context, we had documents returned to us that were sufficiently concerning. The Greens would like to progress that issue and continue to investigate the matter. On that basis, The Greens support the motion. To be honest, in relation to the two-tranche approach that has been proposed in the amendment, we could have gone either way on the date. Extending it to 31 August and capturing that significant number of documents prior to the budget estimates hearings is important. It might not be ideal from the Opposition's perspective, but I think it is a good compromise. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (16:23): I place on record the concerns that my colleague the Hon. John Graham did not get to when he moved the amendment to the motion. The Government opposes the motion for the following reasons: Firstly, paragraphs (c), (d) and (e) are unreasonably broad, contain no specific subject matter and constitute a fishing expedition; and, secondly, paragraph (e) is also unclear, unwieldy and too remote. Paragraphs (c) and (d) call for, in summary, all communications created or sent by three departmental liaison officers in the office of the Minister for Transport and all documents received by a Transport for NSW or Sydney Metro employee from those three DLOs since 28 March 2023, excluding constituent correspondence.

Paragraph (c) covers every communication, including every email, sent by the three DLOs in a period of more than six months, without reference to any subject matter. Paragraph (d) captures every communication received by a Transport for NSW or Sydney Metro employee from those DLOs over the same period, also without reference to any subject matter. The volume is likely to be significant, given the role of DLOs to support communications between agencies and the Minister's office, as set out in the Premier's Department circular C2021-07. Also, the scope of paragraph (d) overlaps with paragraph (c), duplicating effort and wasting public resources. I acknowledge that the scope of those paragraphs excludes constituent correspondence. The Government welcomes that. It is appropriate and consistent with the previous order. However, it does not change the fact that public officials will need to review all of this communication to determine whether the communication is in scope.

Paragraph (e) of the motion calls for, in summary, all documents created by a Transport for NSW or Sydney Metro employee that relate to documents received by the DLOs since 28 March 2023. Firstly, it is not clear what would make a document relate to another document. That highlights the problem with orders for papers that contain no subject matter. As these are legal orders reflecting the House's extraordinary powers to oversight the Executive—which members on this side of the House support—they must be clear and precise in their scope. The Government has serious concerns that those paragraphs are beyond the scope of the powers of this House.

The Government cannot see how an order for every email sent by certain public servants over a period of more than six months, without limitation to a specific subject matter, is reasonably necessary for the exercise of the House's functions, nor how documents that relate to documents received by a DLO could have any relevance to the House's inquiries and functions. The House should therefore consider whether production of this material is reasonably necessary for the House to fulfil its scrutiny function. If it is not, those paragraphs may be invalid and beyond the power of the House. Were the motion to be passed in these circumstances, it could undermine public confidence in the integrity of this House.

As I have said, it is important that orders for papers are clear, relate to a specific subject matter and are specific enough so that the House is able to properly consider whether they are reasonably necessary for the exercise of the House's functions. Otherwise, there is a risk that such orders are an invalid exercise of the House's extraordinary powers. The Government supports this power. It is an important oversight measure. But the motion goes too far.

The Hon. WES FANG (16:26): I make a contribution to debate on the motion of my good friend and colleague the Hon. Natalie Ward. I also address the amendment that was proposed by the Special Minister of State. The Opposition is seeking these papers because it has seen something in the first tranche of returns, as Ms Abigail Boyd indicated. In relation to the amendment moved by the Hon. John Graham, those opposite are

scrambling to try to narrow the information because they know there is likely something in these papers. The Opposition is moving the motion and seeking these papers because there is great concern about the three members listed in the motion and their function as it relates to the Minister's office. Departmental liaison officers [DLOs] are exactly that: departmental liaison officers. The question is whether those people were actually employed as DLOs. The Opposition is seeking these papers to be able to determine if their function was as DLOs or as something else. Labor has got form on this.

The Hon. John Graham: Hear, hear!

The Hon. WES FANG: In Victoria we saw the way that Labor used its staff in ways that it perhaps should not have. I acknowledge the interjection from the Special Minister of State. It was effectively an acknowledgement that he accepted that was an appropriate thing to do. Perhaps we are now seeing the same thing being rolled out in New South Wales. An amendment to narrow the scope of the motion is perhaps best rejected because if it is narrowed too far and we do not get the information then we will have to come back and do this all over again. We are doing it for the second time now. Members opposite should not make us come back for a third time. No doubt, even if the scope of the motion is narrowed, there will be more in the papers. Let us get it done now, on the motion as moved by my colleague the shadow Minister, get the information and let some sunshine in. Labor was elected on its promise of transparency. If Labor is so transparent, it has nothing to hide. Why is the Government seeking to narrow the scope of the motion now?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): For the benefit of all members in the Chamber, I note there was conjecture about the dates in the original amendment. If any member would like to check that detail, the Clerks are now in possession of copies with the concise dates.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (16:30): Here we are again. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has moved yet another motion calling for papers, which is nothing more than what Ms Abigail Boyd described as a fishing expedition that would use this House to harass individual public servants. As a former public servant, I find that inappropriate and despicable. This motion is the second such fishing expedition. Interestingly, the Hon. Natalie Ward admitted that in the debate on the first call for papers under Standing Order 52 she was very keen to suggest that she was not, in fact, seeking to name individual public servants. She said:

We have deliberately tried not to name staff. We have been clear about that, because it is important to us to be respectful of staff. They do a magnificent job. In my experience, they did so when we were in government and continue to do.

It took her less than a month to drop that argument. Three staff members are named in this motion. One might well ask why we are even talking about this. Members might be surprised to know that, in addition to being the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Natalie Ward is also the shadow Minister for Transport and Roads. I am still quite new to this Chamber, so perhaps I should be forgiven for not realising that that is her substantive role given that, apparently, there is nothing else to talk about in one of the largest portfolios of government. In the six months since the election, all we have seen from the shadow Minister is attempt after attempt to smear the names and reputations of public servants, rather than substantive contributions.

I have not been in opposition, but I am sure it is hard, and I know Transport is a large and complex portfolio. But, at some point, members opposite might wonder whether the mudslinging from the shadow Minister is covering up for a lack of policy substance and a desire not to contribute on policy matters. Perhaps the shadow Minister cannot contest the policy debate, given the substantial amount of work done by the transport Minister and the regional transport and roads Minister, both in pursuing a proactive agenda and in uncovering mismanagement by the previous Government.

So it seems the shadow Minister has been reduced to producing nothing more than political mudslinging. Members opposite would rightly be outraged if this House passed a motion demanding to see every email written by the many public servants who served as political advisors to previous governments for no other reason than their political affiliation. They would rightly call it out for what it is—an abuse. The motion as moved is an abuse of the public service and a waste of public money, so I support the amendment that removes the names of the public servants from the motion.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (16:33): People playing along at home will have seen a pattern emerging from members opposite. Rather than engage on transport policy or the issues that matter to the passengers who rely on our public transport network in New South Wales, Liberal-Nationals Coalition members are focused on political games. After 12 long years in power, they know they cannot talk about the mess they left in public transport, so they have flicked the switch to vaudeville in the hunt for the quick jolt of a news story. As members know, an order made under Standing Order 52 is about enabling appropriate scrutiny of a matter deemed to be of public importance. Mere weeks ago the Legislative Council received thousands and thousands of documents on questions raised by the shadow Minister. Public servants spent countless hours satisfying the requests from members opposite. It appears Opposition members have found nothing in those documents to cause concern, so

they come to this place calling for more papers and seeking to waste the valuable time of the public servants we entrust to keep our State moving.

This motion shows that no-one is off limits for Opposition members. Despite what the shadow transport Minister says, the motion does not seek scrutiny of Ministers, senior staff or other senior figures. Shamefully, the motion stoops to name individual departmental liaison officers, public servants seconded into the offices of Ministers. It should be dismissed on that basis alone. Shamefully, the motion has no regard for the time and expertise of public servants across the Government but seeks to tie them up for countless more hours in trawling through, producing and indexing what will likely be tens of thousands of emails. More shamefully still, it seeks to make a mockery of the process and purpose of an order for production of documents under Standing Order 52. It does not seek scrutiny of a particular issue but rather captures a swathe of emails with no purpose whatsoever. It is not about transparency. It is a fishing expedition, as has been described, using a giant super trawler.

Members opposite should ask themselves what the people of New South Wales want. Do they really think New South Wales taxpayers would be comfortable knowing that public servants in multiple departments and agencies—all paid with public money—are using their time to scour through and produce each other's emails for the shadow transport Minister? Do they really think the people of New South Wales would rather public servants do that work than put their energy and time into supporting a better, more reliable public transport system for passengers? It is an unconscionable waste of taxpayer money. It is an appalling attack on our public service. It is time that members opposite sought to find some relevance through engagement with the policy issues that matter to the people of New South Wales and not through a witch-hunt of public servants to further their politicking.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (16:36): It is interesting that the Government asked the Hon. Emily Suvaal and the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine to speak to the motion, because they were not in opposition when we heard, on countless occasions, motions moved by then Opposition members who spoke about accountability, transparency and the documents they needed to hold the Government to account. Now that the tables have turned, it seems the arguments have too. If, in the words of the Hon. Emily Suvaal, it is a trawler—

The Hon. Emily Suvaal: A super trawler!

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: If it is a super trawler that we have sought to employ in the first six months of opposition, I have to say that members opposite engaged in a heavy degree of overfishing when they sat on this side of the Chamber. In fact, after 12 years of calls for papers under Standing Order 52, the sea was so overfished that there were probably no fish left. The Mookhey library was overflowing with papers. The Opposition is making a very sensible request, because the original documents were not up to scratch. They did not provide enough information.

The Government is clearly hiding what these departmental liaison officers are up to. Years ago when I worked as a staffer, the DLOs were the most junior staffers in our office. They were a conduit between the department and the ministerial office. They were not paid hundreds of thousands of dollars after coming fresh from a Labor campaign in Balmain, handing out Local Small Commitment Allocation grants to the Leichardt P&C. That is not what the DLOs were doing when I was a ministerial adviser. They were conduits between the department and the Minister's office. They were not paid political apparatchiks. That is why this motion is so important.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): There has been some toing and froing over the original amendment in terms of the dates. In consultation with the Minister who moved the amendment, the date "1 September" will be removed and replaced with "30 August". That will allow all documents sought to be captured. There was a gap in between those dates. The member has agreed to this course of action. A copy of the amendment is available from the Clerks at the table.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (16:40): In reply: The number of members jumping to their feet to avoid transparency and accountability is telling. This is not a fishing expedition; this is for an order of this House which was already moved and which the Government was so keen to vote for last time, but which it is now going to great lengths to minimise, obfuscate, delay and confine, including by moving the return date to the date after budget estimates—which I am pleased is now not the case. Nonetheless, it is extraordinary that the Deputy Leader of the Government would propose two tranches and now move that these particular people not be named. That was initially done. Then we were told there were too many documents, so we tried to confine the scope. Now we are told it is a fishing expedition. It is very clear what we are after.

The Government is running cover for an embattled Minister who has done the wrong thing. It looks like she broke the rules and now the Government is trying to cover it up. We can see that. There has been a breach of the ministerial code, a "jobs for the boys" appointment and staffer rorts—we can see it all here, and the dates are telling.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: Point of order—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: She is taking up my time. Can we stop the clock?

The Hon. Penny Sharpe: I am happy to do that. If the member wants to make allegations and imputations against members and their staff, she should do so by way of substantive motion and not in the middle of a debate. It is out of order.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): I must admit I was not listening. I am still trying to get my head around these various amendments. But I draw the member's attention to the fact that it is unparliamentary to do that. I have my eye on the clock. The Hon. Natalie Ward has the call.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you, Deputy President—now my time has been taken up. Last week the Government happily complied when departmental staff were named. Now they claim that this is a fishing expedition and is out of order. They were happy to do it when they were in opposition. They have previously named members in this place, so it is extraordinary to see the backflip. In relation to paragraph (e), the purpose of the request relates to the duties and responsibilities of department liaison officers [DLOs] and whether they acted above board. They have a clear duty to not be political, to not be partisan, and we want to know if that was the case. Where they are handpicked and the department issues concerns about them, there are questions to answer.

Paragraph (e) is required to demonstrate what orders were being provided by these individuals in the ministerial office that departments were required to follow. That is why we specifically put it in there. It is very clear what we are after. To remove or amend that places less transparency on the DLOs' duties and responsibilities. After all, if there is nothing to see then it should be no problem to produce these documents. It is clear to me from the significant amount of concern expressed by those on the other side about this call for papers that there is smoke around these documents and there are more questions to be answered. We have worked very closely with the crossbench. I acknowledge Ms Abigail Boyd for her hard work in trying to bring the parties together to some reasonable outcome. I thank her for her efforts. There are more things to see here, and we would like these documents to be produced.

The Hon. John Graham: To assist the House, I suggest that the question on paragraphs (1) and (3) of the amendment be dealt with in globo, and paragraph (2) be dealt with separately.

The PRESIDENT: The Hon. Natalie Ward has moved a motion, to which the Hon. John Graham has moved an amendment consisting of three paragraphs. As requested, I propose to put the question on paragraphs (1) and (3) of the amendment together. We will then deal with paragraph (2) of the amendment. The question is that paragraphs (1) and (3) of the amendment of the Hon. John Graham be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes20
Noes16
Majority.....4

AYES

Borsak
Boyd
Buckingham
Buttigieg
Cohn
D'Adam
Donnelly

Faehrmann
Graham
Higginson
Hurst
Jackson
Kaine
Lawrence

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

NOES

Fang (teller)
Farlow
Farraway
Latham
MacDonald
Maclaren-Jones

Martin
Merton
Mihailuk
Mitchell
Munro

Rath (teller)
Roberts
Ruddick
Tudehope
Ward

PAIRS

Houssos

Taylor

PAIRS

Mookhey

Carter

Paragraphs (1) and (3) of the amendment of the Hon. John Graham agreed to.

The PRESIDENT: The question now is that paragraph (2) of the Hon. John Graham's amendment be agreed to.

Paragraph (2) of the amendment of the Hon. John Graham agreed to.

The PRESIDENT: The question now is that the motion as amended be agreed to. Is leave granted to ring the bells for one minute?

Leave granted.

Ayes21
Noes15
Majority.....6

AYES

Boyd
Cohn
Faehrmann
Fang (teller)
Farlow
Farraway
Higginson

Hurst
Latham
MacDonald
Maclaren-Jones
Martin
Merton
Mihailuk

Mitchell
Munro
Rath (teller)
Roberts
Ruddick
Tudehope
Ward

NOES

Borsak
Buckingham
Buttigieg
D'Adam
Donnelly

Graham
Jackson
Kaine
Lawrence
Moriarty

Murphy (teller)
Nanva (teller)
Primrose
Sharpe
Suvaal

PAIRS

Carter
Taylor

Mookhey
Houssos

Motion as amended agreed to.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members will make their way out of the Chamber as quickly as possible.

*Motions***WILDLIFE DISEASE RESEARCH**

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK (16:56): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that a recent research paper from the NSW Department of Primary Industries Vertebrate Research Unit was published by CSIRO in *Wildlife Research* entitled "A review of viral and parasitic infections in wild deer in Australia with relevance to livestock and human health" by Huaman et al.
- (2) That this House further notes that:
 - (a) the research team involved in the paper evaluated the role of wild deer as wildlife hosts of viral and parasitic pathogens in Australia;
 - (b) the study's search of published scientific papers was conducted on 2 December 2022;
 - (c) the researchers highlighted how advanced genomic techniques have increased our understanding of wild deer diseases in Australia;
 - (d) the review aimed to:
 - (i) review current knowledge of deer infection in Australia;
 - (ii) examine how this compares to deer overseas; and

- (iii) assess the implications for wild and domestic animal populations and humans.
 - (e) the evaluation showed that research focused on detecting gastrointestinal parasites and helminths;
 - (f) exposure to four protozoan and four vector-borne parasites were recently assessed in polymerase chain reaction [PCR] based assays in wild deer from eastern Australia and PCR-based screening of deer serum and blood samples detected no active infection (that is, where the pathogen replicates) of *Sarcocystis*;
 - (g) as these are a range of vector-borne infections relevant for the livestock industry, this is indeed good news for New South Wales;
 - (h) several zoonotic diseases do occur in wild deer in Australia, including Q fever, leptospirosis, fasciolosis, cryptosporidiosis, and giardiasis, which are also common in native wildlife and domestic animals in New South Wales;
 - (i) while SARS-CoV-2 virus has been detected in certain species of free-ranging white-tailed deer in the United States, the good news is that there are no white-tailed deer in Australia and that the SARS-CoV-2 virus has not been detected in the Euro-Asian *Cervus* deer species which we have in New South Wales;
 - (j) the research paper stated that deer are infected by and susceptible to many diseases, some of which are zoonotic, meaning that they could also affect humans, however, the good news for New South Wales once again is that that research suggested a low risk of transmission from wild deer to livestock and humans in Australia;
 - (k) the research paper further stated that increasing the focus on wildlife disease surveillance to detect emerging infectious diseases and integrating wildlife and environmental health into One Health policies are crucial to prepare Australia to better recognise and manage the adverse impacts of zoonotic diseases;
 - (l) the research paper recommended the development of a passive surveillance system in the Australian deer hunter community; and
 - (m) the research paper further stated that deer hunters harvest large numbers of deer, with the authors recommending that training in identifying and recording macroscopic lesions and collecting specimens could be provided to hunters as part of the licensing process and that hunters could help monitor the presence and distribution of infectious diseases.
- (3) That this House notes that:
- (a) the Wildlife Health Australia information paper titled *Foot and Mouth Disease Virus (FMD or FMDV)-Information: Australian native species, feral and zoo animals*, Version 1.2 of 15 August 2022 stated that "evidence to date suggests that wild and feral populations of animals (apart from African buffalo) pose a low risk of transmitting infection to domestic livestock. Feral animals are unlikely to play a significant role in maintaining and spreading foot-and-mouth disease in Australia."; and
 - (b) African buffalo is not present in Australia.
- (4) That this House notes that in October 2003 a report published in *Veterinary Record* by Bhattacharya et al reported on the identification of foot-and-mouth disease from a captive grey kangaroo in a zoological garden in Kolkata, India, and that two days after the onset of clinical signs the kangaroo died.
- (5) That this House acknowledges:
- (a) the importance of biosecurity to the future of farming and the natural ecosystems of New South Wales as well as the health of its citizens;
 - (b) the low risk of transmission of viral and parasitic infections from wild deer to livestock and humans in New South Wales and Australia;
 - (c) that eastern grey kangaroos are a potential vector of foot-and-mouth disease in New South Wales;
 - (d) that the results of this research and these reports and publications do not fit or suit the current narrative of the pest management industry in Australia, who make significant amounts of cash from selective research and futile management operations;
 - (e) that information in New South Wales publications and websites should reflect the sound published peer-reviewed research, reports and information and not the anti-deer propaganda espoused by the rabbits of conservation, the Invasive Species Council; and
 - (f) that the Government should resource the NSW Department of Primary Industries Vertebrate Hunting division to develop and support a passive surveillance system through professional kangaroo and pet meat harvesters and the New South Wales deer hunter community and the general hunting community by providing training in identifying, recording macroscopic lesions, and collecting specimens so that hunters in New South Wales engage and help monitor the presence and distribution of infectious diseases in New South Wales in an ongoing, broadscale, community-based, collaborative, citizen science program, at little cost to New South Wales taxpayers.

I commend to the House the findings in a recent research paper, published by the CSIRO in *Wildlife Research* in July, titled "A review of viral and parasitic infections in wild deer in Australia with relevance to livestock and human health", by Jose Huaman and his co-authors. Their diligent efforts have been instrumental in advancing our understanding of the role of wild deer as wildlife hosts of viral and parasitic pathogens in Australia by examining various aspects of deer infections in Australia. The good news is that the research demonstrated that wild deer in eastern Australia show no active infection of *Sarcocystis*, which is a vector-borne infection relevant

to the livestock industry. While the research highlights some zoonotic diseases occurring in wild deer, such as Q fever, it also suggests a low risk of transmission from wild deer to livestock and humans in Australia.

The research paper makes a crucial recommendation to develop a passive surveillance system within the Australian deer hunter community. The system would empower hunters with the knowledge and tools to identify and record macroscopic lesions and collect specimens. By involving hunters in disease monitoring, we can establish an ongoing, broadscale, community-based, collaborative, citizen science program with minimal cost to taxpayers. We started doing that with R-licensed hunters when the Game Council was managing hunting in New South Wales, while I was chairman of that council.

In addition to the findings from that research, we must also consider the insights provided by the Wildlife Health Australia information paper. That document suggests that wild and feral populations of animals, except for African buffalo—which, thankfully, are not present in Australia—pose a low risk of transmitting infection to domestic livestock, particularly in relation to foot-and-mouth disease. Once again, that is good news.

In October 2003 another important report, published in *Veterinary Record* by Bhattacharya et al, reported on the identification of foot-and-mouth disease from a captive grey kangaroo in a zoological garden. The kangaroo died because of the disease. Any biosecurity planning and research must take account of that unfortunate fact and prepare in case there is a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in this country. It is also crucial to challenge and correct any misinformation that may be perpetuated by certain fringe environmental interest groups who have made an art form of producing pseudoscience and misinformation to back up their near-sighted anti-hunting agendas.

In conclusion, it is essential for New South Wales to make policy decisions that are informed by sound data and peer-reviewed research. The results of these studies point to the low risk of transmission of viral and parasitic infections from wild deer to livestock and to humans in New South Wales. This is one less worry for our farmers in these increasingly challenging times. It is also one less worry for our challenged Minister in these increasingly worrying times. This should be taken on board and the Government needs to direct the Department of Primary Industries, Local Land Services and the new Biosecurity Commissioner to update, correct and amend current information available in government publications and on its websites as well as the information provided by the DPI and LLS to farmers and landholders.

The PRESIDENT: Order! According to the determination of the Business Committee of Tuesday 17 October 2023, proceedings are now interrupted to allow the Hon. Peter Primrose to move private members' business item No. 387 relating to the passing of Mrs Dorothy Isaksen, AM, which will take precedence until concluded or adjourned.

Condolences

MRS DOROTHY ISAKSEN, AM

The PRESIDENT: I welcome into my gallery this evening the family of the late Dorothy Isaksen, a much-respected former member of this Chamber, including her daughter, Deanne; her son-in-law, Steve; and her grandchildren Jack, Hanna and Emma. You are all very welcome.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (17:00): I move:

- (1) That this House notes with great sorrow that Mrs Dorothy Isaksen, AM, a former member of this House who served from 1978 to 1988 and 1990 to 1999, passed away on 29 August 2023.
- (2) That this House notes that:
 - (a) Mrs Isaksen was born in 1930 in North Sydney;
 - (b) Mrs Isaksen was the highly respected Government Whip from 1995 to 1999, and served actively on many committees, including the Standing Committee on Social Issues, State Development Committee, Joint Select Committee upon Gun Law Reform, Road Safety Committee and Standing Orders Committee;
 - (c) Mrs Isaksen joined the Australian Labor Party in 1955 and participated in many party forums as:
 - (i) member of the Administrative Committee from 1976 to 1979;
 - (ii) President of the NSW Labor Women's Committee from 1973 to 1979;
 - (iii) President of the National Labor Women's Committee from 1975 to 1979 and secretary from 1977 to 1979; and
 - (iv) the first woman to serve as a State Organiser for NSW Labor.
 - (d) Mrs Isaksen was a professional stenographer, office manager, union organiser and member of the Clerk's Union and the Public Service Association; and
 - (e) Mrs Isaksen served:
 - (i) on the Royal North Shore Hospital Board from 1977 to 1986;

- (ii) as Deputy Chair of the NSW Women's Advisory Council from 1976 to 1978; and
 - (iii) on many organisations including the NSW Taxi Advisory Committee, the Kirkton Road Health Centre, the Manly Warringah Women's Resource Centre and Bringa Women's Refuge.
- (3) That this House notes that Mrs Isaksen's commitment was acknowledged by the Labor Party when she was made a Life Member in 2002, and by the whole community in 2018 when she was made a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia for significant service to the Parliament of New South Wales and to the community, as an advocate for gender equality in politics and as a mentor.
 - (4) That this House notes that Mrs Isaksen married her husband, Neville, in 1952 and they had two daughters, Debby and Deanne. She was adored by both her grandchildren, Rachel, Danielle, Renee, Corinne, Jack, Hanna and Emma, and her great-grandchildren, Nash, Eloise, Cody, Tilly, Caleb and Isaak.
 - (5) That this House notes that Mrs Isaksen lived her life to the fullest, in service to the Parliament, the Labor Party, the trade union movement, the community, and her family, and she will be greatly missed.
 - (6) Vale, Dorothy Isaksen.

I particularly acknowledge members of Dorothy's family in the gallery today. We all felt great sorrow when we learnt of Mrs Dorothy Isaksen's passing in August this year. Dorothy was a member of this House who served from 1978 to 1988 and again from 1990 to 1999. Dorothy was born in North Sydney in 1930. Dorothy's family were strong Labor people and committed trade unionists. She joined the Labor Party in the mid-1950s. Dorothy became active in the Youth Council executive and made many lifelong friendships there. Dorothy was President of the NSW Labor Women's Committee from 1973 to 1979 and President of the National Labor Women from 1975 to 1979 while also serving on the party's administrative committee. In 1977 Dorothy became an organiser with the New South Wales Labor Party, the first woman to hold that position. In that role, she encouraged and mentored many other women in the party. It was a time of great social and legislative change with the election of the Wran Labor Government, and Dorothy was determined to use her position as an organiser to promote gender equality throughout society but particularly within NSW Labor.

In 1978 Dorothy was elected to this Chamber as part of the first democratically elected membership of the Council. She stayed as a member until 1988 but in 1990 she returned through a casual vacancy. Dorothy was active on many of the standing committees of this Chamber and particularly enjoyed her work on the social issues and road safety committees. She was especially proud of the work done by the road safety committee on mandatory breath testing. She served as Government Whip from 1995 until 1999, only the second woman to hold that position. It was during that time that it was my privilege to have served in this place with Dorothy. I was honoured when she approached me to take on the role of Government Whip on her retirement. Dorothy served on the board of the Royal North Shore Hospital from 1977 to 1986. She was actively involved in many community organisations, such as the Manly Warringah Women's Resource Centre, the Kirketon Road Centre, the Bringa Women's Refuge and Legacy.

Dorothy was a committed feminist and she gave her time generously to supporting other women in the party and bringing about social change. All of us who knew her admired her calmness, her hard work and the kindness and courtesy she extended to all she met. Dorothy's great contribution to the Labor Party was acknowledged when she was made a life member of the party in 2002. Her contribution to the whole community was acknowledged in 2018 when she was made a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia for significant service to the Parliament of New South Wales and the community. Dorothy married her husband, Neville, in 1952. They had two daughters, Debby and Deanne. She adored, and was adored by, her grandchildren, Rachel, Danielle, Renee, Corinne, Jack, Hanna and Emma; and her great-grandchildren, Nash, Eloise, Cody, Tilly, Caleb and Isaak. Like her family, all of us who knew Dorothy admired her.

The greatest accolade that can be given to any of us involved in politics is that our time here made a difference. I tell all members, and particularly her family: Dorothy made a difference. She made a difference to me personally. She made a difference to all those members who knew her. Through her work on the many committees and through her work in the Labor Party, people are alive as a consequence of the work that she did—quietly and effectively, but with great passion and great skill. She was a good politician. She was a good member of the Labor Party, but fundamentally she was a good person. We all miss her. Thank you very much for sharing her with us for that period of time. Dorothy, you will be greatly missed.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (17:05): I thank the Hon. Peter Primrose for moving this motion. I am very pleased to see Dorothy's family here today. It is a pretty rare thing that we start a funeral with a celebration of life for someone like Dorothy Isaksen with the *It's Time* video from Gough Whitlam's election in 1972, but it was absolutely appropriate and it really set the scene for a true celebration of an incredible woman in the Labor Party. We all stand here on the shoulders of giants and Dorothy Isaksen was a giant of the Labor Party. She was never a Minister. She was never someone who got to sit in the big chair, but she contributed consistently over many decades for many of the women in this place to understand how important her role was. She was the

first woman who worked at the notorious Sussex Street at a time when she was the only woman who was there. She made a difference the whole way along.

She found other women that she worked with. She worked across factions, even when that was not a particularly positive or well-received way to do things, but Dorothy stood by her principles and understood that, just by being present, making sure the work was done properly and living true to our values while encouraging that in others, we could make a difference—and Dorothy Isaksen was that person. I feel extremely pleased to stand here on behalf of the Government and the Chamber to thank Dorothy for her service to this place. She spent many years in the Legislative Council doing the good work that the Legislative Council does: working assiduously and carefully through committees, coming to grips with really difficult issues and making a difference. There is a lot of mention of breath testing in New South Wales. We have to remember it was a highly contested area. The fact is that it was put in place and is so well accepted now. It has literally saved thousands of lives. It is the bravery and hard work of people like Dorothy Isaksen who made that happen. It is a tribute to all of us and all of those who serve on committees over that time that we do that work.

I will reflect on two more things about Dorothy Isaksen. One is the love of her children and her grandchildren, how much she has taught them to be fierce, to be tough and to stand up for what they believe in and to never, never miss an opportunity to be kind. I reflect on her love of sauvignon blanc and having a good drink and I particularly want to place on record the letter that she sent to me. It is handwritten note. I think she had been at Parliament House, perhaps having lunch and perhaps having a glass of wine. She just said to me:

I am so proud of the work that you did on women's clinics. Regards, Dorothy Isaksen, previous Government Whip.

Vale, Dorothy.

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) (17:08): I thank the Hon. Peter Primrose for moving this motion of condolence. I also welcome the family of Dorothy Isaksen to the President's gallery. As we have heard, she was among the first group of women elected to the Legislative Council when it was democratically elected in 1978. In that first group of democratically elected women she was then joined by Marie Fisher and Deirdre Grusovin for Labor, and Virginia Chadwick for the Liberal Party.

Dorothy was proud to be part of the first group of MLCs to be elected by the people rather than appointed to this Chamber, especially because, as a self-described fiery young reformer, she had campaigned actively during the 1961 referendum to abolish the Legislative Council. Speaking on 2KY, owned at the time by a Labor Council, she lambasted this place for being undemocratic and full of aristocrats and burnt-out trade union officials. Thankfully things have changed with the presence of women in this Chamber. In those earlier days Dorothy recalled she was often asked, "Whose secretary are you?" There was one toilet for women, out the back, under the stairs, and female MLCs received less superannuation.

Dorothy described herself in her inaugural speech as a child of the Depression, and 50 years later it is clear from the themes of that speech that that experience was formative to her sense of justice and empathy for the unemployed and the disadvantaged. The Westmead Hospital complex had opened only a week before the speech in 1978, and as president of the New South Wales Labor Women's Organisation she rightfully expressed her pride in having been part of a long campaign to build a major hospital for the western suburbs. One bright line through her life and career was her advocacy for women and children. In 1976 she was appointed to the bipartisan Women's Advisory Council and the Women's Co-ordination Unit to advise on issues of particular concern to women. One of the early achievements of those groups during her tenure was establishing special units in major hospitals to care for victims of sexual assault. That is just one example of how all of us today owe a lot to the diligent efforts and long activism of Dorothy Isaksen and many activists like her. I join with all members in paying tribute to this life well lived.

The Hon. BOB NANVA (17:11): I briefly contribute to this debate recognising Mrs Dorothy Isaksen, AM, and thank the Hon. Peter Primrose for bringing this motion before the House. Dorothy was not only a valued member of this place for many years but also one of my predecessors, serving as Government Whip in the Legislative Council from 1995 to 1999. It is a rare thing for people across the political spectrum, allies and adversaries, to speak highly of others with unanimity, and that rarity is afforded to Dorothy. The fondness with which many of my predecessors speak of Dorothy these many years later speaks to her capacity, her tenacity and her compassion. My sincere hope is that my contribution in this place and in this role is as worthy and as fondly remembered as Dorothy's was.

She served another institution I have the privilege of being a part of—the New South Wales Labor Party. Dorothy was the first woman to serve NSW Labor as a State organiser, which is a deeply valued role within our movement. She opened the door and stormed through, beginning the long and arguably unfinished process of changing the blokey culture of Sussex Street, which was too slow for too long to promote strong and talented

women. Dorothy began that change and was so respected that she imbued others with the belief that they could and should do the same.

Dorothy was a trailblazer on so many fronts. Our party is stronger for her leading the way, not just because of her substantive and substantial contribution but the contribution of so many other women who took inspiration from her and gained confidence. It is for that reason that she was made a life member of the New South Wales Labor Party in 2002, recognising her contribution to our movement. She was then made a member of the Order of Australia 16 years later, in 2018, recognising her contribution to the country. Dorothy will be sorely missed by her family, her friends, the party she served so loyally and our State. Vale, Dorothy.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH (17:14): On behalf of the Opposition, I speak in favour of the motion moved by the Hon. Peter Primrose, paying tribute to Mrs Dorothy Isaksen, AM. Dorothy devoted much of her life to serving the community. She was a member of the Royal North Shore Hospital board from 1977 to 1986 and deputy chairperson of the Women's Advisory Council from 1976 to 1978. Additionally, Dorothy served many organisations, including the New South Wales Taxi Advisory Committee, the Kirketon Road Centre, the Manly Warringah Women's Resource Centre and Bringa Women's Refuge. Dorothy was recognised for her lifelong commitment to public service and advocacy for gender equality in politics by being admitted as a member to the Order of Australia in 2018. Before entering the Legislative Council, Mrs Isaksen was a stenographer, office manager, union organiser and member of the Clerks' Union and the Public Service Association.

In 1978 Dorothy was appointed to the New South Wales Legislative Council as a member of the Labor Party. She served the people of New South Wales from within this Chamber for almost 18 years, until 1999. Dorothy was a passionate and effective member during her time in Parliament. From 1995 to 1999 she served as Government Whip, which is an incredibly tough job. I think it is even tougher than being the Opposition Whip. Dorothy probably did not see much of her family during sitting weeks, because it can be pretty gruelling and long hours, particularly in those days before the hard adjournment existed. On behalf of the Opposition and the Parliament, I extend my condolences to Mrs Isaksen's family, particularly her husband, Neville, and her two daughters, Debby and Deanne, for the loss of their dear loved one. I take this opportunity to thank Mrs Isaksen for her love and dedication to serving the people of New South Wales and Australia. Vale, Dorothy Isaksen.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (17:16): I convey my sympathies and welcome Mrs Isaksen's family to the Parliament. This afternoon is an important opportunity for us to pay tribute to a true servant of our party, who made an enormous contribution not only to our party but also to our Parliament, particularly on the machinery side of politics. I served in the Sussex Street head office, like the Government Whip and a number of other members here. My service was some three decades after Dorothy Isaksen served as our first female State organiser. There was no recognition of it. I became aware of it because a country branch member who had been around for so long remembered Dorothy's time. They took me aside quietly and said, "You guys think you're doing all these groundbreaking new things. Dorothy Isaksen was the first female State organiser." She was an incredibly groundbreaking inspiration. I have shared that story with many others, and I know he continued to.

Sometimes quiet servants of our party, who live out their lives in service to the public in a humble way, are not always given the recognition they deserve. This afternoon gives us an opportunity to place that on record. I have heard a lot of stories about Dorothy, though I met her only once. I said, "I'm so excited to meet you. You are the first female State organiser for the Labor Party." She looked quite shocked at me. Her response to me being so excited stands as a testament to the humility, grace and dignity she brought to all of her roles and enormous contributions.

The Opposition Whip talked about the long hours in this place and the enormous sacrifices her family would have made to allow that service to the people of New South Wales. Today we thank them so much for sharing her with our party and with the people of New South Wales, and for making that sacrifice for us. It is an amazing legacy and one that lives on. As the Leader of the Government said, we stand here on the shoulders of giants such as Dorothy Isaksen, and we pay tribute to her enormous service to our party and to the people of New South Wales.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (17:19): I remember Graham Freudenberg once said to me that there was a whole generation of working-class women who dedicated their entire lives to the cause of Labor. They were the unsung heroes of the Whitlam Government, the Wran Government and the Hawke Government. Dorothy Isaksen was one of those. It was a sign of the times that she, and many others, worked so hard for the party but they did not expect to receive high office or be put up on a pedestal. Regardless of their talents, they were never going to get it but they persevered with great resilience and decency.

My memory of Dorothy, first at head office and then working for Bob Carr, was that, unusually in today's politics in particular, she had none of the gruffness of politics. Sometimes around the place it is hard to say hello and be nice to your enemies in the corridor or the lift, but she must have had no enemies and liked everyone because she was always nice. She said hello and she was thoroughly decent and welcoming. I was a nobody from Western Sydney—I still am—but she made people feel good. It is a rare quality in politics. She kept an interest in the head office. She was the female equivalent of Johnno Johnson. There were perhaps not as many raffle tickets or mystery prizes that no-one ever saw allocated, but she kept an interest. She was a thoroughly decent and nice person. I hope she rests in peace.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (17:20): In reply: I hope that all that we have said indicates to the broader community and to Dorothy's family the respect that we have for her. Over the years I have found that this place has a short memory of its people. When you leave, you have left and the place moves on. I think it says something about Dorothy and her personality, her work and the regard that people have for her that, even though she left this place a couple of decades ago, people here still remember her with such great respect. The fact that members can talk about her achievements and feel a genuine warmth for her shows the effect that she had on all of us, including me. I thank all honourable members. I particularly thank her family for sharing her with us.

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

Motion agreed to.

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

Motions

WILDLIFE DISEASE RESEARCH

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (17:23): I move:

That the question be amended as follows:

- (1) Omit paragraph (5) (d).
- (2) In paragraph (5) (e) omit "should reflect the sound" and insert instead "should reflect sound".
- (3) In paragraph (5) (e) omit "and not the anti-deer propaganda espoused by the rabbits of conservation, the Invasive Species Council" after "research, reports and information".
- (4) In paragraph (5) (f) omit "the Government should resource" and insert instead "the Government should consider resourcing".

I will explain the amendment shortly. I acknowledge the report that the Hon. Robert Borsak has referenced in his motion. Feral deer are a priority pest animal in New South Wales. They cause extensive damage to the environment and losses in agricultural production, largely through grazing and trampling. I acknowledge the research paper published by the CSIRO that is referenced. I have not read it, but I received a briefing on its contents today and it has some useful recommendations.

The research team, led by La Trobe University microbiologist Dr Jose Huaman, was supported by the Department of Primary Industries researcher Dr Dave Forsyth. The paper reviewed current knowledge of infection in Australia and examined how it compares to deer overseas. Scientists also assessed the implications for wild and domestic animals and humans in Australia. Broadly, the research suggests a low risk of transmission from wild deer to livestock and humans in Australia; however, an increasing focus on wildlife disease surveillance and the development of a passive surveillance system in the Australian deer hunter community are recommended.

Australia is currently free of many animal pathogens detected elsewhere in the world, such as those causing foot-and-mouth disease and lumpy skin disease. Exotic animal diseases remain a major threat to Australia's livestock industry and to human and wildlife health. Ongoing monitoring to determine the presence of pathogens in wildlife is crucial to identifying potential reservoirs of infectious diseases and preventing future disease outbreaks. One recommendation is that New South Wales could benefit from a passive surveillance system by land managers, hunters and harvesters, including the New South Wales deer hunter community. We are looking at that. We need to do some more work and gather the evidence, but that is something that the member has raised in the motion. The amendment to have us consider that is a worthy thing, and we will consider doing the work on that. The Department of Primary Industries is already actively developing risk-based surveillance programs for foot-and-mouth and other diseases, which are focused on feral animals and the lesser risk posed by native animals.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (17:26): I speak for the Opposition in debate on the motion moved by the Hon. Robert Borsak. I take note of the issues he has raised in the motion. I will be up-front: I cannot say I have expertise in the area, but it is all about lifelong learning and on a Wednesday we often do that. I have had

discussions about it with my colleague the shadow Minister for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Dugald Saunders, and we can see that the Hon. Robert Borsak makes some good observations, particularly in paragraph (5) (a) where he talks about biosecurity and its importance to farming and the natural ecosystems of New South Wales.

Nobody understands or appreciates more the importance of farming than the NSW Nationals, being a party that, for more than 100 years, has exclusively represented regional communities and has a long and proud history of looking after our farmers. When we were in government, we took the matter of biosecurity seriously. Last year Dugald Saunders, as the Minister for Agriculture, hosted a biosecurity conference bringing together stakeholders from a range of industries and putting them in the same room as representatives from Local Land Services and the Department of Primary Industries.

At that conference, with the threat of foot-and-mouth disease and lumpy skin disease on our doorstep, the former Minister announced an additional \$65 million to bolster the State's biosecurity measures and to fast-track the development of vaccines against those diseases. That additional investment took the total New South Wales investment to \$229 million last year, which was the biggest investment by a single jurisdiction in exotic pest and disease control. Some of that funding went towards a mandatory sheep and goat electronic identification system and on-the-ground activities, such as increased culls and incentives for farmers to improve their biosecurity plans. There was funding for intelligent track-and-trace technology and the rollout of targeted extension and awareness campaigns to educate livestock owners, handlers and the community on things such as clinical signs and reporting requirements, as well as how to reduce risks.

One of the speakers at the conference was the former Chief Veterinary Officer of the United Kingdom, who told those in attendance about the lived experience there of foot-and-mouth back in 2001. A key point raised was that feral animal populations did not have a particularly significant impact on the spread due to their lack of interaction with farmed animals, which the honourable member has raised in the motion. In saying that, it is also important we do not let feral animal populations get out of control. Whether it is pigs—which are running rampant across regional New South Wales—or deer, foxes, kangaroos or goats, we have a responsibility to ensure that numbers do not get out of control and that we minimise their impact on biosecurity and day-to-day farming. Opinions differ about the best way to do that. I note the Hon. Robert Borsak has some views on the Invasive Species Council that the Opposition does not necessarily share. The Opposition supports the Government's amendments but notes the observations made in the Hon. Robert Borsak's motion and understands his particular interest in the issue.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (17:29): The Greens will not be supporting the motion. While it is gratifying that the Hon. Robert Borsak has googled the peer-reviewed article and has attempted to understand the science, it is clear that he has failed to grasp the findings and instead has somehow twisted the article into a strange advocacy pitch for feral deer populations in New South Wales. Unlike the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, The Greens, the Government and even some members of the Opposition are not delighted by the pursuit and murder of animals for personal gratification.

Feral species control by qualified and trained professionals is a vital and critical aspect of biosecurity control in New South Wales and directly contributes to the security of agricultural output, ecological sustainability and positive human health outcomes. It is quite ridiculous to suggest that the report indicates a low risk of viral infections from invasive deer to livestock or humans in New South Wales. By contrast, it actually highlights the significant risk that increasing population densities of feral deer pose due to the rise of, and lack of prior knowledge of, novel viruses.

Point of order: Could I be heard in silence?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): The member will be heard in silence.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: It is laughable that the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party would try to accuse the NSW Department of Primary Industries [DPI] of selective research given the moving member has previously denied the contribution of human involvement to climate change, for example—now, there is some selective research! More evidence on the selective nature of the research undertaken by the mover of the motion can be seen in the single source relied on to suggest that grey kangaroos are the real threat when it comes to transmission of foot-and-mouth disease. It is disingenuous and, frankly, intellectually dishonest. The Hon. Robert Borsak has confused inference with evidence and prejudice with presumption.

I note that the member's advocacy for citizen science programs and for diversifying the gathering of consistent scientific data is a reasonable and supportable aspect of the motion. We should all support the work of the professional and dedicated people in organisations like the Invasive Species Council, the DPI and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, which are on the front line of invasive species management and biosecurity initiatives.

Although there is room for improvement in some of the practices undertaken in invasive species management, and certainly an opportunity to significantly increase the funding of management programs, the motion is just a dog whistle to the worst and most destructive people in the recreational hunting sphere. The thin veneer of scientific justification that the motion is attempting to masquerade under should be called out for what it is.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK (17:32): In reply: The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party will not oppose the Minister's amendment. I have just heard the unsurprising contribution from The Greens. Members can take it for what it is worth—which, of course, is nothing. It is essential for New South Wales to make policy decisions that are informed by sound, peer-reviewed research and data, and not pseudoscience and misinformation from the pest industry—including the biggest parasite in the sector, the Invasive Species Council. The result of the study points to the low risk of transmission of viral and parasitic infections from wild deer to livestock and humans in New South Wales. That is great news for New South Wales farmers and the public in general. We also need to be cognisant of the potential for kangaroos to be vectors of foot-and-mouth disease, and there is no doubt that more work needs to be done in that area.

The Department of Primary Industries and Local Land Services must start informing landholders of those facts. To that end, the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party also calls upon the Government to acknowledge the good work of its researchers and allocate resources to the DPI Vertebrate Pest Research Unit and the DPI Hunting division to support the development of a passive surveillance system through the New South Wales deer hunter community and the professional kangaroo and pet meat harvesters.

That collaborative approach will help monitor the presence and distribution of infectious diseases in our State and contribute to our collective wellbeing at little or no cost to the Government. We must prioritise biosecurity, agriculture, public health and the preservation of our agriculture and natural ecosystems. In doing so, we must always rely on the best available scientific evidence, even if it challenges the prevailing narratives that we have been putting up with for decades. By doing that, we can make informed decisions that benefit the citizens and ecosystems of New South Wales. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.

Bills

EMERGENCY SERVICES LEGISLATION 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. Tara Moriarty, on behalf of the Hon. John Graham.

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

Statement of public interest tabled.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: 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. TARA MORIARTY: 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

YEAR 1 PHONICS CHECK

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (17:37): I move:

(1) That this House notes that:

- (a) there is overwhelming evidence that shows a phonics-based approach is the best way to teach children how to read; and
 - (b) the former Liberal-Nationals Government introduced the year 1 phonics check to test how students are progressing with their reading.
- (2) That this House supports the continuation of the mandatory year 1 phonics check for all students in public schools in New South Wales.

It will not be a surprise to many members in this House that I am moving this motion for debate, but I thought it was a good opportunity to once again put on the record the support of the Liberal Party and The Nationals for a phonics-based approach to teaching children how to read. I have spoken about that in adjournment debate contributions in the new Parliament, but the motion is an opportunity for other members not just to place their support on the record for using a phonics-based approach in New South Wales classrooms but also to particularly reinforce their support for the year 1 phonics check to test how students are progressing with their reading.

Since 2021 the teaching of reading using phonics has been a compulsory part of the classroom. That was part of the Liberal-Nationals Government's once-in-a-generation curriculum reform, which was about making sure that phonics instruction was embedded in the curriculum and being taught in our schools. The overhaul of the school curriculum places a heavier emphasis on literacy and numeracy foundations, particularly in the first three years of schooling, to help set our kids up for success. There is no doubt that phonics significantly improves children's word recognition, spelling and reading comprehension. It is also a vital part of a comprehensive reading program, particularly for those students who might be at risk of having reading challenges while they are at school and into their adult years, and those who have been identified as having a reading disability like dyslexia.

During my time as Minister, once we brought phonics and the year 1 phonics check into the curriculum, a number of parents and families of dyslexic children reached out to thank me. Phonics is such a great method to help those children who would, in some cases, have fairly significant challenges learning how to read. The phonics screening check was introduced by the Liberal-Nationals Government as a trial to begin with and became mandatory in 2021. It is really about making sure that teachers understand how their students' reading is progressing and what support they need next. It is a very simple assessment—it takes about five to seven minutes in the classroom. It is not an onerous task for teachers, but it gives them data so that they are able to understand which students need additional support and which are already meeting the benchmarks.

Some of the data from last year showed that 55.1 per cent of students met the benchmark. That is good, but obviously we want to see that number improve. The phonics check was completed by more than 65,000 students and the results were immediately available for teachers. The kindergarten and pre-kindergarten education of that cohort was impacted during COVID-19, and we need to consider that when we look at the data. It is fairly consistent with the year before, with a drop of about 1.6 per cent. The analysis from the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation within the Department of Education was that, given the impact of COVID and the change to the testing window—in the year before there was a longer period for tests, so some students may have sat the assessment later and had more time for learning in the classroom—the 1.6 per cent decline really showed that results were holding steady.

It is important that we continue to do that assessment for those children. Equally important is the support that is then embedded for the children both in the classroom by the teacher and across the system more broadly. We know that we have to provide the right resources to schools for the explicit teaching of phonics. We have done that through the new curriculum. The Liberal-Nationals Government also introduced the Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Instruction roles to offer support in primary schools to help embed a strong foundation in the early years. We provided resources to help teachers implement the new curriculum through the Universal Resources Hub, which was also introduced by the Liberal-Nationals Government.

Additional learning materials were made available for students and also for parents and families to access at home to help encourage what was being taught in the classroom. That is also really critical. We know the benefits of reading to children literally from birth. We know the benefits if parents are engaged in their child's education, whether it is through home readers, decodable readers, practising the sounds or singing the songs—as I am sure many of us in the Chamber have done as parents. I certainly have. My youngest is in kindergarten, and we are going through those decodable readers at a rate of knots. To be a parent and see your child learn to read using phonics is an amazing experience. Every child in New South Wales should have that. We should keep phonics in the curriculum. We should make sure that the year 1 check continues.

I note that the Hon. Mark Latham intends to move amendments, which the Opposition will be happy to support. I do not know if there have been conversations with other parties. We will see, as the debate continues, and I can respond to those in my reply. Opposition members strongly back a phonics-based approach and the year 1 check. We hope that members will agree.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (17:43): I speak in debate on the motion on behalf of The Greens and indicate that we will not oppose it. The phonics question heightens many people's blood pressure. Warring factions declare their approach to be the only rational and efficacious one, and the phonics mantle has been taken up with particular vigour by conservative elements and think tanks. But if you speak with just about anyone who has spent time in a classroom, it becomes immediately apparent that looking for a single standalone approach to teaching children to read and write is highly problematic. Public school teachers teaching kindergarten to year 2 employ a raft of approaches to teaching literacy, including phonics. Focusing on just one approach is totally outdated and is typically simplistic from the Coalition.

I take the opportunity to firmly back our public school teachers, who do an incredible job every single day. Particularly in teaching early infant years, the work that they are doing is extraordinarily skilled and technically sophisticated. Teachers are experts in their field and are well versed in multiple pedagogical theories and approaches to teaching literacy. Of course, we should continue the phonics program if teachers tell us that it is working and there is evidence that it works. But a one-size-fits-all approach tragically misses the mark when we are looking for student-centred approaches to learning.

A student-centred approach to learning tells us that each child has unique learning needs. That approach recognises the immense skill and expertise of qualified professional teachers and pays them a salary commensurate with their skills and expertise, with reasonable workloads, because that is key to optimal student outcomes. The weird controlling obsession over specific teaching styles only emerges from a culture of not trusting and respecting teachers. It has degraded and demeaned the teaching profession, and it is the culture that was presided over by the former Coalition Government, which oversaw a mass exodus of teachers from public schools in the face of exploding workloads and offensively inadequate pay.

The former Coalition Government was so reckless and destructive when it came to our public education system that it was willing to sack 1,100 experts in student learning, robbing schools of teachers with master's degrees who supported classroom teachers in best practice pedagogy such as literacy and supported students with disabilities and additional behavioural needs. That gutting of expertise in the public education system robbed students of specialists who advised teachers on individual learning plans for students with complex needs. The former Government was more focused on teacher bashing than on delivering for students, and students and school communities are now paying the price.

With a change of government, teachers and school communities have reason for hope. Finally, we are beginning to see wages and conditions start to creep back up—but the Government has a long way to go before it can rest on its laurels. The impetus is now on the new Labor Government to address the crippling workload issues and commit to years two, three and four of the heads of agreement. It is self-evident that it is not possible to deliver on the aspiration of a student-centred approach to learning with under-resourced schools. Our failure to fund students at 100 per cent of the minimum schooling resource standard [SRS], a minimum baseline, is a tragedy. Achieving and exceeding a 100 per cent SRS is key to improving literacy and achieving better student outcomes.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (17:46): I support the motion but will also move an amendment. I move:

That the question be amended by inserting after paragraph (2):

- (3) That this House calls on the Government to introduce further reforms, including:
- (a) a mandatory year 2 phonics check for students who did not complete the year 1 check at a proficient level;
 - (b) mandatory teaching of phonics literacy in government schools; and
 - (c) ensuring publication of each year's phonics check results before the end of each year.

That amendment has been circulated around the Chamber. The Year 1 Phonics Screening Check is one of the best things that the Hon. Sarah Mitchell achieved as education Minister. It followed success in South Australia, where the check has been very helpful in improving early literacy rates. That is fundamentally important. There is nothing more important in the education system than literacy—young people being able to read. The phonics check consists of 40 words, some real and some nonsense, and the challenge for the student is to sound them out successfully. The benchmark for proficiency is 28 words out of 40. We must acknowledge that New South Wales lags behind South Australia's level of success in that area. In 2022, 45 per cent of our students in year 1 were not proficient in phonics, which is an alarming statistic indeed. That was an increase from 43 per cent in 2021.

My amendment raises the question of wouldn't it make sense and shouldn't it be mandatory for schools to have a year 2 phonics check for those who were not proficient in year 1? That data is not published school by school. It is statewide data, but it would give us an indication of how those who lagged behind have fared over a 12-month period. Was the system able to bring them up to a proficient standard in year 2? We have a big cohort—45 per cent of year 1 students is not a small group. We would probably then want to have a year 3 check to make sure that nobody is left behind. Is reading recovery working in general? Are students being left behind in phonics?

All the evidence points to phonics being the most effective way of teaching literacy. It is not unreasonable for the Government to require teachers to teach to the evidence base, not fads and theories and experimental programs. Just follow the evidence base of all of the material that has been tested right around the world.

The second part—my addendum, if you like—is mandatory teaching of phonics literacy in government schools. The final part is ensuring publication of each year's phonics check results before the end of the year. Minister Prue Car has accepted that in answer to a question that I asked a couple of weeks ago. The year 1 phonics check is progress for our system. Normally, what matters in education is what can be measured. Measurement is so important for the central authority—the education department and the Minister—to know what is happening in the system across the board. They need to know where the weaknesses are, how they can be corrected and what needs to be done in the vital area of reading recovery in the early years of education. If we do not have a measurement and we do not know what is going on, then the Government is rudderless. The more measurements we have, as with this very useful phonics check process, the better the system will be. Most importantly, more students in New South Wales will be able to read.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (17:49): I move:

That the amendment of the Hon. Mark Latham be amended as follows:

- (1) Omit "calls on the Government to introduce further reforms, including" and insert instead "agrees that the Government continue".
- (2) Omit "a mandatory year 2 phonics check for students" and insert instead "access to phonics checks for students at any level".

I indicate from the outset that the Government will be supporting the motion as amended. The Government supports phonics. As the former education Minister knows, the teaching of phonics is a requirement of the New South Wales English K-2 syllabus. Teachers will continue to teach phonics, as it is mandated. The year 1 phonics check was introduced in New South Wales in 2021, with a trial taking place one year earlier. It is worth noting that year 1 students in South Australia completed the phonics check three years earlier, in 2018. As the previous speaker outlined, South Australia has progressed further than New South Wales. Reading is a fundamental foundational skill for children in their early years of learning, which is why the Government supports the Hon. Mark Latham's amendment stating that phonics checks should continue to occur and should be available to teachers to continue to check how students are tracking.

The single biggest factor in improving student outcomes is having a teacher in the classroom. The Government inherited a chronic teacher shortage from the former Liberal-Nationals Government. At this time last year there were 2,767 vacancies. This Government values the work of teachers and is committed to ensuring that pride in the profession is restored. It has abolished the wages cap and converted 16,000 temporary teachers and support staff to permanent contracts. The Government is already getting work underway to reduce their excessive workload by five hours. The Government is committed to transparency, which is why it supports that part of the Hon. Mark Latham's amendment.

The results of the year 1 phonics check will be released publicly before the end of the year. The Government supported the introduction of the year 1 phonics check and will continue to do so. Labor's election commitment around small group tuition will provide support for older students who are struggling to read and who have not had access to it in the past. Small group tuition with explicit and systematic phonics instruction will help struggling readers become proficient and confident readers. Those students often act out because they are embarrassed that they cannot read. The Government will provide support for students not just in year 1 but also throughout their schooling years to make sure they can reach their potential.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (17:52): To assist the House, I support the Government's amendment to my amendment.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (17:52): I strongly support the motion moved by my colleague the Hon. Sarah Mitchell. I acknowledge her outstanding record and service as the former Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning in the Berejiklian and Perrottet governments. I also acknowledge her continued contribution to education as the shadow education Minister in the Parliament today. She understood that the foundation of education starts with learning to read. I commend the honourable member for identifying the importance of phonics and for introducing the compulsory year 1 phonics check for all students.

Phonics-based learning has been widely regarded as one of the most effective ways to teach children to read. The approach emphasises the relationship between letters and their corresponding sounds, helping children to decode words and develop strong reading skills. The introduction of a mandatory phonics check for students in the primary years is supported by substantial evidence. Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of phonics instruction in improving the reading ability of children. Research consistently shows that explicit and

systematic phonics instruction leads to better reading outcomes than other instructional methods. Phonics instruction is found to significantly boost students' reading fluency and comprehension skills. This skill is crucial for early reading success and allows students to tackle unfamiliar words, leading to improved reading fluency.

Implementing a mandatory phonics check in the primary years offers several benefits. Firstly, it allows educators to identify students who may be struggling with their phonics skills early on. The check can pinpoint areas where additional support is needed, enabling targeted interventions to address any gaps in knowledge and prevent reading difficulties from persisting into later years. Secondly, a mandatory phonics check provides valuable data on the effectiveness of phonics instruction. It helps education authorities evaluate the overall quality of phonics instruction. In conclusion, the evidence overwhelmingly supports phonics-based learning as an effective teaching approach. By prioritising phonics instruction and regularly assessing students, we can ensure that all children have a solid foundation for literacy success. I encourage students to pick up and take hold of *Dear Zoo*, *The Little Prince*, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *Peppa Pig*, *Pippi Longstocking* and so many others. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (17:55): I support the motion and the amendments that have been foreshadowed.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: Are you going to give us some suggested book titles?

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: I am not going to take up the invitation to go through a list of book titles. Many of the titles that I read to my kids have already been mentioned, so I will not add anything further to the debate by talking about them. As someone with very little knowledge about this but a great deal of admiration for our teachers, even I know that sticking to a single method of teaching, like phonics, is not the only method of teaching that is appropriate. As the motion sets out, it is crucial that phonics is taught, but it does not work for all kids in all circumstances. We need to listen to teachers about what other methods and techniques are appropriate at other stages. I congratulate the former Government for introducing the year 1 phonics test. It is absolutely appropriate that phonics is taught as part of the curriculum and that it is tested to see how it is going. It is one of the few things that the former Government did in the teaching space.

As I remember it, during the time that the now Opposition was in government, there were vacancies all over the place. There were more than 2,700 teacher vacancies. There was a quadrupling of those numbers as we went through the 12-year term of the former Government. We had so few teachers that we had more teachers resigning than retiring. The best way to ensure that kids are taught is to make sure there is a teacher in the classroom, which the former Government failed to do at a basic level. There were not enough teachers. I commend the Government for its great work in the recent budget to ensure that more than 16,000 temporary teachers and support staff are made permanent. The Government is paying teachers properly so that they are the highest paid teachers in the country. New South Wales is going to stop bleeding teachers to other jurisdictions and border towns outside of the ACT, Queensland and Victoria. The best way to help our kids is to make sure that teachers are supported, listened to and looked after. I commend the motion as amended to the House.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (17:58): I speak in support of the motion and the amendments put forward. I admit that I got oddly sentimental when I saw the Hon. Sarah Mitchell's motion. My father, who was a primary school teacher for about 50 years, taught me and my siblings to read prior to going to primary school. We sat on his lap while he taught us how to sound out words. In fact, I was the annoying younger sibling who would jump in and say the words before my older siblings. This will give members an idea of the era: we went through the Ladybird and Peter and Jane series. Looking back now, they seem quite dated. To progress our reading further, once we got proficient at those books we were given the treat of going to the shop and choosing a Little Golden Book, which could be any story we wanted.

It is now a matter of family lore that my brother, in particular, took to sounding out words. On a train trip one day, my brother started sounding out the graffiti that was written on the walls in a particular area, until my mother very quickly stopped him. Clearly we became very proficient at using the phonics method when we were quite young. I am very pleased that the Labor Government has continued the emphasis on phonics and will continue the testing and take up some of the suggestions put to the House today. I very much endorse that approach. My father will be very pleased, because he did not like other approaches that came in over time when he knew that phonics worked. I will tell him that is the case, and he will be very chuffed to read *Hansard*. I commend the motion and the amendments.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (18:00): I support the motion and commend the great work of the former Minister in this area, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell. I am pleased that this House is seeking agreement on what is a very sensible motion. She was a very dedicated Minister and is a very dedicated shadow Minister. When we know that things such as the phonics-based approach work, it is important for the next generation that we support them. Bringing in the year 1 phonics test to check in with students to make sure they get the basics right is really

important to all of us. I commend the work of the Hon. Sarah Mitchell. She is a committed person who knows this area inside and out. I have checked in with her on occasion. She is the mother of two beautiful girls and is absolutely invested in this area. I commend her on that and on moving the motion.

I only bring this up because it has already been raised, but I also learnt to read on the lap of my grandfather, Leslie Ward. We would read the newspaper together. When I got to school and I could read, it was not because I was brilliant; it was because he sat there and taught me how to read. But they said, "Wow! You can read." We had arguments over how to pronounce the final letter of the alphabet and the influence of the American pronunciation.

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell: *Sesame Street*.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: We blame *Sesame Street*. He did not have a lot, but he had books and knowledge and I am so pleased that he taught me that education and knowledge is everything. It does not matter who we are, where we are or where we come from; education is empowering. I think we can all agree wholeheartedly on that. I know I have belaboured the point, but I have a daughter going through HSC exams at the moment and I am a little traumatised. I know how important phonics is. It is the foundation that will lead her through to whatever she can be in life. Sitting and reading with her—as I know the Hon. Sarah Mitchell does with her daughters—is one of the greatest joys in life.

We can pass to the next generation the legacy of the Liberal-Nationals Government that year 1 phonics is as vitally important as teaching kids to swim. We should make sure that they have the basic foundations that will set them up for life. I am pleased that this House can agree on this issue which is important for our next generation. The Hon. Mark Latham is very knowledgeable and vocal in this area, and I commend him for moving his sensible amendments. I wholeheartedly support the motion moved by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (18:03): In reply: I thank all members for their contribution to the debate. I also call out the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine's father. It is proof that in education everything old is new again, and sometimes the old way of doing things is proven to be the best. I also thank members for supporting the motion. As I said at the outset, we were happy to support the Hon. Mark Latham's amendments as they were, but I understand that he is not only a fan of phonics but also a fan of numeracy and can count. Therefore, we also support the Labor Party's amendments, which will mean a better outcome for everybody.

I put on record that there are challenges with the teacher workforce right across the country. It is a little outside of the scope of the motion but it was raised in debate by Government members. I saw a story on the *Today* show this morning that Queensland is bringing 1,000 university students into the classroom. Members opposite tend to want to rewrite history a little bit, and that is their right as a new government, but vacancy rates in this State are still high. There is not a lot coming from members opposite about teacher supply. We will be watching this matter very closely. It is very easy to make motherhood statements in opposition; it is a lot harder to deliver in government. There will be much dedication to look at those teacher vacancy numbers and the impact of some of the initiatives, particularly the temporary-to-permanent conversion. The Liberals and The Nationals started that and similar policies were taken to the election. They are not innovative ideas coming from Labor; they are a continuation of things that were already put in place by our Government.

It is important that we have bipartisan support on phonics. I am pleased that there is bipartisan support for this motion, particularly because in the past some organisations like the NSW Teachers Federation and some universities have been anti-phonics. The reading wars have raged for many decades, but to be at this point now where it appears there is bipartisan support for the teaching of phonics and the continuation of the year 1 mandatory phonics check in this State is good. Good policy should trump politics every day of the week, whether that is in education or any other area. I thank the House for its support and look forward to the results coming out of this year's assessment and in future years as well.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The Hon. Sarah Mitchell has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Mark Latham has moved an amendment, to which the Hon. Courtney Houssos moved a further amendment. The question is that the amendment of the Hon. Courtney Houssos to the amendment of the Hon. Mark Latham be agreed to.

Amendment of the Hon. Courtney Houssos to the amendment of the Hon. Mark Latham agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question now is that the amendment of the Hon. Mark Latham as amended by the Hon. Courtney Houssos be agreed to.

Amendment of the Hon. Mark Latham as amended by the Hon. Courtney Houssos agreed to.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.**COMPANION ANIMALS ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

The Hon. EMMA HURST (18:07): I seek the leave of the House to amend private members' business item No. 436 standing in my name on the *Notice Paper* for today as follows:

- (1) Omit paragraph (1) (d) and insert instead:
 - (d) other major international cities like London, Auckland and Melbourne allow animals on public transport in different circumstances;
- (2) In paragraph (1) (e), omit "the people" and insert instead "many people".
- (3) Omit paragraph (2) and insert instead:
 - (2) That this House calls on the New South Wales Government to investigate allowing animals to travel on public transport and undertake detailed consultation with stakeholders.

Leave granted.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Accordingly, I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) companion animals are part of the lives and homes of many families across New South Wales;
 - (b) despite this, companion animals are still not allowed to travel on trains or the metro in New South Wales and are only allowed on buses and ferries in very limited and rare circumstances;
 - (c) this prevents those without a car from getting around the community with their animal, including to the vet, the dog park and other important appointments and is a disincentive for people to make the environmentally friendly decision to use public transport;
 - (d) other major international cities like London, Auckland and Melbourne allow animals on public transport in different circumstances;
 - (e) many people of New South Wales are strongly supportive of allowing animals on public transport, as demonstrated by the work of community groups such as Tails on Rails, who have been lobbying for these reforms; and
 - (f) on 18 September 2023, Lord Mayor Clover Moore passed a mayoral minute calling for the New South Wales Government to take action on this issue.
- (2) That this House calls on the New South Wales Government to investigate allowing animals to travel on public transport and undertake detailed consultation with stakeholders.

Some 70 per cent of Australians share their lives and homes with a companion animal. We know the enormous psychological and physical health benefits of having a companion animal and the joy they bring to our lives. However, right now companion animals and their families are being excluded from the benefits of public transport in New South Wales. They are not allowed to travel on trains or the metro and are only allowed on buses and ferries in very limited and rare circumstances. This is an outdated and restrictive policy that is harming both people and animals. Banning animals from public transport automatically disadvantages anyone without a car, including those living in dense living areas, older people, people with disabilities or those who simply cannot afford a car.

It makes it incredibly difficult for those people to get around the community with their animals, including to access essential services, attend the vet, visit the dog park or attend other important appointments. To put it bluntly, a failure to make our transport system animal friendly leaves us in a situation where having a companion animal is affordable only for those on higher incomes. Our system is set up to stop families on lower incomes or without access to a car from having a companion animal. It is also putting more cars on our roads. Allowing animals on buses, trains, trams and ferries would get cars off the road, reducing Sydney's extreme traffic congestion, carbon emissions and air pollution. Many cities around the world—including London, Auckland and Melbourne—allow animals on public transport, proving that it can work to everyone's benefit. New South Wales is, once again, falling behind.

It is time for the New South Wales Government to listen to the community and allow animals on public transport. The Minister could do it tomorrow if she wanted to, by simply amending the Passenger Transport (General) Regulation 2017 and working with Transport for NSW to implement the new policy. While I understand there may be some policy and regulatory challenges to work through, the fact that it is already working elsewhere around the world shows that concerns can be easily addressed. If we have quiet carriages on trains, there is no reason why we cannot have animal-friendly carriages as well—at least as a trial, to start with. I have also met with Guide Dogs Australia, which has expressed its frustration with current public transport access issues faced by anyone with an assistance animal, despite legal protections that already exist. The organisation is eager to be involved in any future consultation.

I thank Tails on Rails, which has been lobbying for these reforms, Lord Mayor Clover Moore for her longstanding advocacy, and the member for Sydney, Mr Alex Greenwich, who has sponsored a petition on this issue in the other place. I amended the motion on the understanding that the New South Wales Government will support the amended motion. I look forward to working with the Government to make New South Wales a more inclusive and sustainable society by starting the transition to allow animals on public transport as soon as possible.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (18:10): On behalf of The Greens, I speak in support of the motion. More Australians share their lives with companion animals than people do almost anywhere else in the world. But as pets are not allowed on most public transport, many of us cannot reliably or affordably include our companion animal in our travel. Whether it is taking our dogs to great parks that are further away than a comfortable walk or including our cats in weekends away, being able to get where we and our pets want to go is important. It is not just a matter of recreation; people without a car are more likely to be prevented from taking their companion animal to the vet. No animal should have to go without medical care, regardless of their guardian's finances or transit options. Currently in New South Wales there is a blanket ban on companion animals on trains and metro services, and companion animals are only able to travel on buses, ferries, light rail and taxis if confined to a carrier or container and with driver or crew permission. In practice, it can be difficult to know whether a particular service will allow companion animals, and larger dogs are entirely excluded from public transport. While there are exemptions for assistance animals, that does not include therapy and emotional support animals.

By contrast, in Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and all of Europe companion animals riding on public transport is commonplace. The Greens took to the most recent State election a plan to welcome pets onto public transport in New South Wales, with the following restrictions: All companion animals must be either contained to a carrier or on a lead and muzzled; companion animals would be welcome on public transport outside peak travel times; on trains, companion animals would be welcome in the first and last non-quiet carriages; and drivers, staff and crew would be able to ask passengers to remove their companion animal if it is causing a disturbance or poses a safety risk. We came up with this plan after a review of other jurisdictions in Australia and around the world, conducted with the help of Parliamentary Library staff—I thank them for their assistance. We think it represents a good balance between the needs of pet owners and of people who have an understandable phobia of animals or other issue with animals being on public transport. I wholeheartedly endorse this motion and I thank the Hon. Emma Hurst for bringing it to the House.

The Hon. BOB NANVA (18:13): I thank the Hon. Emma Hurst for bringing this motion and note that this is an issue on which she and the Animal Justice Party have advocated for quite some time. There is a diversity of views on this issue in the community, and the Government acknowledges that it is not a simple matter. I am advised that over the past few weeks the Minister for Transport has received feedback from both those who support and those who oppose allowing companion animals to travel on public transport. In response to the City of Sydney's recent motion to allow pets on public transport, some passengers have written to express support for reform, noting that it would allow them to more easily take their dog to the vet or the park, or to access other services. The Minister has noted that research suggests that up to 2.4 million dog-related trips are taken by car in Sydney each week and that, of the two-thirds of people who visit a dog park three or more times a week, half of them travel by car.

Other passengers have raised concerns that allowing dogs on trains may impact accessibility for people with disability, passengers with low vision who may rely on the services of a guide dog, passengers with allergies and passengers with a phobia of dogs. Obviously, a further consideration is the additional challenges that allowing pets to travel on public transport could create for transport workers. In short, this is a complex area, and we must consider that while there are very obvious benefits for pets and pet owners in changing the regulation to allow pets to travel on trains, those benefits need to be carefully weighed against the needs of transport workers and vulnerable passengers, and relevant trade unions must be consulted.

While other jurisdictions may allow pets to travel on public transport, each city has a unique transport mix that requires careful consideration. The issue requires a careful and considered approach by the Minister and the Government—which will be taken—as well as broad consultation with transport workers, advocates and passengers. In that spirit, the Government supports the motion here today, as it reflects the work we are already doing. Our approach to this issue will be driven by our commitment to delivering a public transport system that is accessible, reliable and safe. I understand that the Minister for Transport is continuing to receive briefings from the department and will continue to investigate whether reform of the regulation is in the best interests of the travelling public.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (18:16): I thank the Hon. Emma Hurst for bringing this motion to the House. As other speakers have noted, the advocacy of the member and the Animal Justice Party has resulted in all of us completely rethinking the way we deal with animal rights issues. It is welcomed and I am grateful for her enormous work and advocacy. As the Hon. Bob Nanva noted, the Government will continue to investigate

whether changing the Passenger Transport (General) Regulation 2017 to allow pets to travel on trains is in the best interests of the people who rely on public transport across New South Wales. There is evidence that allowing dogs to travel on public transport would make it easier for people to get their pet to the vet, or visit family or get around the city with their pet. In an environment where more and more households own pets and attitudes about pet ownership are changing, it is something that needs to be investigated properly. Increasingly, Australians regard their dog, cat or other pet as members of their families and want them to be part of more and more aspects of their ordinary daily lives.

There would be benefits for companion animals and their owners in changing the regulation, and I appreciate that many in the community would like to see that change. However, as the Hon. Bob Nanva has already mentioned, those benefits have to be carefully weighed with the needs of public transport workers and other passengers who may not want or be able to travel on public transport when pets are on board. Our main goal is to make our public transport system more accessible, safe and reliable and we must be certain that any change supports those ambitions. It is clear there is community concern about the impact any change might have on safety, hygiene and accessibility for people with disability. Those concerns are valid and require a comprehensive and considered approach. The motion calls on the Government to investigate allowing pets on public transport. I am assured by the Minister, the Hon. John Graham, that he continues to work closely with Transport for NSW to give the issue full and proper consideration. We will approach this issue as we do others in public transport—by listening to passengers and transport workers, gathering evidence to assess the best approach, consulting with all the stakeholders and ultimately making decisions that are in the interests of all the travelling public.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (18:19): I support the motion and indicate that the Opposition will be supporting it. I commend the member for moving it and for her work in this space. It has changed so much in this policy area. She has been groundbreaking in her work, which is often very difficult and challenging in this place. The Opposition is open to a limited trial of a policy supporting companion animals on public transport. The policy does not include a definition of "animals". I am not sure if it includes a companion camel, but I assume we are talking about dogs and pets on leads. We are open to working with the member and the Government on what that could look like.

Mango and Murphy are my favourite constituents. They are great listeners and have other great benefits. We all have our favourite pets. There are also benefits to working with animals. We have companion animals, which are great for heart health and reducing anxiety for people. We already have guide dogs, and we know the benefits of puppies on social media and how they trend. We are open to working with that. But while the vast majority of owners ensure that their animals are well behaved, there is the risk of bad owners not ensuring that their animal behaves appropriately, and there needs to be a balance struck in ensuring that that is managed. However, the Government is yet to propose anything on that subject, so we would commend it for doing some work in that space. That said, some companion animals are better behaved than some commuters, so perhaps their standards should be adopted to ensure that people are appropriately behaved on our public transport.

In all seriousness, it is clear that to implement something like this proposal, there would need to be appropriate policy settings, plans and engagement prior to implementation. We support the work that needs to be done. We would like to see it initially from the Government and operational experts at Transport for NSW, working closely with the member and relevant groups. I think we have broad agreement in this area. If it is friendly and provides benefits to people and a disincentive to use other forms of transport, then that is a good thing, and we will support it.

The Hon. EMMA HURST (18:22): In reply: I thank Ms Abigail Boyd for her contribution and particularly her sensible suggestions about how the policy could work once put into practice and the work that The Greens have done on how this policy has been put into place elsewhere. I also thank the Hon. Bob Nanva and the Hon. Cameron Murphy for their contributions. They mentioned that we need to be mindful of how such a change would impact passengers with disabilities. As I said in my initial contribution, I have met with Guide Dogs NSW. When I met with them the other day, they said that buses pass by people with guide dogs. So there is a current problem, because animals are not being welcomed onto the transport system, and people with assistance animals are already being blocked from it. Normalising companion animals on public transport could help alleviate some of those problems. I encourage the Government to ensure that it consults with Guide Dogs NSW regarding any trials or policies that are implemented.

The Government members also talked about people not wanting to be around animals on transport. I remind all members that animals exist throughout society. If we go down to the park or walk down the street, we will find animals. I am not suggesting we do not give that issue consideration, but there are sensible strategies to get around it. As I mentioned, we have quiet carriages on trains. There is no reason we cannot have companion animal carriages as well.

I also thank the Hon. Natalie Ward for her support and contribution. To settle any concerns about camels, the definition of a companion animal under the Companion Animals Act is a cat or a dog or any other animal prescribed by the regulations. There are no other species prescribed by the regulations. Having said that, we need to be careful because relying on the Companion Animals Act definition would exclude, say, a rabbit or a guinea pig from being able to get to a vet. That is something else I encourage the Government to look into. I thank all honourable members, and I ask the House for support.

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

Motion agreed to.

PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS AWARENESS MONTH

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (18:25): I move:

- (1) This House notes that:
 - (a) October is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month;
 - (b) during this month, the focus is on increasing awareness and providing additional support to individuals whose lives have been profoundly changed by miscarriage or the loss of an infant; and
 - (c) in Australia, one in every four pregnancies results in a miscarriage.
- (2) That this House acknowledges that:
 - (a) an open and honest dialogue where people feel safe to share their personal experiences plays a crucial role in breaking down the stigma associated with miscarriage and pregnancy loss; and
 - (b) since 2021, New South Wales has offered paid leave for public sector employees who experience a miscarriage or pre-term birth.
- (3) That this House recognises:
 - (a) the incredible work and advocacy of the Pink Elephants Support Network, who provide the latest resources, information and peer support for anyone impacted by early pregnancy loss;
 - (b) the launch of the *Miscarriage Rebellion* podcast, hosted by Sam Payne, CEO and co-founder of Pink Elephants, and Stacey June Lewis, a seasoned counsellor, psychotherapist, and broadcaster, to create a safe space for everyday Australians to share their stories of pregnancy loss, and that their conversations provide a platform to candidly discuss many women's experiences, helping to dismantle the layers of shame, blame and stigma that frequently surround miscarriage and early pregnancy loss; and
 - (c) the *Miscarriage Rebellion* strives to break down societal taboos surrounding pregnancy loss, offering empathy and validation to those who have suffered this heartbreaking experience.
- (4) That this House congratulates the CEO of Pink Elephants, Sam Payne, and her team for all the work they do to support grieving women and their families through the tragedy of miscarriage and early pregnancy loss.

October is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month, and I recognise the amazing work of an organisation called the Pink Elephants Support Network and the way they support women, families and parents dealing with both miscarriage and early pregnancy loss. I have spoken about this matter in the House before. It is something I have personal experience with. I have been quite open about the fact that, while I have two beautiful daughters, I had two miscarriages as well. It is a really hard thing to go through. A lot of women find it easy to talk about, and time certainly helps. Other women do not feel comfortable sharing their stories. It is important that we talk about issues that sometimes carry stigma, whether that is pregnancy loss, fertility issues, families who are dealing with the struggles of IVF or people dealing with endometriosis. The fertility journey can be really challenging for a lot of people. It is so common for families to go through the experience of miscarriage and early pregnancy loss that when we get an opportunity as a Parliament to talk about those issues, particularly in the month of October, we should do it.

I had the pleasure of meeting Sam Payne, the CEO and founder of Pink Elephants, a number of years ago. I was thinking about it today. I cannot quite remember the catalyst that brought us together. It might have been Brad Hazzard. It could have been that she heard me speak about my experiences. Anyway, I am so pleased that our paths crossed, because she is an amazing woman who has done so much work to raise awareness about these issues. The first time Sam and I met, which was several years ago now, we chatted about our experiences with our pregnancies. The irony is that we had losses at a similar time, in similar years. I think she has three children now, but our two were born at similar times. So it was eerie that we had both been on that journey at the same time.

My second miscarriage was after a slightly longer gestation, and that was a really harrowing day. To go to the doctor's surgery expecting to see your baby on screen and then to go home that night no longer pregnant is really tough, and it has taken me a long time to be able to talk about it without getting emotional. After that, I told Sam about going down a rabbit hole online, trying to find something that could tell me about it. There was some

okay stuff around. I ended up in a Facebook group with women who I had never met before. I am still part of that group, and a lot of us have watched each other go on to have subsequent children. Some women have not been able to have their rainbow baby yet. I remember telling Sam that I would have loved something like Pink Elephants at the time. Since being set up, it has provided support to the literally thousands of families that go through this every year.

The name Pink Elephants is really beautiful. I did not know this, and I am sure that you, Madam Deputy President, will appreciate it, being someone who has a deep respect for animals. Sam told me that in a herd of elephants, when a mother elephant loses her baby, the other elephants stand in a circle around her and give her the time she needs to grieve and mourn. That is why Pink Elephants uses the elephant as its symbol. One thing it is doing is raising awareness, particularly this month but also throughout the entire year. Last year we had a great event at Parliament House in support of Pink Elephants. Members from all sides attended. The then Premier, Dominic Perrottet, was very supportive and attended that event as well. It is organisations like that that really provide support for women and families at a time that is often one of the most challenging periods of their life.

In my time remaining, I will give a shout-out to two particular initiatives they have. They recently launched a new podcast, *The Miscarriage Rebellion*, that is hosted by Sam Payne and Stacey Lewis to provide a safe space for everyday Australians to talk about their experience. I encourage people to listen to that. A few episodes are up already. Again, it is about trying to break down the stigma, share the experiences and talk about the need for more funding and more support. Pink Elephants has a campaign asking the Federal Government for support. Pink Elephants is the only organisation that provides early-term support, but it does not receive any government funding. They would like to see that changed.

They also have a really great program called #AtLeast because they say that people say to a lot of women, "Well, at least you can fall pregnant," or, "At least you've already got babies." That does not take away the loss that women experience. Pink Elephants does good work. People should look them up, if they have not. I hope members will support this motion because it is a cracker.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst): I will now leave the chair. The House will resume at 8.00 p.m.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (20:01): I speak on behalf of the Government to indicate that it supports this motion. I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for bringing such an important matter to be discussed as part of private members' business day. October marks International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month, and Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day is observed worldwide on 15 October. Pregnancy loss and infant death include miscarriage, stillbirth and infant death. I take this opportunity to say that the New South Wales Government recognises that pregnancy loss at any point is devastating. That loss can have a profound and long-lasting impact on women and their families, and the Government is committed to supporting them during that time.

The NSW Health perinatal loss policy is being finalised. It outlines elements of respectful, culturally safe and supportive care to ensure that all parents and families are well supported. NSW Health has engaged with the comment from Pink Elephants on that policy, and the Government is grateful for the work of such organisations. Since its creation in 2016 by Samantha Payne and Gabbi Armstrong, Pink Elephants has provided support for women and their families through early pregnancy loss or miscarriage. Pink Elephants provides early intervention support to women and their families through digital-based peer support, educational information and resources. Specialist support services such as bereavement counselling, perinatal mental health and genetic counselling are provided in some facilities. Those specialist services are networked with other facilities to ensure that they are available to all women as needed, irrespective of where the pregnancy loss occurred.

The New South Wales Government also recognises the role of other non-government organisations and their advocacy and provision of support for bereaved families who experience miscarriage, stillbirth and infant death. They can be an important referral point and source of information and support. The Government has committed \$209,300 funding for Red Nose in FY2023-24 to provide bereavement support for families in New South Wales that experience the death of their baby during pregnancy, birth and infancy, including miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, stillbirth, and neonatal and infant death.

It would be a rare person who has not either had this devastating experience personally or had a close family member or friend go through it. I place on record my thanks to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I apologise that I was not in the Chamber to hear her contribution, but she has spoken previously of her experience. It is incredibly powerful for members in this place to speak about their own personal experiences of devastating events such as these. It is important that we continue to shine a light on these difficult circumstances and provide

support. The Government thanks Pink Elephants and other like organisations for the important work that they do for people at this incredibly difficult time.

The Hon. Dr SARAH Kaine (20:05): I want to speak on this matter, but before I do, I note that I will be retelling the story of someone who has experienced infant loss. If any member needs to absent themselves, I understand. I think my contribution is in the spirit of the motion, but if it is not, I would be happy for the Hon. Sarah Mitchell to suggest that I do not continue. I note that the motion makes clear that these issues should be spoken about and that we should do so in order to overcome the stigma. I am telling the story of Emily.

She was so excited when she got the news. She had bought the crib, the clothes, the car seat. She had set up the room. She had planned the baby shower to celebrate with family and friends. And then she goes in for a check-up and they tell her there is no heartbeat. She waits for the next scan, hoping they have just missed something, but then she receives the news: Her baby has passed. They send her home with medication and tell her to come back in two days. She goes home to her house full of baby things, carrying a baby she knows will not get to breathe the outside air. She questions how she got to this point—if there was anything she could have done, if there was anything she missed.

She is induced and gives birth to a child so small, but she can still see herself and her partner in their features. She hands her child to a nurse, never to be seen again. Her child has been taken to be autopsied in hopes that maybe she will get an answer about what happened. She is trying to process what has happened but has to tell her friends and family that the baby they were all so excited to meet has not survived. She needs to ring funeral homes and consider if she can afford the \$4,000 just for her child to be cremated or buried. It is a relief for her when she finds one that only charges for the death certificate. People ask how she is and there really is no answer to fully express the sorrow she is feeling—the disbelief. And she continues to question why this happened and whether there was anything anyone could have done.

That is the reality of pregnancy and infant loss. It is the story of Emily, a young woman who lost her son earlier this year. I commend the honourable member for bringing this motion to the House, and for raising awareness about the issue of pregnancy, infant loss and the organisations that support the women and families it impacts. The Government recognises this and commends those who work to help those who have suffered.

The Hon. WES FANG (20:07): I associate myself with the motion of my good friend and colleague the Hon. Sarah Mitchell. I note that the contributions so far have been from female members who have had some experience, whether it is their own or through other people, of these issues. It also affects men. I expect that a number of members in the Chamber have had similar experiences, but from the different perspective of the father. I know that I have. It happened after 12 weeks, just when we thought everything was fine and we had started to tell people. The scan happens at around 12 weeks and then you work out that it was not as you planned.

Obviously, my then wife was devastated at the time. I was trying to work out how I could help her, and I did not really process what I had lost as well. We could see that there was a baby on the scan, but we did not think to ask for a printout of it. I went back and asked for a printout because we had no record of it. That is my story to say that it affects people in different ways. It does not just affect women. There would be other members in this Chamber who have experienced something similar. Everyone is affected by it, which is why it is important that this motion was brought forward. It is good that we shine a light on it and talk about it. I will always remember that moment. It makes you appreciate it even more when you actually have children come into your life. I thank the Hon. Sarah Mitchell for moving the motion. I say to anyone in the Chamber who has experienced this that they are not alone and that they should feel free to talk about it.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (20:10): I start by acknowledging the Hon. Sarah Mitchell for bringing such an important motion and discussion to the House. It is fair to say that many, if not all, of us in this place would have either experienced the loss of an infant, an early miscarriage or a stillbirth, or would know someone who has. It impacts many people in the community. In spite of all of the research and interventions, stillbirth rates are stubbornly stuck where they are. Unfortunately, there are still six stillbirths every day in Australia. I think that is the most recent statistic. That is heartbreaking. It is also heartbreaking as a health professional. It is important to articulate and emphasise that.

During a recent birth trauma inquiry hearing, we heard evidence from one of the wonderful obstetricians who works in this space, who talked about how you take a little piece of every patient, every contact, with you. Some of those pieces are bigger than others. In the instance of a stillbirth or a neonatal death, that really leaves an impact. As a health professional, I certainly remember every child that died. Many of them were babies. Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month is an important opportunity for us to have this conversation and to bring awareness but also to refocus our attention on the work we still need to do in this space.

I commend NSW Health for its initiatives around pregnancy loss and the work that it has done to date. As I said, there is still work to do. We are always looking at what can be done better to deliver the compassionate care that people need at such a horrifyingly difficult time. No-one would expect to have to go through this. I finish by thanking the members that have shared their stories in this place. It is a difficult thing to do, and I commend them for that. It underlines the importance of us sharing our stories and contributes to the debate.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (20:14): In reply: I thank all members for their contributions to the debate. The Hon. Emily Suvaal made a really good point about the healthcare workers that deal with this sort of tragedy day in and day out. It is hard to be in a position to watch families go through what are undoubtedly the toughest days of their lives. It is an admirable vocation and, as we speak to the motion, we should acknowledge the amazing health staff who provide so much comfort and support to families at a really tough time. I thank the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine for sharing the story of her friend Emily. I am sorry for her loss. I am sorry for the Hon. Wes Fang's loss. I did not know that he had been through that until this moment, and we have been friends for a long time.

Sam Payne and I often speak about the fact that people do not know what to say. Sometimes they know, depending on how much might have been shared or what stage of pregnancy a person was at when this happened to them. An acknowledgment of, "I am sorry for your loss," goes a long way. I hope that is something that members take out of the debate today. It is important to share feelings of understanding of a person's grief, because it is a grief process that a person goes through. To the Hon. Wes Fang's point, it does not matter whether you are the mother, the father or what role you play in a relationship; it is hard. It is important that we talk about this, that we eliminate the stigma and that there are motions and months like this where we can commemorate and acknowledge the loss that occurs.

I finish by once again acknowledging Sam Payne and her team at Pink Elephants. They do so much with no government funding. They understand the importance of supporting people not just at that moment in time but often for a period after. When a person goes through that, they are so much more alert in subsequent pregnancies and there is a sense of anxiety. I had my two miscarriages between having my two girls. At every step of my pregnancy with my second daughter, Matilda, I was anxious because I knew what could happen. It adds another layer of complexity that needs to be dealt with. Pink Elephants recognises that it is a journey that needs support.

These things have also come up in our birth trauma inquiry, and there will be a chance to speak to some of those issues later on. These things stay with you and impact the way that you see your experience as a parent. It is critical to have organisations like Pink Elephants that you can call on for support during times when you need them the most. I thank members for their support of the motion. If anyone is not aware of Pink Elephants, they should look them up. If you know someone who has gone through pregnancy loss or the early loss of an infant, please reach out to Pink Elephants. They do amazing work and are certainly worthy of our support and recognition.

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): I thank all members for the respectful nature of the debate. The question is that the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Documents

ISRAEL-PALESTINE PROTESTS

Return to Order

The CLERK: According to the resolution of the House of Wednesday 11 October 2023, I table documents relating to an order for papers regarding the Palestinian protest event in Sydney on 9 October 2023, received on Wednesday 18 October 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 18 October 2023 that are claimed to be privileged and should not be tabled or made public. I advise that pursuant to standing orders the documents are available for inspection by members of the Legislative Council only.

POLICE TASER USE

Tabling of Correspondence

The CLERK: According to the resolution of the House of Wednesday 11 October 2023, I table correspondence relating to a further order for papers regarding the tasering incident in Cooma, received on Wednesday 18 October 2023 from the Acting Secretary of the Cabinet Office, stating that the Minister for Health,

Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast holds no documents covered by the terms of the resolution, and advising that advice had been received from the NSW Police Force that documents held by the Ministry of Health concern the administration of justice and should therefore be sought under Standing Order 55.

Motions

**ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE TO NEW SOUTH WALES
PARLIAMENT**

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (20:18): I seek the leave of the House to amend private members' business item No. 562 standing in my name on the *Notice Paper* for today as follows:

- (1) In paragraph (2) (a) omit "regardless of race," after "vulnerable people,".
- (2) Omit paragraph (2) (d).

Leave granted.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: Accordingly, I move:

- (1) That this House:
 - (a) respects the contribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make to the history and heritage of New South Wales;
 - (b) notes NSW Labor's election commitment to "treaty and truth" and the \$5 million "listening tour";
 - (c) notes that, to date, Premier Chris Minns has refused to rule out a Voice to the New South Wales Parliament;
 - (d) notes that NSW Labor never committed to a Voice to New South Wales Parliament at the 2023 State election;
 - (e) respects the decision of New South Wales voters who overwhelmingly rejected the Voice to Parliament at the 14 October 2023 referendum;
 - (f) notes the final cost of the Voice to Parliament referendum is projected to cost more than \$400 million; and
 - (g) notes that Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles declared that the "Australian people always get it right, and we acknowledge the result of this referendum".
- (2) That this House calls on the NSW Labor Government to:
 - (a) focus on addressing disadvantage for all vulnerable people;
 - (b) respect the decision of New South Wales voters who resoundingly rejected the Voice to Parliament; and
 - (c) rule out legislating a Voice to the New South Wales Parliament.

I decided to amend my motion to focus on the crux of the issue. The motion states that this House calls on the Government to rule out a Voice to the New South Wales Parliament. I will move a separate motion relating to the matters that I just deleted. As of now, Labor's position on the Voice to the New South Wales Parliament still remains unclear. However, the people of this State made it very clear that they decisively rejected the Voice to Parliament. On the weekend over 59 per cent of people in New South Wales made it clear that they reject the Voice to Parliament. It is abundantly clear and should be clear to all members in this House that people have had a gutful. If we look at the votes from the marginal electorates in Western Sydney, outer Sydney and regional New South Wales, many of them changed hands at the 2023 election, allowing Chris Minns to form a Labor Government. There were some very strong no votes in the areas of Camden, MacArthur, Riverstone and Penrith. It is absolutely clear that the people of New South Wales have spoken.

What is also clear is that the Minns Labor Government wants the issue to go away quietly. But it will not go away quietly because it needs to be settled. The Government must formally rule out any intention of legislating a voice to the New South Wales Parliament. No government can be so arrogant as to ignore a mandate like the decisive vote that we saw over the weekend. The clear no vote is telling the Government to focus its energies and attention back on alleviating cost-of-living pressures, the economy and supporting the families doing it tough in communities of need such as Parkes, Lyon and Monaro. We only have to look at the Australian Electoral Commission results to see that people have had a gutful of the virtue signalling. They want real results and they want them now. My motion is sending a strong message to the people of New South Wales that this Government will not be arrogant and just ignore the issue. It will be decisive. It is critical that this motion be passed tonight.

Last week we passed a motion that essentially called on New South Wales to vote yes. It was passed in this House despite the fact that I and a number of other members voted against it. But overwhelmingly the Labor Party stitched up the votes with the left to make sure that motion was passed. Let us look at the results of the weekend. The people of New South Wales sent a clear message to the Government to refocus its energies on supporting families, on reducing the waiting list for housing, and on homelessness, which is on the rise in some

regions of New South Wales. Some stark data coming out of regional New South Wales shows that homelessness is on the rise. NSW Council of Social Service data on poverty shows that one million people and one in seven children live in poverty in New South Wales. What does the Voice do for them? The \$400 million that was spent on the Voice referendum should have been redirected to the communities most in need.

The first paragraph of my motion makes it clear that I respect Aboriginal people and the value they have in building the historical heritage of New South Wales, and I do not discount the need for Closing the Gap measures. They are critical. I have stood in the other Chamber on many occasions and supported Aboriginal people, particularly when I was shadow Minister for Family and Community Services. I was absolutely gutted to see the number of children in care and the number of young Aboriginal people who were incarcerated. The Voice would not have helped them one iota—and everyone in this Chamber knows it. It is absolutely imperative now that the New South Wales and Federal governments refocus their energy on the vulnerable and those who need desperate assistance. It is imperative that there be a strong message from Chris Minns. He only needs to look at his electorate to see that people overwhelmingly voted no. [*Time expired.*]

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) (20:25): On behalf of the New South Wales Government I oppose the motion moved by the Hon. Tania Mihailuk. As a government, we absolutely respect the decision of the Australian people to not change Australia's Constitution. It is an historical fact that only 13 of 45 Australia-wide referendums have ever attracted more than 50 per cent of the national vote. It is true that the Government is focused on the cost of living for the people of New South Wales and on housing and planning issues. That is also a matter of record, and I can report that to the House as a result of the discussions I have had with many of my colleagues both in the ministry and across the caucus. The truth is that, on Saturday, people did not reject reconciliation or working in partnership with Aboriginal communities to achieve better outcomes for Indigenous people and for all taxpayers. The outcome of the referendum does not directly affect the decision by the New South Wales Government to start a conversation about treaty. That is an election commitment we gave and will continue to work on.

We are aware of the very real impact the emotionally charged campaign leading up to the referendum has had on Aboriginal communities, families and people. It is likely that Aboriginal people across New South Wales, regardless of which side of the Voice debate they are on, will need time to recover and heal before they can re-engage with those issues. This Government is committed to starting consultation on a pathway to treaty. We will meet that commitment but will also be guided by Aboriginal communities as to when they will be ready to have that discussion. We are also continuing to deliver on our commitments under Closing the Gap and working towards long-needed reforms to manage and protect Aboriginal Cultural Heritage. New South Wales is behind on a range of Closing the Gap targets, and the Government needs to work in partnership with the Aboriginal community and the whole community to do better. Measures on life expectancy, school readiness, employment and health outcomes all have Aboriginal people experiencing poorer outcomes when compared to non-Aboriginal people.

The very first socioeconomic target in Closing the Gap is that Aboriginal people enjoy long and healthy lives. The latest Closing the Gap data shows that the life expectancy gap in New South Wales is 9.3 years for Aboriginal males and 7.6 years for females. Despite some improvement and a narrowing of the gap, the national target of no gap in life expectancy is not on track to be met for males or females. To close the gap in life expectancy within a generation, or by 2031, is dependent on addressing multiple factors that give rise to the difference. In this State, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census was 38 per cent, which is well below the target of 55 per cent. These are some of the issues that need to be tackled, and the Government is focused on those while it deals with other key priorities.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (20:28): I indicate that The Greens will not support the motion moved by Pauline Hanson's One Nation. We have a lot of work to do in New South Wales in pursuit of First Nations justice. Now that the national agenda referendum is done, we must get on with the work of this State. We need to get First Nations people out of prisons and stop sending them there in the first place, stop the over-policing, fully implement the recommendations of the Family is Culture report, raise the age of criminal responsibility and implement cultural heritage laws that give decision-making powers back to cultural knowledge holders. We must give power back to Indigenous communities to make their own decisions about their own people and remove all of the other structural barriers to self-determination. So many First Nations people engaged in good faith in the referendum process, sharing their knowledge and culture in hope that the Voice might be a step toward addressing these immense challenges across the whole country.

The referendum results show that First Nations communities voted overwhelmingly in favour of the Voice. That is a shameful indictment on those political players who seized the referendum as an opportunity to spread

misinformation and who unconscionably used the good faith engagement of First Nations people to try to rebuild their decimated voter base through the no campaign—and continue to do so. There is now a clear need for truth-telling in this State and across the country. Truth is at the heart of reconciliation processes. The truth is that colonisation sought to erase First Nations people. The reality is that many people are still in denial of this truth and its continuing impact. I urge all members, as lawmakers in this place—and particularly the mover of this motion—to start their own truth-telling journey by researching the vast body of laws and policies that have brutally impacted on Aboriginal people in this State since 1788. A good place to start is by looking at the Towards Truth website set up by the UNSW Indigenous Law Centre and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre. It is sterling.

This motion is not a good faith motion. It flies in the face of First Nations justice, reconciliation and self-determination. Seeking to rule out a First Nations Voice to the New South Wales Parliament as this State embarks on the difficult but very exciting path of truth and treaty is just wrong and ignorant. If First Nations people in New South Wales want a Voice to this Parliament because they determine it would be an effective vehicle to deliver justice outcomes for First Nations people, then it should be on the table. I ask members of this House to not support this motion—not now, not ever and not here on the land of the Gadigal people, which always was and always will be Aboriginal land. [*Time expired.*]

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (20:32): I wonder whether the previous two speakers, the Hon. John Graham and Ms Sue Higginson, have actually read the motion and understand what it calls for. After noting various matters, the motion, as amended by the member, calls on the Government to do three things. Firstly, it asks the Government to "focus on addressing disadvantage for all vulnerable people". The Opposition notes that Aboriginal people are disproportionately disadvantaged and that programs to address specific disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal people are appropriate and widely supported. Whatever is necessary to be done in relation to Closing the Gap programs should be supported.

Secondly, and I note that the Deputy Leader of the Government acknowledged this, the motion calls on this House to "respect the decision of New South Wales voters who rejected the Voice to Parliament". We live in a constitutional democracy. Section 128 of the Constitution of Australia sets out the means of altering the Constitution. A proposal was put to the electorate under this section and the result was decisive. Naturally, it needs to be respected, and I think the Deputy Leader of the Government acknowledged exactly that. So the first and second paragraphs of the motion are capable of support.

The third paragraph of the motion appears to be a sticking point for the Government because it calls for it to "rule out legislating a Voice to the New South Wales Parliament". It is the Opposition's position that any proposal for such a significant change to how the Parliament operates in New South Wales should only be considered for legislation if it has been previously put to the people at a general election. That will be our position. With those comments, I indicate that the Opposition will support the motion as amended by the member.

The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (20:34): I support the Hon. Tania Mihailuk's motion this evening concerning the outcome of Saturday's referendum and this Government's failure to rule out a Voice to the New South Wales Parliament. On Saturday just past, over 60 per cent of New South Wales voters flatly rejected the Voice. The Premier would be interested to know that his own electorate of Kogarah voted overwhelmingly against the Voice. Across the State, despite an avalanche of big business and big union money, and an army of campaign workers, the yes case floundered as millions of citizens said no to the idea of the inclusion of the Voice in our Constitution.

The CEO of the Australian Banking Association, the Hon. Anna Bligh, AC, posted on LinkedIn on Friday that bank customers should vote yes because "Listening gets better results"—a novel idea for our big four banks. But even she was not able to save the day, despite the big four banks having spent over \$7 million of shareholder money—money that could have been spent on keeping local bank branches open—on propaganda and endless campaigning for the yes campaign. The people of New South Wales clearly and decisively said "No" to the Voice. This new chapter would have had a profound impact upon our Australian democracy. The subject matter which the Voice could have involved itself in, as part of our Constitution—alongside the Parliament, the Executive and the judiciary—was unlimited and unknown. The equality of our citizenship as Australians was threatened. Paul Kelly, Editor-at-Large at *The Australian*, pointed out:

The Voice is based on the principle that we have different constitutional rights depending on our ancestry.

When faced with this reality, the people said a clear and eloquent "No". It is time now for the Premier to respect the decision of the people of New South Wales and draw a line through the suggestion of a State Voice to Parliament. As this motion states, Labor never took the idea of a State Voice to the recent State election. There is no electoral mandate for a State Voice—none whatsoever. If the Premier wants to end the division, the most helpful announcement he can make is that a State Voice is off the table. He should respect the wishes of the people of New South Wales and rule it out. The people of New South Wales got it right on Saturday. It is time for the

Government to focus, as this motion states, on addressing disadvantage for all vulnerable Australians, which includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is time to put the corporate spin and celebrity endorsements away and get back to governing. I commend the motion to the House.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (20:36): There have been a lot of attempts since the referendum vote on Saturday to interpret it. I have heard Aboriginal people say that it is the end of reconciliation. That is very sad to hear. I have heard other people, including Aboriginal people, say that it is certainly not the end of reconciliation. I have heard people say that it is the end of constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I certainly hope that is not the case. It is the clear intent of this motion to suggest that the verdict of the people on the referendum is the end of things such as statutory voices to Parliament in States or Territories. To assess the validity of that suggestion, I think that one needs to look briefly at what the issues were in the referendum campaign.

The Liberal Party's position in the campaign, as I understood it, was that they supported a statutory Voice to Parliament made up of local and regional voices. The Liberty Party was also clear in its support of constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It was obviously the position of the Government that the proposal that was being put should be adopted. Those were the broad lines drawn. In that context, it is very difficult to see how the verdict of the people could be construed as a rejection of a statutory voice in New South Wales, in circumstances where the significant opponents of it actually supported a voice. It makes no sense. It is also important to look at what the main substantive underlying issues were in the campaign. They clearly included the concern about there not having been a draft bill or detail exposed first. That being a substantial issue does not support the suggestion that the verdict of the people is a rejection of a statutory voice.

In fact, it is quite to the contrary. The verdict of the people meant that the people rejected a Voice to Parliament through constitutional recognition. That was the verdict of the people. It is not a rejection of a statutory voice. Another thing that needs to be considered deeply is that Aboriginal and Strait Torres Islander communities across Australia voted overwhelmingly for the Voice. In this difficult time in the wash-up of the referendum, we should all sit with that, contemplate it and think about what it means. We certainly should not engage in an unseemly rush to misinterpret the verdict of the people in order to push one's own barrow about the issue.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (20:40): I also oppose the motion moved by the Hon. Tania Mihailuk. As Minister Graham outlined, it is important that we respect the decision delivered on the weekend by the voters of New South Wales. That said, I have spoken to many Indigenous colleagues and friends since that vote who are in a state of sadness, grief and mourning. These are people who feel that through the course of history they have overwhelmingly and repeatedly had backs turned on them, had their children taken away from them and been trodden down and dispossessed. And now they have had this, following a divisive campaign with lots of misinformation. As my colleague the Hon. Stephen Lawrence pointed out, the Indigenous communities in Australia voted overwhelmingly in support of a Voice to Parliament via the referendum. We saw that very clearly in the voting patterns across our nation.

I also heard stories of one person who has needed to take time off work because their children are afraid to go to school for fear of being bullied since the result on the weekend. That is a very sobering reality that we sit in during this week of mourning, as it has been declared. The motion aside, as I have previously spoken about in this place, it is quite clear that we still have a lot of urgent work to do in New South Wales and across the nation to close the gap with Indigenous health outcomes. It is also clear that Indigenous people believed that the Voice was a good way to go about doing so. It is also important to remember that for over 65,000 years Indigenous people have walked on this country. They know this country, and nothing we do or say in this place can take away from that fact.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (20:43): I am astounded at the assertion that the Hon. Tania Mihailuk knows the thinking of the millions of people who cast a ballot on Saturday in the referendum. I am not convinced that a lot of people were actually rejecting the Voice. I am convinced that a lot of people went into the polling booth not knowing what the Voice was about and, in a moment of doubt, were prepared to cast a ballot against something they did not understand. I sat on a polling booth. I sat in the pre-poll, and I listened to people. I asked them if they were voting yes. When they said no, I asked them why. Many of them explained to me that there was not enough information. One person said, "I'm not voting for this proposal because it comes from a government that is supporting Israel." It was extraordinary, but that was one of the explanations put in my polling booth for why someone was not voting yes in the referendum.

Regarding the notion that people rejected the Voice on the basis of a full understanding of what was proposed, it was clear that the yes campaign failed to properly persuade many people or put the case in an effective way. But that does not mean that we should now stop in New South Wales. It does not mean that we should not listen to Aboriginal people, that we should not seek their views or that they should not have some capacity to express views to government and Parliament. It is the appropriate thing for this State to take stock of what the

referendum means in terms of how we progress reconciliation. To draw conclusions based on a rejection of a very specific proposition to amend the Australian Constitution, and to draw a correlation with what should be done in New South Wales, is a flawed proposal and it should be rejected.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (20:45): In reply: I thank all the members who contributed to the debate. It does not surprise me that The Greens are so vehemently opposed to my motion, but it does surprise me that the New South Wales Labor Government is. It is very clear that all I ask the Government to do is, firstly, focus on addressing disadvantage for all vulnerable people. Clearly it does not want to do that anymore, or it has not, to date. Secondly, I ask it to respect the decision of New South Wales voters, who resoundingly rejected the Voice to Parliament. They are not respecting that decision.

It was clear from the contributions of some of the members on the other side of the House that they do not respect the decision of electorates in Western Sydney, south-west Sydney, outer Sydney and regional New South Wales, which in particular had some very high no votes. I stood at pre-poll booths in Bankstown. I was in my electorate on Saturday, handing out at some of the booths. I did not see my Federal Labor member. I did not see any State Labor members handing out for the yes vote, because they realised that it was all over. The arrogance of members on the other side of the House is absolutely shocking. The Hon. Stephen Lawrence, the Hon. Emily Suvaal and the Hon. John Graham—

The Hon. Chris Rath: Name them all.

The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK: They should be named because they are clearly sending a message to the rest of New South Wales that their vote is irrelevant. It was a decisive vote on Saturday. There were suggestions that it be downplayed; that people are stupid, as suggested by Anthony D'Adam; that they do not understand, as suggested by Stephen Lawrence; or that they cannot tell the difference between statutory and constitutional law. Get real, Stephen Lawrence. There is a reason he would never be put into the lower House. It is because he has absolutely no understanding of what the average person thinks. That is the problem with NSW Labor right now. I suggest that Minns has very little to say about this issue.

He would like it to go away, because he can see it is not a vote-winner. Hence, he has not said much since Saturday. The only acknowledgement he has made is to thank poor Linda for her work. He has not had anything else to say. He certainly has not acknowledged the mood of the people of New South Wales. He certainly has not acknowledged that there is work to be done to support vulnerable people in New South Wales. He has not acknowledged that there are a million people living in poverty in New South Wales and that he will redirect all of the Government's energy and resources into supporting all people, irrespective of race. It is disappointing but not surprising that NSW Labor will work with the Greens to oppose what the people of New South Wales want. They sent a very strong message—they said no to the Voice to Parliament. [*Time expired.*]

The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose): Members should refer to other members by their appropriate titles. It is a courtesy. I ask all members to be mindful of that practice. That also applies to members in the other place.

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

The House divided.

Ayes13
Noes19
Majority.....6

AYES

Fang (teller)
Farlow
Farraway
MacDonald
Martin

Merton
Mihailuk
Mitchell
Munro

Rath (teller)
Ruddick
Tudehope
Ward

NOES

Boyd
Buckingham
Cohn
D'Adam
Donnelly
Faehrmann

Higginson
Houssos
Hurst
Kaine
Lawrence
Mookhey

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

Graham

NOES

Carter
Taylor

PAIRS

Buttigieg
Jackson

Motion negatived.

Bills

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2023

First Reading

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

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

Statement of public interest tabled.

The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM: 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. JOHN GRAHAM: I move:

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

Motion agreed to.

HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MISCELLANEOUS) BILL 2023

Messages

The PRESIDENT: I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly agreeing to the Legislative Council's amendments to the bill.

**WASTE RECYCLING AND PROCESSING CORPORATION (AUTHORISED TRANSACTION)
AMENDMENT BILL 2023**

Messages

The PRESIDENT: I report receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly agreeing to the Legislative Council's amendment to the bill.

STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL (NO 2) 2023

Returned

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

Motions

BUSHFIRE READINESS

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (20:58): I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) generally the New South Wales statutory bushfire danger period runs from 1 October to 31 March each year;
 - (b) the statutory bushfire danger period for six local government areas, Armidale Regional, Walcha, Uralla, Glen Innes Severn, Inverell and Tenterfield councils, starts earlier on 1 August; and
 - (c) fire conditions are expected to return to New South Wales after three years of wet weather.
- (2) That this House encourages people to have their bushfire preparedness plan in place before the bushfire season in New South Wales starts in their local area. I speak about the statutory New South Wales bushfire danger period that runs from 1 October to 31 March each financial year. Already we have seen on the South Coast a bushfire reminiscent of the Black Summer

bushfires in 2019 and 2020, which caused such devastation. Three homes were destroyed, and a person was hospitalised after a bushfire ravaged more than 5,000 hectares near Bermagui. The following evening there was another bushfire, near Cessnock, which was contained. Firefighters managed to save a string of homes threatened by the blaze. In the past few days, we have not only heard the news relating to a series of other bushfires, some of which are not contained, raging throughout New South Wales, but also relating to the tragedy of two people, one a Rural Fire Service volunteer, having lost their lives as a consequence of the bushfires. All members will join me in wishing to pay our respects to the families of both of those people. Unfortunately, the situation involving bushfires in this State is always threatening a tragedy.

The statutory bushfire danger period formally signals the importance of having a bushfire preparedness plan in place for every household, regardless of the threat level currently posed by bushfires. It is even better if the plan is made before the statutory period begins. As the message goes, if you do not have one, now is the perfect time to put one in place. Shortly before I gave notice of this motion, back in August, I had spoken with councillors Susan McMichael and Debra O'Brien from Armidale Regional Council. They reminded me that their statutory bushfire danger period had already begun. They spoke about how worried they were by the fire conditions expected to return to New South Wales after three years of wet weather. They were even more concerned about their communities. A lot of the vital work had been done, but more needed to be done to ensure that households in their local government areas and other council areas whose bushfire seasons started early had their bushfire plans in place.

The Rural Fire Service and other agencies and organisations have undertaken significant preparatory work for the bushfire season. There has been much outreach work reminding communities about having bushfire preparedness plans. There have been training of volunteer firefighters and preparing the vital equipment used in these circumstances. I recognise and thank the 70,000 volunteers of the RFS for the work they do in their communities and throughout New South Wales. I recognise and thank also the Ministers involved in steering this effort and the many people in agencies and organisations that prepare and train for bushfire emergencies. These include Fire and Rescue NSW, the State Emergency Service, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, local councils, NSW Health and the many community organisations that provide immediate support in the aftermath.

There have been hazard reduction burns across the State, despite wet weather. The RFS has been working hard to meet hazard reduction burn targets before conditions become too dangerous to do any more. I mention one innovative hazard reduction method taking place: the use of grazing goats. These goats have cleared more than 162 hectares across 20 sites and are not constrained in the same way by weather and terrain. Like everyone in the Chamber and across our communities, I do not want to see the devastation of the Black Summer bushfires ever again. The most important lesson we learned from Black Summer is that we need to be as well prepared as we can be. I urge everyone across New South Wales to discuss and have in place a bushfire preparedness and survival plan. The information to prepare one is available on the RFS and the Fire and Rescue NSW websites.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (21:03): I contribute to debate regarding the bushfire danger period being brought forward in six local government areas of the Northern Tablelands electorate, as the Hon. Peter Primrose has said, and speak on behalf of the Opposition in support of the motion. It is an area I am familiar with. It is really dry, and we could do with more than a drop of rain. I have begun to see the despair on people's faces as they check the Bureau of Meteorology—or the BOM, as we like to call it—for the weather forecast, and then the looks turn more serious because no rain is forecast.

There is despair because we remember the bushfire smoke filling our skies for months back in 2019. It had been incredibly dry. Guyra, where I live, was fast running out of water. At one stage we had only 100 days of water left. We felt powerless against Mother Nature. The whole local government area had been on water restrictions, and the council was trying to find water by drilling bores. Livestock producers were worried about their sheep and cattle. They were working incredibly hard to feed their stock and find water, just to keep their stock alive. The Rural Fire Service worked hard for what seemed a long time. At one stage, the firefighters did not have any water to put out the fires and would try to bulldoze dirt to stop the spread. It was gut-wrenching.

More than 1,633,000 hectares were burnt. Think about that for a moment. This was farmland and national park land. Sadly, there was loss of human life, untold damage and huge losses of flora and fauna. The Armidale airport became a hive of activity as fire brigades from Victoria, South Australia and elsewhere came to help us fight the blazes. It was so dry that in November 2019 hundreds of Irishmen drove from Sydney and delivered hundreds of thousands of litres of water to give us a drink. A convoy of more than 90 trucks carried bottled drinking water on 300 pallets. Other trucks had bulk loads, which proceeded to fill a storage dam near the Armidale airport. It gave local firefighters a huge boost to their dwindled resources. I was there on the day they arrived, and I can tell you that it was such a heartwarming event. Many people cried tears of happiness as the jolly Irishmen unloaded their trucks and brought happiness for the day.

I well understand why the season has been brought forward, as we see now the same conditions we lived through during those devastating bushfires in the region. We were fortunate, though, after a long season of drought of several years and then months of bushfires. The best thing that happened was the skies opening up and the rain

coming down. It kept coming, filling our dams again and even putting out the bushfires. Times are not good, and we need to be prepared for the worst and to hope for the best. I thank the honourable member for his motion but hope that the rain falls soon.

Dr AMANDA COHN (21:06): I thank the Hon. Peter Primrose for moving this motion and giving us the opportunity to discuss this important issue. Regional communities impacted by bushfires in 2019 and 2020 are still traumatised and reeling from those disasters. Even the whiff of a hazard reduction burn brings back difficult memories. Regional communities have been looking at the weather and at the fires in North America and in Europe with genuine fear and trauma. It is important that we support those communities as best we can. Of course, the climate is changing and the standard preparations we have done for generations will not be able to be relied on, going forward.

I absolutely support this motion. We all should be encouraging the communities we represent to prepare for emergencies for themselves and the people we care about. We also need to be preparing for the broader health impacts of these kinds of disasters. Each year, heatwaves cause more deaths in Australia than any other kind of disaster. We know that people cannot afford to run air conditioning and do not have adequately ventilated homes, so we need cool spaces in our communities for people to go to, and we need people to understand how they might be able to keep themselves cool without air conditioning.

We need to look at the impact of smoke pollution. Sydney was not directly impacted by the 2019 and 2020 fires but was blanketed with smoke for a significant period of time. I was working as a GP during that time, and only after weeks of that kind of smoke did we get guidance saying that people who are pregnant or have respiratory conditions should wear P2 respirators to protect themselves from PM2.5 air pollution. I think that our communities are not ready for that, coming into this bushfire season. This is not just about the measures that individuals and households need to take. Although I think we should encourage individuals and households to prepare, we need, at a system level and at a Government level, to be both improving the way we respond to bushfires and the way that we look after air quality.

Independent experts are calling for improved use of technology and light aircraft for early detection and prompt responses to fires before they spread. We cannot rely on the RFS to contain big fires in the kind of conditions that we are seeing in our changing climate. We need to be able to put them out before they spread. The Government needs to be doing more in that space. We also need adequate filtration and ventilation, particularly of all public buildings, so that people who cannot access safe air at home have a safe space to go and participate in the community on days where we are blanketed in smoke. I support the motion and thank the honourable member again for the opportunity to debate it tonight.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (21:09): I speak in support of the motion, moved by my colleague the Hon. Peter Primrose, which encourages people to have their bushfire preparedness plans in place for the bushfire season. The community is a vital partner in bushfire safety and landholders on bushfire-prone land have a responsibility to reduce their fire risk and prepare their properties. I note that the community can now also keep up to date with real-time live fire and flood incidents, including hazard reductions, on the new Hazards Near Me app and look out for the updated communications given by the new Australian Fire Danger Rating System. I particularly want to recognise that the bushfire season has been underway since spring with the Bureau of Meteorology already issuing an El Niño alert, meaning that there will be warm, dry conditions for a long time ahead, which will increase the severity of the fire season.

There are further compounding problems in the Dubbo and Bathurst areas, of which I am duty MLC. The alert is that grass fuel loads in regions across those electorates have the highest grass fuel load rating—red—in the RFS *Fire Season Outlook 2023-24*. The report states:

Fuel state - or how dry fuels are leading into a fire season - is a particularly important indicator of the level of early fire season activity and the difficulty in suppressing fires. Drier fuels ignite more easily and in times of prolonged drought, very dry soil and low fuel moisture levels make suppressing fires significantly more difficult.

I also thank and acknowledge the incredible work that Fire and Rescue NSW crews from Gulgong, Mudgee, Kelso, Orange, Bathurst and Dubbo have already done this season to protect numerous properties in the Springwood Park Road area and extinguish a blaze spreading through the Cope State Forest, which made a turn towards Ulan township. The crews worked in two separate strike teams, alongside numerous volunteer crews from the RFS and aircraft against high wind, unfavourable conditions and the spreading fire to protect houses, infrastructure and bring the blaze under control. I note that fire operations are continuing and I thank them for all they do.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON (21:12): I support the comments made by my colleague Dr Amanda Cohn. I further contribute to the debate regarding the preparedness of New South Wales and this Government in the face of bushfires and other climate-driven disasters. Personal responsibility for our safety and the safety of those who

depend on us is undeniably crucial in disaster preparedness and climate action. However, it must not be the sole line of defence against those threats. The Government holds a paramount responsibility to ensure that its actions are geared towards safeguarding the environment and communities of New South Wales.

The Greens support the motion. It presents an opportunity to impress upon the Government the existential peril that arises from failing to act swiftly and resolutely on climate change. The jeopardy posed to New South Wales communities and our entire ecosystem by lacklustre climate targets, poor land management, including through the continued logging of our public native forest estate, and the support of fossil fuel projects cannot be understated. It must be recognised as perilous and irresponsible. The motion rightly acknowledges that after three years of unusually intense wet weather New South Wales will experience more extreme fires. It is worth noting that as of this afternoon there are 65 fires across New South Wales. Life has already been lost and no doubt the wildlife toll is already large. Today my grandkids in the north of the State have returned home from school from a day cloaked in thick bushfire smoke. It is imperative that we act decisively to mitigate the impending threat and to fortify our State against the growing challenges posed by climate breakdown.

Beyond personal responsibility, we must recognise that collective action is the cornerstone of resilience. That requires a coordinated effort from all levels of government, in partnership with communities and experts, to develop and implement comprehensive disaster preparedness strategies. Furthermore, we must allocate sufficient resources to equip our emergency services with the tools and training they need to respond effectively to crises. We must confront the undeniable truth: climate change exacerbates the frequency and intensity of natural disasters. It is not enough to address the symptoms; we must tackle the root cause head-on.

Ambitious climate targets, coupled with investments in renewable energy and sustainable and regenerative land management practices, are not only prudent but also essential for the long-term survival and well-being of our State. As we move forward, let us be guided by the understanding that the choices we make today will reverberate through generations to come. Let us stand united in our commitment to safeguarding the people and the environment of New South Wales, and in our unwavering determination to confront the biggest challenges of our time.

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (21:15): I support the motion and thank the Hon. Peter Primrose for bringing it to the House. Our regional communities continue to be hit hard with the extremely damaging effects of weather events, including bushfires. With the declaration of the recent El Niño weather pattern, the 2023-24 summer is predicted to be one of the hottest, driest summers on record. The Black Summer bushfires of 2019-20 ravaged regional communities, including a number of areas within my duty electorate of Kiama.

I particularly recognise the devastating effect of the Black Summer bushfires on the residents of Kangaroo Valley, who fell victim to the Currowan fire that, on a change of wind direction, travelled almost 100 kilometres north to reach the small town. It would later come out that the Currowan fire ultimately burned for 74 days and destroyed 320,385 hectares of land. The fire saw approximately 10 per cent—at least 48—of the homes in Kangaroo Valley seriously damaged. At least five of those properties were declared a total loss. A number of holiday cabins, critical infrastructure, sheds and equipment were also declared total losses. The Kangaroo Valley Bush Retreat, a local wedding venue, experienced extreme damage, which forced it to cancel and refund 120 weddings booked for the 18 months following the fire. That had flow-on effects to local businesses because the venue used local suppliers for its produce and wedding parties would often source local photographers and other businesses.

Countless livestock and wild animals were also lost during those events. I visited the area following the fires for a bushwalk—it was not really a bushwalk by then—and I saw the effect on the landscape firsthand. It was devastating and the stunning bushland looked like a hellscape. While experts do not expect this season to be as dangerous as the 2019-20 season, the growth of vegetation over three consecutive years of high rainfall has created a high fuel load, making grass fires a bigger risk than usual. I commend the Government and the fire agencies for their work to prepare for the bushfire season. I encourage local community members to download the Hazards Near Me app and stay engaged with their local rural fire service to ensure they are kept informed of what is happening in their local area. I thank the member for bringing it to the House. I support the motion.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (21:18): In reply: I thank all honourable members who participated in the debate, who gave their personal experiences of the local area and who indicated clearly that bushfire preparedness is an issue that all of us who are concerned about climate change need to be aware of. The motion also mentions the importance of some degree of personal preparedness. It also acknowledges that there is an awful lot else that governments and non-government agencies need to do. No-one in this place wants to see the devastation of the Black Summer repeated.

When I was preparing the motion, it seemed to me that many aspects of my life, at every age, have somehow been involved in and affected by bushfires. Having grown up in Campbelltown, I remember as a child

having a circle of bushfires around us from Wedderburn et cetera almost every summer. I remember doorknocking when I was in Menai as a duty MLC, and it was bizarre. I would be doorknocking in new cul-de-sacs with new houses and at the end of literally every cul-de-sac, near where the fires had come, the house had been burnt down. The other houses were fine, but the house at the end had just gone. That was a strange and calamitous experience for everyone, but it really rammed home how selective and how dangerous it had been. One wondered why that housing had been allowed to go in at those locations.

More recently in the Hawkesbury, which is one of my current duty electorates, I visited not only individuals who were affected by the fires but also small businesses. As a former Minister for Small Business, I would always try to talk to small business people. Most small businesses involve individuals; they are not large corporations. A year after the fires, those small businesses were literally on the verge of bankruptcy. They were still unable to make ends meet. Sometimes it was simply that the devastation of the fires had affected access to their businesses on the roadways and affected the number of people passing. Those things needed to be understood. I thank all honourable members and urge all of the thousands of people who read this debate to find out whether their house will require them to leave early or stay in the event of a bushfire, to know their local TV and radio channels to keep informed, and to make sure they are bushfire ready.

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

Motion agreed to.

MADE IN NSW FUND

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (21:21): On behalf of the Hon. Susan Carter: I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
 - (a) the Made in NSW fund attracts blockbuster screen industry projects to New South Wales, including films such as *Thor: Love and Thunder*;
 - (b) the post, digital, and visual effects rebate [PDVR] provides a 10 per cent rebate on qualifying expenditure for projects registered with Screen NSW;
 - (c) the screen industry in New South Wales contributes \$3.5 billion to the State's economy;
 - (d) it is imperative that we provide an environment for creatives in New South Wales to grow their skillset; and
 - (e) it is beneficial to the State's economy to provide an environment which grows the screen industry within New South Wales.
- (2) That this House further notes that:
 - (a) the Government has reversed its decision to cut Made in NSW and the PDVR, which were included as "portfolio savings" on page A5-5 in the Government's *Budget Paper No. 1*; and
 - (b) these cuts have been "replenished" with funds from elsewhere within the Department of Enterprise, Investment, and Trade.
- (3) That this House congratulates the Government on responding to pressure and reversing its decision to cut funding to a thriving and successful industry within New South Wales.
- (4) That this House hopes that the funds to replenish these cuts has been taken from measures to "provide certainty to ... UFC events", also listed on page A5-5 in the Government's *Budget Paper No. 1*.

"Agency" is a word we do not hear often enough in this House. It is a fundamental Liberal principle. Agency means that, having the benefit of being adults and living in a society free from totalitarian control, we are able to decide our own actions—to choose the course that we believe to be the best or that will have the best outcome. We enjoy personal agency because we live in a liberal democratic society where we can decide our own course and, correspondingly, accept responsibility for our actions.

The people of New South Wales invited members opposite to form government—just—which was an invitation that they accepted. Under our doctrine of responsible government and because of their personal agency, members opposite have the responsibility for making decisions for the benefit of our State and are accountable for those decisions. Some decisions they made in the budget process were wrong. The decision by this Government to cut funding to the Made in NSW fund and the post, digital and visual effects rebate was a bad decision.

I am sure I do not need to persuade the honourable members of this House of the importance of the arts. Since the time of the Medici, governments have had a place as a sponsor of the arts, contributing to the wellbeing and lives of all citizens. Although we do not fund the arts on the simple calculus of dollars in and profit out, any situation in which we can achieve a benefit to the economy of our State as well as grow the arts industry and provide opportunities for New South Wales creatives is clearly worth pursuing.

It has been estimated that the Made in NSW fund generates \$21 in economic activity for every dollar invested. It attracts blockbuster screen industry projects to New South Wales, including films such as *Thor: Love and Thunder*, *Furiosa* and the new *Planet of the Apes* sequel. In doing so, it brings jobs and investment into our State. It also allows creatives within New South Wales to grow their craft and to learn from the world's best, such as Chris Hemsworth and George Miller.

The program means that we have been able to export our art to the world. It is because of programs like that and the post, digital and visual effects rebate that New South Wales now has the biggest film industry in Australia. We are home to 47 per cent of Australia's production companies and 49 per cent of Australia's post-production facilities. In real terms, those are jobs and opportunities for our children. The screen industry is worth \$3.5 billion to the New South Wales economy.

Our screen industry has grown more in size and value than any other State's in the past six years, and yet that contributor to New South Wales' wellbeing—spiritually, educationally and economically—was targeted by the Government in the recent budget. To make those cuts is a bad decision—bad for the economy, bad for the culture of our State and bad for the opportunities for our young creatives. Many of them are my friends. In the words of the Minister for the Arts, it is bad for human rights as "culture is a human right", so I congratulate the Government on responding to calls from the Opposition and the industry to reverse those bad decisions and restore funding to those important programs. However, it is hard to congratulate a government that denies its own agency and refuses to take responsibility for its own decisions.

When announcing the cuts, members opposite attempted to argue that the decision was not theirs—that the cuts were forced on them by the decisions made by the previous Government. To put it plainly, they denied that they had the power and the agency to make budget decisions or that they were truly responsible for any of the cuts. Well, their hands were not tied by us when they cut the Creative Kids vouchers, axed the regional seniors travel vouchers, cut 30 per cent from the budget of Destination NSW, cancelled the Beaches Link project or raised Opal fares and the bridge toll.

Were they not the authors of funding for the Ultimate Fighting Championship? Were they responsible for axing Noël Sydney? Why, then, will they not take responsibility for being the authors of those cuts? They are the Government. They have been invited to make the budget decisions by the people of New South Wales. They have the agency and they have the responsibility. Members opposite made the decision to cut funding to Made in NSW and the PDVR; we did not. In fact, we had stated our commitment to continue those programs. The arts are fuel for the soul, as the Hon. Susan Carter reminds us. However, that fuel for the soul will not be funded. I am glad that the Government has responded to feedback and reversed the cuts. I only hope that one day this Government will take responsibility for its actions.

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) (21:27): The Government opposes the motion, mainly because it contains a number of factual inaccuracies. Of course the screen and digital games industry is a critical part of the creative industries in the State—a point I heard strongly from screen industry representatives when I met with them earlier this evening. I agree with the Hon. Jacqui Munro, though, that it was a bad decision. That is why it is very disappointing that Matt Kean made it in the final days of the Coalition Government on 8 March. Seventeen days before the election former Treasurer Matt Kean made more than \$180 million worth of cuts to the Department of Enterprise, Investment and Trade budget, which led to the \$60 million cut to Screen NSW. It was a bad decision.

I will be clear to the House that the cut did leave funding in the Screen NSW funds, and the Government has publicly been very clear about that. But between the cut being made and the budget being delivered on 19 September, there was a significant increase in demand in screen production, in digital post-production work and in digital games. All of that was good news, but it meant the remaining funds ran down much faster than had originally been projected. As a result, on 13 September we needed to pause the funds as the balance left us unable to commit to funding future projects.

The Government then worked quickly with many organisations in the screen industry. I thank them all for their great assistance; they really did dramatically assist the Government in moving to turn the situation around. We worked through making sure key productions stayed upright. We have been able to confirm certainty for industry that the post, digital and visual effects and digital games rebates and Made in NSW funds will continue on existing terms to eligible projects. The Government will underwrite the funding in future years, and will do that without revising the budget process. We have replenished funds that should have been there but that ran down quickly as a result of the boost in demand in the industry—which is welcome news. Those funds were due to expire in any case. That is one reason why, as we develop the arts, culture and creative industries policy for New South Wales, one of the first things we are likely to see is the screen strategy that will be at the heart of the policy.

I do not blame the former Minister; I doubt he was even aware that Matt Kean had done this to his budget. I do not blame the member; she was yet to be elected to Parliament. However, she has not assisted her case by making additional factual errors. There is no 30 per cent cut to the budget of Destination NSW. In fact, the real figures are even more optimistic than those the member put to the House. New South Wales represents more than half the Australian screen industry, and that is all the more reason why the industry should be supported.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (21:30): If ever there was a Minister who had the ability to obfuscate and contort, we have just heard him. The Minister faced being excluded from every cultural event in the State unless he was able to make up the \$60 million shortfall. Suddenly, he had an epiphany. "We need to find this money, otherwise the invites are going to dry up. They are all going to dry up!" The industry conducted an email campaign and suddenly the Minister had to go into deep conference with the Treasurer. "We've got to find \$60 million, Treasurer, to save all the event invites that I would normally get—me and my colleagues." They are all on the gravy train. I know what it was like; I used to knock them back. Government members were at the Minister's front door. "We need tickets to these new events!" The Hon. John Graham was not going to be able to dole the tickets out as he normally would.

Members opposite are all in the trough. I know what it was like; but I knew how to say no. Government members obviously do not know how to say no, so they had to find the money. There is a serious side to this, which the Treasurer should address. How do you bring down a budget one day, and two to three weeks later find \$60 million because of an industry campaign? It was a legitimate campaign—but suddenly the Treasurer could find \$60 million. No \$60 million in funding was found for Active Kids vouchers, palliative care or all those other projects that were cut. But threaten the tickets for Government members and they will find \$60 million.

The Minister knew that the tickets would dry up, so they had to find the money. The Treasurer was complicit in that process. It goes to show how porous the budget is if, after a campaign, the Treasurer could find the money to meet industry demands. It was correct that those demands were met, but it should have been done in the budget. The Treasurer failed to do it in the budget, where it should have been part of a transparent process. To seek to justify that on the basis of cuts by the former Government is just disgraceful. Restoring the fund was a good decision, but it goes to show that those opposite have no integrity when it comes to the budget process.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (21:33): I do not understand why the Opposition would move such a motion, and I wonder if the former finance Minister was party to the decision to make that cut. He should have known about it—he would have known about it in Cabinet. The motion actually congratulates the Government for fixing the problem created by those opposite. The former Government did not leave the money to continue the fund, like so many others. That put the Labor Government in a position where it had to rescue an excellent program.

I know a lot about it—my wife has worked for Animal Logic and Flying Bark in post-production. She worked on wonderful productions such as *Maya the Bee 3: The Golden Orb*, *100% Wolf*, the *Blinky Bill* movie, *Happy Feet Two*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Mia and Me: The Hero of Centopia* and many others. New South Wales has a thriving industry that produces films, video games and other entertainment that is covered by this funding. It is an industry we need to support. That is why the Labor Government is putting in the money to make sure that those productions remain in New South Wales and that the State remains the centre of animated and digital film production.

I am very proud of this Government's record in supporting culture and the arts. Those opposite should not lecture Government members on issues around the arts when all they have done is try to cut funding, shift museums and open up real estate to be redeveloped. They did not fund this program, and the Government had to come in and rescue it. It is absolutely extraordinary. When the problem was identified, the Government fixed it. The motion is about a problem that has been solved. I am shocked and surprised that the Opposition has the gall to lecture the Government for supporting the industry and fixing the problem. The industry should have universal support across the Chamber. It is a shame that Opposition members do not support the screen industry. Matt Kean should be ashamed.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (21:36): On behalf of the Hon. Susan Carter: In reply: I thank the Hon. John Graham, the Hon. Damien Tudehope and the Hon. Cameron Murphy for their contributions. Once again we see an example of the Government having to save the people of New South Wales from themselves. The only rescue that our good citizens require is from the policies of the Government. It is the most bizarre argument that I could ever comprehend: That a government delivers a budget and then says that it is not responsible for the cuts it has made. What is the point of being in government if you are not going through, line by line, and understanding what will be funded? That is literally the job of being in government.

I must wonder whether the Minister consulted with the industry before the cuts. Five hundred or more form emails were sent to members by people in the industry—rightly so, as the Hon. Damien Tudehope said. The

\$60 million cut was unwarranted and unwanted. The reality is that one week after the budget was delivered, the Government reneged on its decision-making ability and said, "Oh no, we are now listening to the industry because we have heard what they have to say." Why did the Government not listen to what the industry had to say before the budget? Why will the Government not take responsibility for the funding decisions that it made literally one week earlier, when the budget was announced? It is unbelievable and, to be honest, quite concerning. The Minister said that the figures I mentioned actually underquoted the impact of the screen industry in New South Wales in comparison to the rest of Australia. That makes it even more concerning that the Government did not make a good decision from the get-go. It calls into question every other budget decision.

Will we be seeing campaigns of hundreds and thousands of emails that were sent that will continue to reverse Government policy? What will actually stand the test of time? What decision has been made, or has not been made, in response to industry pressure as opposed to industry consultation? What will the Government do to ensure that it is standing up for the things that it believes in and taking responsibility? If the Government wants to cut money from the film industry, it should take responsibility for doing so. The example of this funding turnaround is stunning. It is the opposite of good government. I promised the Hon. Susan Carter that I would speak about Albert in *The Magic Pudding*. He was tucked away in the back cupboard like this \$60 million of funding. That is why this motion is so important.

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

The House divided.

Ayes 12

Noes 22

Majority 10

AYES

Fang (teller)
Farlow
Farraway
MacDonald

Maclaren-Jones
Martin
Merton
Mitchell

Munro
Rath (teller)
Tudehope
Ward

NOES

Boyd
Buckingham
Buttigieg
Cohn
D'Adam
Donnelly
Faehrmann
Graham

Higginson
Hurst
Jackson
Kaine
Lawrence
Mihailuk
Mookhey

Murphy (teller)
Nanva (teller)
Primrose
Roberts
Ruddick
Sharpe
Suvaal

PAIRS

Carter
Taylor

Houssos
Moriarty

Motion negatived.

Adjournment Debate

ADJOURNMENT

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT GENDER PAY GAP

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (21:48): The gender pay gap is alive and well in the New South Wales Parliament. It is fortunate that we do not have to report to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, because we would fail dismally. We know that members of Parliament are on equal pay, but the gap is sneaky. I am, of course, referring to the average pay of women and men across Parliament when office holder positions are taken into account, because office holders attract more money. That is where the gender pay gap widens to ridiculous

proportions. I can already hear the Hon. Mark Latham groaning about "not another woke feminazi banging on about gender equity again". He might not like to hear this, but I am going to put it out there. The fact is this House does not practise what it preaches.

Yes, Premier Minns proudly announced his Cabinet would consist of 50 per cent females, and that holds true, so there is no gap. Labor has been working on gender equity for more than a decade and has a quota. But the New South Wales Parliament does not have a gender quota, and, guess what? Labor members do not have to follow their own Labor rules when they are in this place. I am not talking about the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's calculation for the gap, which is the average remuneration of men minus the average remuneration of women divided by the average remuneration of men calculated into a percentage. I am talking about the other gap, which exists when you see who has the office holder positions in the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council, not to mention committee chairs. It will not surprise members that out of all the positions, be they ex officio or elected, a stark majority are filled by men. Do not get me wrong. I love men; I have been married to one for 34 years. But fair is fair.

Let me break it down. In the Legislative Assembly, the Speaker, Assistant Speaker, Government Whip, Opposition Whip and Deputy Opposition Whip are all male. That is five in total. The Deputy Speaker and Deputy Government Whip are female, for a total of two women. The Legislative Council situation is worse. The President, Deputy President, Assistant President, Government Whip, Deputy Government Whip, Opposition Whip and Deputy Opposition Whip are all male. The total is seven. The tally so far is 14 males and two females. We could look at Parliamentary Secretaries. The tally there is eight males to six females. When we add in the committee chairs, it gets even worse. I will not include select committees, just the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly committees and the joint committees. Have a guess. There are 20 male chairs and 14 female chairs. To be fair, one of those committees only has female members, so it is a foregone conclusion that the chair of that committee would be female.

Do members get the picture about the gender pay gap? It is simple arithmetic—males, 44; and females, 22. It is so bad, I have not included Premier's Department and the Cabinet Office in the figures or the Opposition leadership team. It is, quite literally, jobs for the boys. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency states:

Hiring more men than women as a strategy to beat the gender pay gap is not a responsible or ethical approach.

We can do something about it so that the gender pay gap stops from here on in. It is incumbent upon all of us when we are making our deals and shoring up votes for our respective causes to be mindful of the full impact of those decisions. We must factor in the gender gap or, more precisely, close the gender gap from now on in the New South Wales Parliament.

SNOWY HYDRO PROJECT

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK (21:52): Today I speak of the polished turd that is HumeLink. Last week in this place most of us supported the Hon. Mark Banasiak in agreeing that transparency and consistency are critical in government, especially when it comes to environmental concerns. Yet, as the prices rise and the cries of farmers and communities get louder, the State and Federal governments give the Snowy 2.0 DJ mix another spin and promise the world again. At the end of August a government-dominated committee delivered a finding the Government wanted: It was too expensive to put HumeLink underground. Much of this was based on the \$11.5 billion price tag quoted by Transgrid consultants, GHD. Yet last week, coincidentally but fittingly, the community group Rethink HumeLink released a study that found that the 360-kilometre transmission project could be built underground for \$7.3 billion; just \$2.3 billion more than Transgrid's \$5 billion estimate for overhead lines.

However, all these details are a bumper sticker on a garbage truck that has hit the taxpayer, and it has been all half-truths to make a huge lie. The linchpin of this funding dumpster fire, Snowy 2.0, is made of wax and melts under any scrutiny. Florence, the Snowy 2.0 tunnelling machine, remains stuck in the ground, having tunnelled less than 200 metres of the 17 kilometres needed. Despite a 100 per cent price blowout, in the words of the band, Florence and The Machine, Snowy Hydro keeps calling out, "Never let me go", and both State and Commonwealth Governments have not let go.

Snowy Hydro began this fiasco in 2019 when it was granted approval to begin works on Snowy Hydro 2.0. One would think, since the taxpayer was about to cop a paddling, that the hard work had been done on the design of the transmission lines. One would be wrong. Designs were finally begun in 2021 and, to make matters worse, Transgrid conflicted itself by both planning and costing the project. Picture a scene in the Transgrid planning offices with the engineers covering one eye or the other to remain unbiased. And of course, the standard trick was used to sneak the project through: The initial costings were underquoted because everyone at every level knew there was going to be a cost blowout. Now, new State and Federal governments of different cloth but the same rhetoric are making excuses for an overstretched project that can never deliver.

It is a badly kept secret that the benefits of HumeLink will be far less than its costs. There is even a good chance that the bulk of the energy from the Snowy Hydro 2.0 battery will head south over the border to keep air conditioners running on hot nights in Melbourne, if it ever gets running. The published carbon expended to get the Snowy Hydro 2.0 and HumeLink transmission network completed and running cannot be trusted if the dollars are rubbery, nor the mining and modern slavery justification overseas to import the materials. For an inexplicable reason, Labor, the Liberals and The Greens do not understand the concept of feasibility studies. When I get a new .22 rifle, I want it to hit the target, but every .22 rifle needs the correct ammunition. If I spend \$10 on a box of ammo and it cannot even hit the paper, I do not spend \$200 for another 20 boxes. I try another brand of ammo. The Government is obviously more focused on spending money than hitting targets—lots of taxpayer money.

The Greens are all about making rural communities bear the brunt of that poorly planned and executed renewables project. At the NSW Farmers environmental forum at the Goulburn Soldiers Club on 17 February this year, Ms Sue Higginson was asked if HumeLink could be put through national parks rather than on private land. She replied that it was only fair that farmers shoulder the burden of getting electricity to the big cities. Members may wonder when this whole nightmare of a renewable funding disaster was cooked up. On a full moon on Tuesday 13 March—sorry, during the day on Tuesday 15 March 2017—the then Coalition Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, got his cauldron boiling, added his eye of newt and wing of bat and announced to the world he would revolutionise the green electricity supply for the bargain price of \$2 billion. Of course, that did not include HumeLink. That was not even a twinkle in his eye. Now Snowy 2.0 is a \$13 billion toad in the Kosciuszko stone, and the price of HumeLink is swelling to match. But never fear, multinational contractors: Florence is still singing and the Government loves the tune. They will never let you go.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (21:57): I refer to a recent article by Mr Don Perlmut, the former CEO of Community Colleges Australia, entitled *The missing link in Australia's climate change adaptation strategy: Social infrastructure*. Mr Perlmut points out that, last month, Australia recorded its driest September in history, while New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia marked their hottest September days ever. This month bushfires continued to rage, followed by severe flooding in Victoria. Globally, June, July and August 2023 were the hottest months ever on earth. But how well have we prepared adaptation and survival plans for these massive and devastating events? The short answer is we have not. The Australian Climate Council states:

Climate change is driving a new era of 'unnatural disasters' – and as a country we are not prepared to cope. This year, we have seen how consecutive, record-breaking events can overwhelm emergency services and devastate communities.

The Productivity Commission estimates we spend 97 per cent of our disaster funding on mopping up and just 3 per cent on getting ready. Getting ready means bushfire preparation, resilient communications for disasters, workplace emergency training and skilled emergency responders. Yet Mr Perlmut argues that something is missing—a national plan to develop Australia's social infrastructure to provide shelter, support and community connections during climate events and natural disasters. He argues that the current focus is on social recovery, not social preparation. Planning for social infrastructure—community centres, showgrounds, universities, schools, libraries et cetera—is often left to local councils, but Perlmut says that this needs to be elevated to State and national policy levels, directly connected to disaster preparedness. Quoting sociologist Eric Klinenberg, Perlmut writes:

During extreme weather events, "Hard infrastructure breaks down. Power goes out, transit breaks down, water may not run. Social infrastructure in a disaster can make the difference of life and death," ...

For instance, during the February 2022 Lismore floods, Southern Cross University's campus became the primary emergency evacuation centre where more than 1,000 people gathered. It was the base for police and community services, food distribution, three relocated schools with 1,800 students and more than 500 Australian Defence Force personnel with Blackhawk helicopters. It functioned as a model social infrastructure safe gathering point to coordinate recovery and keep community connections. Professor Daniel Aldrich of the University of Sydney's Environment Institute says diverse social networks matter during climate crises and "can be deepened and broadened by building 'social infrastructure' such as parks, libraries, cafes, community spaces, and places of worship".

It is not just flooding. Australian heatwaves have been responsible for more human deaths than any other natural hazard, including bushfires, storms, tropical cyclones and floods. During the Black Friday bushfires, 71 people died in Victoria, but at least 420 people died in the heatwaves leading up to those fires. Similarly, 173 people died during the 2009 Victorian bushfires, but an additional 374 people died in the heatwave before the fires. On 4 January 2020 Penrith was the hottest place on earth, reaching a high of 48.9 degrees Celsius, surpassing its 2018 hottest place record of 47.3 degrees Celsius. The geography of Australian cities such as Sydney shows more heat and flooding in more disadvantaged locations. The University of Sydney reports:

Climate change impacts in Australia show that geographies of heat risk may also coincide with spatial patterns of relative socio-economic disadvantage.

Perlgut argues it is possibly time to add "heat inequality" to the income, wealth and other inequalities experienced by many disadvantaged communities in New South Wales. Frankly, treating social infrastructure as a key component of disaster planning just makes sense. Perlgut writes:

... The residual benefit of "investing in climate security through social infrastructure is ... that we could dramatically improve the quality of life in these places all of the time, regardless of the weather."

ISRAEL-PALESTINE PROTESTS

The Hon. NATALIE WARD (22:02): I ask members to picture a scene in which gunmen march up to the front door of their home, blast their way in and cold-bloodedly execute all of the civilians they find inside by firing, point blank, at their heads—women, men, the elderly, babies. Picture an idyllic outdoor music festival attended by several hundred young adults, their whole lives stretching before them, and then gunmen approach from both sides. They are armed with rocket launchers and machine guns. They open fire at point-blank range, and 260 young adults are massacred, then and there. The carnage is so brutal and bloody that some parents struggle to identify their sons and daughters, having to bring items of their children's clothing to match the DNA. Many of those who are not massacred are seized, stripped naked, forced onto open trucks and abducted over the border where many are mutilated and killed, and their bodies then driven through the streets. Unimaginable? No. All this and so much more, and so much worse, occurred across a range of working-class towns and villages in southern Israel. We have heard much about it in this place.

Hundreds of Hamas terrorists blew up sections of the border fence separating Gaza and Israel. They poured into Israel in vans, on motor scooters and even by paraglider, and perpetrated barbarity, savagery and vulgarity on a scale not seen in recent times. We know that 1,000 Israelis, mainly civilians, were murdered by the Hamas terrorists in cold blood. Another 2,000 people, mainly civilians, were injured. Approximately 200 Israelis were abducted into Gaza, including children as young as three, to be tortured, abused and used as human shields. Commentators describe it as Israel's 9/11 and Israel's Pearl Harbour. While I am careful not to draw careless analogies between those events and the Holocaust for fear of undermining the magnitude of the genocide, it is a fact that more Jews were killed in that single day than at any other time since the Holocaust.

Approximately 48 hours later, pro-Palestinian protesters marched through the streets of our great city, from Town Hall to the Opera House, yelling antisemitic abuse, endorsing the murderous ISIS-style conduct of Hamas and threatening Australian Jews. It is disappointing, saddening and heartbreaking that this has happened in Sydney, on our watch, in 2023. When the Attorney General advises the Jewish community to stay at home and such a protest is mismanaged by the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, it must be called out. The abuse that occurred on our streets was nothing less than a national disgrace. It was a shocking reflection on this State and, frankly, it was embarrassing. Everyone has a right to protest. This House embodies the right to protest. What we do not have a right to do is engage in threats and abuse, and that occurred at a time when the Jewish community is reeling from the barbarity in southern Israel. The protest should not have been permitted, and we are right to call on the police Minister and the Government to explain the thinking behind that gross miscalculation.

Terrible actions can have terrible consequences. However, in moments of darkness, flowers of hope can emerge. Last week I had the privilege to attend an event in Dover Heights alongside the Jewish community. We gathered in unity and solidarity with Israel and acknowledged the pain of the Jewish community. That gathering was a necessary response to the Hamas attack on Israel. As the sun set over Sydney, the community stood together to remember, to pray and to feel as one. That is what we do so well in Australia. Thousands of members and friends of the Jewish community stood together, demonstrating the unity and resilience of the Jewish community in the face of rising tensions and discrimination. Prayers for those affected by the conflict were said by Rabbi Dr Benjamin Elton, Rabbi Jeffrey Kaims and Rabbi Shua Solomon, representing the Rabbinical Council of NSW. I acknowledge those religious leaders, as well as leaders of the Jewish community, Ms Jillian Segal, AO, President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, and Mr David Ossip, the President of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, for the strength and leadership they have shown during this time.

The gathering was also attended by a number of State and Federal parliamentary colleagues, and friends of the Jewish community. I acknowledge all of them. I acknowledge the work of everybody trying to bring together something that can unite us in this terrible and challenging time. Events like that are so important because they send two messages: first, that it is safe to be proudly Jewish in Sydney and New South Wales; and, second, that the political community will support the right of Jewish people to exist both here and across the world. There is no place in New South Wales for bigotry or antisemitism. It should be a matter of concern to all well-meaning Australians when that occurs with impunity. It is incumbent on every member of this Chamber to stand up against it when it does occur. It is about who we are as Australians.

NEW SOUTH WALES PARLIAMENT AND WOMEN

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (22:06): This Parliament is not a safe place for women. No matter how many reviews we carry out, how many recommendations get handed down or how many of those recommendations are implemented or promised to be implemented, so long as there is no credible way of changing the behaviour of MPs in this place it will continue to be a toxic workplace for women and gender-diverse people. That is because, unlike every other workplace I have worked in, none of the people I sit with in this Chamber today can be realistically removed for their poor behaviour. They are validly elected members of Parliament and, in practice, cannot be blocked from attending this place for anything other than the most serious of crimes.

An average day working in the New South Wales Parliament involves sharing the lifts with people awaiting trial or under investigation, sharing a corridor with people who are being sued over homophobic vilification and sitting for hours in a room within an arm's reach of people who hold the vilest of transphobic and misogynistic views. Let me be clear: It would not be healthy for our democracy to deny elected representatives access to parliamentary chambers, to have them unable to represent the views of those who have elected them. I am not suggesting that we should be able to more easily remove a member. However, this place serves as both a chamber of democracy and as a workplace. It is not just a workplace for MPs, but for all of those who are employed within its walls, most of them with far less power than me when it comes to improving their working conditions.

It is vital that we find a way to allow a diversity of views to be represented while also ensuring a safe workplace because when a woman attempts to perform her role in this workplace she has zero protection from the multitude of patently sexist slurs directed at her, let alone the host of sexist micro-aggressions bombarding her every day from all sides of the Chamber. This is a place where a group of men can use parliamentary debate, and the cover of the parliamentary privilege that it affords them, to target and degrade a former member, and to go so far as to refer to her theoretical involvement in sexual activities. Far from calling out this behaviour, members on both sides of the Chamber instead laugh and join in, giving the debate validity and providing their implicit endorsement of this so obviously sexist and unsafe behaviour.

I had honestly thought that the culture in this place would get better with a new government and now that the Legislative Council consists of almost 50 per cent women. It would be a massive understatement to say that I am disappointed at the continuation of the sexist and degrading behaviour that marks this place and that is apparently accepted as though it is a perfectly normal day in the office. And there is nothing that can be done about it. If members were to say such things on TV or social media, they would likely find themselves facing legal action. If they were to say them within the halls of Parliament, their conduct could potentially be reviewed by the newly installed parliamentary Independent Complaints Officer. But the words said within this Chamber, or within a committee hearing, are protected by parliamentary privilege. Even if there were some valid way of holding these people to a higher standard of behaviour, there is no real sanction that can realistically be imposed.

What hope do we have of ever coming to work in this Parliament and not being constantly reminded that we are women and we are to be spoken over, belittled and sexualised? If even the self-professed left-leaning members of the Labor Party cannot recognise their role and responsibility in creating a safe workplace for women in the face of the most obvious breach of what in any other workplace would be applicable anti-discrimination laws, then what hope do we have that things will ever really change? I feel compelled to raise these points because I do not believe that they are fully understood by most commentators of parliamentary culture. By not recognising the limitations on what we can realistically do to enforce appropriate behaviour, we are preventing ourselves from taking a different and hopefully more productive approach to creating a safer workplace. In the absence of any powers to remove people for discriminatory behaviour, or the threat of any real enforcement of parliamentary standards, it will only be by setting more appropriate norms in this place that we will ever see real cultural change.

There are excellent people across this Parliament, in both Chambers and across political parties, including MPs, MPs' staff and parliamentary staff, who are committed to improving this Parliament as a workplace that is safe for everyone. But we cannot do it by ourselves. Any member of this place who considers themselves someone who wants to see this Parliament become a truly safe and inclusive place for all people, regardless of gender, sexuality, race or disability, has a responsibility to call out, and not indulge in, inappropriate behaviour by others. Members should join us, not be part of the problem.

CROOKWELL AQUATIC FACILITY

The Hon. BOB NANVA (22:12): Recently I had the chance to catch up with the mayor of Upper Lachlan shire, Councillor Pam Kensit. Mayor Kensit has a great love for the regions, and we had a good conversation about the character of Lachlan shire and its down-to-earth, hardworking people. Mayor Kensit is a fierce advocate for her local government area, and she came to Sydney to share with me some of the challenges facing her region and its residents. Key among them was the lack of access to public facilities, including in the town of Crookwell, a storied and charming town of 2,000 that the mayor affectionately says captures Australia's old world.

Each of the 128 local government areas in New South Wales does its level best to deliver on its ratepayers' needs, like providing parks, public services and facilities. But the distribution of services to ratepayers is not always equitable. In more urban and suburban parts of New South Wales, we might take for granted some of the basic services that we enjoy, which are so precious to some of our outer suburban and regional friends. As a case in point, I have a public pool within five kilometres of my home. The people of Crookwell do not have one in close to 50 kilometres. The good news is they are closer to getting one.

I understand that the council is hopeful that the Crookwell Aquatic Facility will reopen sometime this summer, which will be a welcome reprieve for residents in what is likely to be a hot and dry El Niño season. It has not been an easy journey to get to where they are and, indeed, they are still not yet sure of the exact date the centre will reopen. The council faced a crisis when the first developer for the aquatic centre upgrades went into voluntary administration. With funds already allocated and works part way complete, a great number of stakeholders were affected. Money was owed to hardworking people, like local tradies who just wanted to deliver the work and get paid, with confidence in the developer. It also deprived residents of the community, young and old, of a vital public facility.

It is worth noting just how important aquatic centres like this one are. Throughout the day, a public pool gives locals somewhere to go, whether they are parents with younger kids in the morning, students after school or older members of the community who want to take a class or enjoy a rest. For a lot of kids, it is the only place they can learn to swim. It is one of the bare minimums a community can ask for. The people of Crookwell have had to fight hard to get their project near the point of completion. After much work by the council, a new developer has stepped in, but the impact to the time line is done. The new developer has to do surveying, auditing and a range of other preliminary works all over again.

The people of Crookwell are hardworking and decent. They make their own way; they do not ask for much. I am told that the upgraded pool, when it reopens, will still not have full, separate change rooms, and that another \$250,000 is required to create the structure to facilitate them. In the meantime, there will be portable change rooms at the launch, which is better than nothing, but we cannot forget the importance of permanent change rooms. Many people cannot properly participate in activities without them. As one example, I was told that the girls' soccer team had to get changed in their cars, due to a lack of basic facilities.

The delivery of separate facilities was a small request, and it can make a tangible impact. We should all have a right to swim in New South Wales, whether we live in the suburbs or the regions. The upgrades to Crookwell's pools are essential. Prior to those upgrades, the 70-year-old facility was failing to meet basic safety or environment standards. I am pleased that after a lot of perseverance and government cooperation, the upgrades are coming closer to fruition, but the lack of permanent changing facilities is a reminder that there is still work to do. I hope the Government continues to take a close interest in Lachlan shire. If my most recent meeting with the mayor is anything to go by, that fierce advocate will not relent on this very important issue for her community.

PARAMEDICS PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (22:17): Today I attended, with a number of MPs from all sides of politics, an information session from the Health Services Union on its paramedics professional recognition campaign. The campaign centres around how unlocking the scope of practice can benefit New South Wales, especially in rural and regional areas. It has been a long-running campaign. Today we were fortunate enough to meet and listen to paramedics directly, like Steve, Niecea, Tess, Clint, Nick, Alex, Mel and many others, who told MPs firsthand of the career progression difficulties that they face and the extraordinary responsibility they have every day in their work as emergency service workers. I offer my solidarity with their campaign and thank general secretary Gerard Hayes and division secretary Adam Hall for their important advocacy on behalf of those essential workers.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts): The question is that this House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 22:18 until Thursday 19 October 2023 at 10:00.