

# LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday 12 February 2025

**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*

### **PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY AT WORK: ESSAYS ON THE NEW SOUTH WALES LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**The PRESIDENT (10:01):** I am delighted to advise members of the launch this evening of *Parliamentary Democracy at Work: Essays on the New South Wales Legislative Council*, edited by David Blunt, AM, and Dr David Clune, OAM. The publication of this book was a bicentenary project showcasing the scholarship of Legislative Council members and staff over the past 20 years on subjects ranging from parliamentary privilege, to a robust committee system, to the Council's transparency agenda around Executive Government accountability. The launch is taking place at 6.30 p.m. in the Jubilee Room. Brief commentary on the book will be provided by professors Gabrielle Appleby and Rodney Smith. All members of the Legislative Council are invited to attend and to collect their complimentary copy—which may or may not be signed, if members are particularly lucky. Those who are unable to attend the launch can collect a copy from the office of the Clerk afterwards.

## *Motions*

### **NATIONAL AUTISM STRATEGY**

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (10:02):** I move:

- (1) That this House welcomes the launch of the National Autism Strategy and corresponding action plan, which finally brings Australia into line with many other countries that have long had national autism strategies to drive progress in creating a safe and inclusive society for all autistic people.
- (2) That this House notes that:
  - (a) the success of any government strategy depends on robust and consistent implementation of targeted actions which must be fully funded, delivered in ongoing co-design with people with lived experience and underpinned by strong accountability measures;
  - (b) People with Disability Australia has cautioned that the strategy must be matched by fully funded long-term action plans that are both autistic led and compliant with the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and
  - (c) South Australia and Victoria are the only jurisdictions with autism strategies, while the Australian Capital Territory and Western Australia have taken steps to create similar strategies to complement the National Autism Strategy.
- (3) That this House calls on the Government to commit to developing a statewide plan for improving outcomes for the autistic community across health, education and employment, as well as diagnosis, services and support systems, that is neuro-affirming, human rights based and co-designed with autistic people.

**Motion agreed to.**

## *Business of the House*

### **WITHDRAWAL OF BUSINESS**

**The PRESIDENT:** I inform the House that the Hon. Aileen MacDonald has withdrawn the formal business request regarding private member's business item No. 1673 standing in her name relating to the New England rail trail project.

## *Motions*

### **PCYC FIT FOR WORK PROGRAM**

**The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD (10:03):** I move:

- (1) That this House congratulates the young people who successfully completed the Police Citizens Youth Club Fit for Work program and graduated at the ceremony held on Tuesday 17 December 2024 at the Charles Byrnes Room, Parramatta Town Hall.

- (2) That this House acknowledges the PCYC Fit for Work program, a life-changing 10-week initiative designed for young people aged 16 to 17 years to re-engage with education and employment by developing essential life skills, gaining qualifications and increasing resilience.
- (3) That this House recognises the significant role the PCYC NSW plays in delivering this transformative program, aimed at reducing and preventing antisocial behaviours and youth involvement in crime, while creating pathways to employment and positive futures.
- (4) That this House commends the dedication of PCYC NSW staff, program facilitators and chief executive officer Ben Hobby, who provide young people with support, encouragement and opportunities to thrive.
- (5) That this House encourages continued investment in programs like Fit for Work, which empower young people, strengthen communities and contribute to a safer and more prosperous New South Wales.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Committees*

## **REGULATION COMMITTEE**

### **Establishment**

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) on 19 October 2023 the Legislative Council resolved to amend the resolution establishing the Regulation Committee to expand the committee's functions to include inquiring into and reporting on instruments of a legislative nature that are subject to disallowance against the scrutiny principles set out in section 9 (1) (b) of the Legislation Review Act 1987 on a 12-month trial basis from the first sitting day of 2024;
  - (b) following this resolution, the Regulation Committee commenced its additional scrutiny function from the first sitting day of 2024;
  - (c) over the course of the 12-month trial, the committee undertook a significant body of work, including:
    - (i) reviewing 249 statutory instruments against the scrutiny principles set out in section 9 (1) (b) of the Legislation Review Act 1987, of which 34 instruments engaged one or more of the scrutiny principles;
    - (ii) tabling 14 reports, entitled Delegated Legislation Monitors, which set out the committee's conclusions regarding instruments that had engaged any of the scrutiny principles;
    - (iii) engaging with 13 Ministers and three bodies in relation to scrutiny concerns identified in statutory instruments; and
    - (iv) receiving undertakings from Ministers and bodies to rectify specific issues identified by the committee in 10 instruments, six of which had been implemented as at 20 December 2024.
  - (d) in accordance with the resolution of the House of 19 October 2023, the committee tabled a report entitled *Evaluation of the Regulation Committee's technical scrutiny function* on 10 February 2025, which found that:
    - (i) the return of the technical scrutiny function for delegated legislation to a committee of the Legislative Council has been successful in improving the quality of delegated legislation and enhancing parliamentary oversight of the Executive, and aligns with the constitutional role of the upper House as a "house of review" (finding 1);
    - (ii) in order for the Regulation Committee to effectively discharge its function in scrutinising delegated legislation, it should continue to be supported by a dedicated secretariat and a part-time independent legal adviser (finding 2).
  - (e) on the basis of the committee's finding that the 12-month trial of its additional scrutiny function was a success, the committee therefore recommended that:
    - (i) the Legislative Council amend the resolution establishing the Regulation Committee to permanently expand the committee's functions to include technical review of delegated legislation against the scrutiny principles set out in the Legislation Review Act 1987, section 9 (1) (b), (recommendation 1); and
    - (ii) the Legislative Council amend the resolution establishing the Regulation Committee to change the committee's name to the Delegated Legislation Committee, to reflect more accurately the committee's role and remit (recommendation 5).
- (2) That, in accordance with recommendation 1 and recommendation 5 of the committee's evaluation report, the resolution of the House of 10 May 2023 appointing the Regulation Committee, as amended on 19 October 2023, be further amended by:
  - (1) In paragraph (1), omitting "Regulation Committee" and inserting instead "Delegated Legislation Committee".
  - (2) Omitting paragraph (3) and inserting instead:
    - (3) The committee is:
      - (a) to consider all instruments of a legislative nature that are subject to disallowance, while they are so subject, against the scrutiny principles set out in section 9 (1) (b) of the Legislation Review Act 1987;

- (b) may report on such instruments as it thinks necessary, including setting out its opinion that an instrument or portion of an instrument ought to be disallowed and the grounds on which it has formed that opinion; and
- (c) may consider and report on an instrument after it has ceased to be subject to disallowance if the committee resolves to do so while the instrument is subject to disallowance.

**Motion agreed to.**

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

### **Extension of Reporting Date**

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

That the reporting date of the inquiry into the impact of the regulatory framework for cannabis in New South Wales by Portfolio Committee No. 1 - Premier and Finance be extended to 20 June 2025.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **SELECT COMMITTEE ON PFAS CONTAMINATION IN WATERWAYS AND DRINKING WATER SUPPLIES THROUGHOUT NEW SOUTH WALES**

### **Extension of Reporting Date**

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** I move:

That the reporting date of the Select Committee on PFAS Contamination in Waterways and Drinking Water Supplies Throughout New South Wales be extended to 20 August 2025.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Motions*

## **AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP CEREMONIES**

**The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (10:05):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes the celebration of Australian citizenship at ceremonies held throughout January 2025 across the Sutherland shire, Wollongong, Georges River, Liverpool and Bayside council areas.
- (2) That this House congratulates the newest Australian citizens who pledged their allegiance to our nation, embracing the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and who committed themselves to Australia by reciting one of the following oaths:
  - (a) "From this time forward, under God, I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect and whose laws I will uphold and obey"; or
  - (b) "From this time forward, I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect and whose laws I will uphold and obey".
- (3) That this House acknowledges the important role these ceremonies play in fostering a sense of belonging and celebrating the diversity that enriches our communities.
- (4) That this House recognises the contributions of the Citizen of the Year 2025 award recipients in each of the council areas, who exemplify the values of active citizenship and community service.
- (5) That this House thanks councillors for their continued engagement with Australian citizenship ceremonies, welcoming new Australians to our communities.
- (6) That this House calls on the Government to continue to support and promote initiatives that encourage civic participation and celebrate the contributions of all citizens to the cultural, social and economic life of New South Wales.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **LUNAR NEW YEAR**

**The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (10:05):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that on 27 January 2025 the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Sydney hosted a celebration for the Lunar New Year.
- (2) That this House acknowledges the significance of the Lunar New Year as an important cultural celebration for many communities in New South Wales, representing a time for family reunion, reflection and hope for the year ahead.
- (3) That this House further notes that the Taiwanese and Australian celebration provided an opportunity for members of the community to come together, share in cultural traditions and celebrate the rich heritage associated with the Year of the Snake.
- (4) That this House notes the attendance of the following people at the Lunar New Year celebration:
  - (a) the Hon. Rod Roberts, MLC, Deputy President and Chair of Committees;

- (b) Dr Hugh McDermott, MP, member for Prospect;
  - (c) the Hon. Tania Mihailuk, MLC;
  - (d) the Hon. Jacqui Munro, MLC, shadow Assistant Minister for the Arts, Innovation, Digital Government and the 24-Hour Economy; and
  - (e) Mr David Cheng-Wei Wu, director of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office.
- (5) That this House commends the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Sydney for hosting the Lunar New Year celebration and for its ongoing efforts to foster cultural understanding, goodwill and trade between Taiwan and New South Wales.

**Motion agreed to.**

### WUGULORA MORNING CEREMONY

**The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (10:06):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that on 26 January 2025 the WugulOra Morning Ceremony was held at Barangaroo Reserve in Sydney to mark Australia Day.
- (2) That this House acknowledges that the moving ceremony symbolised embracing Australia's three strands of culture—Indigenous, British and more recent international migration—and that WugulOra, meaning "One Mob" in the local Gadigal language, represents all Australians and the future of a united nation.
- (3) That this House recognises that the ceremony provided a time for reflection, understanding and reconciliation.
- (4) That this House further notes that:
  - (a) Aboriginal artists showcased the richness and significance of their culture with a blend of historical and modern expression; and
  - (b) the Australian national anthem was sung in Eora and English languages.
- (5) That this House acknowledges the attendance of the following people at the 2025 WugulOra ceremony:
  - (a) Her Excellency the Hon. Margaret Beazley, AC, KC;
  - (b) Mr Dennis Wilson;
  - (c) the Hon. Tanya Plibersek, MP, Minister for the Environment and Water;
  - (d) the Hon. Chris Minns, MP, Premier of New South Wales;
  - (e) the Hon. Penny Sharpe, MLC, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage;
  - (f) the Hon. Mark Speakman, MP, Leader of the Opposition in the New South Wales Parliament;
  - (g) the Hon. Jacqui Munro, MLC, shadow Assistant Minister for the Arts, Innovation, Digital Government and the 24-Hour Economy;
  - (h) Councillor Lyndon Gannon, City of Sydney council;
  - (i) Councillor Yvonne Weldon, City of Sydney council;
  - (j) J. P. Janke, co-host, NITV Australia; and
  - (k) Shahni Wellington, co-host, NITV Australia.
- (6) That this House commends the organisers, performers and participants of the WugulOra Morning Ceremony for their contributions to promoting reconciliation, cultural understanding and unity in New South Wales and across Australia.

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Documents*

### UNPROCLAIMED LEGISLATION

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** According to standing order, I table a list detailing all legislation unproclaimed 90 calendar days after assent as at 11 February 2025.

### *Committees*

### REGULATION COMMITTEE

### **Reports**

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I table a report of the Regulation Committee entitled *Delegated Legislation Monitor No. 1 of 2025*, dated 12 February 2025.

*Documents***AUDITOR-GENERAL****Reports**

**The CLERK:** According to the Government Sector Audit Act 1983, I announce receipt of a Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled *Regulation of the land titles registry*, dated 12 February 2025, received out of session and published this day.

*Committees***ANIMAL WELFARE COMMITTEE****Government Response**

**The CLERK:** According to standing order, I announce receipt of the Government response to report No. 1 of the Animal Welfare Committee entitled *Proposed aerial shooting of brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park*, tabled on 13 November 2024, received out of session and published this day.

*Motions***PSYCHIATRY WORKFORCE**

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (10:12):** I move:

- (1) That this House acknowledges that staff psychiatrists play a vital role in public health in New South Wales, ensuring care is available to some of our sickest and most vulnerable citizens.
- (2) That this House notes that over one-third of staff psychiatry positions are routinely filled by locums at three times the cost because of the difficulties of filling these positions on a permanent basis, and uncompetitive wages and working conditions are a factor in the extensive and expensive use of locums.
- (3) That this House further notes that:
  - (a) staff psychiatrists have been seeking a resolution to these staffing problems for over 16 months;
  - (b) the Minister for Health and the Minister for Mental Health have failed to resolve this issue; and
  - (c) as a consequence, staff psychiatrists are now resigning en masse and leaving the public health system.
- (4) That this House notes that neither the Minister for Mental Health nor the Minister for Health have responded to these resignations by seeking to engage seriously to resolve the dispute, but instead have sought to redesign our mental health system to work without specialist psychiatrists by, among other things:
  - (a) seeking to shift the work of consultant psychiatrists to nurses, registrars and interns;
  - (b) closing psychiatry beds in emergency departments, leading to wait times exploding to as long as four days;
  - (c) closing specialist units which provide care for vulnerable mothers, such as the Mother and Baby Unit at Westmead; and
  - (d) handing over the management of the care of anorexics and those suffering from other eating disorders to drug and toxicology specialists.
- (5) That this House urges the Minister for Mental Health to be a political leader who steps up when others are stepping back, to come back to the table and resolve this dispute as a matter of urgency and to end the preventable suffering of the acutely mentally ill in New South Wales.

It is common ground, I hope, that we should care for our mentally ill, and also common ground that we rely on skilled, multidisciplinary teams to provide that care and that those team members should be adequately resourced, remunerated and respected. That team includes psychiatrists employed in our public hospitals, who care for our most vulnerable; psychiatrists employed in our forensic hospitals, who care for those who present a danger to themselves and to others; and staff psychiatrists, who have been trying to talk to this Government for over a year now. They have been asking for respect and adequate remuneration to address existing retention issues, which see over one-third of staff positions filled by locums at three times the cost. NSW Health can afford to pay those locums but apparently cannot afford to engage in respectful wage negotiations.

Psychiatrists have not been heard by this Government. They warned that they would resign if they were not listened to. What was this Government's response? The Minister shared with us yesterday that the contingency plans in place to cover her leave in January did not involve consultation, did not involve negotiation and did not involve listening. They were to redesign our mental health system to work without specialist psychiatrists. It is clear from his press conference that Premier Minns struggles to tell the difference between psychiatrists and psychologists, let alone understand the real difference between the work that they do.

Minister Jackson indicated that nurses, residents and registrars could work outside the scope of their existing duties, muck in and take on the work of consultant psychiatrists. That is tantamount to saying that more than half of the psychiatry positions in public health are redundant, if other health workers can simply step up and fill those roles, and ignores the fact that our nurses, registrars and residents are already working beyond capacity and do not have either the training or the time to take on additional load.

Have those contingency plans fixed anything? Not if you are a mother experiencing significant mental health problems in the perinatal period, because the excellent Mother and Baby Unit at Westmead Hospital is now closed. Where do those women go? Who provides the care for them that will prevent intergenerational trauma for their children? That unit is not fixed; it is closed. If you have an eating disorder so severe that you need to be hospitalised, how are the contingency plans working for you? They are not, because instead of being in the care of a specialist psychiatric team, at a number of hospitals you are being cared for by specialists in drugs and toxicology, which of course has a knock-on effect for patients who actually need that expertise.

As we heard, arrangements are in place to shift public patients to private hospitals. At what cost to NSW Health and with what impact on the availability of beds for private patients? It is amazing to think that this Government has had time to talk to private health providers and has found money to pay them, but has not been able to engage in successful negotiations with our psychiatrists. Is the Government even trying? Does it value the specialist work done by those critically important medical workers? Can we say that we truly care for our mentally ill?

How are the contingency plans working for those in crisis and those with severe psychosis or suicidal ideation who make their way to our emergency departments? They are not. We know that they are facing waits of up to four days in emergency departments, if they can bear the wait. But, of course, on day two or day three, you do not know how much longer you have to wait, how many more hours to refine your suicide plans, how many more days you have to live in a state of psychosis where you may not be able to trust what you see, what you hear or anyone around you, where you may well be a danger to yourself and others and where you are uncared for because this dispute has not been addressed promptly and appropriately as it should be by this Government. Our Minister for Mental Health aspires to be a political leader who steps up when others are stepping back. Do not step back from the mentally ill. Do not step back from those in great need. Step up. Step up to the table and negotiate respectfully with the psychiatrists. It is time to end the pain of the acutely mentally ill in New South Wales.

**The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast) (10:17):** The Government will move an amendment to the motion of the Hon. Susan Carter. I move:

That the motion be amended by:

- (1) Omitting paragraph (3) (b) and inserting instead:
  - (b) the Minister for Health, the Minister for Mental Health, and other necessary Ministers have sought to resolve the matter. However, as yet they have not reached a resolution; and
- (2) Omitting paragraph (4) and inserting instead:
  - (4) That this House notes the Minister for Mental Health and the Minister for Health have engaged with these negotiations and have sought to resolve the dispute. However, they acknowledge:
    - (a) the mass resignation of psychiatrists is deeply concerning and has a negative impact on the current mental health system;
    - (b) public sector wages were capped under the previous Coalition Government for over a decade, creating the wage disparity at the heart of the dispute;
    - (c) since coming to government, the Minns Labor Government has sought to resolve this issue by meeting with representatives of the staff specialist psychiatrists on many occasions and offering amongst other things:
      - (i) a 4.5 per cent wage increase in 2023;
      - (ii) proposing a 10.5 per cent pay increase, including super, over the next three years;
      - (iii) additional allowances for onerous duties; and
      - (iv) a pilot of productivity measures to further improve wages and conditions for psychiatrists.
    - (d) despite this effort, as the matter has not been resolved the New South Wales Government is seeking a resolution via the NSW Industrial Relations Commission, which has agreed to hear the matter in March 2025.
- (3) Inserting in paragraph (5) "as one part of a comprehensive plan to reform the mental health system in New South Wales" after "matter of urgency". My time is now limited after reading those amendments onto the record, but either this motion is moved in the most wilful ignorance or it is some of the most bald-faced, opportunistic politicking that I have seen in a long

time. At its heart, the only disagreement that we have with psychiatrists is whether the way to resolve the wage disparity is to increase pay by 25 per cent in one year. That is unreasonable; we do not agree with that. We have put a lot of other options on the table. The idea that the party that created this dispute with a wages cap—what would their negotiations with psychiatrists look like? We need to sit down and negotiate.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**The Hon. ROSE JACKSON:** We are going to put 2.5 per cent on the table. In 2023 we gave them the largest increase they have seen in over a decade, and we have put more on the table. It is unbelievable that Opposition members have moved this motion when this disparity was created as a direct result of their wages policy—a wages policy that they are consistently sticking to and have not walked away from. We are absolutely committed to resolving it and we continue to meet with psychiatrists, but the bald-faced, opportunistic politicking in the name of those who are mentally unwell is disgraceful.

**Dr AMANDA COHN (10:20):** The Greens support the motion. I move:

That the question be amended by inserting after paragraph (3) (c):

- (d) modelling published by the Guardian on 12 February 2025 demonstrates savings of \$35 million per year by giving staff specialist psychiatrists a 25 per cent pay rise compared to the Government's current contingency plan.

I will start with what the Minister got right in the comments she just made, and that is that it was the Coalition's public sector wage cap that got us into this mess. But the Government's wage offer so far to the psychiatrists has not addressed the critical issue, which is that pay matters because of the pay gap with other States, which is as high as 30 per cent. We have widespread vacancies as a result, and this is not new. The psychiatrists are not advocating for themselves; they are advocating for a broken system where we cannot get a psychiatrist to work in the public system.

The current contingency plan has had a profound impact on patients and their families and on other health workers already. Some of those impacts were outlined in the motion and in debate yesterday. But we need to talk about the cost of this contingency plan, both in dollars and to the health system long term. Losing staff specialist psychiatrists means we are losing the opportunity to supervise registrars, doctors who are in training to become psychiatrists. That pipeline is broken, and we will lose those doctors to other States. It will take a generation to rebuild that. It is not quick to get back.

We have lost continuity of care for people. Even if a locum has the same qualifications and skill set as a staff specialist, if they pop in shift by shift or week by week, they do not have relationships with the patients experiencing chronic, complex mental illness and they do not have relationships with other staff in that department to provide the same level of quality of care. The impact of the current contingency plan is profound. It is egregious that the Government is continuing with this when the modelling now shows that it would be cheaper to pay the psychiatrists. Other health workers, as well as the Nurses and Midwives' Association, have come out absolutely swinging to support the psychiatrists. The solidarity between different health professional groups on this issue has been extraordinary, and that is because health workers are collectively advocating on behalf of their patients and on behalf of the system.

Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health held an inquiry last year into community and outpatient mental health services. We made the clear recommendation that the Government should be paying all health workers and those in mental health, at a minimum, what they would earn in other States. We are not even touching the sides of what a mental health nurse actually deserves to earn for the value that they contribute. The problem is this ongoing pay gap with other States, which is as high as 30 per cent, and the Government needs to pay health workers at least what they would earn in other States. I support the motion, but I note what is, to be honest, a weakness in that call to action. We should be calling for health workers to be paid what they would earn in other States, not just for additional leadership from the Government and the Minister on this issue.

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (10:23):** The amendment moved by the Minister is extraordinary. On 13 October 2023, the Australian Medical Association [AMA], the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists [RANZCP] and the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation [ASMOF] signed a joint letter to the Minister for Mental Health, headed "Psychiatry Workforce Crisis in the New South Wales Public Health System". It sought an urgent meeting "to discuss the perilous circumstances surrounding the psychiatry workforce in NSW Health". The letter spelt out the significant issues that arose in relation to the employment situation of psychiatrists by NSW Health. The letter then went on to say:

This is not a term we use lightly or for undue emphasis. We have deep concerns about the scale and urgency of this issue and the very real impact on the community ... NSW Health Mental Health services are responsible for the provision of care to those with the most severe and disabling mental health disorders. The quality and quantum of care able to be delivered is under threat due to a shrinking and demoralised clinical workforce. The same existential threat applies to the commissioning of much needed and heralded innovative services.

According to the Minister's diary, it was four months before time was found for this urgent meeting. The Minister had a series of four meetings with the AMA, RANZCP and ASMOF on 9 February, 18 March, 22 April and 29 May 2024. To be fair to the Minister, her hands were tied by the Treasurer and the Premier, who had made it clear that the offer was the new de facto wages cap of 10.5 per cent over three years. There are no meetings with this group or with ASMOF at all in the Minister's diary for the remainder of 2024.

The Minister claimed yesterday that she was confident in flying off to Japan despite New South Wales facing its biggest crisis in mental health because the Minister for Health was fully briefed. The Minister failed to mention that her gazetted leave and the gazetted leave of the Minister for Health overlapped for nine days from 11 to 19 January 2025. Noting that when the Minister started her gazetted leave on 29 December 2024, her understanding was that the resignation of over 200 psychiatrists was due to take place just three days later, this joint absence with— [*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (10:26):** I indicate at the outset that the Government will not support The Greens' amendment moved by Dr Amanda Cohn. We acknowledge that locums do cost more, and it is not an ideal situation. We are continuing to work through this situation. The costings do not align with the Government's costings. They are not our costings. We do not know what methodology and information has gone into those. Unfortunately, for those reasons we cannot support The Greens' amendment.

I urge all members in this place to be mindful of the language that we use when drafting motions and also when speaking in the House. It is well canvassed in this day and age that it is important to use person-centred language and non-stigmatising language when speaking about people who may have mental ill health. I urge members when making their contributions to be mindful of the impact their language can have on people, particularly people who are unwell. I particularly acknowledge the psychiatrists who have reached out to me personally over the past couple of months and weeks. I acknowledge the respectful way in which they have engaged in dialogue with me. I acknowledge the work they do. They know who they are; I will not single them out in this place. Again, I thank them for reaching out and allowing me to listen to them. It is a privilege to be able to do that in this position. As someone who has received so much help from psychiatrists over the years, which has been well canvassed in this place, it is a real privilege for me to listen to their concerns and to pass those on.

We inherited a health system that was on its knees when we came into government in March 2023. We will continue to systematically and unapologetically work to restore and reform the health system as we build a better New South Wales for all people, including those people who are mentally unwell. The impact that the wages cap in this State has had on many professions has been well canvassed in this place. This is another one of those professions. I finish my remarks by expressing my thanks, sympathy and utmost respect for psychiatrists in New South Wales. [*Time expired.*]

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (10:30):** I speak in support of my colleague Dr Amanda Cohn's comments and reiterate that both sides are wrong. The Coalition systematically devalued and under-resourced the public health system in this State. The Coalition did not respect doctors and psychiatrists. It did not respect any of the clinicians working in the system. Opposition members making sanctimonious statements and having a go at the Labor Government is a bit hard to stomach, but Labor is wrong as well. It is okay to admit that and say, "This is hard. We inherited this. We said that we would get rid of the wages cap but, when it came to it, we had so much ground to make up. It is hard and expensive, and it is going to take us a bit of time." It is okay to say that they have got it wrong. It is very clear what has happened, with the Government failing to speak with the psychiatrists in a timely manner, in a fair way and in a way that is not high-handed.

There is a tone of arrogance from this Government. I do not refer to the particular Minister; I refer to the Government as a whole. I am not interested in picking on one Minister in this Government. There is a systemic problem in this Government's approach to dealing with public sector workers. There is an unwillingness to engage with the concerns. If one were to take a smart fiscal approach, one would acknowledge that it is much cheaper to pay those workers a fair wage. But it is also about the conditions those people are working in. They are under-resourced and people are leaving. Part of getting more workers into the system is attracting them with a fair wage, which will help the conditions of the existing workers in the system. That is vital.

Looking at the longer term costs of not reaching an agreement and of allowing psychiatrists to resign, the Government should have known that the right thing to do was to come to the table much quicker and resolve the dispute. The Government did not do that. It was a mistake, and the Government has a chance to rectify that. Let us not pretend that the Coalition was any better, because it was not. The Coalition has the opportunity to do better as well. Admitting that the wages cap was a disaster for the State would be helpful. Let us work together in a way that respects workers and restores our public health system to the standard that it was once at.



**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (10:33):** I support my colleague the Hon. Susan Carter and thank her for bringing forward the motion. New South Wales is facing a critical issue that affects our community deeply. The severe shortage of mental health staff in New South Wales, due to the Minister's inaction on the mental health system, is at breaking point, with over 200 specialist psychiatrists resigning in protest over chronic staff shortages and inadequate working conditions. I first raised this last year in question time, and it has been raised before. We are able to employ 416 full-time psychiatrists. At the time, we had a shortage of 121. When asked in November what she would do if a further 145 resigned, the Minister for Mental Health said, "It wouldn't be good." We are now three months on and nothing has been done. The contingency plan is clearly not working. With one in three positions going unfilled, the Minister has left our public mental health system in crisis.

The impact of the shortage is profound. Patients with acute and severe mental ill health—such as suicidal thoughts, psychosis and severe eating disorders—are suffering due to the lack of available care. Emergency departments are overwhelmed, with patients waiting hours, sometimes days, for mental health care that they desperately need. The closure of mental health units and beds across the State has only been exacerbating the problem. Our dedicated mental health professionals are being placed in an impossible position, feeling unable to provide the care their patients need due to the system's limitations. Mental health nurses are specialised and play a critical role in providing care and support to individuals with mental health concerns, but they cannot be forced to be the fallback because the Minister has failed to address the industrial dispute.

The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses has highlighted the significant workforce gaps in the New South Wales public health system, calling the Minister in January to address the issue urgently. Mental health nurses are already stretched, covering vacancies and managing overwhelmed workloads. Despite that, they continue to provide skilled, compassionate care that makes a difference to many lives. While we wait for the Minister to take decisive action, because the Government's contingency plan is not working, public hospitals have been forced to shut down mental health wards and beds to deal with the crisis.

Last week the Prince of Wales Hospital in Randwick closed eight of its mental health beds, while at least 71 public beds across the city's west are now unavailable to patients. The Western Sydney Local Health District has announced the temporary closure of 25 mental health beds at Westmead and two 20-bed inpatient units at Cumberland Hospital. We cannot afford to ignore the crisis. The Minister must take immediate action. The New South Wales Government must support our mental health professionals and patients to ensure that they receive the care that they deserve.

**The Hon. WES FANG (10:36):** I make a brief contribution to the debate and thank the Hon. Susan Carter for bringing the motion forward. I address some of the points that were made during the debate. The Government has said that it does not support The Greens amendment around the modelling that was published in *The Guardian* today and that it does not match the Government's modelling. Those opposite should put their modelling on the table so that we can see their costings. We know that when we do not have staff psychiatrists or visiting medical officer psychiatrists, the locum costs of psychiatrists to the health system is astronomical. That is what we are facing at the moment. It is not only those costs, but also that allied health workers and other health workers who are not trained in psychology or psychiatry are having to pick up the slack from the psychiatrists that have resigned, putting an extra burden on the workers who are still in the system.

There is a cost to what the Government is implementing at the moment. The question is whether that cost is equal or greater than a pay rise for psychiatrists. *The Guardian* published figures today that indicate that it would be cheaper for the Government to accept what psychiatrists are asking for. If those opposite have modelling that does not agree with what *The Guardian* says, they should put it on the table and tell the people. They keep saying that they want to be a transparent government. What are their costings? I ask the Minister for Mental Health to put them on the table and tell us what the costings are.

Another point that was addressed in the debate was that we need to be careful about the way we speak about these things in this Chamber. That concern should be echoed in the way that we care about patients in hospitals who are now facing treatment not from psychiatrists, as they should be, but from other health professionals that have been laboured with trying to do the work of psychiatrists in our health system. That is where the Government should be directing its concern, but it is not. Government members talk about tempering language. We are trying to make sure that patients in hospitals get the treatment that they need and deserve. The last point I raise is that despite 12 years of our Government's fiscal management, psychiatrists were not resigning en masse. That has happened on Labor's watch. This Labor Minister needs to wear it, own it and fix it. At the moment, the Government has not fixed a single thing.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (10:39):** I contribute to debate on the very important motion moved by my colleague the Hon. Susan Carter. I recognise the passion and commitment behind her work on this matter. As we know, staff psychiatrists play a vital role in the public health system. It is a highly skilled, specialised role. We hear more and more about the impact and consequences of the chronic shortage of staff psychiatrists in the public

health system. As I understand, last month some 443 psychiatrist positions at NSW Health were already sitting vacant. That was a vacancy of 30 to 40 per cent. The real impact of such a shortage on health outcomes is concerning and very obvious.

In this environment, staff psychiatrists have been in talks with the Minns Government for the past 18 months to address the pay and conditions. These talks with the Government have meandered for almost a year and a half. The lack of progress is staggering. The half-baked solutions banged together by the Government and the Ministers have gone nowhere. The end result is chaos. I have seen it firsthand. I have seen the public hospitals, the emergency departments, the wait times and the patients who cannot get attention. In our newspapers and those overseas we have read about patients waiting on the floor in emergency departments. It is not fair on the staff. It is not fair on the psychiatrists. It is not fair on families.

We now learn, as reported by the ABC, that since the resignation deadline of 21 January, more than 50 staff specialists have ceased working in the State health system. The consequence, as we have heard, is the closing of patient beds and the redistribution of highly specialised work to other mental health services. We have learnt that 70 of the staff psychiatrists who resigned have rejoined as independent contractors. As independent contractors, they are getting paid significantly more—the Government estimates 13 per cent more than if they remained on staff. Locums are getting paid much more to service these patients.

We are presented today with no outcome after 18 months of work. There has been some consultation, but not enough. The public health crisis in this State is serious and concerning. It is time for the Minister to come to the table and resolve the issue with certainty. The question is how much more is needed. The answer is not the outrageous closing of psychiatry beds, bandaid solutions and shifting of the vital work to other health professionals. The people of New South Wales deserve better.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (10:42):** In reply: I thank all members who contributed to debate on the motion. I indicate at the outset that we will not accept the Government amendment, but we are happy to accept The Greens amendment. I thank Minister Jackson for her words, and Dr Amanda Cohn, the Hon. Damien Tudehope, Ms Abigail Boyd, the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, the Hon. Wes Fang and the Hon. Rachel Merton.

Much was made in the debate about wages records. It is unfortunate that we are focusing on wages records in a debate about the care of the mentally ill. I simply say that, in terms of wages records, the psychiatrists who work in public hospitals, and therefore have no private practice, are simply looking for the same wages treatment as accident and emergency doctors who work in public hospitals and have no private practice. They received the same uplift from our Government that the psychiatrists are now looking for. One of the reasons we are not accepting the Government's amendment is that it appears to mischaracterise the record of meetings between senior members of this Government and those stakeholders in this dispute. I had the opportunity to speak to a number of psychiatrists, and they feel completely unheard. The diaries do not disclose a pattern of constant negotiations on this matter.

At the end of the day, while this is about wages, retention and working conditions, it is also about care for the mentally ill. This is about how we as a society take care of our most vulnerable. Any plans that put those vulnerable people at greater risk than they already are, reduce their access to specialist care, suggest they can be shifted from a public hospital to another facility with different care regimes and caregivers, or rely on more and more locums, where there is a lack of consistency of care for the vulnerable and psychiatrically ill, are not plans that are focused on providing good mental health. At the end of the day, that is exactly what we should be about, which is why I have moved the motion.

**The PRESIDENT:** The Hon. Susan Carter has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Rose Jackson and Dr Amanda Cohn have moved amendments. The question is that the amendment of the Hon. Rose Jackson be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

*[In division]*

**The PRESIDENT:** I advise members that there may be further divisions. I ask that they stay in the Chamber so that we can have a short bell.

Ayes .....22

Noes .....16

Majority.....6

AYES

Banasiak

Faehrmann

Mookhey

## AYES

Borsak  
Boyd  
Buckingham  
Buttigieg  
Cohn  
D'Adam  
Donnelly

Higginson  
Houssos  
Hurst  
Jackson  
Kaine  
Lawrence

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

## NOES

Barrett  
Carter  
Fang (teller)  
Farlow  
Latham  
MacDonald

Maclaren-Jones  
Martin  
Merton  
Mitchell  
Munro

Rath (teller)  
Roberts  
Ruddick  
Tudehope  
Ward

**Amendment of the Hon. Rose Jackson agreed to.**

**The PRESIDENT:** The question now is that the amendment of Dr Amanda Cohn be agreed to. Is leave granted to ring the bells for one minute?

**Leave granted.****The House divided.**

Ayes .....19  
Noes .....20  
Majority.....1

## AYES

Barrett  
Boyd  
Carter  
Cohn  
Faehrmann  
Fang (teller)  
Farlow

Higginson  
Hurst  
MacDonald  
Maclaren-Jones  
Martin  
Merton

Mitchell  
Munro  
Rath (teller)  
Roberts  
Tudehope  
Ward

## NOES

Banasiak  
Borsak  
Buckingham  
Buttigieg  
D'Adam  
Donnelly  
Graham

Houssos  
Jackson  
Kaine  
Latham  
Lawrence  
Mookhey  
Moriarty

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

**Amendment of Dr Amanda Cohn negatived.**

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

**Motion as amended agreed to.****PUBLIC SECTOR WAGES**

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (10:56):** I move:

(1) That this House notes that:

- (a) the Minns Labor Government has made a series of unforced errors when it comes to negotiations of wages and conditions with key public sector workers;

- (b) it is unconscionable for the Government to claim that there is insufficient revenue available to pay workers a fair wage while neither cutting wasteful spending to the corporate sector nor raising further revenue from big business and the very wealthy;
  - (c) a government that cannot afford to pay its workers a fair wage is not managing its finances in an equitable and efficient manner; and
  - (d) pitting groups of workers against one another, backgrounding hostile media against the working people in this State, taking legal action against unions, and expecting workers to find productivity gains or other savings in sectors which have been starved of funding by this and previous governments is a shameful betrayal of Labor's historical foundations.
- (2) That this House further notes and expresses its concern at the apparent approach by the Government in conducting its approach to bargaining, including:
- (a) spending millions of dollars of taxpayer dollars on private law firms to conduct bargaining; and
  - (b) its failure of planning, operational competence and accountability from those in charge by failing to take reasonable and necessary steps, in the lead-up to legally notified and permitted protected industrial action, to prevent entirely avoidable issues that would affect critical public systems and the public.
- (3) That this House calls on the Government to return to good-faith bargaining, to negotiate with all workers in a fair and respectful manner, and to resolve all industrial disputes rapidly for the sake of workers and the community.

The New South Wales Government has got it wrong, catastrophically wrong, when it comes to its approach to dealing with the working people of this State, and particularly its approach to bargaining with the public sector workers of this State, for whom it has responsibility. The mask has slipped, and the public is coming to realise the shallowness and mean-spiritedness of its agenda. Labor campaigned on a promise to abolish the regressive and arbitrary wage cap and end the acrimony between a starved public workforce and a well-fed, miserly government and its ranks upon ranks of senior executives. That promise has proven to be, if not an outright lie, a carefully worded and narrowly defined exercise in rhetoric over action.

What use is a promise to scrap a formal wages cap when it would simply become replaced with a de facto limit on pay increases, just barely but technically above that of the notoriously anti-worker Liberal-Nationals Government? What use is that to workers who are getting hammered by an explosion in the cost of everyday essentials when their financial and emotional reserves are already entirely depleted by over a decade of wage suppression? What use is that to a nurse, midwife or a psychiatrist who is committed to public service and care but who is exhausted and underpaid, and who is seeing their friends and colleagues forced out of the job they love, and when the public service motivates them into the private system or out of the health workforce entirely? What use is that to the transport workers who were relentlessly attacked by the former Government and are now being attacked by this Government?

Without their work and dedication, our State and economy would grind entirely to a halt. The New South Wales Labor Party has been waging a campaign of lawfare against public sector workers in this State ever since taking the reins of government. It has spent millions of taxpayer dollars on private lawyers like Kingston Reid and others to lead its bargaining negotiations, rather than taking ownership of the messes of its own creation. It has taken public health workers to court and pursued determinations in the Industrial Court that would see their legitimate industrial actions squashed. It has demanded that the Rail, Tram and Bus Union drop its wage theft case, while continuing to pursue section 471 notices against workers, docking their pay in a time of acute financial pain as punishment for taking legally protected industrial action.

Time and again, the Minns Labor Government has preferred to seek to use the courts to squash legally protected industrial action than to sit down at the bargaining table with workers and their representatives and deliver a deal that works for everyone. In fact, the Government seems to have done everything in its power to induce a more disruptive and acrimonious situation throughout the bargaining process by failing to plan for and adequately manage entirely predictable impacts of properly notified and well-publicised industrial action. Rather than taking responsibility, the Minns Labor Government and transport bureaucrats have deliberately misled the public in an attempt to inflict reputational damage on rail workers and union members, using the public and working people as pawns in their petty power games. The people of New South Wales are sick and tired of the small-minded approach of this Government. It was supposed to know better.

The New South Wales public sector is the nation's largest employer. The wages and conditions of this sector have a direct and indirect impact on the wellbeing of our entire State. The Government talks about wanting to relieve the financial pressure on the public while hammering workers and depressing their wages, inflicting pain on households across the State. We are in the midst of not just a cost-of-living crisis but also a crisis of inequality. The ranks of Australian billionaires and rent-seekers have swollen yet again in just the last year, while working people have to work out how to make do with less every day.

It is not good enough for the New South Wales Labor Government to continue crying poor, claiming not to have enough in the budget to pay the people keeping our hospitals and trains running. It is time to seize the obvious and available revenue-raising opportunities the Government has left untouched, by cutting corporate handouts and levying taxes and levies on big businesses and the mega-wealthy so that we can ensure that all public sector workers are paid fair wages. Most of these revenue-raising measures would simply bring New South Wales into line with other States, while some, such as the supplementary banking levy, would take ideas already well socialised within Labor parties in other States and Territories and make New South Wales a leader when it comes to creating a fairer revenue base. The fact is that the New South Wales Government can afford to pay all of its workers fairly and ensure the long-term health of our vital public services.

Mr President, do you want to interrupt me?

**The PRESIDENT:** No, we will add time to question time. You can finish your speech.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Thank you. The Government could afford it if it just took action to end the handouts to big business and asked those businesses to pay their fair share to the State's revenue. It is not too late for the Government to learn the errors of its ways and begin delivering for the people it was elected to represent and support. I am glad to see, hopefully, a new approach to bargaining with the rail unions, which was announced yesterday afternoon. But let us hope it is not just more spin and rhetoric and that a deal can finally be achieved. The Greens are willing to work with Labor to rebalance the budget and get our State back on track. There are no excuses for not paying everyone who works for our State a fair wage.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! According to sessional order, proceedings are now interrupted for questions. I note that question time will today end at 12.01 p.m. and 25 seconds.

#### *Questions Without Notice*

#### **MINISTERIAL CAR USE**

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (11:02):** My question is directed to the Minister for Mental Health. From what place in Australia did the Minister carry out her ministerial duties from 26 December to 28 December 2024 before she commenced gazetted leave on 29 December 2024?

**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) (11:02):** I thank the member for his question. I departed Sydney on the evening of 26 December. I carried out my ministerial duties from regional Victoria for a few days before departing from Melbourne, when my gazetted leave commenced, on 29 December.

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (11:02):** I ask a supplementary question. I note that 26 December 2024 was a public holiday and that the Minister has justified her use of a ministerial vehicle that day to take her and her family to the airport for the start of a family holiday. How long was the trip in that vehicle? And what was the nature of the work that the Minister carried out during that trip that could not be done either before or after a trip to the airport?

**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) (11:03):** I reiterate that I cannot recall the length of the trip. It was not a long trip. Because there were ongoing issues, particularly in my Mental Health portfolio, but also because we were still quite concerned about the potential of a mass fish death event in the Menindee Lakes over summer, I was receiving—and continued to receive throughout the period I was away—updates in relation to my portfolios. Those conversations are private and confidential and relate to Government business of a significant nature. I reiterate what I said yesterday: My use of the driver has always been not only within the ministerial guidelines but has also met the public expectation test.

#### **FIRST HOME BUYERS ASSISTANCE SCHEME**

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (11:04):** My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Will he update the House on how many people have been able to buy their first homes using the Government's First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme?

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:04):** I thank the member for his question. We were elected on a mandate of ensuring that more first home buyers pay less stamp duty taxes or no stamp duty taxes.

**The Hon. Damien Tudehope:** They would have got a better deal with us, mate.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** I am pleased to tell the House that we have reached an important milestone. More than 50,000 first home buyers have benefitted from the changes since we introduced them from 1 July 2023.

**The Hon. Damien Tudehope:** And how many were there under us? Fair dinkum!

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The Hon. Jacqui Munro will cease interjecting.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** We are on the side of people buying their first homes, and our program is delivering. In addition to that, it is important to say that with many of the other changes we have made we are boosting the number of homes for first home buyers to buy. As the shadow Treasurer has pointed out, this scheme did replace another scheme. I remind the House that under the previous Government's policy, 13 per cent of first home buyers captured 50 per cent of the benefit. Those first home buyers were much more likely to be on the higher end of the income scale. We said that there is a better and fairer way to assist first home buyers, and we are glad to have delivered. In addition to that, I inform the House that every dollar saved from Labor's cut to stamp duty taxes is a dollar a first home buyer can put towards a housing deposit. To that end, I am pleased to say that 37,000 first home buyers have paid nothing in stamp duty since we introduced this change and more than 14,500 first home buyers have received a concession.

I am also pleased to tell the House also that today the finance Minister and I launched a new website, with a new dashboard that allows members to find their own neighbourhood and see how many more first home buyers are joining their community as a result of these changes. I did not code the website myself; I deferred to our coding experts in Revenue NSW. I thank them for the hard work they have done to build it. I am looking forward to learning from them about the joy of Power BI. This Power BI-powered website will tell you that, if you go to Western Sydney, you will see the surge in the number of first home buyers in places like Liverpool.

**The PRESIDENT:** The Treasurer's time has expired. Members will come to order. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has the call. I thank her for being so polite and so quiet, unlike everybody else in the Chamber.

#### MINISTERIAL CAR USE

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:07):** My question is directed to the Minister for Mental Health. In relation to the Taylor Swift concert of 23 September 2024, for which the Minister declared a gift of three tickets valued at \$2,700, did she use a ministerial driver to take her to or from this concert?

**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) (11:08):** Yes, I did. I attended in an official capacity in the Venues NSW box, and I am happy to report that I did use the car for that. In fact, I gave a lift to former Premier Dominic Perrottet and his three kids.

#### NATIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON (11:08):** My question is directed to the Minister for Climate Change. Was the Australian carbon credit unit—

**The PRESIDENT:** Ms Sue Higginson will start her question again when all members are silent.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** My question is directed to the Minister for Climate Change. Was the Australian Carbon Credit Unit Scheme Improved Native Forest Management methodology that was prepared by Professor Andrew Macintosh and submitted to the Commonwealth Government commissioned by the New South Wales Government or was it acquired by the Government from a third party?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:09):** I thank the honourable member for her question. As I am not sure how much detail the member has available to her, I can provide this information to her. In July 2024 the New South Wales Government submitted an expression of interest [EOI] to the Australian Government for an Improved Native Forest Management [INFM] method under the Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) Act 2011, which is a Commonwealth Act. Prior to submitting the EOI, issues related to the scope and content of a proposed INFM method were discussed with the Great Koala National Park steering committee and advisory panels. The member would be aware that there is a cross-government steering committee and three advisory panels: a First Nations panel, an industry panel, and an environment and community panel.

The INFM EOI has been selected for further method development. The method is being developed by expert professor Andrew Macintosh from Australian National University as requested by the New South Wales Government. The member is probably aware of the work of Professor Macintosh; he is considered one of the global experts in this field. To answer the member's question, it was done for the Government and it is being developed by Professor Macintosh because of his considerable expertise in relation to these matters. To help

people understand—because I have had quite a lot of interest in this—this is an independent process that is done by the Emissions Reduction Assurance Committee [ERAC]. It came out of the Chubb review into carbon credit units and it is a process independent of government.

There is now a period of further technical development and consultation. ERAC will assess the method against the legislated offsets integrity standards. A method can only be approved if it meets those standards, which address issues such as additionality and leakage. It is very technical, as members who pay attention to these things would be aware. In particular, a method will only be approved if it delivers real, additional and permanent greenhouse gas abatement. There is a fair way to go with this. Basically it has been selected for consideration. Now all of the technical work is being undertaken. If it is approved, it will be something that can be applied in projects. I hope that answers the question asked by the member.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON (11:11):** I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate if the commissioning of Professor Andrew Macintosh is a direct commission? Is the Government paying Andrew Macintosh independently or is another party involved?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:12):** I believe that is the case but I will take it on notice to confirm it. I am pretty confident, but I will confirm it and come back to the member.

### RED IMPORTED FIRE ANTS

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (11:12):** My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Agriculture. How is the New South Wales Government maintaining its strict biosecurity in relation to red imported fire ants?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:12):** I thank the member for his question. I have talked a lot in this place about the New South Wales Government's war on red imported fire ants. We are doing everything we can to keep them out of New South Wales. We know that they are a significant issue in southern Queensland and they continue to pose a significant threat, particularly in the north of our State, to our agricultural industries, human health and beyond. Whilst it has to be vigilantly managed and monitored every day, we are committed to the fight. I have already informed the House that the Government brought forward \$95 million in funding, which was an increase from the \$15 million that the previous Government had on the table, to deal with the significant threat.

We are also making sure that people fully understand the rules that are required to be followed under the Biosecurity Act, particularly in relation to materials that pose a threat of bringing ants into New South Wales. To make sure that people understand that, we have had a whole education campaign. Border checks are in place. Operations have included the police to inform not just businesses but also the general community—particularly around the north and north coast of New South Wales—about their responsibilities under the Biosecurity Act regarding identifying the ants and calling them in. I have reported to the House that there have been three incidents of finding ants in New South Wales. Because the system is working to date, we have been able to identify, with community support, the problem and eradicate it each and every time. But, again, we have to maintain vigilance and maintain our operations to keep this threat from the State.

The most recent case was towards the end of last year when some ants came into New South Wales on turf from a Queensland company that did not follow the rules for bringing in turf, which is a high-risk product. I took decisive action on that threat and banned turf from Queensland altogether. Unless people follow the rules completely with additional checks in place to protect our State and, in particular, our northern agricultural industry, that ban will remain in place until we need to lift it. I am not messing around. We are very serious about people needing to understand the rules. Following that, we have completed prosecuting some businesses that did the break the rules. That has resulted in significant fines from the Local Court of \$60,000 to companies that have breached our biosecurity rules in New South Wales. They are Queensland companies that have broken the rules. We have prosecuted and now fined them. Everyone needs to take the threat seriously.

### WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT LICENCES

**The Hon. EMMA HURST (11:15):** My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. Humane Society International has released a report titled *Licence to Kill - The shocking scale of licensed wildlife killing in Australia*, which reveals that New South Wales issued licences to harm over 650,000 native animals in 2023, more than any other State or Territory. That includes wombats, possums, corellas and galahs, which would otherwise be protected by the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016. Will the Minister commit to review the large number of licences to harm issued in New South Wales and undertake a review of the licence to harm native animal system generally?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:16):** I thank the honourable member for her question. I am actually familiar with the report. Humane Society International does very good work relating to such matters. I used to follow this issue fairly closely in opposition as well, noticing how the licences are issued. For background, licences are issued through the National Parks and Wildlife Service if people want to harm native wildlife for a range of reasons. Sometimes farmers apply and there are some specific instances where local councils and others try to manage the issue. It is one of those things that, for me, is always under constant watch in relation to what we are doing.

I will not commit to the member to do a full review on it, but I am happy to provide more information about some of the trends and how it is going. I am happy to inform the House on the way we would do that. People are aware that native wildlife has special protection. It is owned by all of us. It is a public asset and a valuable one, as well as being incredible in terms of the diversity and the wonder of our native plants and animals. Licences, in my view, should be as rare as possible and only issued when they are absolutely required. I am confident that the National Parks and Wildlife Service applies the rules judiciously, but I am happy to continue to work with and talk to the member and inform the House about the status of the licensing system.

#### MINISTERIAL CAR USE

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (11:18):** My question is directed to the Minister for Mental Health. In relation to the birthday gift valued at \$750 of a chauffeur-driven limousine service to and from a Hunter Valley winery for the Minister and five friends, which she received from former Minister Jo Haylen, has she made a written disclosure of this gift? If so, when did she make the disclosure?

**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) (11:18):** I thank the honourable member for the question. I have not made any disclosures of gifts in relation to that. I will have to take on notice the detail of the question. As I have said, I have been on the public record in relation to the fact that the entire event was a surprise to me. I was not involved in organising it or making any of the bookings and logistics, but I will take on notice the part of the question as it relates to my obligations to make disclosures.

#### CRITICAL MINERALS MINING

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (11:19):** My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Natural Resources. Will the Minister update the House on the important roles that mining and refining of metals and critical minerals have in supporting jobs and regional economic development across New South Wales?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:19):** I thank the honourable member for a really important question about future opportunities for our mining sector. I know that the member is a keen advocate for the mining sector in the particular part of the State where she lives. But there is no doubt, as I have said many times, we need to mine our way to a clean energy future. Off the back of our announcement of our critical minerals strategy last year, I had the fantastic opportunity last week to visit one of our successful companies in New South Wales that is already well down the processing chain in relation to gold and silver.

It is worth noting at this point that indeed the Federal Parliament, which is sitting this week, has passed the production tax credits, which will be important in encouraging further investment in our critical minerals and processing opportunities. There is no doubt that this is one of the largest packages of support provided for the resources sector by the Federal Parliament and I certainly congratulate my Federal colleagues, who I speak to regularly regarding the opportunities we have in this sector and ways that we can work together. We have a common view about the opportunities that are presented.

In New South Wales we have already more than 4,000 people directly employed in metals mining across the State. As I mentioned, last week I had the opportunity to see how some of that gold and silver is processed in the heart of Sydney by a company called ABC Refinery. This is the country's only accredited metallurgical laboratory. It manufactures ABC bullion, Australia's gold standard, and serves a range of New South Wales mines, including Cadia gold mine in Orange, Evolution's Cowal gold mine near West Wyalong, Northparkes mine, Peak gold mine in Cobar, and Tomingley gold mine south of Dubbo. I am told it refines about 23 per cent of the available gold and 70 per cent of the available silver in Australia. If there are other mines out there that are looking for opportunities, please bring your gold and silver to New South Wales to refine. We have opportunities here.

It was a remarkable opportunity to see this family-owned business and to see the entire production process, from the gold bars received from the mines to some of the amazing finished products, including the Melbourne Cup, and indeed the manufacturing of the Australian Open Cup is already underway in the heart of Sydney. There is no doubt that there are remarkable opportunities if we can get further down the refining and processing



production line. ABC Refinery is a company already doing that in the heart of Sydney and I congratulate it on its efforts. I also thank ABC Refinery for a fantastic tour of its facilities. I look forward to having much more to say about our critical minerals and high-tech metals sector.

### RACING NSW AND CROWN LANDS

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:22):** My question is directed to the Treasurer, and also in his capacity representing the Minister for Lands and Property, Minister Kamper. I refer the Treasurer to the Government's decision to appoint Racing NSW as a Crown lands manager and give it control of five country racecourses on Crown lands. Is the Treasurer aware of a letter from Scott Kennedy, the Racing NSW Industry General Manager, to the Queanbeyan Race Club last April, stating that "Racing NSW is looking to consolidate Crown land eventually to be owned by Racing NSW, but with Racing NSW as manager as a first step". Is the Government still committed to opposing privatisation? If so, will the Treasurer rule out transferring ownership of Crown lands to Racing NSW so that it can then sell them for housing and other profit-making purposes once it has freehold title?

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:23):** I thank the member for his question. To the specific question am I aware of the letter, the short answer is that I am aware of it now, but I was not aware of it before. In terms of the question of Racing NSW and its interaction with Crown land racecourses, I can advise the member that I have been advised that on 31 May 2024 Racing NSW was appointed as a category 1 Crown land manager for Armidale, Coffs Harbour, Inverell, Port Macquarie and Queanbeyan racecourses. The appointment of Racing NSW as a Crown land manager aligns with the priorities of the Crown land 2031 strategic plan by securing the sustainable management of Crown assets for local communities. I am further advised that Racing NSW brings experience and capabilities in land management as well as in racecourse operations and that each of the jockey and race clubs that operate the five racecourses were consulted as part of the appointment process and confirmed their support for this new role for Racing NSW.

I am advised that the appointment provides more opportunities for capital investment to maintain and upgrade the facilities for the community's enjoyment. Crown Lands holds quarterly meetings with Racing NSW to ensure good governance and management of the reserves for the people of New South Wales. It is important to note that I am advised that revenue generated by Racing NSW from the racecourses must be invested back into the reserves that it manages. That is the information I have to hand. I am happy to take the balance of the question on notice and provide any further detail, and to refer it to the Minister, as the member asked it in my own capacity and in my capacity representing Minister Kamper.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:25):** I ask a supplementary question. Will the Treasurer advise the House, as a firm opponent of privatisation, how it is that Racing NSW ever got the impression that its Crown land management would be the first step towards owning the land in freehold title? Will the Treasurer investigate how this has come about and enforce the Government's policy not to hand over freehold of Crown land in New South Wales which can then be sold for housing and other purposes, thus profit-making?

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:25):** The short answer is that I am not in a position to provide such advice, but I am in a position to make inquiries, and I will.

### MINISTERIAL CAR USE

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH (11:26):** My question is directed to the Minister for Mental Health. Noting the provisions in the Crown Employees (Ministerial Drivers) Award 2023, including those relating to minimal three-hour shifts and 150 per cent loading for work on a public holiday, what was the total cost to the taxpayer of the Minister using a ministerial driver on Boxing Day 2024 to take herself and her family on a short trip to the airport for the start of their family holiday? Did the Minister give any thought as to whether this was a reasonable use of taxpayers' money before booking this trip?

**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 part of the question on notice relating to the details of the award and the cost. I reiterate the answer I gave yesterday and today: All of my use of the ministerial vehicle is within the guidelines. The previous guidelines were in existence for a long time and I am very confident meet the public expectation test.

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH (11:27):** I ask a supplementary question. If the Minister could—

**The Hon. Penny Sharpe:** Do you really want to go there? We can go into Don's use of the car if you really want. You've got a few nervous people on the other side.

**The Hon. Scott Farlow:** Point of order: The Hon. Chris Rath is seeking to ask a supplementary question. The Leader of the Government is trying to throw idle threats across the Chamber. I would have thought a

government that wants transparency and accountability would be open to answering the questions rather than throwing threats from across the other side of the Chamber.

**The PRESIDENT:** I uphold the first part of the Hon. Scott Farlow's point of order. The second part was a debating point. All members should be heard in silence when they are asking questions. Ministers should be heard in silence when they are answering questions. The Hon. Chris Rath has the call.

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH:** I thank the Minister for taking part of the question on notice. Will the Minister elucidate with regard to her recent claim that she had reviewed all of the use of her ministerial drivers and that all such use would pass the reasonable person on the Clapham omnibus test? Did this claim cover the Minister's use of a limousine service on Boxing Day to the airport for a family holiday?

**The Hon. John Graham:** Point of order: I ask the President to rule on whether that is a new question. In particular, the framing has taken us in an entirely different direction.

**The PRESIDENT:** Can I see a copy of the question? I uphold the point of order. The question can be asked as a new question later, if Opposition members wish.

### HOMES NSW

**The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (11:29):** My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Housing. Will the Minister update the House on achievements made during the first year of Homes NSW?

**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) (11:30):** It is exciting to be celebrating—and it is a celebration—the one-year anniversary of the creation of Homes NSW.

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell:** Are you excited?

**The Hon. ROSE JACKSON:** I am so excited! I make absolutely no apologies.

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Opposition members just made the not-unreasonable point that members should be heard in silence. What is good for the goose is good for the gander. The Minister will be heard in silence.

**The Hon. ROSE JACKSON:** I am not so excited to get thrown out of question time, as happened to the Leader of the National Party. That has never happened to me. I am so excited to be the Minister for Housing in a government that is, for the first time in a long time, prioritising the rebuilding of public and social housing in this State. We have made so much progress, which is incredibly exciting. Of course, there is more to do. There is absolutely no boosterism from this Government about the scale of the challenge that is ahead of us, but let us be clear about the progress we have made. We had an election commitment to bring together the disparate elements of public and social housing, which had been flung into the back alleys of the New South Wales Government under the previous administration, into a central agency, Homes NSW, which is already kicking so many goals when it comes to social and affordable housing.

It was not just the creation of the new agency, which is a year old this month; it was also the historic injection of \$6.6 billion into housing and homelessness. Again I thank the Treasurer and the finance Minister for backing this reform, which is an entirely necessary step in confronting the housing crisis. We cannot properly confront the housing crisis without recognising that social and affordable housing is the critical bedrock on which to build better private market outcomes. So we created Homes NSW, and we injected \$6.6 billion. One example of the progress made is that we have managed to reduce the average wait time for public and social housing in New South Wales from 21 months to 14 months. That is real progress. Fourteen months is still too long. We know we have further to go; we know there is still work to do. But that is just an example of the direction in which we are moving and why we are so proud.

I recently visited Telopea, which is an estate that has three buildings that have sat empty, languishing for years after a dud deal signed by the previous Government. Homes NSW has ended that deal and taken control of the project. Construction has started. When I was there, they were cleaning and tidying up so that we can move hundreds of people back into those properties. That is more roofs over heads and more solutions to the housing and homelessness crisis. We have made a lot of progress in one year alone. We now have the resources to keep going, and we are not going to stop. There is so much more to do.

### HEALTH WORKFORCE

**The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (11:32):** My question is directed to the Minister for Finance, representing the Minister for Health in this place. I refer to an email sent from a medical administrator to a junior doctor at John Hunter Hospital, who had been rostered on to work 10 night shifts in a row. The email referred to junior

doctors as "clinical marshmallows". What will the New South Wales Government commit to in order to lift the standards that are acceptable within our New South Wales health workforce to ensure that a small number of bad eggs do not ruin the reputation of NSW Health and, more broadly but importantly, the psychosocial health of our important New South Wales health workers, who do an excellent job?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:33):** I thank the member for the question in relation to junior doctors. I acknowledge his history of advocacy for that particular part of the State. He asked the question of me in my capacity representing the Minister for Health, so I will take the opportunity to take that part of the question on notice and come back to him with a considered response. The member has raised what is obviously a serious allegation. My understanding is that Health has apologised for the email, but I will take the opportunity to come back to him with a considered response to his question on this important issue.

The member also raised the issue of psychosocial challenges. More broadly, regarding questions that relate to junior doctors, it is an issue that our Government has inherited and is confronting. There is no doubt that there are some challenges, but I particularly commend the Minister for Health on the way that he is dealing with those issues. In speaking about the health workforce, given this morning's developments I take the opportunity, with the indulgence of the House, to condemn some of the other behaviour that we have seen among some of the 180,000 people who operate within the health workforce.

**The Hon. Greg Donnelly:** Shame!

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:** I acknowledge those interjections that clearly show that we stand united as a House in condemning this appalling and sickening behaviour. The health Minister has stood with the secretary of the health department to respond to those allegations of shocking and appalling behaviour. They have been swiftly dealt with by this Government, and no doubt we will have more details to update the House with as the investigation continues.

#### MINISTERIAL CAR USE

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (11:35):** My question is directed to the Minister for Housing. In December 2023 did the Minister use a ministerial driver to take her and her family to the airport for a flight to the United States?

**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) (11:36):** I feel like I have answered these questions. I reiterate once again that every single use of the ministerial vehicle was within the guidelines that have existed for many years. Those uses met the requirements in the guidelines, and I am confident that they meet the public expectation test.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (11:36):** I ask a supplementary question. I seek an elucidation of the Minister's answer with respect to the travel in December 2023. When the Minister took that car, if it was within her ministerial guidelines, was she on gazetted leave at the time?

**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) (11:36):** I have nothing further to add to my previous comments.

#### WESTERN SYDNEY TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (11:37):** My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Roads. Will the Minister outline the benefits that will flow from the joint investment by the Federal and New South Wales governments across Western Sydney?

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (11:37):** I thank the member for the question and for his interest in the transport network in Western Sydney. On 19 January I joined the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Prime Minister, the Commonwealth infrastructure Minister, as well as local Federal and State MPs—quite a crowd—for the announcement of a \$1 billion joint investment to better connect Western Sydney to the world.

The joint commitment from the governments will upgrade Fifteenth Avenue to create a critical transit corridor through to Western Sydney airport, joining up Liverpool to Western Sydney airport. Each day over 22,000 vehicles travel along that road. Even at about 10.00 a.m. on a Sunday morning, cars were queuing right near where we were doing the announcement. That is the case now, but Liverpool City Council predicts that number will rise quite significantly. As many as 63,000 additional people could be living there by 2041. The need

for the investment could be seen on that Sunday morning, and that is why this billion-dollar commitment is so welcome.

As the Premier said at the announcement, "This critical investment is a game changer for Western Sydney that will connect thousands of jobs at Western Sydney airport and the aerotropolis with Liverpool." Without this critical road, we could not deliver the growth and jobs that the aerotropolis has the potential to deliver. Western Sydney is growing rapidly. That is the reason for the suite of investments: \$10.4 billion into Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport; \$2 billion into the M12; and now, after recent announcements, \$1 billion into Mamre Road stage two and \$800 million going into Elizabeth Drive, on top of this Fifteenth Avenue announcement. That is good news.

What does that add up to? The Government has nearly doubled the funding going into Western Sydney roads that was there under the previous Government. Between 2019 and 2023 the former Government spent \$2.8 billion on Western Sydney road projects. Now \$5.2 billion is going into this area over the same duration. The additional joint \$1 billion for Fifteenth Avenue and our commitments to Garfield Road East add to that tally. The priority being put on that can be seen. We need to do that, given the opportunity from Western Sydney airport. The Government is absolutely delivering on the priorities that it committed to ahead of the election.

### COUNCILLOR CONDUCT FRAMEWORK

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (11:40):** My question is directed to the Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales, representing the Minister for Local Government. The New South Wales Government committed at the election in March 2023 to reviewing the Councillor Conduct Framework, releasing a discussion paper on 5 September 2024 with submissions closing on 29 November. In response to a question during the public hearing for the review of the 2023-24 annual reports of the ICAC regarding the fact that 42 per cent of section 10 complaints before the ICAC are related to local government, the Chief Commissioner, the Hon. John Hatzistergos, indicated on Monday that the ICAC made a submission to that review and that his preference is that the submission be made public. However, to date, the submission has not been made public. Minister, what is stopping the New South Wales Government from releasing the ICAC submission and other submissions into the review of the Councillor Conduct Framework—

**The PRESIDENT:** The Hon. Tania Mihailuk's time has expired. I have made the point on a number of occasions, and I make it again, that questions must be kept to one minute.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:41):** I thank the member for the question. It has been asked in my capacity representing the Minister for Local Government. I will take on notice specific parts of the question about consideration of whether reports should be released or not and what decisions have been made by the Minister. I will get an answer from the Minister. Obviously, we want more accountability in local government. The community expects more accountability in every level of government in New South Wales and in Australia. I do not know the details of what ICAC has recommended or what the Chief Commissioner has recommended. Obviously, there are some sensitivities on occasion about those kinds of recommendations to government, but I do not have access to that information to provide an answer today. In relation to that part of the question, I will also check with the Minister and come back to the House about what his thinking is about releasing the ICAC submission or not.

### MINISTERIAL CAR USE

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (11:42):** My question is directed to the Minister for Mental Health. Noting the Minister's earlier answer, for which other concerts or events that she received gift tickets for, such as the \$2,400 for the Star Championships or the \$400 tickets for the Robbie Williams concerts, did the Minister make use of a ministerial driver to get her to and from those events?

**The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast) (11:43):** I have answered those questions. The answer is that all of my use of the ministerial driver that is allocated to me is within the ministerial guidelines, which have been in place for some time. I have full confidence that the use meets the public expectation test as well.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (11:43):** I ask a supplementary question. Noting that the Minister stated that she believes the use was within the guidelines, what was the longest time the Minister kept a driver between dropping her off and then picking her up from those events?

**The Hon. Penny Sharpe:** Point of order: That is an entirely new question.

**The PRESIDENT:** Yes, it is. I uphold the point of order. The supplementary question is out of order.

### EMBEDDED BATTERY DISPOSAL

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (11:44):** My question is addressed to the Minister for the Environment. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government is supporting households to dispose of batteries safely?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:44):** I thank the honourable member for his question. I have spoken about this previously. Batteries are everywhere in our lives. They are in the phones in our pockets, sometimes in our toothbrushes and in the shoes of some of our kids when they have those light-up shoes, which are gorgeous. They are in cordless appliances across our homes and in the growing fleet of electric vehicles on our roads. They are everywhere. Batteries are incredibly important, but there are some serious challenges, including fires caused by poor-quality batteries and unsafe battery use and disposal.

Battery fires are, unfortunately, too common. On Thursday, Fire and Rescue NSW reported that it had attended four separate e-bike and e-scooter fires in Sydney within just 12 hours. There has been about one battery fire per week this year. That is a stark example of why everyone must think carefully about how they buy, use and dispose of battery-powered devices. We face a challenge with managing batteries as they reach end of life. A battery should never go in an ordinary bin, including batteries embedded inside other devices like electric toothbrushes; vapes, which are a huge problem; light-up toys; and shoes. Our waste and recycling sector is facing a crisis from battery-related fires. When crushed in a rubbish truck or at a waste facility, batteries can ignite. Those fires are frequent and can be devastating, as anyone in the waste sector or our local councils will say.

The New South Wales Government is committed to reducing the risk of battery fires and supporting safer battery use and disposal. We need to ensure that the community has access to free and convenient disposal for batteries. That is why the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] has embarked on a two-year trial to collect battery products at over 21 community recycling centres. So far, the EPA has collected over four tonnes of items containing embedded batteries, including vacuum cleaners, toothbrushes, power banks and vapes. The batteries are then discharged and shredded for recycling. The Government has invested up to \$1 million for more education of the new disposal options. The Government will also be undertaking an advertising campaign.

The issue is very serious. I have worked closely with my colleagues Jihad Dib and Anoulack Chanthivong as we also deal with batteries at their source and the standards that are required. We are working on providing very important information to the community about how people can deal with batteries before the situation gets worse or someone is killed. It is a very serious matter. I will also bring legislation to Parliament later this year that will look at mandatory product stewardship for batteries. Those that produce batteries need to be responsible and need to have a process for making sure that they are disposed of properly. Product stewardship is an approach to reduce environmental impacts, but it is also about safety. I bring this item to the attention of the House. We are doing what we can— *[Time expired.]*

**The PRESIDENT:** Those following along at home will realise that the next question for the crossbench should go to the Hon. Rod Roberts, but he has ceded it to the Hon. Mark Latham, who now has the call.

### RACING NSW AND CROWN LANDS

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:47):** My question is directed to the Treasurer, representing Minister Kamper in the Lands portfolio. Why did Minister Kamper gazette an illegal transfer of Queanbeyan Racecourse to Racing NSW on 31 May last year, given that the transfer was never considered or approved by the Queanbeyan Racing Club board, and that it was signed by John McIntyre, who has never been a member of the Queanbeyan Racing Club board? Given the board members bypassed by Minister Kamper included Bernie Fraser, the former governor of the Reserve Bank, will the Treasurer now report back to the House on how the illegal transfer was ever allowed to occur?

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:48):** I thank the member for his question. I cannot necessarily validate the assertion in the question that the transfer was illegal, because I cannot provide legal advice to the House in question time. But, nevertheless, it is fair to say that I am not particularly au fait with the circumstances that the member has asked me about in my capacity representing the Minister for Lands and Property. I am also not aware of the board membership of the Queanbeyan Racing Club. Incidentally, nor am I aware of the service of Mr Bernie Fraser since he has departed his role as the head of the Reserve Bank of Australia. I will have to take the question on notice and see if I can provide the member with some further information and detail. I am happy to do that. I will see whether it is possible for me to provide further information at the conclusion of question time. If that is not possible, I will provide an answer to him as forthwith as possible.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:49):** I ask a supplementary question. The Treasurer mentioned he is not au fait with the documents. They are actually held in the Mookhey library upstairs on what can be described

as a fortuitous SO 52 moved by the Hon. Emma Hurst last year. So now that they are in his eponymous library, will the Treasurer make himself au fait with the documents, examine them, and deal with the very serious matter of an illegal transfer of Crown land management to Racing NSW?

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:50):** I am glad that my library is being added to by the crossbench. That is very good. I have to say that I do miss the library. I miss the opportunity of spending time down there reading the documents. Dare I say I did acquire quite a sadistic love of long government documents. I read a lot of them still, but not necessarily those that have been obtained by the House under compulsion. I will check my diary to see whether it is possible that I can visit my library to read the documents. Dare I say, I almost want to accept the challenge of finding them without the member giving me the index number. But I might be able to speed up my knowledge of these documents if the member would be kind enough to identify precisely the index numbers of the documents he would like me to read. If he is prepared to do that, I will read them. That does not necessarily mean I will express an opinion on them, but I will read them. I will happily provide such an undertaking.

While that is taking place, I will refer the question to the Minister for Lands and Property. I will also make him aware of the location of my library so, should he wish to read the documents, he can. But if he cannot, I will send them along to him as well. I hope that the library is going well. I do miss the time I spent there. I am looking forward to seeing how much more is added this year. I cannot help but see that volumes are being added to the library. Unfortunately, it is the equivalent of Schrödinger's cat—if you add a document to the library and no-one reads about them in the media, did you even get them in the first place?

**The PRESIDENT:** I thank both the questioner and the Minister for using the words au fait, eponymous and Schrödinger's cat in the one question and answer.

#### MINISTERIAL CAR USE

**The Hon. WES FANG (11:52):** My question is directed to the Minister for Mental Health. Has the Minister ever made use of a ministerial driver while on gazetted leave?

**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) (11:52):** I thank the member for his question. I reiterate the answer that I have given in relation to these questions: All of my use of the ministerial car and driver have been within the guidelines that are applicable to all Ministers and have been applicable for some time. I am confident that they meet the public expectation test.

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** Point of order: The question that I asked could not have been any tighter. I asked the Minister a very pointed question. The Minister needs to be relevant to that. At the moment, the answer that she is giving is not relevant. I ask you to direct her to be relevant to the question that was asked.

**The Hon. Penny Sharpe:** To the point of order: Again, it is question time, and as much as those opposite would like to direct how Ministers choose to answer the question, Ministers are entitled to answer it in the way they see fit, as long as they are directly relevant. The Minister is absolutely being directly relevant in her response.

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** Further to the point of order: The Minister is reiterating an answer that she has previously provided to other questions. She is not being directly relevant to the question that I asked. The question I asked was whether the Minister had used a ministerial car and driver while she was on gazetted leave. The response that she is providing is not directly relevant to the question that was asked.

**The Hon. Penny Sharpe:** Further to the point of order: The issue relates to direct relevance. The Minister is answering with direct relevance on her use of the car and the way in which that is dealt with in the guidelines. It is perfectly in order and it is directly relevant to the question asked. Just because she is answering the question in a way that those opposite do not like does not mean it is not directly relevant.

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

**The Hon. WES FANG (11:54):** I ask a supplementary question. Given the Minister's answer is that she believes her usage was in order, will the Minister elucidate that part of her answer and indicate, if she was on leave, did she ever take a trip to the airport with her family for a holiday to the United States in December 2023?

**The Hon. Penny Sharpe:** Point of order: That is not a supplementary question. It is yet another question that those opposite should have in their question line-up rather than trying to ask it as a supplementary question.

**The PRESIDENT:** I uphold the first part of the point of order. The second part of the point of order was unhelpful.

## SUPERANNUATION FUNDS

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (11:54):** My question without notice is addressed to the Treasurer. The pool of Australian superannuation has now reached more than \$4 trillion, meaning Australians are now amongst the biggest global investors. What are the economic implications and opportunities that arise as a result?

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:55):** I thank the member for his question. He is quite right in saying that Australia is now one of the world's biggest investors. Australia's superannuation pool is now larger than the combined sovereign wealth funds of Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, the United Arab Emirates. We have Paul Keating and Kevin Rudd to thank for it. Their decision to create the modern superannuation system to ensure that we are allocating 9 per cent of wages under Mr Keating, and now ratcheting up to 12 per cent as a result of the policy changes introduced by the Rudd Government, means that we now have an amazing pool of capital that we can deploy to our strategic interests, to create jobs not just here but also abroad, and to maximise the retirement earnings for our citizens.

In addition to that, the fact that we are fully funding more and more people's retirements means that we are putting less pressure on taxes and we are making sure that we are able to deploy that resource towards our young students as we invest in their future, particularly in the education system. The two are linked, because one of the best ways to use our superannuation pool is by linking one of the world's fastest growing capital sources with one of the world's best trained workforces. When I was a humble economics student in the late 1990s, all of us were writing essays about the risk of a current account deficit, which was of course a big obsession in the late 1980s and early 1990s—for good reason. That is no longer a problem. We are no longer as dependent on foreign capital because we have created our own domestic source of capital that has been able to meet Australian investment needs and now, more and more increasingly, the world.

The fact that our mining industry is able to tap into Australian super pools to build jobs in Australia is a very good thing. It is increasingly clear that this is becoming a strategic asset for Australia and for New South Wales in the world. Right now the world's fastest growing economy is the United States, which is obviously in the midst of a productivity boom that is sucking up a lot of world capital. At the same time that we are having difficult conversations with a major trading partner about the future of their tariff policies, the fact that Australia is now one of the top 10 foreign direct investment investors in the United States is an important argument to make. It is an important argument that we are making, which is only possible because of the foresight of Labor governments to create the superannuation pool.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Is a member from the crossbench seeking the call?

**The Hon. Mark Latham:** Mr President—

**The PRESIDENT:** I will make this clear. The next question was for the Hon. John Ruddick. If two members are seeking the call, I would go to the person who was first in the next rotation. I would go to Ms Sue Higginson if she was seeking the call, but she is not. The Hon. Mark Latham has the call.

## RACING NSW AND CROWN LANDS

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:59):** I am happy to accept the call. I thank Ms Sue Higginson for her generosity. My question is directed to the Treasurer, representing the Minister for Lands and Property. Contrary to the Treasurer's earlier statement that Racing NSW would make new investments in those racecourses, why, in the nine months of its Crown land management conferred by Minister Kamper, has Racing NSW not changed the management of racecourses or spent an extra dollar on them, as its plan is to receive freehold title from the Minns Government and then sell them off?

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:59):** I thank the honourable member for his question. I will take it on notice and see whether I can provide further detail, as it has been asked to me in my capacity representing the Minister for Lands and Property. I refer the Hon. Mark Latham to my previous answer because he made reference to it. On 31 May 2024 Racing NSW was appointed the manager. I also made the point that the appointment provided the opportunity for more capital investment to maintain and upgrade the facilities for the community's enjoyment.

*[A member interjected.]*

I hear the interjections about whether there is any coming. In referring it to the Minister, I will probe to see whether he has been provided with a timeline for when that investment is forthcoming and what the plans are for that investment. I have been advised that each of the jockey and race clubs that operate the five racecourses were consulted and that they confirmed their support for the new role of Racing NSW. I make the general observation that Racing NSW, as the honourable member has brought to the attention of the House, has diverse sources and large scales of income and assets, which means that it is often in a position to make investments in some

racecourses. I am particularly knowledgeable about the Armidale Racecourse, which is mentioned. For what it is worth, I have spent my time running around it. It is quite an interesting run.

There are periodic races there that are important to the city of Armidale, but the case that has been made to me by people in Armidale is that, as a principal town event, the capacity to connect it to wider events means they need access to larger scales to be able to support additional capital investment. Therefore, I understand that may be part of the reason sitting behind the motivation informing the structure. I hear the honourable member making the point that nothing has happened. It has been nine months since the transfer took place in May of last year. It is fair to say that any capital investor that has acquired an asset will take time to develop the plans, the planning approvals, the financing, the procurement and the construction. I do not know where in the pipeline that is up to when it comes to those particular racecourses. That is part of the reason why I will refer the rest of the question to the Minister and see if I can provide any further information.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM (12:02):** I ask a supplementary question. The Treasurer mentioned that each of the racing and jockey clubs approved the transfer. Why, then, did Crown Lands seek due diligence on Queanbeyan Racing Club, looking for the documents whereby the board approved the transfer and the two signatories, Mr Comyn and Mr McIntyre, were authorised by the board, when no such documents exist and no such board consideration was given? In fact, the board only found out about the transfer after it had occurred and been gazetted by Minister Kamper on 31 May.

**The Hon. Penny Sharpe:** Point of order—

**The PRESIDENT:** If the point of order is that it is an entirely new question, I uphold the point of order. The supplementary question is out of order.

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

#### NATIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (12:03):** In relation to the question that was asked by Ms Sue Higginson, the contract with Professor Andrew Macintosh is a contract between the New South Wales Government and the Australian National University, his employer. There is no other third party. He has undertaken that work on behalf of the Government.

#### *Supplementary Questions for Written Answers*

#### NATIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON (12:04):** My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for Climate Change. Will the Minister provide any and all estimates and modelling for the value of carbon credits in the Great Koala National Park assessment area, as well as any and all estimates and modelling for the value of carbon credits in all or any part of the public native forest estate?

#### MINISTERIAL CAR USE

**The Hon. WES FANG (12:04):** My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for Mental Health. Did the Minister use a ministerial driver to take her and her family to the airport while on gazetted leave in December 2023?

**The Hon. Courtney Houssos:** Point of order: I seek the President's ruling on whether that is a supplementary question for written answer, given that it is restating a question that the honourable member asked and that the Minister answered during question time. I understand that previous rulings have been made in relation to that. I seek clarification as to whether supplementary questions for written answers are subject to the same rules—

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** To the point of order—

**The Hon. Courtney Houssos:** I am not finished.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The Hon. Wes Fang will resume his seat.

**The Hon. Courtney Houssos:** I seek the President's clarification as to whether supplementary questions for written answer are subject to the same rules as questions that are asked during question time. If they are, I make the submission that the question should be ruled out of order.



**The Hon. Wes Fang:** To the point of order: If the Hon. Courtney Houssos had been listening, she would have heard that I sought to ask for an elucidation in a supplementary question earlier. It was ruled out of order and it was suggested that I ask it as a new question, which I am doing now.

**The PRESIDENT:** I have heard the point of order and will consider it. I will reserve my ruling and let the Chamber know. I take both of the members' points. I do not remember the specific order of events, so I will go back and have a look.

#### RACING NSW AND CROWN LANDS

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM (12:06):** My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Treasurer. Will the Treasurer provide a written answer for the three serious matters on which he committed to report back to the House: that the Queanbeyan transfer is illegal, that there will be no new investment or management changes and that Racing NSW has an expectation of freehold title and to privatise these sites?

**The Hon. Penny Sharpe:** Point of order: The honourable member asked three questions. I do not mind that members ask supplementary questions for written answer—they are allowed to—but it is supposed to be a singular question. I seek some guidance from the President about asking three questions in one supplementary question for written answer. It was a good try.

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell:** It is one question with three parts.

**The Hon. Mark Latham:** To the point of order: It was clearly one question going to the matters on which the Treasurer said he would report back to the House. Reporting back to the House and investigating issues where there is an allegation of illegality is a serious obligation of a Minister. The people at Queanbeyan Racing Club are vitally concerned about it and would appreciate a written answer within 24 hours.

**The PRESIDENT:** The Hon. Mark Latham is going right to the line in terms of a previous ruling that I have given, which was helpfully elucidated by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Questions can be in more than one part. On this occasion, the member is just inside the line. Members will be cognisant that they cannot continue to ask a series of entirely independent questions and say that it is part of the same question, but on this occasion I will allow it.

#### COUNCILLOR CONDUCT FRAMEWORK

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (12:08):** My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for Agriculture, representing the Minister for Local Government. Will the Minister provide a written answer with respect to issuing a timetable as to when the Councillor Conduct Framework will be finalised? Will the submissions be made publicly available, particularly from the agencies that are prepared to make their submissions publicly available?

*Questions Without Notice: Take Note*

#### TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN:** I move:

That the House take note of answers to questions.

#### MINISTERIAL CAR USE

#### HEALTH WORKFORCE

**The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (12:08):** I take note of every answer given by the Minister for Mental Health throughout the one hour of question time. The Coalition, which is running against itself in the electorate of Port Macquarie as it seeks to replace a member in lower House, spent the entirety of question time today ignoring the real issues of the people of New South Wales. These are the parties campaigning for election right now. Ministers have staff, and many Opposition members know that. They had staff and drivers of their own in the previous terms of Parliament. I am of the view that drivers who chaperone Ministers of the Crown perform a very important security function. We are a First World country. New South Wales is the largest, most economically developed State in Australia. It is okay for Ministers to have somebody with them. They do not work nine to five; they work around the clock. They have emails, texts, calls and meetings on top of meetings. For the Opposition to spend the entirety of question time today talking about the movements of the Hon. Rose Jackson is a shame.

News broke this morning about two employees of NSW Health, one of whom said on video that they have harmed patients who have presented to hospital for medical care. A male nurse in NSW Health has literally claimed that Israeli patients have been harmed. That was not raised once today by the Opposition in question time. It was news this morning. That news was raised in answer to a question I asked about NSW Health. It is a real

travesty that no member of the Opposition in this House, the house of review, remarked on that matter at all. It is an extreme shame.

I have presented to my local hospital before and I have taken for granted that the people treating me would take no notice of the colour of my skin, the religion that I practise or my sexuality but would treat me for the symptoms I present with. Today we heard that there are people who do not do that, two of whom we now know about and will deal with properly. As a Parliament—and, of course, the Government, and the Minister for Health has addressed this today—we should be reassuring people that they are able to present to NSW Health services if they have any symptoms at all, regardless of their age, race, sex, sexuality or anything of the sort. They should not have to think twice. I say to anyone who is Jewish, Arab, Israeli or Palestinian that they can use NSW Health services without any fear. *[Time expired.]*

### SUPERANNUATION

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (12:11):** I take note of the answer given by the Treasurer to a question I asked about superannuation and the over \$4 trillion now in those funds. It is very important to recognise such thoroughgoing policy changes that actually have a material, generational effect on people's lives. This was a Labor Party reform that was roundly criticised at the time, by those on the conservative side of politics, for trying to socialise the economy. It was a massive transfer of wealth and income from the corporate sector to working people which has the benefit of alleviating the Government from having to raise taxes to pay for people's retirement and giving people independent living in their retirement. It was a one-off generational reform that only a Labor Government could institute. The Treasurer outlined the benefits of the capital that is creating, which is allowing this country to make both domestic investments that foster job growth and also foreign direct investments. It probably has a material effect on the thinking about whether our ally the United States will raise tariffs, given the injection of funds into that economy by those superannuation funds.

From time to time we need to take a deep breath, look back in history and see just what those reforms have meant for a country like Australia. It was game-changing policy reform that will last into the future and will probably be lauded as one of the greatest reforms made by Australia as a mature social democracy. Again, it was the brainchild of the union movement, with Bill Kelty working with Paul Keating to get that superannuation levy up. Telling an employer that they have to compulsorily contribute 9.5 per cent, 10.5 per cent, 11.5 per cent or 12.5 per cent would have been unthinkable a generation ago, but that is what governments are capable of if they have the will. It would be highly uncontroversial to say that people on both sides of politics should continue to support this into the future. Let us have none of this nonsense about dipping into superannuation and using cop-out excuses that people should have access to that money prior to retirement. It is there to fund retirement and enable independence in retirement so that people can have a good life and not have to rely on the pension alone. Again, I give credit to the Treasurer for his answer and more credit to the Labor Government for instituting the policy.

### MINISTERIAL CAR USE

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (12:15):** While I accept the observations made by the Hon. Taylor Martin about the Opposition's strategy in question time, I do not accept his criticism that the position of the Minister for Mental Health should go unremarked upon. A number of legitimate questions were posited to the Minister today, to which she adopted a strategy that was completely different to the frank answers that she gave yesterday. I say to the Hon. Taylor Martin that a significant debate on antisemitism will occur in this place later today, and I anticipate that he will make a significant contribution to that debate when it occurs. That, potentially, is the view that we took regarding the questions about the incidents he identified and which he would have preferred to have been our strategy in question time.

A Minister has resigned from the ministry over allegations relating to improper use of a ministerial driver. Whilst I accept that there are appropriate uses for ministerial drivers—including safety, which the Hon. Taylor Martin identified—what has been colloquially described as the "pub test" applies to how that should be used. Ministers should adhere to a certain standard when using those drivers. Today in this place the Minister sought to avoid, on every occasion, transparency on the manner in which she used that driver. If the former Minister for Transport had used that strategy, she may well still be a Minister today. However, the public does not accept the use of a driver on a 446-kilometre round trip to the Hunter Valley. We suggest that the Minister using her driver for a seven-minute trip to an airport for a family holiday is also an inappropriate use of a driver. The Minister's lack of transparency in her answers to questions today creates a circumstance where there are more questions to be asked than answers given.

### RACING NSW AND CROWN LANDS

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM (12:18):** I take note of the answers given by the Treasurer regarding the transfer of Crown land management to Racing NSW. This was gazetted by Minister Kamper on 31 May last year

for five racecourses. One would have to ask why he ever did it, given that the role of Racing NSW under the statute is to be the regulator of the thoroughbred racing industry. Now those five racecourses—Queanbeyan, Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour, Armidale and Inverell—are regulating themselves. It is an obvious probity problem to allow the regulator to regulate itself in the management and control of five racecourses, and it has listed many more that it would like to control. In the Standing Order 52 documents, Minister Harris was asked for his opinion about this. There is no document from Minister Harris saying, "I approve of this Crown land management and this extraordinary move with Racing NSW."

I would have thought that a sensible Minister would say, "No, they're the regulator. You can't let them regulate themselves." That is the first error of judgement from Minister Kamper. The second is that, clearly, from the correspondence with the general manager of industry at Racing NSW, Scott Kennedy, there is an expectation that Crown land management would be just the first step. He wrote, "Racing NSW is looking to consolidate Crown land, eventually to be owned by Racing NSW, but with Racing NSW as manager as the first step"—like it is a ruse that we are going to do this as a first step. Labor made an election promise two years ago—and one could have stamped it on its forehead—of "no privatisation". "No privatisation" was the mantra, but it found a back doorway by collaborating with Racing NSW—and I warned Labor about dealing with those characters.

Let Racing NSW be the Crown land managers as the first step and then there will be a freehold transfer to Racing NSW—and we know about the fire sale at Rosehill and the real estate ambitions and obsessions of Racing NSW. It loves freehold title as it can sell it off for big bucks. Obviously there was a plan to use a back doorway to privatise Crown land, which is a disgrace. Crown land normally is regarded as sacred in New South Wales. Some 40 per cent of its land mass is Crown land. To convert country racetracks into freehold title and then sell it off for housing is a disgrace.

Further in the Kennedy correspondence—and this is part of the problem of dealing with people who think they are more powerful than the Government itself—it says, "The property is occupied without charge"—this in reference to Queanbeyan—"so the market value referred to won't occur." Minister Kamper signed an agreement with Graeme Hinton at Racing NSW that, in being a Crown land manager, it charges market rent. Racing NSW wrote to say, "No, it won't occur," snubbing its nose at the Minister. [*Time expired.*]

#### MINISTERIAL CAR USE

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (12:21):** I address the series of questions that the Hon. Damien Tudehope directed to the Minister for Housing. It would be a mistake for the Government to apply the standard that the member advocated for. Minister Jackson is a fine Minister and is very good at her job. The pub test is not the test that must apply to ministerial misconduct; the application of the law and the appropriate guidelines must be applied. It is clear that the former Minister for Transport resigned so she would not be a distraction for the Government. She did not concede that she had done anything technically wrong.

It is honourable that the Minister placed the interests of the Government above her personal interests. That was honourable conduct, as was her decision to resign. But to apply that standard across the Government is utterly unreasonable, and we should not bow to that. The Premier said he will review the guidelines. That is the appropriate course of action. That response is required given the sense that the settings are not appropriate or consistent with public expectations at this time. That should be the end of the matter.

#### MINISTERIAL CAR USE

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (12:23):** I take note of answers given today by the Minister for Housing. As the Leader of the Opposition outlined, the Minister's approach in question time today was markedly different from yesterday, when she was open in her answers to the House. She was honest in her communication to the House, but today the shutters went up. We heard the defence that she had previously answered those questions, but the Minister was asked completely new questions about completely different events. The same answer was proffered for every single question, so the Minister's approach has changed since yesterday. It is a trademark and a part of the brand of this Minister that she is open, honest and forthright. I appreciate that when the Minister answers my questions, whether they are asked in this House or in budget estimates, the Minister is forthright and open.

Sometimes she is disarmingly open. She has said, "Yes, I was wrong on that," or, "Yes, I'm sorry about that." That is her brand. That is who she is as a person and Minister, and I applaud her for that. But today we saw something very different. The Minister was defensive. She put up the shutters and resorted to the same standard line. Of course, that is a wild departure from the Government, which has held itself up to be transparent, open and accountable. The Government has said that is its mantra. That was the change that it claimed to bring to New South Wales. But as we have seen, when the times get tough, the Government uses the old tactics of defence, defence, defence.

In answering questions, the shutters have gone up from not only the Minister but also the Leader of the Government, who continues to throw insults and threats across the Chamber at members of the Opposition as they rise to ask questions—as if members on this side of the Chamber would feel threatened by the Leader of the Government when she says, "We will go through the record of former Ministers." That is not the hallmark of a government that is open, transparent and raising the standards; that is the hallmark of a government that resorts to the same old bullyboy tactics as soon as the first signs of trouble appear.

## COUNCILLOR CONDUCT FRAMEWORK

### CRITICAL MINERALS MINING

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (12:25):** I want to quickly make a comment about a couple of questions, one being the question that I put to the Hon. Tara Moriarty, representing the Minister for Local Government, in relation to the Councillor Conduct Framework. That is an issue that I have asked this House a number of times about, and last year I moved a bill that was subsequently passed and is now before the lower House. My concern here, of course, is that at the ICAC public hearing on Monday the chief commissioner made note that 42 per cent of section 10 complaints before ICAC do relate to local government, and he subsequently made a submission about the Councillor Conduct Framework last year. It was his preference that that submission be made public. Of course, that is the question that I am putting to the Government: What is stopping them from making these submissions public?

I do not understand why these submissions from agencies like ICAC, which are willing to have their submissions made public, are not publicly available for everyone to peruse. My concern also is that the issue relating to the Councillor Conduct Framework has been sitting with the Government for far too long. They raised that matter during the March 2023 election, committing that there would be a review. That was one of the first things Minister Hoenig made public after being made a Minister. He had been talking about it all through 2023. Finally, he released a consultation paper in September 2024 and invited these submissions. How long are the people of New South Wales going to wait for a new Councillor Conduct Framework to come into effect in New South Wales, particularly given, as ICAC has indicated, that a large number of the complaints and matters before ICAC understandably relate to local government, and to local government planning matters at that?

I also want to make a quick point about a question asked of the Minister for Natural Resources today regarding mining. I commend the NSW Minerals Council for its recent survey of 31 participating mining companies. The survey indicated that over \$22 billion has been put towards the New South Wales economy. A large amount of that went across different regions of New South Wales, and that contributed more than 34,000 jobs to New South Wales. There has been an increase in jobs in the past 12 months in the mining sector and related ancillary industries that support the mining sector. I congratulate the mining sector on contributing to the economy of New South Wales.

## 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) (12:28):** In wrapping up the take-note debate, I reiterate and agree with the comments made by the previous speaker in supporting the important work that the mining sector does to support jobs and investment. I note also the research that was released earlier this week, and the important and significant contribution that mining makes to the New South Wales economy.

I will be brief in my remarks and simply say that it was clear from question time today that this Government is getting on with delivering for the people of New South Wales. More than 50,000 families and households have now begun their journey of home ownership because of this Government's laws that passed through this Parliament. They were one of the first priorities we put on this Parliament's legislative agenda after being elected. More than a billion dollars of tax relief has been delivered to assist those families to own their homes because we understand the cost-of-living pressures that families are facing and that housing is a crucial contributor to those. I was proud to stand up with the Treasurer this morning as we provided that important update to the community. Ministers were talking today about roads, batteries and a range of other substantive policy issues, showing how we are delivering and building a better New South Wales.

Those opposite might get up and whinge that they do not like how the Minister for Housing is answering. I forget some of her portfolios because she has so many—Housing, Mental Health, Homelessness, Water, North Coast and Youth; I think I might have got everything there. The Minister has a full suite of responsibilities, which she is ably managing in difficult circumstances, delivering a record investment in social housing. Those opposite cannot find a single substantive policy question to ask a Minister. It shows how out of touch they are. The Opposition might not like how the answers are being given, but those questions being asked of her are absolutely being answered.

In relation to the question I responded to in question time and the subject of discussion within the broader community today, I agree with the Hon. Taylor Martin. Every member of the community of New South Wales should feel able to present to a New South Wales hospital, regardless of race or gender, whatever happens. We have more than 180,000 amazing, dedicated health professionals who staff that system, including some members I know in this place. The health Minister and this Government will continue to act swiftly to clamp down on any instances of antisemitism or racist behaviour, which are completely unacceptable. But they are not a reflection of our community or of our health system.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

*Written Answers to Supplementary Questions*

**PSYCHIATRY WORKFORCE**

In reply to **Dr AMANDA COHN** (11 February 2025).

**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)**—The Minister provided the following response:

I have been advised:

As of 10 February 2025:

Twenty-nine psychiatrists have withdrawn their resignation and 105 deferred instances of resignation beyond this week.  
Seventy-one psychiatrists have agreed to transition to VMO.

**MINISTERIAL CAR USE**

In reply to **the Hon. NATALIE WARD** (11 February 2025).

**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)**—The Minister provided the following response:

I refer the member to my answers given during question time on 11 February 2025.

**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*

**NINE MEDIA COMPANY**

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM (14:01):** I congratulate the Government on the very successful Ultimate Fighting Championship [UFC] event held in Sydney last weekend. Why was it successful? Quite simply, it is very popular among young people. My generation loved Ali and Frazier; this generation loves Du Plessis and Strickland. Strong, gutsy combat athletes who are highly paid competing in a sport they love in front of a huge fan base, local and international—who would have problem with that? Let us start with the weird editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Bevan Shields, who said that he felt physically sick to see Dana White and Premier Chris Minns on a podcast together talking UFC. There are some sick things in our society, but consenting adults competing in sport is certainly not one of them. How abnormal and twisted Shields must be.

For things sickly, he actually needs to look closer to home at his own newspaper. In mid-November one of his reporters filed a well-researched and very important story about the corruption at Racing NSW, but Shields refused to publish it because Peter V'landys gives him so much money for the redundant racing form guide and other purposes such as freebies in the director's room at Royal Randwick. Nine media has also just started negotiations with V'landys to keep the NRL broadcasting rights—another reason Sickly Shields is happy to be part of the corruption protection racket around the man. Make no mistake, V'landys is the modern Sydney equivalent of a gangster, who survives because of political and media protection, as this Parliament has seen in recent times.

Another thing that should have made Shields sick is the Nine media cultural review into workplace behaviour. By far, the most complained-about person was Ray Hadley for his bullying, intimidation, abuse and deliberate mental torture of staff. Hadley did not retire willingly; he was made to go as a result of the so-called cultural review. *The Sydney Morning Herald* knows this but so far has refused to publish it. It knows of a letter written to 2GB apportioning blame for the suicide of a young man to the thug Ray Hadley. When I condemned

those practices in a motion about Hadley—objected to by those opposite—how did *The Sydney Morning Herald* respond? Alex Smith condemned me, not Hadley, thereby announcing herself as an enabler of this abuse. Most of Hadley's victims, as the cultural review revealed, were young women. Smith tries to parade herself as a feminist, the champion of respect for women in the workplace but, when it comes to Hadley, she is just another enabler. They use the word "grubs" a lot at 2GB but, again, they should look within—inside Nine media at the grubs like Shields and Smith.

### LIBRARY LOVERS' DAY

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (14:04):** This Friday is a special day. It is 14 February, a day to rediscover, a day to romanticise, a day to reconnect—with your local library. On 14 February it is national Library Lovers' Day, a day to honour libraries, librarians and books, and the valuable role that libraries play in our lives. That includes the librarians who work in our Parliament. They are approachable, welcoming, passionate, knowledgeable and well read. I also acknowledge the staff of my local libraries in Cessnock and Kurri Kurri, and their union, the United Services Union, of which I am also a proud member. Libraries in 2025 are about much more than the books that they hold in their collection. They host community groups. They have seed libraries. They hold important forums for seniors, and provide justice of the peace services, author talks, local studies and history groups, literacy groups and my new personal favourite, the school holiday activity schedule, which includes story time, rhyme time and much more. They are also a safe, cool and welcoming place on a hot day, with free wi-fi.

In year 5 and year 6 at school, I spent most afternoons at my local library waiting to be picked up by my mum on her way home from work. I devoured the Nancy Drew books on the shelves and somewhat cheekily would hide the book I was reading in a different section of the library every day so I could go back and pick up from where I was. Occasionally, I would arrive and find the book returned to its usual place—and I give a shoutout to the librarians at Baulkham Hills shire library when it was still there. I loved being taken into a world of mystery and intrigue every afternoon with the Nancy Drew novels. The problem was, as anyone who has read Nancy Drew books would know—and long before Netflix adopted this approach in its bid to have you binge-watch its series—each chapter would end on a cliffhanger. You had to read on. "Just one more chapter, Mum," I would say. Fast forward to now and both my boys have been taken to their library from a young age.

I will finish by honouring and thanking Sandy Ryan, the children's services officer at Kurri Kurri and Cessnock libraries. Sandy created the most wonderful, warm and welcoming space for me as a new mum. Attending rhyme time was one of the first regular things I ventured out of the house for on my own with my firstborn. It helped me in many more ways than just providing music and singing with my six-month-old. It provided connection, community and company at a time when I felt completely isolated and at times overwhelmed. Sandy's rhyme time gave me a reason to leave the house and for that I will be forever grateful. *[Time expired.]*

### BANK BRANCH CLOSURES

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (14:08):** I note the announcement from our Big Four banks that they have put in place a freeze on further closures of regional and rural branches until at least July 2027. Yesterday the outgoing Australian Banking Association CEO, Anna Bligh, alongside the Federal Treasurer, Dr Chalmers, made a grand announcement that this would provide breathing space in the digital transformation of banking. A cynic might say an impending Federal election might also have had something to do with the Treasurer's new deal. As someone who has publicly advocated for the Big Four banks to cease their endless campaign of branch closures since my election in 2023, I obviously welcome any move to cease the closure of the branch network.

The impact of branch closures on small business, the elderly and the vulnerable is huge. Regional and rural communities especially pay a price when the bank shuts up shop. Since 2017 some 36 per cent of bank branches in regional Australia have closed. That is an appalling statistic for which the Big Four banks should be condemned. Let us remember that in 2024 Australia's major banks reported a combined profit after tax of almost \$30 billion. We continue to hear that Australia Post can fill the void in providing banking services when the banks shut. However, Australia Post CEO Paul Graham warned last year that most post offices need to close for the business to remain more financially viable. In the long term, where will that leave customers who rely on over-the-counter services?

I note that three of the Big Four banks previously put in place rural and regional branch closure moratoriums in the face of ongoing criticism and a Senate inquiry. The National Australia Bank [NAB] did not. I note that it has finally been dragged into signing up to the new closure moratorium. In 2024 NAB rapidly closed regional branches throughout New South Wales. Last April it closed its doors in Lithgow and told customers to take a 90-minute round trip to Katoomba or Bathurst if they wanted NAB over-the-counter services. Some nine months ago on LinkedIn, on the day NAB closed its Oberon branch, I publicly asked the chairman of NAB, Philip

Chronican, whether the NAB would follow Westpac on regional bank closure moratoriums noting Yass, Cessnock, Moruya and Mullumbimby were slated for imminent closure. I never received a reply.

NAB subsequently closed its branches and now, apparently, it is on board with the new moratorium. Better late than never, but cold comfort to the communities that lost their branches. Our regional and rural communities deserve our support in retaining access to over-the-counter banking services. The moratorium is a start, but much more needs to be done, starting with a genuine review of the report from the Senate inquiry into regional branch closures. I will continue to advocate loudly and publicly in this space.

### ANTISEMITISM

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (14:11):** After the appalling tragedy of the 7 October 2023 Islamic terrorist attack by Hamas on Israel, a wave of antisemitic attacks and threats has swept across Sydney. Some of those have been attacks on educational facilities where Jewish parents send their children. Notable was the graffitied Mount Sinai College with "Jews are real terrorists" on 30 January. Also notable was, chillingly, the fact that the Only About Children childcare centre in Maroubra, a secular childcare centre located near Mount Sinai College and Maroubra Synagogue, was set on fire on 21 January.

While authorities are doing everything they can to clamp down on the rising tide of bigotry, Jewish families are, understandably, terrified. The *Australian Financial Review* spoke to a number of Jewish parents, including Rebecca Tabakoff, who told the publication:

School went back this week ... We didn't let [our kids] catch the bus, we drove them ...

We're on high alert for everything. We're worried about them waiting at the bus stop or walking somewhere after school. We don't know where the next escalation is going to come from.

There have been reports that Jewish parents have been cancelling applications for Jewish preschools, favouring non-denominational institutions, so concerned are they that sending their kids to Jewish religious schools may put them in danger. Jewish students have reportedly been covering their blazer emblems in public, avoiding public transport and wearing civilian clothing on excursions to avoid potentially putting themselves at risk. This is unacceptable in a country like Australia. We should be allowing people to live in a way that is free of this type of danger and fear.

On top of the attacks on schools, this morning we saw that a diabolical video has emerged of two Sydney nurses proudly admitting and boasting that they refuse to treat Israeli patients and would kill Israeli patients. According to one nurse, they have sent a number of Israeli patients to Jahannam, which is the Arabic word for hell. The other nurse in this horrific video went further and said to the interviewer:

When your time comes, I want you to remember my face so you can understand that you will die the most disgusting death.

The two nurses have now been stood down. Apparently, they were at Bankstown hospital. As a former member for Bankstown, I am absolutely disgusted and deeply upset for the community of Bankstown and the wider south-west Sydney community that we have had staff like this at Bankstown hospital. It is time for the Minns Labor Government to look not just at hate laws but also, more importantly, at the type of people it is hiring in public service because, if they have this type of view, they should not be there. That means looking at hospitals, looking at the public service and looking at how people can even access social media during work time to be able to put up these appalling videos in the first place.

### MIGRANT WORKERS

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (14:14):** As a State, we pride ourselves on our commitment to fairness and equality in our communities and in our workplaces. Yet a recent report by Unions NSW has pulled back the curtain on the appalling and exploitative practices that are still prevalent in our workplaces and affecting some of the most vulnerable in our communities. The comprehensive report, titled *Disrespected, Disregarded and Discarded*, sheds light on the pervasive sexual harassment and exploitation faced by migrant women in our workforce. These women often endure conditions that are nothing short of appalling.

The report reveals that sexual harassment is alarmingly prevalent among temporary migrant women, with 51 per cent of respondents reporting that they had experienced sexual harassment at work, with perpetrators including co-workers, customers and clients. Many endured the degrading treatment in silence because they felt they had no other option. Their vulnerability is exacerbated by precarious visa conditions, language barriers and a lack of accessible legal protections. Seventy-five per cent of those who indicated they experienced sexual harassment did not report the incident for fear of repercussions. That fear is not entirely unfounded because a number of women who tried to defend themselves, rejected the behaviour or reported the harasser's conduct, instead of being helped or protected, faced repercussions, including reductions in shifts, being forced to quit or being fired, being underpaid and losing promotion opportunities.

We cannot turn a blind eye and ignore these findings. No employer in New South Wales should be able to exploit anyone, regardless of the worker's immigration status. While many workplace conditions are legislated federally, we need to consider what we, at the State level, can do. I am pleased that we are already proposing reforms in our jurisdiction, such as the planned updates to chapter 6 of the Industrial Relations Act to better protect gig workers. We know that many gig workers, particularly in transport, are on various types of visas.

I also commend the work of the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner, particularly for the work he is doing to identify modern slavery risks in our State and work with victim-survivors. His recent report *Be Our Guests* was the impetus for the Modern Slavery Committee inquiry into modern slavery risks for temporary migrant workers in rural and regional New South Wales. I look forward to engaging with that inquiry. Exploitation of temporary migrant workers is not just a labour issue; it is a question of human rights. Every worker in New South Wales, regardless of where they come from, deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. We must consider how we can ensure that New South Wales is not a place where workers are disrespected, disregarded and discarded.

### STARTUP MUSTER REPORT

**The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (14:17):** Members in this House will know that I am deeply passionate about the startup sector and that I have been deeply critical of the Government for its lack of interest and investment in the startup sector, particularly its lack of interest in the Startup Muster report, which has been going since 2013—on and off because of funding challenges—but last year had 1,000 people respond to what is now the biggest startup survey in Australia.

Some 460 founders and 287 supporters gave us information, and it is a surprise to nobody, as the report says, that artificial intelligence [AI] utilisation continues to rise. Seventy per cent of startups now say that they are using or are substantially assisted by AI for key team functions versus 56 per cent in 2023. Further, engagement in deep tech has had a huge increase in prevalence—from 13 per cent of startups launched through a research commercialisation process to now 22 per cent of the entire startup community that responded. They are incredible results. The report also reveals the funding sources of those startups. Overwhelmingly, startups use their own cash contributions to begin their operations. About 68 per cent of respondents in last year's survey said they use their own contributions. That is enormously important. In a cost-of-living crisis and a housing crisis, we risk fundamentally the future of innovation startups and our State's prosperity if we are not engaged in supporting this sector because these are the people who are finding solutions to some of our most difficult and long-term wicked problems.

These problems are not just about making money. The survey revealed that the most important decision that startup founders made was to equally rate profit and impact as their founding motivation. Those who reported a full-profit motive were 17 per cent, while profit and impact were rated at 64 per cent equally—up from 56 per cent in 2023-24. Fundamentally, this reveals the motivation of startup founders to create a better world. These are the entrepreneurs and businesspeople that we need to support, enable and connect with, and yet this Government has turned its back on this startup community. UNSW Founders program director David Burt commented, "Love how the Startup Muster team are doing a better startup data collection than all of the State and Federal governments in Australia. Founder is a mode."

### TRIBUTE TO JOHN FAGG

**The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (14:20):** This afternoon I pay tribute to John Fagg, a former Cessnock City Councillor and my friend, who died peacefully at home in January after a long battle with illness. John was born in Hove, England, in 1947 and grew up in Glasgow. He worked for the Glasgow City Council, designing street lighting. His daughter, Karen, recalled in her eulogy the meticulous detail that John would go into when he purposefully designed and positioned a light post outside a church in Luss on the banks of Loch Lomond so that it would not ruin the bride's photos. He also had a hand in the blue lighting that illuminates the Glasgow Bridge on the River Clyde.

John came to Australia in 2004 and married Karen Jackson in 2007, enjoying their early years on the northern beaches of Sydney. Together, they made a tree change and moved to the Hunter Valley, buying Burncroft Guesthouse in Lovedale in the heart of wine country. Together, Karen and John turned that guesthouse into a thriving local business. John found a sense of belonging in the Hunter where he settled, running Burncroft with Karen, meeting new friends and neighbours, joining the Liberal Party and being part of the community. In 2016 John was nominated by the Liberal Party to be its candidate in Ward C of Cessnock City Council—one of the toughest places in the State to be a Liberal—and was elected with fellow Liberals Paul Dunn and Rod Doherty.

John was exactly the type of person that we want on councils: a person with a lifetime of experience, ready to give back to his town and his community. His wife, Karen, told me that he enjoyed his time on council and committed himself to his position, like he did everything else in life. He was committed to making his community



better within the confines of the restrictions of local government, and he did it well. One of his fellow Liberals on council, Rod Doherty, said that he had a good knowledge for numbers and kept a keen eye on the council's finances. Due to COVID, his term was extended, along with other councillors, and he decided that he had had enough at the end of that term.

Unwilling to lose John's seat to Labor or an Independent, his wife, Karen Jackson, put up her hand in his place and won the seat. Karen said she had the best mentor, who was more than willing to help her jump through the hoops and hurdles. When she came home with the council papers, he pored over them as if they were his council papers from the previous term, explaining and guiding all along. He may have only been a councillor in name for five years, but Cessnock City Council and the ratepayers gained from his wisdom, expertise and experience for eight years. I pay my condolences to his wife, Karen Jackson; his children, Karen and Graeme; and his grandchildren, Andi and Toby; as well as his many friends in the Hunter and from further afield. Vale, Councillor John Fagg.

### TRIBUTE TO TAONASHE "LATROY" CHIVHAKU

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (14:23):** On 2 February Taonashe Chivhaku, 16 years old, of Dubbo drowned in the Macquarie River at Sandy Beach. It is a beautiful place, indeed, as members would know, which from now will long be shackled with the memory of that tragic event that shocked the community of the Dubbo region. Known as Latroy, he was a much-loved son, brother, family member, team member, classmate, friend and community member. I am told that he was about to start at the senior college in Dubbo, having finished a substantial part of high school at St Johns College. His family moved to Dubbo from Africa. The recent vigil highlighted that this family, having made their way to Australia for a better life, have suffered from this truly tragic event.

Latroy was a very keen sportsperson, who played soccer and rugby. On the evening of 6 February, a vigil was held at Sandy Beach in Dubbo. A huge crowd gathered to sing, cry, light candles, release balloons and support Latroy's family and each other. Christian hymns and African songs were sung, and his family, friends, teammates and classmates were closely involved. A GoFundMe was started by his rugby club to support his family during this terrible time, which has to date raised some \$60,000. I know that all the people who contributed are hoping that that will be useful to his family and provide them some support and solace in this terrible time.

The mayor of Dubbo, Josh Black, announced recently that he will move a motion at council to ensure that questions of safety at Sandy Beach, which is a council-owned area, are addressed appropriately and will ask council staff to look into whether any additional safety measures are needed. I note that the *National Drowning Report 2024*, published by Royal Life Saving Australia, records the following: There were 323 drowning deaths in Australia in 2023-24, a 16 per cent increase on the previous years; 278 deaths is a 10-year annual average; 82 per cent of all drownings in the past annual period were males, with 40 per cent aged 55 and over; 83 of those people in that previous annual period were born overseas; 26 per cent drowned at a beach; 25 per cent drowned at a river or creek, 14 per cent in the ocean or a harbour, and 11 per cent in swimming pools. I take this opportunity to express my deep sympathy to the family and friends of Latroy.

### KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK WILD HORSE MANAGEMENT

**The Hon. WES FANG (14:26):** I acknowledge that today the Government has tabled its response to the brumbies inquiry. It provides me the opportunity to reiterate what committee members said at the time of the tabling of the report, which is that they were extremely disappointed by the way in which the report was formed. The excellent report as moved by the chair, the Hon. Emma Hurst, was not adopted by Labor members. Effectively, they used their numbers on the committee to gut the report. Since the Government response was tabled, stakeholders involved with the brumbies have expressed their palpable disappointment, which is akin to the disappointment expressed by members at the gutting of the report. Members of the community came forward in good faith to speak to members of the committee about their experiences with our iconic brumbies. They feel that the Government response is less than adequate and does not acknowledge the iconic status the brumbies have in Australia.

Ultimately, we now have a choice between continuing with aerial culling and this Government—prior to being elected Labor said it would not reintroduce aerial culling—or The Nationals, who have been strong advocates for the brumbies and protecting their iconic status in the Australian culture. The inquiry also heard how Indigenous people embraced the brumbies in the Kosciuszko National Park and further across Australia. I again implore the Government to listen to the voices of people who love and respect brumbies and the highlands culture, which is as important and relevant today as it was 100 years ago when we looked at those wonderful brumbies as a great feature of Australian culture.

## LUNAR NEW YEAR

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (14:29):** I wish everybody who celebrates it a very happy Lunar New Year. It began on 29 January and finishes today, 12 February. Lunar New Year is a time of renewal, reflection and connection. This year we say goodbye to the year of the dragon and hello to the year of the snake. The year of the snake is associated with transformation and wisdom. We now have an entire year to shed the things that are holding us back and change for the better, both as individuals and as a community. We can all get behind that. I have been very grateful to join the celebrations this year and represent the Government at several Lunar New Year events. I attended, once again, Metro Assist's dumpling making event on 29 January.

**The Hon. Natalie Ward:** How was your dumpling?

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG:** It was great. They loved it. The event brought together recent migrants from many different backgrounds as well as service providers to make and enjoy dumplings together. On 6 February, I attended CanRevive's Celebrating the Year of the Snake event at the fantastic Taste of Shunde Chinese restaurant in Hurstville. CanRevive supports Chinese-speaking cancer patients, their carers and families so they do not have to face it alone. It is an amazing initiative, and I congratulate them on it. Over the weekend, I attended the Rhodes lunar festival hosted by Rhodes Multicultural Community Association. It was a super enjoyable event with great performances and was very well attended. Again, I send my best wishes to all those celebrating and wish everyone a happy Lunar New Year.

### *Bills*

## AUTOMATIC MUTUAL RECOGNITION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2024

### First Reading

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

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

**Statement of public interest tabled.**

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** 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. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** 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*

## PUBLIC SECTOR WAGES

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (14:33):** The Government has an amendment to Ms Abigail Boyd's motion. Therefore, I move:

That the question be amended by omitting all words after "That this House notes that:" and inserting instead:

- (a) all public sector workers have the right to collectively bargain for their terms and conditions of work;
- (b) the Minns Government has delivered public sector workers the highest wage increase in 12 years;
- (c) collective bargaining should produce results that both improve the terms and conditions of employment for workers, but should also acknowledge the fiscal constraints that public sector finances are under in the current economic climate; and
- (d) the Minns Government will always negotiate in good faith with public sector workers and their unions.

It is a strange confluence of events—perhaps not so strange given the desired outcomes of those opposite—when conservatives join with The Greens to attack Labor on industrial relations. One minute they are in this House telling us how we have to resist unions and get tougher on them because the State cannot afford it, and that the unions are our mates. The next minute, they are in this House supporting The Greens and telling us that we are not doing enough. The truth of the matter is that the reason we are in government is because we were elected on a platform for rewarding frontline workers and working people, and that is exactly what we have done within the

constraints of the budget. This Treasurer and this Government have done the best that they possibly could have. They restored the Industrial Relations Commission and lifted the wage cap that those opposites put in.

The Greens have brought this polemical motion to the House, which is purely based on currying favour and kicking the Government, knowing full well that this Government has been responsible in its negotiations with unions. Under the previous Government, people could never have hoped for some of the outcomes this Government has achieved—and The Greens know that. On top of a 4.5 per cent wage rise, we have negotiated historic wage deals with the police, paramedics, hospital workers and teachers. The retention rate for teachers has gone through the roof because of those wage rises. There are outstanding disputes, yes, with the nurses, which are currently in arbitration, with the Fire Brigade Employees Union and with the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, where the new Minister is diligently negotiating an outcome. But to come into this House and get on a unity ticket with The Greens to bash us up when they know full well this Government has done way better than the previous Government is very political and totally disingenuous.

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (14:36):** So much to say, so little time to say it. The Opposition supports the motion moved by Ms Abigail Boyd. The ongoing chaos on our trains, the abysmal failure to solve the crisis in our mental health system before mass resignations of psychiatrists and the deep feeling of betrayal experienced by nurses and midwives all confirm that this Labor Government is utterly failing to manage industrial relations successfully. So-called mutual gains bargaining, having been marketed by the Minns Government as a fix-all, win-win solution, has been exposed for the sham it is.

This week the Fire Brigade Employees Union [FBEU] begins nine days of arbitration hearings before the newly resurrected industrial relations court. They have described the endless mutual gains bargaining as entirely futile and a waste of everyone's time, because all government negotiators were shackled by the Mookhey-Minns 10.5 per cent de facto wages cap. If that cap is to be exceeded, it will not be through mutual gains bargaining but only after months of stalling by the Government and days of expensive court hearings. The FBEU arbitration case timetable was set in August 2024. Final legal submissions are scheduled for 25 March 2025. Any determination is unlikely until April.

It is no wonder the nurses are distressed. Rather than benefiting from good faith bargaining, they are ultimately dependent on an arbitration process that is unlikely to even begin until September. The Minister for Mental Health managed to further exacerbate tensions with the psychiatrists by claiming credit for asking the Industrial Relations Commission to bring forward urgent arbitration, when the reality was that several days earlier the commission had already begun a process under section 130 (2) of the Industrial Relations Act for urgent arbitration based on its concern about the impact of a failure of the Government and the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation to make any progress in negotiations on the State's mental health services.

Mutual gains bargaining and the manner in which it has been conducted has time and again been the subject of observations by unions that the Government does not act in good faith. That allegation alone against the Labor Government, which pretends to be a friend of the unions, is in many respects emblematic of the failure of this Government in relation to industrial relations policy.

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (14:39):** The Libertarian Party will not support the motion. We agree that there is wasteful spending that needs to be cut. We do not have a natural instinct to rush to Labor's defence, but the motion is misguided. The Labor Government is 100 per cent correct to say that it does not have enough money available to put into an ever-growing bureaucracy. The simple reality of State budgeting in this country is that State governments in Australia have very little control over revenue, with almost half of all the revenue received by the New South Wales Government in the form of a welfare cheque from Canberra. That is a terrible way to run a federation. It creates warped incentives that undermine productivity and governmental responsibility.

It has been decades since a State Premier or a State Opposition leader went into an election campaign with a "Vote for me and I will cut your taxes and spending." We never hear that rhetoric anymore. They do not do that because the system incentivises State leaders to not try to find efficiencies but to perfect the art of begging for more money from Canberra. And when they are successful in that endeavour, they come back to their voters to say, "I have done a great job. I got more money out of Canberra." Of course, the money has been taken off the people of New South Wales, recycled through the Canberra bureaucracy and handed back to them. This is the system that we have.

The Libertarian Party once again invites the other parties to join us in demanding that the Federal income tax be abolished and income taxing powers returned to the States, so that we can make the so-called federation an actual Federation. Yes, that will mean there will be State Government taxes. We will have competition among the six States to have the most efficient tax system, which of course will lower taxes. Until and unless that happens, the only option available for a responsible State government is to be exceptionally prudent with the money it has. Indeed, the Libertarian Party believes that the Government needs to cut spending on the bureaucracy further, both

to weaken the ungodly power of bureaucrats in our political process and also so that the Government can cut the inefficient taxes that it has control over.

Instead of focusing on the growing bureaucracy, the Government should shrink the bureaucracy and then increase the threshold where a small business is forced into the payroll tax net. That threshold is currently \$1.2 million, which our Treasurer has not lifted since he became the Treasurer. It has not even kept up with the consumer price index. The Libertarian Party supports raising the payroll tax threshold to \$2 million. That would overnight boost small business, improve market competition and push up real wages in the private sector. We realise that is unlikely at the moment. Both major parties are afraid of micro-economic reform, and so the State finances continue to muddle through the middle. But at least that is better than diving straight into economic ruin, which is what would happen if this motion were to be taken seriously. That is why I will be voting against the motion.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM (14:42):** Imagine if Matt Kean had income tax powers: the top marginal rate would have been 90 per cent and all spent on solar panels and koalas. So one has to be careful who one empowers. There are three big issues in the New South Wales economy at the moment—productivity, productivity and productivity. Ours has dropped dramatically. The Australian productivity rates are back to 2016 levels. Though the United States are much derided by some, its productivity is up, along with its living standards.

Where have our living standards gone in the past three years under Albanese and two years under Minns? It has gone back 10 per cent. It is a rare achievement to spend \$170 billion for living standards to go back 10 per cent, but that is what Canberra has done. Productivity is the solution, as it has always been. If we get improved output per unit of labour, then everyone is a winner. It justifies real wage increases, improves customer service and assists the State budget. Productivity is the solution. Unfortunately, this Government's big productivity initiative was to put drivers on the driverless metro, which is a black mark against anyone with any interest in productivity. Who could do that?

The reality of the public sector wage negotiations is that there was a very generous pay increase for teachers, sans productivity gains of any kind. One could run a hot knife through the teachers' award and cut out all the archaic conditions and improvements. At this point the average New South Wales teacher, under that award and the industrial agreement of this Government, is spending just one in three calendar days each year in front of a classroom. Classroom teaching is becoming optional. That is how generous the conditions are, as the Teachers Federation has a weird policy of getting teachers away from students. What kind of education system is that?

On top of that, there was another pay increase for the police. At that point, the Treasurer ran out of money. The consequence for New South Wales is rolling strikes in the rail system and problems in the health system on a range of fronts including with the nurses, who are probably the most justified of the lot in terms of a pay increase. It has become a shambles. The only way to break the Gordian knot and open up the system, which should have been done at the very beginning, was to have a comprehensive productivity improvement in the public sector.

A comprehensive public sector productivity improvement program would justify wage increases beyond the old crude wages cap of the former Government. We could have had modest, real wage increases in the public sector, but the Government did not have any agenda for that. The trade unions just wanted increases and now we have got the shambles that confronts the people of New South Wales. I will move an amendment to the Government's amendment. I move:

That the amendment of the Hon. Mark Buttigieg be amended by inserting at the end:

- (e) the only way real public sector wages increases are financially viable is if they are negotiated to include productivity improvements.

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH (14:45):** I never thought I would support a Greens' motion on industrial relations, but the intent of the motion is very good. I think what happened in the lead-up to the last State election is that the unions were lied to. They were sold a lie. They thought that all of the countless hours of campaigning that they put into the State election to help the Labor Party get elected would be repaid with the Labor Party now in Government. How wrong they were. They are angry and striking. They were striking today. They have been protesting and striking for a very long time now—almost since the Labor Party came into power. They were just completely coaxed through the election campaign. The hundreds and thousands of hours that they put in and the hundreds and thousands of dollars in donations have all amounted to what the Leader of the Opposition has rightly called a de facto wages cap. It is nothing more than a headline in a media release if the Government said that it has abolished the wages cap, but there is a de facto wages cap in place.

Here we are again. Barely a month and a half into 2025 and we have already been subjected to countless rail cancellations, tram delays and bus replacements. And this week we learnt that the pain is not over for commuters as both the Rail, Tram and Bus Union and the Electrical Trades Union plan on separate instances of industrial action in the coming days and months. It seems that the Government has taken a Sisyphean approach to

negotiation with the unions. No matter how much it weakly pushes back against its union bosses, a new bout of industrial action follows, with seemingly no end in sight. The mover of this motion is right to say that the Government is not managing its finances in an equitable and efficient manner. It is its own poor planning that got us here in the first place. About 45 per cent of the State Government's budget is wages. Even slight increases in the wages bill leads to hundreds of millions of dollars in extra expenditure.

The Hon. Mark Latham is completely correct to say that wage increases should be offset with productivity improvements. Where have we heard that before? We heard that in the lead-up to the State election—any wage increases would be offset by productivity. Where are the productivity improvements? We have not seen them. We have not seen a dollar in new productivity improvements from those opposite, despite all of the election promises. It is just a drastic increase in government expenditure, no productivity improvements and a very angry trade union movement.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (14:48):** I again contribute to the debate on the basis that the Government will support the Hon. Mark Latham's amendment. The amendment states that the only way that real public sector wage increases are financially viable is if they are negotiated to include productivity improvements. The Government accepts the amendment because it is embedded in the Government's industrial relations framework. It is called the mutual gains bargaining system, which the Government supports and campaigned on. Fast-breaking news for those who lecture us about productivity improvements, agreements and unions: We were doing this stuff 20 to 30 years ago, on the ground in award negotiations. Members opposite might want to pick up the minutes on those award negotiations and look at the productivity gains that were negotiated. It is standard fare for unions.

Members opposite like to characterise unions as simply wanting more pay for doing nothing extra. That is simply not the case. Unions know that their members' best interests are served by them being productive and happy at work so that both the employer and the employee are happy, and they can get on with enjoying their job and lifting output. That is what it is all about, but they should be fairly recompensed. The characterisation of unions as simply going for a money grab with no benefit is false. The Government is more than happy to support the Hon. Mark Latham's amendment. As a result of the amendment, the motion is a fulsome representation of the Government's position, which is eminently sensible and has achieved infinitely better outcomes than could have been hoped for with those opposite in government.

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (14:50):** I indicate that the Opposition will also support the Hon. Mark Latham's amendment. I endorse the observations made by the Hon. Chris Rath about promises that were made to the union movement and itemised as part of the Labor Party's submission to the Parliamentary Budget Office prior to the election. When asked about how the Labor Party would fund the removal of the wages cap and the negotiation of wages, every single dollar was to be met by productivity offsets. That was a lie. The Parliamentary Budget Office indicated that it was doubtful whether that could be achieved. To the extent that no productivity outcomes have been negotiated as part of the award negotiation process, it shows the rank failure of the Government to get a benefit for the people of New South Wales.

We are here because the Government has run out of money. Those opposite gave it all to the teachers, nurses and police. All of a sudden, they have run out of money. The only thing they can do now is stall every negotiation and let the Industrial Court decide. I am sure that the Treasurer, as he is bound to do, will abide by the decision of the umpire. That is where members opposite would rather go than have to find productivity improvements for the purpose of making sure that we protect the budget of the State. The Treasurer has lost control of the budget because he is not able to demonstrate productivity offsets in respect of wage negotiations.

The Treasurer is now saying to psychiatrists and the Fire Brigade Employees' Union that he wants them to show productivity offsets before he agrees to anything above 10.5 per cent. That is what he should have been doing from day one if he was true to the negotiation position that he outlined to the Parliamentary Budget Office. He did not do that. There is now a perception amongst the union movement that if it is okay for the teachers and the nurses, then what about us? Why are we not in the same boat? That is the problem with the manner in which the Government has conducted industrial relations. It has betrayed the people of New South Wales.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (14:53):** In reply: I thank all members who contributed to the debate, particularly Opposition members, who, unbidden by me, have decided to agree to the motion on the basis of the good words on the paper. Labor's defence, as I hear it, is that the Government is barely, technically better than the last lot and we should be happy with that. Labor was elected to stand up for workers, but it has not. That is the point. We have a chauffeur-class Labor Party that is so divorced from the needs of the working people who keep us safe, healthy and connected. To see Government members gut the motion and try to turn it into something self-congratulatory is disgusting. It is a slap in the face to those who are striking.

Is it political? Yes, it is. But it is not a political attack on the Labor Party. The material circumstances of the people that we have been elected to represent is one of the most important political issues of the day. We will

speak about it. Government members might not like it when we call them out on it, but it is not a political attack. I am not interested in the petty pointscoring that the major parties are obsessed with. The Greens are interested in standing up for what we say we stand for, going into Parliament every day and fighting for the things we say we will. We stand for workers' rights. We stand for relieving the cost-of-living pressures on the people of this State. We stand for looking after the people of this State, who are really angry. It is my responsibility to bring that angry voice into Parliament and tell the Labor Government that it is not doing what we need it to.

If Government members are not convinced by what I am saying, there were Electrical Trades Union members who work for Sydney Trains on strike outside of Parliament earlier today for the first time in 25 years. They did not strike under the former Coalition Government. They are striking now against the Labor Government. If that does not make Government members double-check themselves and think that maybe they are not doing this right, I do not know what will. Labor has lost its way. The Greens will not be threatened into silence by the constant bleating by Labor members that by complaining about Labor and holding it accountable, somehow it is more likely that the Coalition gets into government. That is not our concern right now. Our concern is looking at the decisions of the government of the day and holding it accountable.

At the end of the day, budgets are about choices. Government members have determined the constraints for themselves. Right now, they have chosen big business and the super wealthy over the workers of this State. That is on them and nobody else. The Greens do not support the Government's amendment. I have sympathy for what the Hon. Mark Latham is trying to do in holding the Labor Party to something it said, but The Greens do not believe it needs to be made up with productivity gains, so we do not support his amendment.

**The PRESIDENT:** Ms Abigail Boyd has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Mark Buttigieg has moved an amendment, to which the Hon. Mark Latham has moved an amendment. The Hon. Mark Latham's amendment is entirely to do with the amendment of the Hon. Mark Buttigieg, so we will go to the Hon. Mark Latham's amendment first to see what form the Hon. Mark Buttigieg's amendment will then be voted upon. The question is that the amendment of the Hon. Mark Latham to the amendment of the Hon. Mark Buttigieg be agreed to.

**Amendment of the Hon. Mark Latham to the amendment of the Hon. Mark Buttigieg agreed to.**

**The PRESIDENT:** The question is that the amendment of the Hon. Mark Buttigieg as amended be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....22  
Noes .....17  
Majority.....5

**AYES**

Banasiak	Kaine	Murphy (teller)
Borsak	Latham	Nanva (teller)
Buttigieg	Lawrence	Primrose
D'Adam	Martin	Roberts
Donnelly	Mihailuk	Ruddick
Graham	Mookhey	Sharpe
Houssos	Moriarty	Suvaal
Jackson		

**NOES**

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

**Amendment of the Hon. Mark Buttigieg as amended agreed to.**

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

**Motion as amended negatived.**

## MINISTERIAL REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (15:07):** I move:

- (1) This House notes that according to the Auditor-General's report, *State agencies 2024*:
  - (a) the Treasurer did not table the audited Total State Sector Accounts (*Report on the state finances 2023-24*) in the Legislative Assembly by 30 November 2024, as required by the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 (the Act);
  - (b) the Treasurer did not, as required by the Act, inform the Legislative Assembly before 30 November 2024 that the Total State Sector Accounts would not be tabled on time or state the reasons why the Treasurer could not comply with the requirements of the Act;
  - (c) delays in reporting the State's financial information can reduce the ability of users to meaningfully assess the State's financial results, make the information less relevant to users in making decisions, and reduce transparency and accountability;
  - (d) under the Act, the responsible Minister for a reporting GSF (Government Sector Finance) agency is responsible for tabling the annual report (of the agency) in each House of Parliament as soon as practicable but no later than within five months after the end of the annual reporting period for the agency;
  - (e) 16 agency annual reports were not tabled by the responsible Minister by the statutory due date of 30 November 2024;
  - (f) the Treasurer was the responsible Minister for seven of these annual reports;
  - (g) the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance were, together, the responsible Ministers for eight of these annual reports;
  - (h) the Premier and the Treasurer were, together, the responsible Ministers for one of these annual reports;
  - (i) all these 16 agencies provided their annual reports to the responsible Minister or Ministers by the due date; and
  - (j) delays in tabling annual reports mean parliamentarians have less time and opportunity to inquire about the performance and accountability of the use of resources entrusted to the agency.
- (2) That this House further notes that:
  - (a) the *Report on the state finances 2023-24* was not tabled until 18 December 2024, 18 days after the due date;
  - (b) Treasury did not publish the monthly statements for July, August, September and October 2024 until 18 December 2024;
  - (c) the July monthly statement was due to be published by 31 August 2024, the August statement by 30 September 2024 and the September statement by 31 October 2024;
  - (d) the delay in publication of each of these three successive monthly statements is not covered by the provision in section 7.15 (5) (b) of the Act allowing a delay at or near the time the half-yearly review is required to be released, that is, 31 December;
  - (e) consequently, there was no publicly available information about the state of the Government finances for the six months between 18 June 2024, when the budget was released, and 18 December 2024, when the monthly reports for July, August, September and October 2024 were tabled, and the half-yearly review was released;
  - (f) eleven of the overdue annual reports were tabled on 13 December 2024, 13 days past the statutory due date;
  - (g) the *annual report* of the Transport Asset Holding Entity was tabled on 13 January 2025, 44 days past the statutory due date;
  - (h) the *Annual Report 2023-2024* for the Sydney Water Corporation was not published until 10 February 2025, 72 days past the statutory due date; and
  - (i) three other annual reports have not yet been tabled.
- (3) That this House calls upon the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance to:
  - (a) apologise to the House and to the people of New South Wales for their egregious breaches of the Government Sector Finance Act 2018; and
  - (b) undertake to the House that they will in future comply fully with all the requirements of the Government Sector Finance Act 2018.

The Government Sector Finance Act includes important provisions that the Parliament has imposed on the Executive Government to improve transparency and accountability to the Parliament and to the people of New South Wales. The motion deals with the failures of Ministers to comply with their statutory obligations to table annual reports and reports on the State's finances in a timely manner. The Auditor-General has been critical of the failure of the Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance to meet some straightforward statutory duties. In relation to the Treasurer's delay in tabling the total State sector accounts, the Auditor-General observed:

Delays in reporting the State's financial information can reduce the ability of users to meaningfully assess the State's financial results ... cause the information to be less relevant to users in making decisions ... reduce transparency and accountability.

As the motion notes, there was no publicly available information about the state of New South Wales Government finances for the six months between 18 June 2024, when the budget was released, and 18 December 2024, when

the monthly financial statements for July, August, September and October were finally released, along with the half-yearly review. The Treasurer should do better. I encourage him to support the motion, and call upon him to lift his game on financial reporting going forward.

I turn to the annual reports. The statutory deadline for tabling the annual reports for all relevant agencies that have a financial year ending on 30 June is 30 November, allowing a generous five months for preparing, checking and finalising the report. The Auditor-General stated that each agency complied with its part of that obligation and provided a finalised annual report to the Minister or Ministers responsible for tabling that report. Most responsible Ministers acted responsibly and tabled the reports on time. Who failed? The Premier, one strike; the Minister for Finance, eight strikes; and the Treasurer, 16 strikes. That is 16 late annual reports, including the Transport Asset Holding Entity [TAHE] report, which was late by 44 days, or over six weeks.

Just imagine the great critic and reformer of TAHE failing the very simple task of tabling its report on time. But the over 10-week delay in tabling the Sydney Water annual report shows an outstanding level of disdain for the Parliament and the people of New South Wales. The Minister for Water saw the annual report in October, but she appeared unconcerned about the public being denied access to it until February, while it was being perused for weeks by the Minister for Finance and the Treasurer. In answer to a question on notice provided on 4 February 2025, the Treasurer claimed, "The Sydney Water 2023-24 Annual Report will be made public when it is finalised." It was finalised in October.

It was surprising to examine the version that was finally tabled on 10 February 2025 and see that, according to its document properties, it was last modified on 23 October 2024. What kept it from being tabled? The only explanation is that the three Ministers involved in the tabling of the report did not get around to meeting their obligations. The motion asks of them one simple thing: just do their job and comply with the requirements that are set forth in the relevant financial reporting obligations. The Auditor-General got it right when he said this is important for the transparency of government and for the members of this House to hold government to account by virtue of the documents that should be submitted in accordance with the requirements set forth.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (15:12):** I indicate from the outset that the Government will not be opposing the motion, because I take the obligations to report to Parliament very seriously, and I also take the chidings of members very seriously when we cannot do so. I well and truly appreciate and welcome the scrutiny of the Parliament and Opposition about these particular reports. Ministers have dual responsibilities for tabling reports. We have a responsibility to table them in a timely manner and, where statute prescribes a timetable, to make our best endeavours to reach it. But we are also subject to a duty—dare I say perhaps even a higher duty—to ensure that the information we table is accurate. There are times and circumstances where those duties conflict, and that means they need to be resolved. That is what we endeavoured to do in the course of the past year.

The Report on State Finances, which is the Total State Sector Accounts [TSSA]—I know the Deputy President reads those documents—was tabled on 18 December, which is roughly 2½ weeks after its statutory deadline. That was tabled late in large part because, having discovered errors in Sydney Water's reporting, we wanted to take prudent steps to ensure that the information we were about to table was not affected by such errors. There were other issues to do with the TSSA that were also warranted. When I sign that report, I am signing off on the State's accounts. I am responding to the management concerns letter, which I use as a tool to ask questions of Treasury and others about any concerns that the Auditor-General raises with me. I do not sign those reports until I am satisfied that such concerns have been addressed.

I can say that, particularly with the TSSA, it was late. The other thing that is interesting about the 2023-24 TSSA is that it is the first time in three years that a Treasurer has been able to table an unqualified set of books. I am proud of the fact that the efforts we made in respect of both the Transport Asset Holding Entity and the Catholic Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust issue last year have meant that I am the first Treasurer whose books have not been qualified since 2021. That is an important obligation that we had to take the time to get right. I well and truly accept that there was a delay in publishing the other reports. But the other part, which the shadow Treasurer omitted from his speech, is that those reports are customarily tabled with statements of corporate intent.

The former finance Minister would know, as he was a former shareholder in those corporations, that those statements of corporate intent are very serious documents. I will only sign them if I am confident that the statements of corporate intent reflect both what I and the other shareholding Minister agree are our objectives for those corporations for the next year.

I seek an extension of time.

**Leave granted.**

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** When it comes to finalising those statements of corporate intent, which often determine billions of dollars of spending, I will take the time to ensure they are correct. I apologise to the



Parliament that that meant that last year there was a delay. I well and truly accept the fact that the motion calls on me to do better. We will absolutely apply our best endeavours to do better this year. Once more, my obligation to provide timely information to the Parliament is balanced with my obligation to provide accurate information to the Parliament. I will always take the opportunity to provide accurate information, even if it takes slightly longer. I do not anticipate such issues this year, but let us see what happens.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (15:16):** I make a brief contribution as I am also named in the motion. I agree wholeheartedly with the Treasurer's characterisation of what occurred. It is certainly not ideal. I also apologise to the Parliament. We take our responsibilities as Ministers seriously. We take the statutory obligations and the privilege of serving the people of New South Wales seriously. But, in doing so, we do that diligently and carefully while balancing a range of competing priorities. As we noted in the letter that the Treasurer and I signed and sent to the Clerk when the Sydney Water report was tabled, it was pertinent that we investigate the matters that occurred, which the Treasurer outlined.

I apologise for the delay in the presentation of some of the reports that we are required to produce, but I do not apologise for both of us doing our jobs diligently and seriously. We understand the responsibility we have to serve the people of New South Wales. That is why those reports were late. It is appropriate that we come forth and explain that to the Parliament, but we have been absolutely clear and transparent about why we did that. Challenges with the report of Sydney Water caused that delay, but the shareholding Ministers, including the Treasurer and me, together with the portfolio Minister, are working through those issues carefully, and we will continue to monitor them closely.

I completely agree with the Treasurer that we will continue to use our best endeavours to meet the timelines that are set by the House. We will work diligently and carefully to do that, and to serve the people of New South Wales. But we will do that carefully and responsibly, because we understand that it is an extraordinary privilege to do these jobs and ensure that those State owned corporations and the Government as a whole operates in the best interests of the people of New South Wales.

**The Hon. WES FANG (15:19):** I will make a brief contribution. I was not intending to, but I have just listened to approximately six minutes of "the dog ate my homework". Ultimately, the Parliament has timelines for reports to be tabled to this House. They are there for a good reason. A litany of excuses has been provided to us, and I accept that sometimes there are difficulties in achieving those timelines. But both the Treasurer and the finance Minister are ultimately responsible for ensuring that those reports are provided on time. I note the contribution of the Treasurer in particular, who indicated that he will endeavour to not have this happen again. However, it is incumbent upon us to make the point that the Government is responsible for providing these reports on time and that, if it does not do so, it should advise that it is not going to or provide reasons why.

I used the phrase "the dog ate my homework", but ultimately I think we have been provided appropriate responses as to why those reports were not tabled on time. The one Minister we have not heard from is the Minister for Water. Obviously, the Sydney Water report was mentioned and tabled. The shadow Treasurer has been quite clear in saying that the Treasury's report was not at all edited in the time when it was held up. So what was the hold-up? A number of questions need to be answered. What we have heard so far does not capture exactly why we saw the number of delays we did. I think 16 reports not being provided on time to this Parliament is a good indication of somebody who is perhaps not quite across their brief. Accepting that the Treasurer has indicated that he will endeavour to do better, I encourage him to do so.

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (15:22):** In reply: I accept the explanation provided by the Treasurer. It should not have required this motion to elicit that response from the Government. There is an obligation to file these reports on time, which includes an obligation to provide an explanation when they are not provided on time. I am not sure whether we have had an adequate explanation. We have certainly been proffered a reason why they have been delayed, because of the responsibilities the Treasurer identifies and the statements of corporate intent and the like, which need to be examined and interrogated as a component of finalising those reports. I accept all of that.

But it beggars belief that a report finalised in October last year was not lodged with this Parliament until February this year and that, when it was lodged, there was no alteration to that report from the date when it was lodged with the respective Ministers. I accept that the Government has come to this place today acknowledging its responsibilities. I accept that both Ministers say that they are balanced by their obligations to ensure that the material contained in the reports is correct. But they should at least, if those reports are going to be delayed, come to this place first and inform the House that there will be a delay in the finalising of those reports and provide an explanation for that delay. However, I welcome the support for the motion.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd):** Before I invite the Hon. Mark Latham to speak, I note that in the Chamber today we have Mr Carson Bauer, an intern from Brown University. I am reliably informed that he is adding great perspective and energy to the office of Ms Abigail Boyd.

*Documents***RACECOURSE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT****Production of Documents: Order**

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM (15:25):** I seek leave to amend private members' business item No. 1655 by omitting "14 days" and inserting instead "21 days".

**Leave granted.**

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Accordingly, I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 21 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents, excluding any documents previously returned under an order of the House, created since 5 June 2024 in the possession, custody or control of the Premier, the Treasurer, the Attorney General, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Minister for Transport, the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage, the Minister for Better Regulation and Fair Trading, Minister for Industry and Trade, Minister for Innovation, Science and Technology, Minister for Building and Minister for Corrections, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing, Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research and Minister for the Central Coast, the Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth and Minister for the North Coast, the Minister for Small Business, Minister for Lands and Property, Minister for Multiculturalism and Minister for Sport, the Premier's Department (including Investment NSW), the Cabinet Office, Treasury, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, the Sydney Olympic Park Authority, the Department of Communities and Justice, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Transport for NSW, Sydney Metro, the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport, the Office of Sport (including the Sydney International Equestrian Centre) or Racing NSW relating to racecourse housing development proposals:

- (a) all documents relating to proposals to develop Rosehill racecourse for housing, including those of the Australian Turf Club [ATC] and Racing NSW;
- (b) all documents relating to stages one, two and three of the unsolicited proposal lodged by the ATC for Rosehill Gardens Racecourse, including all documents relating to the conduct of due diligence for the project and the work of the probity adviser;
- (c) all documents relating to proposals by the Rosehill-Camellia Landowners Alliance and its members, including the ATC and Billbergia;
- (d) all documents relating to the impact of any proposal to develop Rosehill racecourse on planning for Metro West;
- (e) all documents relating to the compulsory acquisition of Rosehill Gardens; 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 call for papers under Standing Order 52 is much needed, for the simple reason that the largest housing development proposal in Australian history is being conducted in secret. Nine months ago the last papers were produced under Standing Order 52, and the return to order before that was incredibly useful in getting an understanding of how these proposals came about, the role of Racing NSW, the role of the Cabinet Office, the role of Investment NSW and the whole proposal for an unsolicited way of dealing with it. Since then, Premier Chris Minns has failed to answer my questions on notice about it. The Treasurer has failed to answer questions on notice about the possible involvement of the Billbergia company, notorious on the Camellia peninsula. Importantly, the 13,000 members of the Australian Turf Club [ATC] have had no update from their leaders about what is involved.

The leaders of the ATC have been negotiating and involved in trying to finalise this proposal with the New South Wales Government for nine months, and there has been no update to the members as to what is involved. Not only that, but members of the ATC board are being kept in the dark. It is incredible to think that the governing board of the Australian Turf Club is not being given an update on the proposal to build 25,000 dwellings on the Rosehill racecourse—possibly 40,000, in collaboration with companies like Billbergia. That is the level of corporate misgovernance we are talking about. It is incumbent upon this House to have an order for papers to reveal what is going on, for a couple of reasons. The public, the ATC members and the board should know what their chairman, Peter McGauran, has been doing in collaboration with the Government. The ATC members will vote on this on 3 April, which is fast approaching. It is all the more important to have publicly available information about what the proposal involves.

I am sure other urban environmentalists will join with me in my concerns about what has been proposed in the past. Will the woodlands in the Western Sydney Parklands be bulldozed for the new Sydney International Equestrian Centre [SIEC] training facility at Horsley Park? The ATC submitted a map with SIEC to use the woodlands as part of the training facility. It is unacceptable to see those woodlands go. They are very valuable in Western Sydney. What is the status of the brick pit, and the environmentally endangered bell frog and the always important Latham's snipe that are found there? It is said that Racing NSW has bailed on the due diligence it promised to Peter McGauran because the plan for the brick pit has fallen over. Is that in fact what has happened?

There is a new entity registered, in a most unusual development. Peter McGauran is not only the chair of the ATC but also involved as an owner and a consultant with Bondi Partners, Joe Hockey's consultancy, which one would normally expect to be dealing with the United States on AUKUS, ANZUS, diplomatic relations and national security. On 10 October Bondi Partners—this Hockey-McGauran entity—registered a new commercial body called Bondi Partners Racing. It is a long way from nuclear submarines to have an entity called Bondi Partners Racing. Have they now been involved in doing the due diligence? The ATC board has not been kept informed. The membership has been kept in the dark.

These are important considerations. It is incumbent upon the upper House, with its Standing Order 52 power, to look at the documents and to provide as much useful information to the ATC members as it can. At the moment Peter McGauran has broken his promise to take the membership on this so-called journey and keep them fully informed. They have been told nothing for nine months. It is incredible to think that the biggest housing development in Australian history has been conducted in secret for nine months. This is a government led by Chris Minns, who said that integrity would be part of the everyday work of his government and that integrity is not just a noun but a verb.

Well, integrity starts with transparency and there has been none around this development. To update the Farlow call for papers and to find out what has been happening with all these issues—the woodlands at the Sydney International Equestrian Centre, the brick pit, the bell frog, the financial viability of it, why the ATC board has been kept in the dark, whether Bondi Partners Racing has been involved, what the advice of the probity advisers on the matter is—is critically important before the vote is taken on 3 April under law by the ATC membership. The House will perform an important function if members support the motion.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (15:30):** As the Hon. Mark Latham has indicated, this motion is similar to a resolution that passed the House nine months ago. The Government takes a similar position on this motion as it did on the former one: We will oppose it. I expect, as the former motion did, that this motion will pass the House. Accordingly, I thank the member for slightly lengthening the time period to what the Government views as a very tight but still more realistic timeline. It is appreciated and will allow much better compliance with the motion.

I refer members to the comments of the Leader of the Government during debate on the motion passed nine months ago. She put the case well on both what the Government's agenda was and what its objections to that motion were. I will provide some assurances to the House. Firstly, the Government's interest in the Rosehill site is about housing potential. That has really driven the Premier's interest and the Government's interest. I am strongly of that view. The second assurance is one that the Leader of the Government also gave. The Rosehill site is going through the unsolicited proposal process, which was in place from the former Government. That is not an easy process. Many proposals have failed; few have succeeded. It is an arms-length process. It is also a confidential process. That probably does put some pressures on the transparency that the member is asking for. However, the House is entitled to pursue the sorts of questions that are being raised. There are well-known processes for that: calls for papers, estimates and certainly others that the member has alluded to. The Government has no problem with those being used.

As the Leader of the Government indicated during debate nine months ago, the Government's view is that this raises real questions about the Opposition's position on housing. I will not say a number or enter into a debate about how many houses, but there will potentially be tens of thousands of houses at that site opposed by the Opposition. If you add that to the tens of thousands of houses that the Opposition is raising concerns about in relation to the transport oriented development bill, it raises a question about how the Opposition expects the Government to deliver on housing, on the targets that we have set, and on the targets that the Commonwealth has asked us to set. We need help to deliver this agenda, not hindrance. I reiterate those views of the Leader of the Government, which she put well, about the questions this raises of the Opposition.

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (15:33):** The Opposition supports the motion. I will correct a couple of things that the Hon. John Graham has said. The Opposition has never opposed this housing proposal. What the Opposition opposes is, in fact, exactly the reason this call for papers under Standing Order 52 should be supported. A government should not say, "Because we need housing, our obligations about transparency and probity no

longer exist." That is the position now being put by the Deputy Leader of the Government. They are saying, "Don't stand in our way. If you say the word 'housing', that means everything else doesn't matter anymore." Unfortunately, it does matter. The Deputy Leader of the Government has said that, because the Opposition supports transparency and probity in the manner in which this proposal proceeds, that in some way is opposition to housing.

Those opposite operated that way in the past. It did not matter what Mr Obeid came in the Chamber and suggested; because it was part of the Government's priorities, transparency and probity and those sorts of things went out the door. The Government is now acting as it did then. We should absolutely support the Government producing papers, to the extent that it is able to, relating to this process. The Deputy Leader of the Government made an observation that there is a process to go through and it is very sensitive and confidential and all those sorts of things. Again, the powers of this House to call for papers are not bridled or fettered by virtue of the fact that there are sensitive negotiations.

The Government can make a claim for privilege, as it is entitled to do, and it should go through that process if those documents should not be produced. That is fine—and that decision can be challenged and an independent arbiter can look at it. But for Government members to come into the Chamber and say that we should not exercise the power of the House and the Government is relieved of its obligations to produce documents because it does not want that process looked at is, quite frankly, a farcical circumstance and makes a ridicule of this place. Coming into the Chamber and saying, "Housing, housing, housing: We are now able to be relieved of any probity obligations", just does not pass the test. This call for papers should be supported.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (15:36):** The Greens support the motion moved by the member. We particularly support the change to 21 days from 14 days. It is a rare moment in the Chamber for me to say that I support the words of the Hon. Mark Latham and I support and second the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition as well. But this is about more than simply the contents of this Standing Order 52 motion, which, having sat on the Rosehill racecourse inquiry, I wholeheartedly support; it is also about our frustrations with trying to seek information, including seeking information through other ways such as questions on notice or via questions during the committee process. There is a general frustration that some of the Standing Order 52 requests and questions on notice to the Government are deteriorating in detail.

Some Ministers are good. Most of the Ministers in this place are actually pretty good in terms of what they are returning from their departments. But some of the returns we have recently received from lower House Ministers are not so great. This particular issue before us, of course, is incredibly complex, but it also goes to the issue of relationships and of, potentially, deals and who spoke to whom. To be honest, we have not gotten to the bottom of it. There are a lot of unanswered questions. I echo the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Damien Tudehope. For the Government to say that anybody who supports this motion and wants transparency on this issue is trying to stop housing or is against particular developments is just not correct. When it came in, the Government said it was going to be super transparent. It was really committed to that. We are not yet halfway through the term and I feel like that is really starting to wane. What that means is a stronger coalition of all members in this place, other than those in Government, to ensure that calls for papers under Standing Order 52 are supported to ensure that, if we are not going to get transparency any other way, we will get it this way.

**The Hon. WES FANG (15:39):** I will keep my comments brief. I object strongly to the contribution of the Minister in response to the Hon. Mark Latham moving this motion. I do so in respect of his comments that somehow supporting this Standing Order 52 and seeking transparency is akin to not supporting housing. That is somewhat offensive to somebody who sat on the inquiry. As a member in rural and regional New South Wales, I have heard from a lot of stakeholders around the racing industry, indeed more on the periphery, that none of them want to see Rosehill racecourse sold. Am I opposed to the sale? I would probably say yes, at this stage I am. Why do I say that? I speak to people in my area of Wagga Wagga, where we have a large contingent of horseracing businesses and trainers—we have the Murrumbidgee Turf Club [MTC]—and all of them have said that having that racecourse in Sydney is vital in keeping country racing viable, alive and aspirational, so that there is somewhere they can go and race in metropolitan areas. I will defend that and the stakeholders who speak to me about it. Does that mean I am against housing in Sydney? No, it does not.

The Minister has come in here and tried to suggest that somehow I am trying to block housing just because I am seeking transparency around this deal and trying to provide some clarity to the stakeholders that I speak to about what is going on behind the scenes regarding what the Government and the ATC is proposing. Ultimately, that is on the Government because it has put all its eggs in one basket. This is effectively the Government's whole strategy. It has delivered nothing else. The whole transport oriented development idea has delivered one application. The Government has pinned everything on the Rosehill project. What else has it got? It came to government saying that it would deliver housing. It has failed on the very thing it said it would do. We are almost halfway through its term and this is the only project it seems to have that is on the ether of delivering more housing.

The Government needs to have other strategies. Seeking to hold it to account around the Rosehill racecourse strategy does not mean we are stopping housing. It means that the Government has failed in its job.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM (15:42):** In reply: I love it when the Hon. Wes Fang says he is going to be brief. I wish I had that certainty at the racetrack; I would back "use full time" every time and clean up. I thank him for his contribution and that of other speakers to the debate. Let us understand what has gone on here. Stage one of the unsolicited proposal has finished. There has been no transparency and no report to anyone—not even the board of the Australian Turf Club—as to what stage one looks like. Stage two of the unsolicited proposal has finished. The membership of the ATC is voting on it on 3 April—just weeks from now—so it must be finished. Again, no report to even the board of the ATC, let alone the public, the membership of the ATC, the racing fraternity, as to what stage two looks like.

This raises very important issues about the role of the unsolicited proposal, which was an accidental thing invented by the former Government in very unusual circumstances. It never envisaged that Australia's biggest ever housing development would be done this way. Having it done in secrecy is clearly unacceptable. Stages one and two were completed and now they are moving on to stage three with nobody knowing anything about it except Peter McGauran—one individual at the turf club—and Premier Minns and his agencies, essentially, because he is the Minister in charge of unsolicited proposals. It is incumbent upon the Legislative Council to play that transparency role through this SO 52 motion. Otherwise, we know nothing. We are in the Sergeant Schultz position of knowing absolutely nothing about Australia's biggest ever housing development.

The second point I make in conclusion is the Minister arguing "support some housing, support some housing". It is an overlooked fact that the former Government, for seven or eight years, developed a sophisticated, carefully calibrated housing strategy at Rosehill-Camellia. It was called the Camellia-Rosehill Place Strategy. The ATC cooperated. They developed colourful brochures, sophisticated plans—it was all finished—for 10,000 new dwellings on the Rosehill-Camellia peninsula. That all changed on the day that Steve McMahon walked into Chris Minns' office and said, "We want to go to 25,000 on Rosehill." If the Government had not swallowed that, today bulldozers could have been moving at Camellia and Rosehill to build those 10,000 dwellings.

I can tell members that 10,000 dwellings in the hand is worth a lot more than this madcap Rosehill proposal, which essentially came about because of Steve McMahon and his relationship with the Premier. That is the truth of it. Beyond that, the Government should be careful. In the last Parliament it was signalling, particularly through the Hon. Daniel Mookhey, that Billbergia was the most corrupt land development company in Sydney. It is now in alliance with the Australian Turf Club in a thing called the Rosehill Camellia Landowners Alliance for 40,000 dwellings, including its land on the Rosehill-Camellia peninsula. They should be very careful who they deal with in racing. I said that about the racing regulator. I say that about Billbergia and what has been going on with Peter McGauran.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....24  
Noes .....15  
Majority.....9

#### AYES

Banasiak  
Barrett  
Borsak  
Boyd  
Buckingham  
Carter  
Cohn  
Faehrmann

Fang (teller)  
Farlow  
Higginson  
Hurst  
Latham  
MacDonald  
Maclaren-Jones  
Martin

Merton  
Mitchell  
Munro  
Rath (teller)  
Roberts  
Ruddick  
Tudehope  
Ward

#### NOES

Buttigieg  
D'Adam  
Donnelly  
Graham  
Houssos

Jackson  
Kaine  
Lawrence  
Mookhey  
Moriarty

Murphy (teller)  
Nanva (teller)  
Primrose  
Sharpe  
Suvaal

**Motion agreed to.***Committees***PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 5 - JUSTICE AND COMMUNITIES****Reference**

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH (15:53):** I seek leave to amend private members' business item No. 1662 standing in my name on today's *Notice Paper* by:

- (1) In paragraph (1) inserting after paragraph (d):
  - (e) ways to improve security arrangements around synagogues;
  - (f) arrangements to protect individuals from the practice of "doxing";
  - (g) privacy arrangements around public information that may identify an individual or their address, such as land title records and electoral roll information; and
  - (h) the role of the Sydney Jewish Museum in providing Holocaust education for students.
- (2) In paragraph (2) omitting "7 October 2025" and inserting instead "1 September 2025".

**Leave granted.**

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH:** Accordingly, I move:

- (1) That Portfolio Committee No. 5 - Justice and Communities inquire into and report on antisemitism in New South Wales, and in particular:
  - (a) the causes underlying the increasing prevalence and severity of antisemitic incidents across the State;
  - (b) record levels of antisemitism on university campuses and in schools undermining student safety;
  - (c) the threat to social cohesion in New South Wales presented by antisemitism; and
  - (d) how community safety might be enhanced, on behalf of the Jewish community of New South Wales.
  - (e) ways to improve security arrangements around synagogues;
  - (f) arrangements to protect individuals from the practice of "doxing";
  - (g) privacy arrangements around public information that may identify an individual or their address, such as land title records and electoral roll information; and
  - (h) the role of the Sydney Jewish Museum in providing Holocaust education for students.
- (2) That the committee report by 1 September 2025.

It is with absolutely no pleasure that I again speak on the persistent prevalence of antisemitism across New South Wales and our country. The threat of antisemitic incidents and attacks, a menace which seems to be growing in both prevalence and severity, is undermining the social fabric of our State. It is clear to me that presently criminals and thugs feel far too empowered to levy violence and inflict immense terror against our Jewish community. Despite clear patterns of antisocial behaviour that have been inspired by the 7 October attacks—an attack not simply on a nation-state but, more broadly, an attack on the right of Jewish people everywhere to exist—the Government has continued to fail in taking proactive measures to ensure the safety and fundamental liberties of every Australian are afforded.

On 29 January we observed a particularly heinous example of this behaviour, where it was revealed that a caravan loaded with enough explosives to cause a mass casualty event was found to have contained a list of Jewish targets. Despite the horrifying nature of the discovery, it sadly comes as an unsurprising development to many. It is certainly an unsurprising development to me. Put simply, the failure of all levels of government to apprehend and take seriously the causes underlying antisemitism has emboldened those motivated by such causes. Devaluing one group of Australians' fundamental right to safety, freedom of assembly and freedom to practise their religion denigrates the perceived strength of our justice system. It is this devaluing which has subjected the Jewish community to the disgusting and insidious rampage of violence we have recently observed. Antisemites seem more emboldened than ever before.

No member in this Chamber seriously considers the prospect that if they simply park their car on the street overnight there is a considerable chance it will be torched. Perhaps the childcare centre their son or daughter attends might be the target, and it will be torched simply because of who they are or who their neighbours are. Such a thought begs the question: What catastrophic event is required for the Government to act? If an attempted bombing of a synagogue exists below this threshold of action, will Jewish Australians become the victims of a large-scale terrorist attack before the Government responds? The goal of this committee referral to Portfolio

Committee No. 5 is to say we have now long passed that bar, and that indeed this Parliament does care and will act.

Nonetheless, I address the proposed law reform raised by the Premier yesterday and the Opposition's law reform put forward by shadow Attorney General Alister Henskens. Those bills are a step in the right direction. I commend the Premier, but it does not address the root causes of antisemitism. A recent example is the disgraceful hijacking of the right to public assembly by way of imposing encampments on university campuses, ostensibly fashioned as protests, which were designed to remove Jewish students from their own campuses. This act bears an eerie resemblance to the Nazi exclusion of Jewish students from public schools and universities during World War II. Yet, for months, those institutions refused to adequately protect their students.

Even the Government's public sector employees are not above antisemitic acts. Just this morning two hospital workers from Bankstown Hospital disturbingly bragged about killing and refusing to treat Israeli patients. Failure to act has now led to the toleration of criminal intent. It is the duty of this Parliament to constantly guard our State's social cohesion. Today the House has the opportunity to address past failings and correct course, taking proactive leadership to ensure antisemitism is stopped in its tracks. The motion before the Chamber today represents a chance to take partisan politics out of the picture and send a clear message that the legislators of this State will not accept antisemitic language and graffiti, doxing, boycotts, death threats and violence as an acceptable means of public discourse. There is nothing humane about the way Jewish Australians in this State have been treated since the 7 October attacks. As someone who hopes to never be subject to violence simply based on my ethnicity or my religion, I ask that members support the motion.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (15:59):** I thank the Hon. Chris Rath for bringing the motion to the House. The Government supports the motion. I thank the Opposition for working with the Government and including our proposed amendment in the motion. I understand that there will be another amendment regarding the referral. I will speak to the importance of the Government's proposed amendment that is now part of the motion and explain the Government's reasons for supporting it. The amendment expanded the scope of the inquiry to address additional issues of importance to the Jewish community in New South Wales. The first part of the amendment was about safety around synagogues. That is important given that on 6 December there was a firebombing of the Adass Israel Synagogue in Ripponlea, Victoria. On 10 January the Southern Sydney Synagogue in Allawah was defaced with Nazi symbols and on 11 January, one day later, the Newtown Synagogue was subject to an arson and graffiti attack.

The second and third paragraphs of the amendment went to the issue of privacy for members of the Jewish community. We are all aware of the public doxing of members of the Jewish community a year ago, and we are all aware of the attack on 17 January on the former home of a Jewish leader in Dover Heights, Sydney. Reviewing privacy provisions and how we treat the personal details of individuals needs to be part of any review into antisemitism. The final part of the amendment acknowledged the important role of the Sydney Jewish Museum in New South Wales. The amendment allows the inquiry to examine the important role education plays in combating antisemitism now and in the future.

In conclusion, the amendment ensured that the scope of the inquiry reflected the extent of the issue we are facing. Another amendment that was included in the motion was to change the reporting date of the inquiry. I believe that 7 October is a very tragic day and should stand alone without an arbitrary committee deadline attached to it. The amendments are all supported by the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies. Antisemitism does not happen in a vacuum. It behoves everyone on all sides of politics to use the strength of this State and nation, which is our embracement of multiculturalism, to preach unity and harmony. We must try to take a unified and collective approach to making sure the community is not divided. The motion will address a lot of the things that we are concerned about, but preaching that harmony and not trying to politicise these things is extremely important as well.

**Dr AMANDA COHN (16:03):** As the only member of this place with lived experience of antisemitism, both the intergenerational trauma of the Holocaust and threats to my personal safety when I was the Deputy Mayor of Albury, I contribute to the debate on the motion on behalf of The Greens. The Greens will seek to amend the motion, but we support an inquiry into antisemitism with broad terms of reference. The genuine fear and distress that Jewish communities are experiencing at the moment deserve seriousness and a unifying approach from this Parliament. We want to be able to support an inquiry with broad terms of reference. But the terms of reference that are proposed are very narrow, and it is unfortunate that the amended motion seeks to make them more specific before the committee has had the chance to hear from witnesses and from the community. Therefore, I move:

That the question be amended by:

- (1) In paragraph (1) omitting all words after "inquire into and report on antisemitism in New South Wales".
- (2) In paragraph (2) omitting "report by 1 September 2025" and inserting instead "report within six months".

It is pleasing to hear that there is already consensus that the originally proposed reporting date is completely inappropriate: 7 October is a day for commemorating and remembering the victims and not for the tabling of a political report. I am pleased that change has already been made. I understand that there will be a further amendment to change the committee undertaking this inquiry from Portfolio Committee No. 5 to Portfolio Committee No. 1. Earlier this week in the Federal House of Representatives Mark Dreyfus was speaking about his experience of antisemitism and the Liberal Opposition moved that the member be no longer heard. It is unclear whether that was an oversight by an inexperienced Manager of Opposition Business or whether that was deliberate silencing of a member of the Jewish community on this issue.

I want members to be aware of the implications of the decision to send this inquiry to Portfolio Committee No. 1 instead of Portfolio Committee No. 5. That means I will not be able to take part as a substantive member of that committee. As the only member in this place with a lived experience of antisemitism, it is important, it is something I would like to be part of, and it is something that should have a multipartisan approach and be treated with the seriousness it deserves. For that reason The Greens will support the inquiry remaining with Portfolio Committee No. 5.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (16:05):** I support the motion and I commend my colleague the Hon. Chris Rath for bringing it to the House. I also commend the Government for the way that it has worked with the Opposition in accepting the inquiry. That is needed within our community at the moment. Every day all members would like to say "enough is enough" when it comes to the rising levels of antisemitism—as we have seen today with the two NSW Health workers and their actions. I commend the Government for taking swift action in standing them down, but our Jewish community is having to live with antisemitism each and every day.

Over the Christmas and new year break I was at my best friend's house. He is a non-practising Jew. He said two things to me: the first was that he was glad he did not send his kids to Jewish schools and the second was that this all made him more and more resolute to be able to declare his Judaism because he felt that he needed to stand with the community. The sad thing is he also felt that if his children went to a Jewish school they would be in harm's way. Sadly, I have heard from many people across the Jewish community that they do not feel safe to go to the synagogue anymore, they do not feel safe to walk around with a kippah on their head and they do not feel safe to be identified as a Jewish person walking in the street. Whoever it may be, that is not the community we want in New South Wales. That is not the multicultural society that we aspire to have in this State. It is not what we all thought we lived with.

But sadly, each and every day, we are seeing more and more acts of antisemitism. We are seeing our Jewish community feel completely violated, vulnerable and unsafe, and we need to take action. We all need to stand together as a House to take that action. We need to provide, through an inquiry such as this, some solutions and responses that we can take as a Parliament to assist all members of our community in living in a safe community. In particular, we need to assist our Jewish community to feel safe, loved and embraced in New South Wales. It pains me every day when I see that, somehow, New South Wales and Australia are shown on the world stage to be unsafe for Jewish people. I have seen travel warnings for people in Israel when travelling to New South Wales and Australia because of the levels of antisemitism. That should appal all of us. I hope that this committee will work to strengthen our resolve to ensure that does not happen again.

**The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK (16:08):** The alarming rise in antisemitism is not just a community issue; it is a critical public safety concern that demands a whole-of-government approach. Moving the inquiry into the prevalence and severity of antisemitism in New South Wales into Portfolio Committee No. 1 will ensure the necessary oversight and coordination across all relevant government agencies. Premier Chris Minns has shown leadership that far surpasses his Labor counterparts, especially the Prime Minister, who remains out of touch with the reality confronting our society and the everyday person in New South Wales. In all my years in this State, and indeed Australia, I would never have dreamed of seeing the level of racism and hate demonstrated in our society against the community of Jews, especially in New South Wales.

The spewing of hatred and racism is unacceptable anywhere in Australia. If someone can carry hate of the Jewish people in their heart, then I think it is time they rethought their Australian citizenship. The ancient enmities of the Middle East do not sit well with the vast majority of Australians. In 2025 that hate does not belong in Australia, or indeed anywhere. The New South Wales and Federal governments need to come down hard on the racists involved. Australia is a very tolerant society, but there will be a limit to that tolerance in the end.

The Premier must continue to lead by example and ensure that New South Wales takes decisive action to combat this growing threat to social cohesion and public safety. He has shown that the buck stops with him. For that reason, I support moving the inquiry to Portfolio Committee No. 1 so that, through the Premier, it can make inquiries on what has occurred, what steps are currently being taken and what needs to be done. There needs to be a tough, whole-of-government approach to antisemitism in this State, and only the Premier is in a position to deliver that solution.



**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (16:10):** As the Hon. Mark Buttigieg said, we support the establishment of an inquiry. We are in a pretty awful moment in New South Wales. For a long time we have seen growing antisemitism in our community that, frankly, I think most of us are absolutely shocked by. We have had firebombs and graffiti. Having Jewish members of our community not feeling safe in their own State is something we thought was put in the dustbin of history after World War II. The creeping change to that is concerning to all members in this Chamber and this Parliament. Both the Opposition and the Government have proposals, which will be dealt with appropriately in this House in coming weeks, but law reform on its own is not going to fix this issue. We need to understand where the roots of antisemitism come from and what else we can do to stamp it out before it gets even further into our community.

Conversations about the terms of reference have taken place with members across the House today, and there is some disagreement. But I think there is a very clear commitment to the importance of this inquiry and it is the moment for the Parliament to say, "Beyond laws, what else do we need to do?" Everyone who has dealt with hate in a range of different ways knows that there is so much to be done through education and understanding, and this inquiry will deal with that. It will also allow a broader discussion than just penalties and offences. That is an important part of it. I move:

That the question be amended by omitting in paragraph (1) "Portfolio Committee No. 5 - Justice and Communities" and inserting instead "Portfolio Committee No. 1 - Premier and Finance".

I make very brief comments about the amendment. The Government believes this matter needs to be elevated to Portfolio Committee No. 1. It is about driving and working through a whole-of-government response. I have heard Dr Amanda Cohn's concerns in relation to that. She is of course welcome to be a participating member. I think all members respect her lived experience of antisemitism and the challenges that presented. But that is not what the motion is about. It is about the genuine desire of the Government to elevate the issue and put it at the centre of government through Portfolio Committee No. 1.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (16:14):** I have no pleasure in supporting this motion. This inquiry should not be necessary. But sadly, it is. Eighty years after we uncovered the horrors of Auschwitz and started to learn of the enormity of the Holocaust, it is utterly appalling that Australians are experiencing record levels of antisemitism on university campuses and in their communities. Sadly, this is where we find ourselves. Businesses being firebombed, cars being destroyed, childcare centres and places of worship being attacked, and horrid graffiti sprayed around our suburbs all have one common thread—antisemitism.

As Archbishop Fisher observed at the Red Mass this year, these antisemitic attacks "have stained our city's soul". We must address this stain. We have all said "never again", but then on the outskirts of Sydney police found a caravan full of explosives with an address of a synagogue. Today we see film circulating of two health workers in their scrubs at Bankstown Hospital, bragging that they would kill Israelis who turned up for treatment, and the male worker declaring that he had sent a number of Israelis to the afterlife, specifically to the place of punishment for evildoers. Clearly we need to act to ensure that "never again" is not just an aspiration but becomes a truth.

The inquiry is a start to understand the causes of antisemitism and how we can act to address it; to promote social cohesion and to ensure the safety of our entire community; to build a stronger, safer, more respectful future; and to clean the stain on our city's soul. Simply washing our hands of the past will never work to heal what has happened, as Lady Macbeth demonstrates. If we want to truly remove the stain of antisemitism, we need to understand why, in the twenty-first century, in the new world, we are still living with this old-world hate and why our Jewish brothers and sisters are suffering so much. The inquiry is a sad necessity. Importantly, it seeks to do more than simply look at how the problem has arisen. The terms of reference are a direct call to action to look for positive measures to enhance community safety on behalf of the Jewish community of New South Wales. I look forward to the fruits of the inquiry and their implementation. We have to put the "never" into never again.

**The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (16:16):** I contribute briefly to associate myself with supporting this motion. I am extremely pleased at the bi- and multi-partisan approach to dealing with this horrible scourge of antisemitism. We know antisemitism is a different type of racism. It has an underlying current that runs through thousands of years. Unfortunately, today's experience is just another version of it from lots of different parts of the community, but hopefully only a small number of people are responsible. In reality, the Jewish population of New South Wales is about 0.5 per cent of the population. It is tiny; maybe 37,000 people. It is a true minority in New South Wales. Yet, there is so much hate currently directed towards that community that it is incumbent upon us to take action to uncover and identify what steps we need to take to nip this in the bud.

We talk about antisemitism a lot in this Chamber, unfortunately with good reason. The motion allows us to take action, to uncover the information we need to make good policy and to take action that will prevent the further spread of the scourge of antisemitism. I will read a quote from Bari Weiss, who is a journalist in the United

States. She is Jewish and started a new publication called *The Free Press*. She held a lecture at the end of 2023 and said:

Look at where Jews stand ... you will understand with almost 100 per cent certainty where a civilisation stands. Where freedom of thought and of faith and of speech are protected, Jews tend to be too. Where liberty thrives, Jews thrive.

In New South Wales, if we ensure that the liberty of populations that are contributing positively to our community and our way of life are protected, then we will have a thriving community that includes the Jewish contributions that we all so greatly benefit from.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (16:19):** I contribute to the debate and thank the Hon. Chris Rath for bringing the motion to the House. As a former multiculturalism Minister, I used to be able to say that we live in the most harmonious multicultural community in the world. I can no longer say that, and that is heartbreaking. This is Australia in 2025. It started on the steps of the Opera House. It then spread to schools, to universities, to private homes, to cars parked in the street outside of private homes and now to hospitals. It has to stop.

I feel heartbroken by the terror and inhumanity of those events, and for our Jewish community and the families that have to have conversations with their children before school about wearing their yarmulke, about wearing a school uniform, about how they get to school, about whether it is safe and about whether they should stay in a Jewish school. I feel heartbroken for that community and those families that have to check their phones worrying about what has happened. We should not stand by and let those things happen to that community. It is our community. If it were any other group, any other faith group or cohort, there would be much more action much more quickly.

Members of this House have a responsibility to take action and hear from the community about what we can do. I include on the record a quote from Miriam Rosenman, who said: "When did I ever think that every day I would open the paper and there would be some new antisemitic incident reported? I think of my parents coming here after the Holocaust, finding this wonderful safe haven after the terrors they suffered in Poland and Germany. They would not believe what has become of what my father always described as the best country in the world because it was so trouble free. How did this happen in such a short time? Daily I hear of people buying property in Israel because they see no future for their children and grandchildren, and the incidents are escalating."

We know that these incidents are escalating. We know that we have the opportunity to speak up, speak out and take action. That is what we all must do. The incidents are escalating—the graffiti, the car bombing, the childcare centre and the caravan packed with explosives aimed for the Great Synagogue. Who would have dreamt that leaders of the community would need guards because they do not know what risk they are at? I am pleased to associate myself and the Opposition in support of the commendable motion. It is incumbent on us all to make sure that the community is listened to, that recommendations are made and that the recommendations are implemented immediately.

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH (16:22):** In reply: I thank all members who contributed to the debate. There is multipartisanship in this Chamber and a lot of goodwill to ensure that the horrific antisemitic acts are finally stopped. The Opposition does not support The Greens amendment, which essentially guts elements from the terms of reference. It is entirely appropriate to mention the specifics that we want the committee to look into. They are well traversed in the media and will give the committee some direction. The Opposition would prefer that the inquiry stays with Portfolio Committee No. 5 - Justice and Communities. It is entirely appropriate that it stays with that committee. I cannot think of an issue more appropriate than this to stay with that committee, and I cannot think of a better chair to look into the scourge of antisemitism than the Hon. Robert Borsak. The Opposition prefers that it stays with Portfolio Committee No. 5 - Justice and Communities.

I make some points on the debate more broadly. Jewish people living in Sydney today must be absolutely terrified. It seems that almost every day there is some type of antisemitic attack in their community, whether it is cars being torched at the end of the street, whether it is the childcare centres that they send their kids to, or whether it is walking down the street and seeing the worst kinds of graffiti and vandalism from a horrible point in history to the more modern types of hideous graffiti that we see today. There are Hamas kill symbols—red inverted triangles—and people flying Hezbollah, Hamas and Taliban flags. Jewish students trying to go about their studies at university have encampments of radical activists trying to prevent them from studying, backed in by Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is prescribed as a terrorist organisation in many countries around the world. What we saw at Bankstown Hospital today was absolutely horrific. An inquiry is a good place to start. It will do a lot of good to investigate this.

**The PRESIDENT:** The Hon. Chris Rath has moved a motion, to which Dr Amanda Cohn and the Hon. Penny Sharpe have moved amendments. I propose to put the amendment of the Hon. Penny Sharpe first because it appears first in the motion. The question is that the amendment of the Hon. Penny Sharpe be agreed to.

**The House divided.***[In division]*

**The PRESIDENT:** I advise members that there may be a couple of other divisions after this. It would be helpful for members to remain in their places so that we may have a short bell.

Ayes .....18

Noes .....21

Majority.....3

**AYES**

Banasiak  
Borsak  
Buckingham  
Buttigieg  
D'Adam  
Donnelly

Graham  
Houssos  
Jackson  
Kaine  
Lawrence  
Mookhey

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

**NOES**

Barrett  
Boyd  
Carter  
Cohn  
Faehrmann  
Fang (teller)  
Farlow

Higginson  
Hurst  
Latham  
MacDonald  
Maclaren-Jones  
Martin  
Merton

Mitchell  
Munro  
Rath (teller)  
Roberts  
Ruddick  
Tudehope  
Ward

**Amendment of the Hon. Penny Sharpe negated.**

**The PRESIDENT:** The question is that the amendment of Dr Amanda Cohn be agreed to. Is leave granted to ring the bells for one minute?

**Leave granted.****The House divided.**

Ayes .....5

Noes .....34

Majority.....29

**AYES**

Boyd  
Cohn (teller)

Faehrmann  
Higginson

Hurst (teller)

**NOES**

Banasiak  
Barrett  
Borsak  
Buckingham  
Buttigieg  
Carter  
D'Adam  
Donnelly  
Fang  
Farlow  
Graham  
Houssos

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

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

**Amendment of Dr Amanda Cohn negated.**

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

**Leave granted.**

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....34  
Noes .....5  
Majority.....29

#### AYES

Banasiak  
Barrett  
Borsak  
Buckingham  
Buttigieg  
Carter  
D'Adam  
Donnelly  
Fang  
Farlow  
Graham  
Houssos

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

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

#### NOES

Boyd (teller)  
Cohn (teller)

Faehrmann  
Higginson

Hurst

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Bills*

### CRIMES (ADMINISTRATION OF SENTENCES) AMENDMENT BILL 2024

#### First Reading

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

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

**Statement of public interest tabled.**

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

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

**Motion agreed to.**

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

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Motions*

### ANTISEMITISM

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (16:41):** I move:

- (1) That this House condemns the rise in antisemitism in New South Wales.
- (2) That this House denounces the abhorrent attacks directed at our Jewish community.
- (3) That this House rejects the hatred and racism motivating these attacks.
- (4) That this House affirms the right of every Australian to feel safe in their home and community.

As we heard in debate on a previous motion, it has been shocking and horrifying to see so many hateful antisemitic attacks recently across the State and country. Destruction, arson and antisemitic graffiti to synagogues, private homes, property and a school are very confronting incidents for all of us. As we have repeatedly stated, the New South Wales Government is absolutely committed to stamping out these attacks. There is absolutely no place for hate, extremism or racism in any shape or form. The Minns Labor Government is acting strongly in response to these cowardly attacks. Strike Force Pearl was established in December 2024 to investigate these hate crimes and we have now doubled the number of detectives working on that.

As of late January, under Operation Shelter, 174 people have been arrested for 463 offences, 184 court attendance notices have been issued and 35,707 taskings have been issued since its inception in late 2023. This week the Government introduced a number of new measures to send a clear message about how seriously it is taking these attacks. In addition to that, the Minns Labor Government is increasing funding to the NSW Police Force Engagement and Hate Crime Unit by \$500,000 and to the NSW Social Cohesion Grants for Local Government program by \$500,000. The Government has also announced support for local governments in addressing the rising number of hate crimes. Further, Multicultural NSW has a number of ongoing initiatives to address hate crimes and ensure the safety of our communities.

For example, the New South Wales Government has invested \$14.5 million over four years to extend COMPACT, the Community Partnership Action Program, to 2028, and it has invested \$15 million over four years to enhance safety and security at places of worship and other places where faith communities gather. The motion seeks to denounce and condemn recent cowardly antisemitic attacks, as well as the hatred and racism motivating those attacks. Importantly, it also reaffirms that every single Australian has the right to feel safe in their home and community. As I said in debate on a previous motion, multiculturalism is a very fragile concept. If it is not nurtured, fostered and supported, it can die a very quick death. In situations where racism, bigotry and hatred are bubbling to the surface of our otherwise cohesive society, government must step up and play a leading role to nip it in the bud. I commend the Premier for the leadership position he has taken in this situation.

I thank the House for its support for the previous motion moved by the Hon. Chris Rath. Once again, I thank Legislative Council members for the way those debates were handled. Debate on both motions today was conducted very maturely and with goodwill. I must be honest, I cannot say the same for some of the debates we have had in this place, which were clearly politicised. When we all act together and unite for a good purpose to do the right thing for genuine outcomes, then we will get the results in the community. I hope this motion and the motion moved by the Hon. Chris Rath contribute in some way towards that end. I commend the motion to the House.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (16:45):** I associate myself with this motion and the comments of its mover, the Hon. Mark Buttigieg. It is important for all of us across the Chamber to denounce antisemitism wherever it may rear its very ugly head. Sadly, it has reared its very ugly head all over Sydney. We should all be ashamed of that as a community. Our Jewish community needs to know we are in lockstep with them. Fortunately, we had a range of Jewish leaders in this building earlier today, organised by the Parliamentary Friends of Israel and its co-chair in this place, the Hon. Natalie Ward, together with the co-chair in the other place, the member for Coogee, Marjorie O'Neill. It was sad that we had to come together in a show of solidarity because of what has happened in our community and, sadly, to our Jewish community.

Today I was shocked and saddened to hear from a Jewish leader, whom I will not name, who outlined that he has removed his mezuzah from outside his front door because even someone like him, who is a Jewish community leader, fears what could happen to a house that is identified as a Jewish home. That is very sad for all of us. We should not have to experience those fears in any community, particularly our Jewish community, which is living through the threat of these attacks at the moment. I join with the Hon. Mark Buttigieg in denouncing these actions and also in supporting the good work of Multicultural NSW, which seeks community cohesion. I pay tribute to Joe La Posta and his team at Multicultural NSW, which is working through this, drawing on the Jewish community while also bringing other communities together.

In recent months, many other faith leaders have stood with the Jewish community to denounce the actions we have seen in our society. That is not the society that we aspire to be nor want to live in. Unfortunately, I think we all know that there are some elements at the extremes of both sides of the political spectrum who seek to sow division and target our Jewish community. All good, fair-minded people need to stand up against that. That is what members are doing in the House today by supporting the motion moved by the Hon. Mark Buttigieg, for which I commend him.

**Dr AMANDA COHN (16:48):** The Greens support the motion and thank the Hon. Mark Buttigieg for his collaborative and unifying leadership as Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism. This is the kind of approach against antisemitism and all forms of racism that we should be modelling for the communities we represent. Antisemitism is a live issue in Sydney and also in my regional community of Albury. It has become

well known that neo-Nazis and white supremacists are organising out of Corowa. We have seen growing antisemitism and homophobia, as well as gatherings at our war monument at Albury, which honours those who died fighting against Nazism. It has horrified the broader community, as it should.

We all know there has been a growth of antisemitism in Sydney. My colleagues working in the mental health sector in Sydney have told me that they have seen young people requiring treatment for mental illness because of some of the fear and anxiety borne out of the events in recent weeks and months. But neo-Nazism and white supremacist ideology are not things the Government can just arrest its way out of. Other members have spoken about the whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach that is needed to address these kinds of issues.

I will remind members of two things. The first thing is the importance, when supporting a marginalised and vulnerable community, of not platforming or repeating hate speech. As someone with a lived experience of antisemitism, both intergenerational trauma and threats to my personal safety when I was deputy mayor, I chose not to repeat those threats or name who made them. That provides a platform and publicity to those people, which is exactly what they want. I hope that we can continue to speak in a respectful way that does not re-traumatise people when we speak about these issues. The second thing is that Jewish communities are really diverse. We have a broad range of experiences and views on a number of issues. I look forward to contributing on behalf of The Greens to the newly established inquiry.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (16:51):** Frankly, it is hard to see what else there is to say about this motion, which is so self-evidently true that it could have been moved as formal business. All Australians have the right not just to feel safe but also to be safe in their own homes and, indeed, wherever they move about in our community. We all reject the hatred and racism that has been expressed so violently over recent months and that has caused so much fear and pain to Jewish members of our community. But it is good and appropriate that we not just automatically approve this motion. We must speak about it because, as Ronald Lauder, the president of the World Jewish Congress, reminded us recently at the eightieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, a wall of silence led to Auschwitz. So we must not be silent. We must tear down any walls that would restrict the free and safe movement of our Jewish citizens.

Frankly, we are relying too heavily on walls at the moment and not enough on the harder but necessary work of building a respectful, harmonious society. I was at the Parramatta synagogue late last year, at the opening of the Daat Library and Learning Centre, its positive, outward-facing memorial to the terrible events of 7 October. I spoke to the president, who said that, when that synagogue was built, in the 1950s, they had a low brick fence marking the boundary between the property and the street. The synagogue was welcoming and accessible to all. It is now hidden by diplomatic-grade steel. This is protective and may be necessary, but it should be temporary. Good fences may make good neighbours, as the poet Frost suggests, but we need to be careful that high walls do not build new ghettos. Jewish Australians should have the same freedoms, rights, privileges and opportunities as any other Australians. They currently do not. This is shameful. And it is not just a Jewish issue. It is an issue for all of us. I have always preferred Donne to Frost. So let us remember:

No man is an island,  
Entire of itself;  
Every man is a piece of the continent,  
A part of the main.  
...  
Any man's death diminishes me,  
Because I am involved in mankind.  
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;  
It tolls for thee.

We are all part of the problem, and we are all called to be part of the solution.

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (16:54):** I speak in support of the motion to add my voice in condemnation of the terrible rise in antisemitic attacks in Sydney, particularly in recent times. I express my solidarity with the Jewish community and support so much of what has been said along those lines. As members of Parliament it is important that we think about the causes of what has occurred. Some members have reflected on various things and the possible causes. I read an interesting article in *The Times of Israel* of 6 February, which talks about what is happening here and the debate about the cause of it. The fundamental cause is antisemitism, this long-running series of evil slurs and conspiracy theories that has been used as the basis to persecute Jews for so long. More recent causes have been discussed. For example, we have had some contributions about the protest movement that has occurred and its place in universities. It is important to say that many people will disagree that that is a cause and, indeed, many Jewish people have been part of those protest movements and it is antisemitic in itself to take a monolithic approach to the Jewish community.

The article also discusses the possibility of foreign interference in Australia. I am sure all members are aware that Deputy Commissioner David Hudson spoke about the 10—I think it may now be 12—people charged in the recent investigation and said that none has any identified potential ideological motivation. He spoke of a level of coordination and orchestration. The Prime Minister discussed the possibility that people are being paid to commit the crimes, and the ABC reported on 22 January that the Australian Federal Police briefed National Cabinet in relation to an investigation into whether overseas actors were paying people to do these things. A variety of investigations about the causes is going on, but, of course, the fundamental cause is antisemitism, and it must be condemned. I conclude by saying that the fundamental cause of the uptick of these things matters not, in so many ways, to the Jewish community, who is terrorised by what has been occurring. Like everyone who has spoken, I stand in solidarity with it.

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH (16:57):** I commend the Hon. Mark Buttigieg for moving this motion. What Sydney is currently facing and has faced since 7 October is almost reminiscent of being in Germany in the 1930s and of Kristallnacht. Anyone of Jewish descent living in Sydney, especially if they are a Holocaust survivor or a descendant of a Holocaust survivor, must be absolutely terrified.

It is a horrifying thought that we are probably now in the worst place for antisemitism since the 1930s—when your car or the cars at the end of your street are being torched simply because you are Jewish or you have Jewish neighbours; when the childcare centre where you send your kids is being burnt to the ground; when you run a bakery or own a bakery and you are subject to the most horrific antisemitic attacks like the one in Surry Hills a few months ago; when you are a Jewish student and all you want to do is study but you are copping so much antisemitic abuse day in and day out that you are prevented from attending your classes from people who call themselves social justice warriors but are, in fact, antisemites backed in by terrorist organisations like Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is a prescribed terrorist organisation in many countries around the world; and when you watch the news and see that a caravan filled to the brim with explosives is heading through Sydney to your community to enact terrible damage and the significant loss of lives on people that you might know.

Then today there was another terrible scene—which was chilling to all of us—where two medical staff at Bankstown Hospital presented us with what could be the future if action is not taken. It is right to move this motion. It is right to call out antisemitism in all its forms, because we want to ensure that the horrors of World War II and the horrors of the Holocaust are never repeated, especially in Sydney in 2025.

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (17:00):** I support the motion. Antisemitism is a medieval curse. We do not want it establishing itself in Australia. In 1981 American President Ronald Reagan was shot and rushed to hospital. On the operating table Reagan quipped, "I hope you're all Republicans", to which the chief surgeon, a registered Democrat, replied, "Mr President, we are all Republicans today." Of course, we all expect complete impartiality in our healthcare system, particularly a public healthcare system. But today Australia is in shock to learn that nurses at a Sydney hospital have openly bragged that they not only want to kill Jewish patients but already have.

I understand the nurses have been stood down but what is most disturbing is that those nurses, who otherwise seem like very normal young Aussies, are so casual in their extreme antisemitism. They had no inhibitions talking like that, even on a public viewing platform. The whole thing is shocking. I can only conclude that those nurses come from a culture where people routinely talk like that. It is incorrect to suggest that the shocking spike in antisemitic behaviour is due to the current conflict in the Middle East; there have been multiple Arab-Israeli conflicts for decades and none of them saw a rise in public antisemitism in Australia.

What is different? Our immigration program has, by and large, been good, though I am personally in favour of a five-year general pause. But, more specifically, if we grant visas to people who are from a culture with pervasive antisemitism, should we be surprised to see a sharp rise in antisemitism? We do not need new hate speech laws that, I fear, will only fuel the problem long term. More than anything else, this is further evidence that we need a five-year immigration pause and we need to completely overhaul our immigration program so that the free market determines which skills we need and that we select for migrants who come from cultures where antisemitism and other malign values are not a feature.

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM (17:02):** I support what the Hon. John Ruddick has just said. One of the hardest things in politics is to accept the limits of government and parliamentary power. In the case of antisemitism and problems that have come to Australia essentially out of the Middle East, we are dealing with hatred that is ingrained and clearly has been a part of the existence of those people for thousands of years. The idea that we are going to roll that back with some laws on protesting in front of a synagogue or some tougher penalties for graffiti, or by trying to define hate speech and the incitement to hatred, really does not understand the extent of the problem.

There is an element of delusion here driven by TV cameras and the need to make a media response and also, quite frankly, the power of the Jewish lobby. No-one in this Chamber has spoken more comprehensively and consistently in favour of the State of Israel whenever we have ventured into foreign policy, but Bob Carr is right

in saying that the Jewish lobby is strong. Sometimes you find in government that, when you have a kneejerk reaction to appease that lobby, you cause unintended consequences for everyone else that represent poor law and poor public policy. We are seeing that in the reaction of the Minns Government.

The truth is that, after 7 October, people peddling antisemitism were given an escort down to the Opera House by the police. There was no policing of the street blockage laws, the protest laws. They were escorted down to the Opera House and they were chanting, "Kill the Jews," and this Government did nothing about it. A police report said they were saying, "Where are the Jews?" As if. They were chanting, "Kill the Jews." It is the broken windows effect. I know the Premier beats his chest and he gets favourable coverage that he has been strong on these issues, but the problem started that night at the Opera House because clearly the radicals that we are talking about received a message: "This is all right. We get a police escort down there for an illegal protest. We can chant, 'Kill the Jews', and nothing happens to us." Since then there have been scores of illegal protests in New South Wales, none of which have been policed according to the law. If you consistently send a message to a community that they can get away with anything, in the end they try anything.

Do members think the Parliament and Government have the power to wind back the hatred that is clearly integral to the existence of those two nurses at Bankstown hospital? It is contrary to every principle of a civilised society. It is frightening to think that the people in Bankstown and south-west Sydney who might have to use that hospital could be treated that way. It is absolutely horrific. There are limits to what government can do. I think government makes a mistake with kneejerk reactions driven by TV cameras and a particular lobby group to rush into laws that will have absolutely zero impact. That is the problem. We need harder, more sensible thinking.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (17:05):** In reply: I thank all members who contributed to debate, which has been healthy and useful: the Hon. Scott Farlow, Dr Amanda Cohn, the Hon. Susan Carter, the Hon. Stephen Lawrence, the Hon. Chris Rath, the Hon. John Ruddick and the Hon. Mark Latham. By and large I agree with the contributions but I would put a caveat on the last two contributions from the Hon. John Ruddick and the Hon. Mark Latham. I am not dismissing their contributions out of hand but, if they think that the source of this problem is Australia's immigration program, then they are sorely mistaken. The reason our society is so great, progressive and open-minded is because of our immigration program and, more importantly, the Whitlam-Grassby concept of multiculturalism. That is not that you import people for an economic value or to assimilate; it is that you bring people here because one of the value-adds is that it gives your domestic population a different perspective on what it means to be a human being and the different experiences of different cultures.

If the proposition is that we put up the shutters and to hell with multiculturalism because we are importing hatred, that is a very zero-sum, bipolar assessment of the situation. What we need to do is exactly what this Government is doing, and that is to use our embrace of multiculturalism to denounce the hatred and to say, "We value you. If you're are a minority community that is getting abused and threatened"—like the Jewish community are—"then we will come in and we will defend you. And if you need the State to implement laws to do that, that's exactly what we'll do."

We are going to use our multiculturalism to try to stamp out this hatred and make people understand that they are not welcome in this society if they do not embrace multiculturalism and that, if they are part of a minority community, they will be protected. I make special mention of the Minister for Multiculturalism, Steve Kamper, who has not been mentioned yet. He has done a gargantuan job in bringing together all those multi-faith community leaders to denounce this sort of behaviour. The bottom line is this: Whether it is the Jewish community, the Muslim community or whatever community it is, if a minority community is being racially abused, whether it is antisemitism or otherwise, the State will step in and help them because we want people to feel comfortable no matter where they are from.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Rulings*

### **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS**

**The PRESIDENT (17:08):** At the end of question time today I reserved a ruling relating to supplementary questions for written answers. I am now in a position to rule on the matter. By way of background, during question time the Hon. Wes Fang asked the Hon. Rose Jackson—the Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast—a question about the use of ministerial drivers. Following the Minister's answer, the Hon. Wes Fang asked a supplementary question:

... will the Minister elucidate that part of her answer and indicate, if she was on leave, did she ever take a trip to the airport with her family for a holiday to the United States in December 2023?



I subsequently upheld a point of order taken by the Leader of the Government that the supplementary question was a new question, and was therefore out of order. It is well established by various rulings of Presidents Burgmann, Primrose, Fazio, Harwin, Ajaka and myself that a supplementary question must not be a new question. A supplementary question must be directly related to an answer given. Subsequently, at the conclusion of question time, the Hon. Wes Fang asked a question of the Minister, this time as a supplementary question for written answer:

My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for Mental Health. Did the Minister use a ministerial driver to take her and her family to the airport while on gazetted leave in December 2023?

At that point the Hon. Courtney Houssos—Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources—took a further point of order seeking my guidance as to whether supplementary questions for written answers are subject to the same rules as supplementary questions asked during question time and whether, by extension, the supplementary question for written answer asked by the Hon. Wes Fang was again out of order. Standing Order 66 (1) states:

At the discretion of the President, at the conclusion of questions without notice, supplementary questions may be put by members to elucidate answers given earlier during questions.

Standing Order 66 (2) provides:

The rules for questions apply to supplementary questions and answers under this order.

Upon reviewing *Hansard*, I saw that the Hon. Wes Fang's supplementary question for written answer was not the same as his original supplementary question and that it met the rules for supplementary questions for written answers outlined in the standing orders. I therefore rule that the Hon. Wes Fang's supplementary question for written answer was in order.

In general terms, I will always extend wide latitude to members in the asking of supplementary questions. This ruling adopts the same approach in respect of supplementary questions for written answers. The purpose of supplementary questions for written answers must remain the elucidation of an answer given, and supplementary questions need to remain tethered to a question and answer during question time.

**The Hon. Mark Latham:** Point of order: That is all well and good. Was the Hon. Wes Fang notified that you would be giving that ruling?

**The PRESIDENT:** I thank the Hon. Mark Latham for the question. I formally advised by way of the Government Whip and the Opposition Whip that I would be giving the ruling at this time.

**The Hon. Mark Latham:** Thank you. That is the appropriate courtesy. I was just wondering why he was not here, but notification was given.

### *Bills*

## **GREYHOUND RACING BAN BILL 2025**

### **First Reading**

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

### **Second Reading Speech**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST (17:12):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Greyhound racing is an industry that has long been synonymous with animal cruelty. From the substandard conditions greyhounds are bred and forced to live in to the shocking number of on-track injuries and deaths that occur every week as greyhounds are forced to race for their lives and the thousands of healthy greyhounds who are killed as so-called "wastage" when they do not run fast enough, this is an industry that has animal cruelty built into its business model.

The history of greyhound racing in New South Wales is particularly sordid. Members will recall the ABC *Four Corners* story, "Making a Killing", in 2015 that exposed the rampant use of illegal live baiting in the greyhound racing industry. The program showed live possums, rabbits and piglets being tied to a mechanical lure and used as bait to encourage greyhounds to chase and run faster, in a practice known as "bleeding". The public was understandably horrified. In the wake of the program, multiple high-profile New South Wales greyhound trainers were charged with animal cruelty offences and the board of Greyhound Racing NSW [GRNSW] was forced to resign.

In response to the scandal, the Hon. Michael McHugh, AC, QC, was appointed to lead a special commission of inquiry into greyhound racing in New South Wales. This was another watershed moment. The McHugh report comprehensively documented the dark reality of the greyhound racing industry that animal activists had known and been fighting against for decades. It found that there was a mass slaughter of healthy greyhounds in New South Wales, with up to 70 per cent of greyhounds born in the last 12 years having been killed simply because they were deemed too slow to race. These hidden deaths are what the industry calls wastage. Greyhound racing kills dogs, and the industry was finally exposed for this. Justice McHugh concluded that the greyhound racing industry had lost its social licence and should be shut down, stating in his final report:

Permitting GRNSW a further period of time in which to attempt to demonstrate it can successfully address issues of overbreeding and wastage appears to the Commission to be likely to prove fruitless and, at the same time, continue to result in the deaths of many more thousands of healthy greyhounds.

Sadly, he was entirely correct. In the face of this compelling and disturbing report, it is no wonder that then Premier Mike Baird decided that the greyhound racing industry must be shut down. For attempting to stop further cruelty to dogs in this vile industry, Mike Baird lost his job as Premier, as the gambling industry targeted him in an attempt to warn other MPs of what they could do if they did not comply with industry demands and put gambling profits before human and animal welfare.

By October 2016 the ban had been overturned and the Greyhound Racing Act 2017 was put in place instead. The decision of the New South Wales Labor Party to jump onto what it saw as a political opportunity at the expense of animal welfare and problem gambling was reprehensible. But even NSW Labor acknowledged that the greyhound racing industry had to reform quickly if it wanted to continue to operate. David Harris—now the racing Minister in New South Wales—said during a debate in 2016:

Labor's approach would allow the New South Wales greyhound industry to reform and continue to exist—it would allow the industry a second chance, but it would also be a last chance.

Now Premier Chris Minns agreed, stating in 2016 that, if there is still noncompliance across the industry after a period of two years, it should be closed down.

Of course, the greyhound racing industry did not reform. This is an industry that was killing dogs en masse, that was using drugs and that was blooding greyhounds using live animals who were torn apart—and got away with it. Instead of being shut down for those vile acts, the former Coalition Government reversed its proposed ban and then rewarded the industry with millions of taxpayer dollars. It did this knowing that this was an industry incapable of reform. It did this knowing it would only be a matter of time before the industry was exposed again for failing public expectations. And that is exactly where we are again today.

There is a level of absolute arrogance by the racing industry that has been demonstrated in the decade that has passed since the live baiting scandal. The number of dogs killed or seriously injured on track has remained consistently high. Last year, 4,223 greyhounds were injured and 17 greyhounds were killed on New South Wales tracks. As Justice McHugh had predicted, despite a facade of new regulatory structures and oversight measures, the practice of mass overbreeding in pursuit of a winner has continued and healthy greyhounds continue to be killed as wastage when they are no longer considered profitable. Whole-of-life tracking exists in name only.

Last year, a handover report from the former chief veterinary officer of Greyhound Racing NSW, Dr Alex Brittan, was exposed by the Animal Justice Party through a parliamentary call for papers. This internal document from a greyhound industry insider confirmed the many insidious problems that continue to occur behind closed doors in the industry. The issues Dr Brittan raised were eerily similar to those flagged in the McHugh report. A major feature of his handover report was concern about the hidden backlog of un-rehomed greyhounds in New South Wales. Dr Brittan alleged that, due to continued overbreeding, thousands of greyhounds are at risk of spending miserable post-racing lives in industrial kennels, without any prospect of rehoming.

His advice to Greyhound Racing NSW is that it would be "utterly immoral to allow yet more greyhounds to enter this unsustainable morass of exploitation and suffering". The Brittan report also echoed and reiterated major concerns already being raised in the public domain about the industry's rehoming program, both domestically, with the closure of the Wyee rehoming facility and allegations of substandard conditions and poor treatment of dogs, and overseas, as part of the controversial Aussie Mates In The States program.

The industry's desperate attempt to deal with the continual problem of over-breeding and wastage by sending dogs to other jurisdictions where their fates cannot be monitored has been particularly controversial. At least five dogs have been killed as part of the United States [US] export program. Barcia Jazz suffered an agonising death on a flight to the US in April 2023 after she developed a twisted stomach, likely brought on by stress or negligence by the transporter. The pathologist report on her death noted a significant amount of self-trauma to her skin, as Barcia Jazz attempted to tear at her own stomach.

In September 2023 Carey was accidentally killed at the Hanrob Mascot facility on the way to the airport. He was released from the transport kennel of the transporters van—which would have resembled the starters box that greyhounds race from—and ran at full velocity into the fence, suffering a neck fracture that led to his euthanasia. Alby and Katana died during, or shortly after, a flight to Dallas in July 2024. Both their deaths were linked to heat stress, with allegations that one or both may have been left in the sun on the tarmac and boiled to death.

There is reportedly a fifth dog that died, in circumstances unknown—and, of course, we do not know how many dogs may have died, suffered injuries or are languishing in industrial kennels after they arrived in the United States for purported rehoming. The deaths that we do know about have come to the public's attention through whistleblowers, as the industry and even the Government have remained sketchy with any details. At one point the Minister even denied knowing about some of the deaths at the most recent budget estimates, despite having been advised about deaths many months prior.

The Brittan report made undeniable what animal protection groups had been saying for years: The greyhound racing industry never cleaned up its act after 2015, and it is clear the industry is incapable of doing so. In the wake of its publication we saw major media attention, mass protests and an intense backlash from the public. The then CEO of Greyhound Racing NSW, Robert Macaulay, resigned. Despite Labor's previous stance that the industry should be shut down if it does not reform, and instead of the industry doing what it promised the people of New South Wales with this so-called last chance, the Minns Labor Government chose to establish yet another special commission of inquiry into the greyhound racing industry, this time presided over by Commissioner Lea Drake. While it is still ongoing, the hearings of the Drake inquiry so far have made it abundantly clear that, in the 10 years since the industry was last exposed, nothing has changed.

The question hangs in the air: If 2015 was the industry's last chance, how many more last chances will this industry get? How many dogs will be killed by this industry before those "last chances" run out? On the first day of the Drake inquiry the commissioner was advised that, back in 2015, Greyhound Racing NSW had told the McHugh inquiry it would consolidate its 34 greyhound tracks down to no more than 14 to address welfare concerns. Almost 10 years later, over 25 operating tracks remain in New South Wales. And here is the most disturbing part: It appears that not a single one of those tracks meets, or has ever met, the minimum track standards concerning animal welfare. Those failures have had devastating consequences. For example, just last month two greyhounds suffered horrific injuries and died after colliding with the rail at the Taree track. This track was described by the industry as a "\$6 million centre of excellence" and one of the "safest tracks" in the State, but it has now been temporarily shut down, as it was revealed the track did not even have a safety rail.

In addition to systemic animal cruelty concerns, there remains a shocking lack of accountability and transparency in the greyhound racing industry—another concern initially raised in the McHugh inquiry that remains unchanged almost 10 years on. The industry continues to publish false and misleading statistics around its injury, death and rehoming rates in its annual reports, and asking questions to the New South Wales Government about this or seeking further information is usually futile. It seems even the racing Minister cannot get information out of Greyhound Racing NSW, despite it being an organisation established by and subject to an Act of this Parliament.

We saw this play out in 2024, when the Minister had to resort to issuing a show cause notice to the board of Greyhound Racing NSW for its failures to disclose key information to the Government. This, of course, is a direct breach of the operating licence issued to Greyhound Racing NSW pursuant to section 25 of the Greyhound Racing Act 2017, one of many committed by the industry since the Act commenced. This operating licence, and the threat of losing it in the case of noncompliance or further bad behaviour, was meant to be a key regulatory tool to ensure that the greyhound racing industry undertook reform. But it has not worked.

So why has the Minns Labor Government not acted to take this operating licence away, as it promised it would if there was further noncompliance by the greyhound racing industry? How many more horrific on-track injuries and deaths do we have to witness? How many more scandals and how many more exposés and inquiries are needed to come to the inevitable conclusion that greyhound racing should not be legal? Instead of taking the bold action needed, the New South Wales Government continues to pour millions of taxpayers' dollars into the greyhound racing industry through grants programs, tax exemptions and betting tax moneys that are returned to the industry. This is taxpayers' money being given to an industry which the public simply does not support. In a State where nurses and midwives are not getting decent pay, where paramedics and psychiatrists are not getting adequate pay, where transport workers are not getting adequate pay and where teachers are not getting adequate pay, taxpayers' money is being used to prop up an industry that has been repeatedly exposed for ongoing animal cruelty. Instead of funding essential services for the community and giving fair pay to frontline workers, who are literally saving lives and getting people to work, every taxpayer is being charged to uphold the cruelty, killing and suffering of dogs in greyhound racing.

Every taxpayer needs to know that the State Government is spending their money to kill and cause cruelty to dogs. They should stop and ask themselves this: Why would a government pour millions of taxpayer money into an industry that is repeatedly exposed for animal cruelty, brings no money into the State and, in fact, costs the State money? It is because the major parties do not represent the wants of the people of New South Wales, who pay those taxes. It is because the State takes our money and gives it to powerful industries, even if those industries harm animals and people, like the greyhound racing industry does. Meanwhile, around the world, countries are turning their backs on this cruel, archaic industry. Commercial greyhound racing is now banned in over 40 US states, and late last year New Zealand announced it would also be banning greyhound racing by 2026 due to ongoing welfare concerns. Closer to home, the Australian Capital Territory has banned greyhound racing since 2017.

The greyhound industry has proven it cannot be trusted to keep its promises or to clean up its act. It sure as hell is out of chances—chances that it never should have been given in the first place. The community will not tolerate systemic animal cruelty for gambling profits. Enough bending to the gambling industry to line its pockets. We must put voters in New South Wales first, use their taxes appropriately and prioritise animal welfare. We must not allow the continued bucking by the major parties to the gambling industry above the interests of the community and above basic animal welfare. We are going to bring back the ban, and that is exactly what this bill will do.

I now turn to the provisions of the bill. I thank Dominic Bowes and the Parliamentary Counsel's Office for their professional assistance in drafting it. The bill allows for a transition away from greyhound racing that aligns with the ban on greyhound racing in New Zealand, which is also scheduled to come into effect in 2026. It will also ensure a managed transition, supported by any assistance the New South Wales Government chooses to provide to those affected, including track and venue workers, support staff and other non-racing employees who may be affected by the shutdown.

During this transition period, it will be essential that the New South Wales Government put in place a plan and provide appropriate financial support to assist with the rehoming of greyhounds, who will inevitably be discarded by the industry once they no longer produce a profit. Right now, greyhound rehoming is done almost entirely by volunteer rescue organisations operating on charitable donations. Those groups do amazing work on their own, but they will need support to ensure that every greyhound coming out of this industry can receive the rehabilitation they need and find a loving forever home outside of the industry.

This is an industry with a sordid history of participants killing and discarding greyhounds when they are no longer considered to be profitable. To guard against this and assist with the transition, the bill contains a number of provisions that will commence immediately on assent, prior to the ban. First, the bill will impose an immediate ban on breeding greyhounds for racing. As I have already addressed, over-breeding is a major issue within the greyhound racing industry, and there are already more greyhounds in New South Wales who need rehoming than there are homes available. By placing an immediate ban on any further breeding, we will reduce the number of greyhounds that will invariably need to be rehomed following the ban, reduce the burden on rehoming organisations and allow them to focus on finding homes for greyhounds already within the industry. The penalty for breaching this offence provision will be 500 penalty units, or 12 months imprisonment, or both. For similar reasons, the bill also imposes a ban on registering any further greyhounds for racing during the phase-out period.

Clause 8 of the bill, which will also commence on assent, makes it an offence to kill a registered greyhound. That has been modelled off a transitional provision passed in New Zealand and is designed to stop greyhound trainers and breeders within the industry from killing greyhounds they anticipate will no longer be profitable in anticipation of the ban coming into force. Again, sadly, we know this industry has a shameful history of killing and discarding greyhounds as so-called wastage when they are no longer deemed profitable, so the bill guards against that.

The bill makes very clear that the provision applies to any greyhound registered prior to the passing of the bill or any greyhound born to a greyhound that was registered prior to the passing of the bill. Industry participants cannot deregister or retire greyhounds onto the companion animals register to create a loophole to kill healthy dogs. The new offence is punishable by a maximum of 500 penalty units, or 12 months imprisonment. There is an exemption for legitimate euthanasia performed by a veterinary practitioner if, in their opinion, the greyhound is so severely injured, so diseased or in such a physical condition that it is cruel to keep the greyhound alive.

During the 12-month transition period, part 3 of the bill will allow for the winding up of Greyhound Racing NSW to commence, including the appointment of an administrator in place of the board of directors. Upon the winding up, all assets of Greyhound Racing NSW—including any land it owns such as greyhound racing tracks—will revert to the Crown. I am hopeful that any income received from the winding up and sale of assets can be used by the New South Wales Government to continue to support the transition and rehoming of former racing greyhounds. At the end of the 12-month transition period, a ban on greyhound racing in all forms will come into effect. That is contained in clause 4 of the bill and will be punishable by a maximum penalty of 1,000 penalty

units, or two years imprisonment, or both. That punishment will show the industry how seriously the Parliament will treat any breach of the prohibition on greyhound racing.

It will also become unlawful to offer betting services in relation to greyhound racing in New South Wales, and all racecourse licences relating to greyhound racing pursuant to the Betting and Racing Act 1998 will be terminated. It will become an offence to keep a greyhound for greyhound racing, punishable by a maximum penalty of 500 penalty units, or 12 months imprisonment, or both. Finally, pursuant to part 5 of the bill, the Greyhound Racing Act 2017 will be repealed. It will no longer be needed, as the sad and sordid chapter of greyhound racing in New South Wales will finally be over. I note the bill contains a number of other provisions, including broad regulation-making powers and savings and transitional provisions, which can be used to create regulations to support the operation of the bill, including, for example, regulations surrounding the seizure and care of any greyhounds found to be kept, bred or raced in breach of any provisions of the bill.

I thank all the amazing activists who have fought against the greyhound racing industry for decades and have never given up, even in the face of the devastating reversal in 2016. Most of those people are volunteers, putting in long hours after work, attending protests on weekends and sacrificing their own time and money to fight to protect the vulnerable dogs. I particularly acknowledge the work of the Coalition for the Protection of Greyhounds, which is responsible for so much of the vision, knowledge and data we have around the New South Wales greyhound racing industry. The coalition has kept the industry honest, even while it resists even basic levels of transparency and accountability.

I thank the many greyhound rescue organisations and foster networks in New South Wales. I thank them for their tireless work and for trying to find the loving home that every greyhound discarded by this industry always deserved. To my fellow members, together we have the opportunity to right the wrongs of the past that occurred in this Parliament with respect to greyhound racing. It is the first week back in Parliament for 2025 and already four greyhounds have been killed on New South Wales greyhound racing tracks and over 400 have been injured. We cannot allow that to continue. Let's bring back the ban.

**Debate adjourned.**

#### *Documents*

### **KOALA POPULATION DATA**

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

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (17:34):** I seek leave to amend private members' business item No. 1658 for today of which I have given notice by removing "21 days" and inserting instead "42 days".

**Leave granted.**

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK:** Accordingly, I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 42 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents created since 1 January 2013 in the possession, custody or control of the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage, Forestry Corporation of NSW, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, or the Environment Protection Authority relating to koalas and pre-harvest reviews or surveys:

- (a) all documents, created between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2023, that record koala scats and koalas in pre-harvest reviews or surveys conducted by or for Forestry Corporation of NSW in the areas of New South Wales State forests now designated koala hubs;
- (b) all documents relating to koala scats and koalas in pre-harvest reviews or surveys in the areas of New South Wales State forests now designated koala hubs, provided by Forestry Corporation of NSW to the following:
  - (i) Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water; and
  - (ii) Environment Protection Authority.
- (c) all documents relating to koala scat and koala data from pre-harvest reviews or surveys in the areas of New South Wales State forests now designated koala hubs that was entered into BioNet;
- (d) all documents relating to procedure manuals, data entry procedures or data collation procedures for obtaining or providing data that is entered into BioNet;
- (e) all internal correspondence, including emails or memos, relating to koala survey methodologies or data collection processes; 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.

I move this order for the production of papers because decisions that shape our environment must be built on facts and not assumptions. We hear time and again that good policy relies on good science. Several times when

discussing forestry in this House we have heard about the dispute and contest of science. In September 2024 the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage put out a media statement announcing that drone surveys conducted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service had estimated a population of 12,111 koalas across 176,000 hectares of surveyed land. A month later that number was presented to the industry advisory committee. That is a very specific figure, so how was it reached? What methods were used? How reliable is the data? How does that data compare to historical data? Apart from the work of Dr Brad Law from the Department of Primary Industries, that is only the second major study the New South Wales Government has undertaken on koala numbers in native forests, and yet we are making significant policy changes based on it.

If we are shifting from a koala strategy to a koala plan, we owe it to the people of New South Wales to ensure the shift is grounded in strong, verifiable evidence, which can then be measured for success in the future. Policies that impact land management, industry and conservation must be supported by clear, accessible and unquestionable data. Anything less than full transparency risks making conservation policy a guessing game rather than a science-based approach. The motion is not about undermining conservation like the portrait the left will undoubtedly attempt to paint; it is about ensuring the integrity of the data that drives policy. If the data is sound, there should be no issue with making it available. But if there are inconsistencies, then we have a duty to uncover them and interrogate them.

The people of New South Wales expect us to ask the tough questions, to challenge what does not add up and to demand honesty in decision-making. If we get this wrong, we do not just risk bad policy, we also risk setting a dangerous precedent. We need to know how koala population data is collected, reviewed and stored. We need to know how survey methodologies are determined, who is conducting them and whether the data collection follows a rigorous, peer-reviewed process. We need to know whether the results are truly reflective of the population trends in our forests or whether they are being used to justify predetermined political decisions.

Science should lead policy and not the other way around. That is why this motion calls for documents that show exactly how koala population data has been collected, shared and then entered into BioNet. We are seeking internal correspondence on survey methodologies to determine whether the processes in place are rigorous, transparent and in line with best scientific practice. This is not just about New South Wales; decisions made in this State influence policy across the country. If flawed or incomplete data is driving conservation decisions, it will have national consequences.

We have seen in the past how poorly tested policies based on questionable data can lead to significant disruptions in land management, industries and communities. The stakes are high in this case and anything we do should be based on the absolute best scientific evidence available. To reiterate, this call for transparency is not an attack. It is our responsibility, and the public deserves confidence that environmental decisions are based on evidence and not guesswork. The people of New South Wales deserve to know that the policies affecting them and their livelihoods, industries and regional communities are based on facts that can be crosschecked and measured for success in the future and not just flawed data. I urge all members to support this call for papers.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (17:38):** I thank the honourable member for agreeing to a longer time frame. The call for papers is a big ask as it is over a 10-year period, and the Government appreciates that time has been given to fulfil it. The Government has no problem with the call for papers for some of the reasons outlined by the member. We have to stand by the science and the way in which we do our work. I do not believe there is anything to hide and there is nothing that concerns the Government in relation to the release of these papers.

I would like to make a couple of comments, which are my observations, relating to the comments "Lies, lies, damned statistics and data. Sometimes you have your favourite scientist; sometimes you don't." We have to be honest that science is ever evolving. Techniques relating to counting and statistics are always changing. It is never fixed in time; it is a constantly changing environment. We have gone from looking at and counting koala scats at the bottom of a tree to using dogs to using drones. We are always trying to improve the way in which we are counting koalas so that it is as accurate as possible. No matter who is working in this field, they are trying to get the data as best as they can.

I flag with the member that we have no problem with holding this out. Again, my experience would be that all members, depending on their views, have preferred scientists and data sets. I wish that we could agree more on the facts in these areas. But, to be honest, I have found that to be very hard, depending on where you stand. Having said that, the Government takes all of the data seriously. Whether it is Brad Law's work on monitoring koala bellows or whether it is using drones, scats or dogs, or the various sampling that we do over time, I am very confident that everyone is trying to get the best evidence and we will continue to do that over time.

We are entirely relaxed about having this information in the public domain. I spent a lot of time responding to inquiries that have come via the media, where there is a range of different claims—some verifiable, some not; some choosing their own adventure or their preferred scientist or other things. The point is we need to be open and honest about what we are trying to do. The Government's focus, particularly when it comes to koalas, is about making sure that koalas do not become extinct in the wild in New South Wales and that it is working closely with impacted communities as we try to build some consensus in relation to the science.

**The Hon. WES FANG (17:41):** I indicate that the Opposition will support this excellent SO 52 motion moved by the Hon. Mark Banasiak. I thank him for bringing it to the House so that we can finally see the data, as the member outlined in his speech. However, the contribution from the Minister was extraordinary. She is effectively flagging that there is some science that we can believe and some science that we cannot. This Minister hangs her hat on science.

**The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine:** Point of order: It is against the standing orders to mischaracterise what has been said by any of the members here. That was a clear misrepresentation. We all heard what the Minister said. It is inappropriate to try to characterise it in the way that the Hon. Wes Fang has.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst):** The member is entitled to make his contribution as a debating point. The Hon. Wes Fang has the call.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** It was clear from the Minister's contribution that she was talking about "damned lies and statistics". This Minister cherry-picks the things she wants, to try to prove the things on her agenda. This House does not accept that. This House settles on facts. That is why we want the data and support the SO 52 motion. This Minister will select the scientist and data that she wants to get the outcome that she believes she wants. Members on this side of the House will use data and science. We believe scientists when they give us evidence. The Minister mentioned Brad Law. She is ignoring Brad Law's excellent work in this space. It is absolutely on her that she has ignored his excellent work on koalas in New South Wales. We support the SO 52 motion. It will enlighten our communities that are impacted by what is potentially quite draconian—the impactful changes to the way wood supply industries operate in this State. We look forward to seeing the data.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON (17:44):** The Greens absolutely would not oppose this motion. I am genuinely curious about what the member thinks he will discover. The plight of koalas, their habitat loss and the series of events that gave rise to identifying koala hubs, which is the first part of the SO 52 motion, are a matter of public record. It is really clear. As we know, koalas are on track to becoming extinct before 2050. That fact is also according to the Parliament's own inquiry, which heard from many experts and communities. That finding was supported by Labor and Coalition members and everyone who was part of that inquiry.

The first serious local campaign to save koalas was a community protest against logging high-quality koala habitat in Pine Creek State Forest in 1992. In 2012, four local environment groups—Bellingen Environment Centre, Clarence, Nambucca and the North Coast Environment Council—combined with the National Parks Association to raise \$3,000 to engage an experienced ecologist, Dave Scotts, to undertake mapping and reporting on koala populations on the Mid North Coast between the Macleay and Richmond rivers. I have no doubt that Dave Scotts was selected because he was well qualified, having undertaken the first comprehensive ecological study mapping out key habitats and corridors. He did that on behalf of the Government. It was the first of its kind. His work is entitled *Key habitats and corridors for forest fauna: a landscape framework for conservation in north-east New South Wales*.

In 2013 the forestry division within the Environment Protection Authority undertook a comprehensive koala habitat mapping pilot project, which resulted in identifying several the koala hubs, which the member is also seeking information on in the SO 52 motion. That included Royal Camp, Carwong and the Port Macquarie-Hastings local government area. That project involved some of the State's most renowned koala experts: Dan Lunney, Steve Phillips and others. They relied on actual evidence of koala findings. The koala hubs are areas with high-density koala populations that have been passed down through generations. The Office of Environment and Heritage formally identified the koala hubs in 2017 in the Saving Our Species report entitled *Securing the Koala in the wild in NSW for 100 years*.

We know why we are here. The assessment for the Great Koala National Park is going to add an incredibly important volume of evidence and information about koalas. The one thing that members should remember when talking about koala methodologies and surveys is that the most relevant concern for us right now is that we are still destroying koala habitat, even in the Great Koala National Park that the Government promised to protect. We look forward to the SO 52 documents, but the reality is most of this information is available on the public record. Go into the forest today and tomorrow and you might see yourself a little koala.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (17:48):** I would like to take the opportunity to clarify information, given the allegations made by the Hon. Wes Fang.

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** Are you seeking leave to speak again?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** I believe I am allowed to make a second contribution.

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** Have you sought leave?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** I do not think I need leave. It is not by leave.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst):** Order! The Leader of the Government is seeking to clarify her remarks, in which case she does not need to seek leave.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** I make the following points. When members in this place speak very clearly in relation to the challenges of science and the way that it works, it is not an opportunity for other members of the House to stand at the table and verbal them, misrepresent them and, frankly, tell untruths about what has been said. I make it very clear that I take the science and the way in which we do this work, particularly relating to conservation, extremely seriously. My outline to the House is an honest account of the challenges of science and the fact that it is ever evolving. I have deep respect for all scientists as they battle these things out through peer-reviewed papers and a whole range of things. It is absolutely false for the member to suggest that I was saying that we cherrypick that data or that there is an issue from that.

I make no apologies for being honest and clear about the challenges that we face in trying to get to agreed facts to make wise and important decisions on behalf of the people of New South Wales. The contribution from the Hon. Wes Fang was an example of the problem that we have, in contrast to other members, who are up-front about what they are seeking and why they are seeking it. The Government has been clear that it wishes to be transparent and that it has nothing to hide about the challenges. To assert that I cherrypick data and that the very good public servants who have been working for decades in this field across all areas of government are somehow rorting the data or doing the wrong thing is simply incorrect.

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** Point of order: The accusations that the Minister just made in her contribution are similar to accusations that she has made about me. She is projecting that I have said words like "rorting the data", which I never said. Whilst the Minister has the opportunity to clarify her speech, she is now seeking to abuse the standing order.

**The Hon. John Graham:** To the point of order: That is not a point of order. The member is welcome to use Standing Order 92 in the same way that the Leader of the Government has.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst):** There is no point of order. Does the Leader of the Government want to use the last second of her time?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** My final exhortation to the House is for the member opposite to grow up and listen to what people say.

**The Hon. WES FANG (17:51):** I will take the opportunity to clarify my remarks.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst):** I remind the Hon. Wes Fang that the clarification of his remarks needs to remain about the accusation that has been made. It cannot be a further debating point.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** The Leader of the Government, in clarifying her remarks, made a number of accusations about things that I said about issues around data, public servants and implications of that type. My observations of the Leader of the Government were made using her contribution. The Leader of the Government was the one who suggested that scientists were cherrypicked, in that there were favourites. She was the one who suggested that there were "damned lies and statistics". The Leader of the Government was the one who suggested that data could be cherrypicked as required. I only repeated parts of the—

**The Hon. Peter Primrose:** Just apologise.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** The interjections from Government members are somewhat troublesome.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst):** The Hon. Wes Fang may continue if he chooses to.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** The Leader of the Government used her contribution in clarifying her speech to make further attacks on me. I ask that members read the Leader of the Government's contribution in *Hansard* and then read my response. They will clearly see that it was the Leader of the Government who initially made those points.



**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (17:53):** In reply: I will try to be brief. The debate has gone longer than I anticipated. I thank the members who contributed to the debate. I acknowledge the Minister for the Environment, the energetic contribution of the Hon. Wes Fang, and Ms Sue Higginson. Going to Ms Sue Higginson's point, some of the information may be in the public domain, but some of it is not. Part of the order for papers is seeking the procedures and methodology about how we take data that may have been collected from scientists at Forestry Corporation and then how that gets translated into BioNet. People have sought that information in the past to understand it and have been told to go away. The evolving science is a fact. We want to make decisions based on the most up-to-date science. When we are trying to measure policy decisions for success, we need to look at the data as a whole. If the data that we have collected is not whole and not up to date, how do we measure the success of policies in the future, if we do not have a good baseline starting point? That is what we are all trying to get to.

We talk about conflicting science. I recall the koala wars during the last Parliament. I had senior public servants telling me during the timber inquiry that in the absence of scat and scratchings, they just assume that koalas are there. That is a past assumption in tracking koala numbers. We heard that a sighting once in 18 years was counted as valid. Science has evolved, but we need to understand how it has evolved, how that evolution has been recorded into BioNet and how it is informing policy decisions. That is what the order for papers is about. If we understand that, we can be confident in the decisions that have been made and how we measure that into the future.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Motions*

### **AUSTRALIA DAY**

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (17:56):** I move:

That this House supports Australia Day, which was celebrated by Australians on 26 January 2025.

I am particularly pleased to move this motion, which recognises, honours and celebrates 26 January as our day. On 26 January each year Australians celebrate the miracle that is modern Australia. It is without question our greatest day. On 26 January we mark the day when Captain Arthur Phillip, one of the most consequential men in history, toasted the King and raised the flag after leading the brave First Fleet to Sydney Cove. That remarkable day 237 years ago marks the birth of the modern Australia that we know and love today. We are the envy of the world. As Australians, we have so much to be grateful for, such as our liberal democracy—the finest in the world—in which Australian citizens, whether they became citizens yesterday, they are descendants of the First Fleet or their family has been here for 60,000 years, enjoy the same rights before the law, one and free, as our national anthem proudly states.

For many years, celebrating Australia Day was hardly a matter of controversy. I remember the excitement of 26 January 1988, when we celebrated the bicentenary, and the "Celebration of a Nation" television commercial as the big day grew near. Some 2.5 million people gathered at Sydney Harbour that day to celebrate our great nation. Australia had a population of only 16.5 million people in 1988. The nation united and rejoiced at being Australian. It is disappointing that in recent years, there has been a calculated and deliberate campaign to denigrate our national day.

The malign campaign against 26 January has gathered speed in more recent times, with spineless corporates like Woolworths essentially capitulating to activists saying that celebrating Australia and our national day is somehow divisive. We saw the much-loved Sam Kekovich annual Australia Day lamb advertisements morph into a self-indulgent political statement where 26 January was deleted. It accelerated when woke LinkedIn corporate human resources directors began suggesting that employees be given a day off in lieu of Australia Day. It went further when the utterly failed and incompetent Albanese Government disgracefully gave the green light to local councils to abandon citizenship ceremonies on our national day.

Eventually, the endless erasure and vilification of Australia Day and our history ends with statues of our nation's heroes, like Captain James Cook, being attacked and torn down by low-life criminals, as we have seen in Hyde Park and Randwick. In recent times, however, the tide has started to rapidly turn. Everyday Australians have had enough of the sometimes subtle, sometimes obvious vilification of the Australian nation—our history, our flag, our constitution and our heritage. They have had enough of the lies and the falsehoods spun by the miserable activists of the hard left. The Australian people want to celebrate their nation's history on 26 January, both celebrating the good and acknowledging the challenges of the past.

I submit that 26 January 2025 was one of the most positive, patriotic and exciting Australia Days for some years, as Australians everywhere took back their national day. The Australian national flag was on display

everywhere, all over the State—at the bowlo, the backyard, the pub, the beach and the park. People were out and about celebrating our national day on 26 January, proudly and happily. My friends at Harry West Flags, a fine Sydney manufacturer whose beautiful flags fly over the Sydney Harbour Bridge, told me that the demand for our national flag this Australia Day was simply enormous and well exceeded years past. Much of the media, particularly *The Daily Telegraph*, Sydney's journal of record, got right behind Australia Day and provided terrific coverage of the day. I even dropped by the local Woolworths and was surprised to see staff wearing Australian flag T-shirts and handing out lamingtons. It was a great day. I call on this House to embrace 26 January and recognise Australia Day. [*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (18:01):** I support the motion. I support Australia Day. I had a very good Australia Day this time around. Some of the excesses that the member has gone to, I will not quite endorse. But it is a remarkable day to take a moment to reflect on what an incredible State, city and community we live in. With all the pressures of the modern world that we know about and have debated earlier today, this is a moment to take a little pause and reflect on how lucky we are to live in this country.

Most Australians in this State celebrate Australia Day at the beach, around the barbeque, with family and friends. I do not know if they always appreciate the annual attempts to politicise the day. I think they would prefer to keep politics out of it and keep family and friends and the barbeque at the centre of the day. That is the sense I get, but members are welcome to put another view. Of course, it is an important official day for the State as well. That is why Sydney has one of the largest celebrations each year, as the State allows tens of thousands of people to celebrate officially by the harbour in some remarkable ceremonies. That unfolded again this year.

Around Barangaroo, Sydney Harbour, Circular Quay, Sydney Opera House and The Rocks, tens of thousands of people came together on Australia Day. The theme this year was "Reflect. Respect. Celebrate". The day began with the dawn reflection morning ceremony at Barangaroo. Then there was a citizenship ceremony at Government House; the Circular Quay daytime program; the Midday Salute; the harbour parade; the Ferrython, which this year reflected on our emergency services and acknowledged them; and the Australia Day Live concert. The turnout for that concert was huge. Some 3,500 people got free ticketed seats at the forecourt, but the capacity was there for 55,000 people to come and enjoy the concert. It was a fantastic night. Those were some of the official celebrations.

On Australia Day I was making the fantastic drive back from Tamworth and the Tamworth Country Music Festival. I was able to make it along to a number of events, including Blak Powerhouse put on by the Powerhouse Museum with some incredible music, the official Australia Day reception and Australia Day Live. Australia Day is a moment to reflect on our incredible State and just how lucky we are. I commend the specific words in the motion.

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (18:05):** The Libertarian Party is proud of Australia and delighted to support the motion moved by the Hon. Rachel Merton. On Australia Day this year, our nation's finest historian Geoffrey Blainey wrote a superb opinion piece in *The Australian*. I use my short time to quote a few slabs from Professor Blainey. He wrote:

We should celebrate Australia Day. By various definitions this has been one of the most successful nations in the world. During the past two centuries our nation has had far more successes than failures, though the failures can't be overlooked: they offer lessons.

Most Australians have pride in the nation, present and past. Today, in contrast, the most vocal opponents of Australia Day offer a gloomy version of our history and many even believe Aboriginal people were, in a variety of ways, better off before 1788 than they are today.

Many who dislike or resent Australia Day glamorise Australia's first people. They see the hunter's and gatherer's life as a utopia: they think war was a rarity, that the male elders were praiseworthy without exception, that the old people belonged to a caring society and that most tribes or mini-nations continuously held their own land for 50,000 or more unbroken years. It is fair to suggest that these are all dubious claims.

The outside world gained enormously when the long isolation of this land came to an end. Australian sheep of a superior breed eventually were yielding the wool that in most years helped sustain the million Europeans enduring cold winters. Similarly, a host of people in poor countries gained the chance to be born and remain alive, such were the fleets of grain ships arriving from Australia. In a favourable year, Australia now grows enough for its own 27 million people and enough for many times that number inhabiting foreign lands.

It was only two years ago that China, suffering from drought in its drier north, was receiving more grain from Australia than from any other nation. Most school students apparently are not taught that Australian foods, minerals, building materials, energy and other products are annually provided in vast quantities to the outside world. In contrast, for thousands of years ancient Australia provided virtually nothing.

Well said, Professor Blainey. Australia truly is the lucky country. We have a whole continent to ourselves and we are surrounded by a powerfully deterrent natural moat. We had the world's fastest growing economy during the

twentieth century. We have never had a civil war or foreign soldiers on our soil. We do have golden soil. We do enjoy wealth for toil. Long live Australia Day.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (18:08):** I too support the motion, and I thank my colleague for moving it. This is an opportunity for us to not only acknowledge the importance of Australia Day but also reaffirm what it means to celebrate. As the Minister said, it is an opportunity to reflect on how great this country is and how fortunate we are to live in a democratic and free country, and to celebrate what we have achieved. Right across the country, particularly in New South Wales, a number of Australia Day celebrations are held. The Minister touched on some of the events that happened in Sydney, but some amazing celebrations also take place in our regional areas, whether it is in Bega or Tweed or coastal communities. Australia Day this year, being on a long weekend, was fantastic for country and regional areas because people took the opportunity to get out of the major cities. It was fantastic in my area. A lot of tourists visited and supported local businesses and celebrated what it means to be Australian.

But it is also an opportunity to celebrate some of the most fantastic Australians, and we see that each Australia Day. I acknowledge Neale Daniher, AO, who was named the 2025 Australian of the Year. Neale Daniher is a co-founder of FightMND, an organisation created by him in 2014 to find effective treatments and a cure for motor neurone disease. When he was diagnosed with that in 2013, he was expected to live for about 27 months. He has defied that and worked continuously since then to raise funds to find a cure. His organisation has invested over \$115 million to battle against motor neurone disease. I acknowledge his great work and the work of the foundation.

I acknowledge Brother Thomas Oliver Pickett, also known as "Ollie Pickett", who was named the 2025 Senior Australian of the Year. He is a co-founder of a volunteer-based organisation known as Wheelchairs for Kids. This fantastic not-for-profit organisation provides custom-built wheelchairs for children in developing countries across the world. Since it was founded, he has provided over 60,000 wheelchairs to children in over 80 countries.

Finally I acknowledge Adam Johnston, who was appointed a member of the Order of Australia for significant service to people living with disability, community health and the law. Adam Johnston served a number of important roles in these spaces, including deputy chairman of the ethics committee of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, member of the tribunal and professional standards committee of the Nursing and Midwifery Council of New South Wales and community board member of Northern Sydney Local Health District, to name a few. I acknowledge all the recipients, particularly the ones I mentioned.

*[Business interrupted.]*

#### *Visitors*

#### **VISITORS**

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst):** I welcome and acknowledge in the President's gallery esteemed former Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council Lynn Lovelock. You are most welcome.

#### *Motions*

#### **AUSTRALIA DAY**

*[Business resumed.]*

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON (18:11):** I move:

That the question be amended by inserting ", which is Invasion Day" after "26 January 2025".

I acknowledge that we are gathered on stolen land, that this is the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation and that this land was never ceded. I draw members' attention to a place just 600 metres east of here, where, 237 years ago, on 26 January, British convicts and colonists landed in Sydney Cove and claimed this land on the lie of terra nullius. This day marked the beginning of the most painful part of the history of this land and its people. It was this day and this lie that paved the way for land theft, massacres, rape, genocide and a legacy of systematic oppression of the First Nations of this country. For this reason, 26 January can never be a day truly for celebration. It is and always will be Invasion Day. It is a day of mourning, of survival, for truth-telling, for justice, for solidarity and for allyship.

There has been a long history of First Nations-led resistance to the invasion of this land and, more recently, to the wrongful celebration of a day that marks this gross injustice. This year, thousands of people gathered in Belmore Park in Sydney as part of a rally organised by Blak Caucus to "reject the colonial narrative, confront the truth of this racist country, and work towards building the movement of justice and Indigenous sovereignty".

Through resistance, love and pain we came together to show up and listen to the truth-telling of this day and to protest the horrendous effect that invasion has had and continues to have on First Nations people in this country.

The reality is that First Nations people in New South Wales continue to face violent dispossession, over-incarceration and overpolicing. Laws made in this very place are driving horrific outcomes and pushing families to breaking point. Right now First Nations children make up over 66 per cent of young people in prison. The First Nations adult prison population has surged over 10.3 per cent between 2023 and 2024, on the Labor Government's watch, and First Nations people continue to die behind bars at unprecedented rates. It is unconscionable in 2025 that outcomes continue to worsen for First Nations people in the very place where dispossession first took place, almost 250 years ago.

Until we can sit here and take a good hard look at the role this Government and successive governments play in the material outcomes of First Nations people in this State, it is indefensible for this House to declare its support for celebrating one of the darkest days in this country's history. This land always was and always will be Aboriginal land. No matter how much insensitive and dishonest people want to ignore a living and harmful cultural reality, 26 January will always be Invasion Day. Anyone not hungry for justice on Invasion Day is too fat and full on their privilege.

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH (18:14):** When Captain Arthur Phillip raised the Union Jack in Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788, he could not have foreseen how extraordinary a nation would emerge over the next 240 years. From the establishment of the first colony, through to Federation, right up to the modern, sunburnt oasis we now occupy, the Australia I know has always been synonymous with prosperity and opportunity for all. Of course, Australia Day is a time to celebrate with friends and family, to gather for a barbeque and to welcome new citizens of this country, but it is equally as important to recognise the things that make our country so great and understand why we should celebrate Australia Day from a principled perspective. Celebrating Australia Day means celebrating our institutions. No-one can deny that the creation of modern Australia was synonymous with the development of the rule of law and the Westminster system, the most successful governance framework ever developed.

In tapping into the governance framework built by the United Kingdom, with a healthy amount of Australian flair, we enabled ourselves—in the words of Elliot Bulmer—"to literally speak the same constitutional, legal-political and institutional language" as much of the developed world, allowing us to do business and communicate with people "from Vancouver to Sydney, from Port of Spain to Port Moresby". On 26 January 1788, Australia began its march towards the global stage.

We celebrate Australia Day also because of the prosperity that our home offers to its citizens. To be born here is to win the lottery of life. Free from much of the suffering endured by the rest of the world, be it conflict, major health crises or dearth of resources, our nation has flourished in an incredibly short period of time. That is what we should honour and celebrate on our national day, not merely because of a barbeque but because of the institutions that allow us to put that food on the table.

Australians are tired of being told that they cannot be proud of their nation. In response to a poll conducted by Dynata, which asked respondents to assess the statement "Australia Day should be celebrated on January 26", 69 per cent of respondents agreed, with a majority in all age groups. Just 14 per cent disagreed. It is time not only to end this divisive debate but also to celebrate Australia Day loudly and proudly. But it is not enough to say that most people do not care about the politicisation of the date and just want to celebrate. In fact, we should be saying from this day onwards that 26 January was monumentally significant and should be cherished and respected.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (18:17):** I felt compelled to make a contribution on this motion. Here we are on Whacky Wednesday, and it does seem to bring out the worst in members in this Chamber. When we are talking about erasing an entire culture of people, I am sorry, that is pure fascism, and I am calling that out because that is disgusting. No-one is saying, as we clutch our pearls at the idea of people pushing over statues—gosh, the poor statue—that that is somehow an excuse for perpetrating the racism that comes about by just ignoring what happened. The twenty-sixth of January is a day of mourning. It was a day when this country was invaded. It is okay to acknowledge that, to accept the truth of the beginnings of this country as we now know it and say, "That is okay. We can celebrate Australia Day on another day." I love this country, and most people I know who want to change the date of Australia Day to one that is not about the beginning of the murdering of an entire culture also love Australia. They just do not want to celebrate it on Invasion Day. I do not think that is a big ask.

It is fascinating that people are saying, "They're woke and anti-fun", or whatever. It was once put in a really beautiful way. I was listening to triple j one day when they were talking about changing the day that they play the Hottest 100 from 26 January. A young Aboriginal man said, "Look, I think about it this way. If I was going to have a party with my flatmates in our flat and I said, 'Let's have a flat party today,' and my mate said to me, 'Well, actually, today is a bad day for me because this is the day that my family were killed and, yeah, it was hundreds

of years ago now, but it actually marked the beginning of an attack on my family and everything we stood for, and it has continued to this day, where we get locked up and my family is the target of ongoing discrimination and persecution and attempts to erase the fact that we even exist,' I would just say, 'You know what, mate? Let's have that party on another day.'" It is as simple as that. Let us not celebrate on a day when a significant portion of our population are in mourning. We should not erase that and pretend that something else is happening. Today's motion is astounding. I fully support the comments of my colleague Ms Sue Higginson.

**The Hon. WES FANG (18:20):** I note the earlier comments of the Hon. Mark Latham but I will keep my remarks short. The cancel culture over Australia Day has started to recede and be rescinded to some degree. Indeed, the mover of the motion indicated that Woolworths, which effectively had a ban on Australia Day, has pulled back from that now and has indicated that it is prepared to celebrate Australia Day. Pubs in Sydney and Melbourne in particular had indicated that they were not prepared to recognise Australia Day and there has been a withdrawing of that. Even the Labor Party appears to have, to some degree, withdrawn its opposition to Australia Day. The Prime Minister says the words "Australia Day" now, which he seemed to struggle to do previously. Even the Hon. Stephen Smith attended the barbeque in the United Kingdom that he said he was not going to attend.

There is, however, one cancel culture hold out on Australia Day. We will not see the end of cancel culture until this is restored. The previous speaker Ms Abigail Boyd actually mentioned it. It is triple j's Hottest 100. To me, Australia Day was always about the Hottest 100. We need to acknowledge that the ABC is the last of the hold outs. Choosing not to play the Hottest 100 on 26 January, when you have Australia Day on the weekend, is obviously a decision that the ABC has made. When the ABC is less woke, and does not adopt the cancel culture that it seems to have, and returns the Hottest 100 to Australia Day on 26 January, then we will know all is right in the world.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (18:23):** In reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate on a motion that I consider should be a moment of unity for this House. I was fortunate enough this Australia Day to attend the wonderful citizenship ceremony at Liverpool City Council, presided over by my friend the Mayor of Liverpool, Ned Mannoun, and addressed by our former Prime Minister the Hon. Tony Abbott. It was a great morning. The outstanding Warren Mundine, AO, was there, as was the terrific Sam Kayal from Werriwa. That day almost 100 new citizens from nations all over the world took the oath or pledge to become Australians. The pride they and their families felt on becoming Australians on Australia's national day especially was immense.

The twenty-sixth of January is a day worth celebrating. That is not just my view or that of my friends at the Institute for Public Affairs; it is the view of the bulk of the Australian people. A recent Roy Morgan poll demonstrated that 72 per cent of New South Wales people now state that 26 January should remain known as Australia Day, with support up substantially from last year. That is a popularity rate far greater than anyone in this place could ever hope for. There is now support for 26 January as Australia Day across all age groups. A majority of Australians of all age groups, including young Australians, are against moving Australia Day. It is clear there is strong support for Australia Day in our community. Quite frankly, no other date in the calendar can adequately replace this day as our national day. This motion recognises that and demonstrates that this House shares the commitment of the Australian people to 26 January as our day, Australia Day. I commend the motion to the House.

**The PRESIDENT:** The Hon. Rachel Merton has moved a motion, to which Ms Sue Higginson has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....5  
Noes .....27  
Majority.....22

**AYES**

Boyd  
Cohn

Faehrmann (teller)  
Higginson (teller)

Hurst

**NOES**

Banasiak  
Barrett  
D'Adam  
Donnelly  
Fang

Kaine  
Latham  
Lawrence  
MacDonald  
Maclaren-Jones

Moriarty  
Munro  
Murphy  
Nanva (teller)  
Primrose

## NOES

Farlow  
Graham  
Houssos  
Jackson

Martin  
Merton  
Mitchell  
Mookhey

Rath (teller)  
Roberts  
Suvaal  
Ward

**Amendment negatived.**

**The PRESIDENT:** The question now is that the motion be agreed to. Is leave granted for a short bell?

**Leave granted.**

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....27  
Noes .....5  
Majority.....22

## AYES

Banasiak  
Barrett  
D'Adam  
Donnelly  
Fang  
Farlow  
Graham  
Houssos  
Jackson

Kaine  
Latham  
Lawrence  
MacDonald  
Maclaren-Jones  
Martin  
Merton  
Mitchell  
Mookhey

Moriarty  
Munro  
Murphy  
Nanva (teller)  
Primrose  
Rath (teller)  
Roberts  
Suvaal  
Ward

## NOES

Boyd (teller)  
Cohn

Fachrmann  
Higginson (teller)

Hurst

**Motion agreed to.**

*Visitors*

## VISITORS

**The PRESIDENT:** I warmly welcome to my gallery the Hon. Don Harwin, a former long-term and esteemed President of this place and former Leader of the Government, who is here, I suspect, for this evening's launch of a book on the Legislative Council in the Jubilee Room, where I am sure I will see most members.

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

*Motions*

## FORESTRY CORPORATION OF NSW

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON (20:01):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) in 2024 the North East Forest Alliance and South East Forest Rescue discovered significant discrepancies in the Forestry Corporation of NSW's biomaterial reports and sustainability reports from the 2022-23 financial years;
  - (b) after having the discrepancy reported to them, the Forestry Corporation retrospectively amended their reports over the last three years to:
    - (i) reduce the total yield volume from public native forests by 28 per cent;
    - (ii) reclassify 65,584 cubic metres of premium large high-quality logs as lower value small high-quality logs; and
    - (iii) reduce the claimed yields of low-quality logs by 36 per cent.
  - (c) both the biomaterial reports and the sustainability reports are published as supplementary reports to the annual report, as required under the law pursuant to section 69H of the Forestry Act, and provide data on a wide range of environmental sustainability measures that are supposed to align with Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management;

- (d) Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management is the entire basis of the legal framework that allows the Forestry Corporation to operate outside of Commonwealth and New South Wales environment, biodiversity and planning laws; and
  - (e) the publishing of sustainable yield volumes is a requirement under the law and the Regional Forest Agreements, and the data is relied on by the public, the Natural Resources Commission, the NSW Environment Protection Authority and the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.
- (2) That this House further notes that:
- (a) the Forestry Corporation of NSW has:
    - (i) issued no public statement on the revised data or underlying maladministration;
    - (ii) blamed a data extraction error for the inaccurate reports in comments to the media; and
    - (iii) asserted that the incorrect sustainability reports have no financial impact.
  - (b) the Forestry Corporation:
    - (i) has lost \$73 million through its hardwood division and logging public native forests over the last four financial years, including \$29 million in 2023-24;
    - (ii) reduced its expected dividends from all divisions by \$55 million over the four financial years from 2023-27; and
    - (iii) has breached its operating conditions an extraordinary amount of times, noting that within just the past five years the regulator has commenced 50 formal investigations into the Forestry Corporation, with at this stage 30 resulting in enforcement action with fines and costs, at this stage over \$1.7 million, and in December 2024 we learnt that it had illegally clear-felled an area within Bindarri National Park.
- (3) That this House calls on the Government to:
- (a) place an immediate moratorium on all native forest logging in New South Wales;
  - (b) table revised annual reports and sustainability reports from the Forestry Corporation of NSW using correct data;
  - (c) provide a complete explanation to the Parliament about the scale and reasons for the false reporting of sustainable yield volumes by the Forestry Corporation; and
  - (d) end all native forest logging in New South Wales.

It is beyond time to call it: The Forestry Corporation of NSW is out of control and is a massive liability that needs to be reined in. Shockingly, last week we found out the Forestry Corporation has misled the Government, the Parliament and the public in a significant and material way. It has been providing false yield data in its biomaterial reports, which are central to the corporation's sustainability reports, and has done so now over a number of years. The revelation was so damning that *The Sydney Morning Herald* broke the story with the headline "'Fiasco': State government loggers caught out exaggerating wood harvest". In fact, the SMH was clearly so disturbed that the Forestry Corporation has been cooking the books, haemorrhaging public money and accidentally destroying hectares of the national park estate, and that the Government has not delivered the promised Great Koala National Park, that the editor penned his entire Friday independent opinion on it, questioning how it could be happening and making clear references to my reasonable allegation of maladministration.

The Land and Environment Court of New South Wales has now found that the Forestry Corporation has a history of unlawfully carrying out forestry operations and, over the past five years, has racked up more than \$1.1 million in penalties for more than a dozen instances of unlawful activity, including seven criminal convictions. The Forestry Corporation logged almost 1.5 hectares of the Bindarri National Park in 2019 and is being prosecuted for other breaches, including the felling of giant and hollow-bearing trees in Wild Cattle Creek in 2022. Those crimes carry a maximum penalty of \$18 million. With that history of unlawful activity, the Forestry Corporation has retrospectively reduced its total timber yields by 28 per cent across the past three years and grossly misrepresented and misreported timber product volumes, which has led to the significant corrections in 2024 and 2025. The 2022-23 biomaterial report was halved in October 2024 after the North East Forest Alliance and the South East Forest Rescue complaints, followed by further reductions in January 2025 for the years of 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24.

The Forestry Corporation has over-reported harvested areas by 14,000 hectares since 2017 and misclassified logs. Some 65,584 cubic metres of premium, large, high-quality sawlogs were reclassified as lower value, small, high-quality sawlogs, and so on. Timber volumes obtained from specific areas and sold to mills should be objective facts and not be subject to revision years later. The Forestry Corporation has misled the public, the Government and the Parliament through inaccurate financial and sustainability reporting. The 2024-25 New South Wales budget and the 2023-24 Forestry Corporation annual report highlighted major financial miscalculations. Over-estimations of profit projections have resulted in a \$38 million reduction in a one-year period. The hardwood division has now recorded a \$73 million deficit since 2020. We now have to realise that

the assessments of the economic and employment impacts of the Great Koala National Park have been based on inflated, false data.

The integrity of public native forest data is compromised, and it is impacting decisions on sustainability and conservation. The Forestry Corporation is legally required to submit accurate biomaterial reports under the Coastal Integrated Forestry Operations Approval. False data was submitted to the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] and the Auditor-General for years without detection. Despite oversight from the EPA and audits, the errors were only identified due to persistent questioning from the public and the community. No explanation has been given. There has been no apology from the Forestry Corporation and no recognition of the errors.

The Minns Labor Government has not stood up. It is complicit. It is running a protection racket for a maladministrative State owned corporation that is exploiting a public natural resource as well as driving the extinction and climate crisis. That is the only way one can view this. We need a moratorium on logging. We need a full explanation from the Forestry Corporation and the Government as to how the misleading behaviour has taken place. Maladministration is a serious issue. Public trust is central to our democracy. This is a natural resource that belongs to the people of New South Wales. The Ministers responsible need to stand up and explain.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (20:06):** I speak on behalf of the Government in debate on the motion. I say at the outset that the Government will not be supporting the motion. I put on record some of the advice that I have received from the Forestry Corporation, which is a State owned corporation. It is not a government agency; it is a State owned corporation. It has acknowledged that errors were made in its biomaterial report. I am advised that the errors have been corrected and the report republished on the corporation's website. I am advised that the volume of some product categories in the document was misstated due to human error. Those human errors have been corrected so that the biomaterial reports show the accurate net weight or volume drawn from native coastal forests for the year.

I am also advised that data within the underlying sales system remains correct and accurate. I inform the House that I have spoken directly to the CEO of the Forestry Corporation. I have reiterated, as I have done many times in this House and in the public domain, that the Forestry Corporation is required to follow the rules. It is a corporation with a board that must follow the rules and have the highest level of integrity when it comes to data reporting. The industry is highly regulated and has a massive amount of oversight, which Ms Sue Higginson highlighted some of. That is how things like this get picked up. It is unfortunate that it has happened. I am not here to defend the organisation; it is required to carry out responsibilities. It has corrected the record and the reports in relation to the issue.

The Government does not support the motion, firstly, because it is calling on the end of the industry, which is not supported by the Government. The Government is doing a heap of work on what the future should look like. Members have been open and transparent about that in this House. Part of that is the creation of the Great Koala National Park, but there are also plans and a lot of work on what the industry should look like now and for decades into the future, so that it is clear for everybody to understand and members do not have to have skirmishes every Wednesday.

Respectfully, I understand that the member is passionate about this issue and that it is a reason for her being a member in this place. I understand that. But it is not helpful for the industry, and the 15,000-odd people who work in it, to be a political target every Wednesday in this place, without certainty. The Government is doing a lot of work to deal with the matter and to provide plans for what the industry should look like well into the future. The motion calls for a new annual report to be tabled, but the advice is that that report is not necessary. The issues that have occurred in relation to the error have not impacted any of those official reports.

**The Hon. WES FANG (20:09):** I lead for the Opposition on the motion and indicate that the Opposition, like the Government, will not be supporting it. Members will not hear me say this very often—and with good reason—but I commend the Minister for her contribution to debate on the motion because it captured quite brilliantly some of the issues. If she could do that across the rest of her portfolios, we would be much happier. That was a backhanded compliment, I appreciate. A simple clerical error by Forestry Corp should not spell the end of forestry in New South Wales. We only need to look at the work that has been done in the regulation, the requirements for Forestry Corp and the need for oversight. That is more than sufficient to make sure that it is meeting its targets and reporting requirements.

The Minister outlined quite appropriately that there was enough oversight to catch the issue initially, which indicates the level of oversight by the Government and by the EPA, which is involved in a lot of these issues. The level of oversight is sufficient to capture and correct a clerical error. It is unfortunate that, in bringing the motion to the House, once again The Greens are targeting one of the few industries that provides a renewable resource



that helps us with some of the issues we face today, like housing and jobs. Real people in the real world deal with things like that.

Whilst I appreciate that the chardonnay-sipping inner city greenies sitting on the crossbench are pandering to a very narrow band of people, the reality is that both the Opposition and the Government have to govern for the majority of people. The majority of people need jobs and access to timber. If we do not have access to those things, we will see rural and regional communities in decline, we will see timber imported from overseas and we will not provide ourselves with the renewable resource that we have at our fingertips. The motion is yet again another chance to kick Forestry Corp. [*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (20:12):** I indicate that the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party will not be supporting the motion. It is hard to keep up with the arguments of The Greens. They have spent the past few years explaining how Forestry Corp is over-logging. They have used words like "industry-scale logging" and all this nonsense, and now they are saying, "They're not actually logging as much as we thought." I wish they would make up their minds. As the Minister indicated, what happened was a simple clerical error—a mixing up of numbers. It was not some grand conspiracy, as it has been painted, to deceive the community. But that is how it is being portrayed by *The Sydney Morning Herald* with hyperbole.

The numbers in the annual report show that there were no issues with timber supply—none. As the Minister indicated, the annual reports show the true figures. The Greens are trying to attack an industry for every single little mistake that they think the industry has made to say, "We have to shut down the industry." I appreciate that they do not like the industry and they want it to end, but that does not mean they need to drag the good, hardworking people of the industry through the mud for simple clerical errors. It is not as if it is the only department in this State that has made simple clerical errors that we have had to discover and correct. We cannot shut down a whole industry because of simple clerical errors that were caught, addressed and rectified. We should expect better.

I will wait for the muttering to stop from members in the Chamber's cheap seats. I listened to them in silence. We should expect journalists to verify claims before running their mouths. We should expect activists to admit when they get it wrong. This is an absolute beat-up. At the end of the day, the forestry industry plays a crucial role in our economy and sustainable resource management. It does not deserve to be dragged through the mud over a clerical mistake that was never hidden or meant to mislead. The real issue is not Forestry Corp; it is the lack of integrity in reporting and the willingness of some members to use any opportunity to discredit an industry they do not like. People do not like a lot of things. That does not mean they should spend all their waking hours trying to find everything that may have done wrong. In an industry that is a moving feast— [*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** Point of order: I wanted to wait until the member had finished his contribution because I did not want to interrupt him. Members in this Chamber who have already made a contribution and were heard in silence are interjecting. Their interjections have been growing during the debate and are becoming extremely disorderly. I think you know which members I am talking about. I ask that you call them to order so that they cease interjecting and understand that they are on a warning.

**Ms Abigail Boyd:** To the point of order: Although I accept that there is a need for members not to interject and that interjections are disorderly at all times, I believe that my colleague was not interjecting. We apologise if we were talking on the sidelines too noisily. We absolutely own that. But the hypocrisy of this particular member raising this point of order cannot go unnoticed.

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** Further to the point of order: There are none so pure as those who are purified. As a serial offender, I acknowledge that I know an interjector when I see one. Ms Sue Higginson was certainly interjecting to the point of being disorderly. I would have been called to order by that stage.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine):** I remind members that interjections are disorderly at all times. I ask that they comply with the standing orders of the House.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST (20:18):** On behalf of the Animal Justice Party, I support this very sensible motion and thank Ms Sue Higginson for moving it today. The revelation that Forestry Corporation has been misreporting and overstating logging data for the past three years is shocking, but also not surprising. It is an organisation that has a disgraceful history of noncompliance with its legal and environmental obligations. Forestry Corporation has been repeatedly investigated and fined for breaches of rules designed to protect wildlife, including illegal logging in critical habitat for koalas, greater gliders and other threatened species. As the motion notes, that enforcement action has resulted in fines and costs of \$1.7 million, and that is just in the past few years. In a recent judgement, Justice Rachel Pepper accepted that the Forestry Corporation has "a pattern of environmental offending, has not provided any compelling evidence of measures taken by it to prevent its reoffending, and does

not accept the true extent of harm that it has caused by its offending". This is a damning indictment of a State owned corporation that is responsible for some of the State's most precious natural resources.

The most recent misreporting by Forestry Corporation was exposed by members of the North East Forest Alliance and South East Forest Rescue. I thank them for their tireless advocacy for the protection of native forests and the animals who live there. In the wake of their advocacy, Forestry Corporation has retroactively updated its reports, admitting it overstated by 28 per cent the volume of timber it obtained from logging native forests over the past three years. All of this is just prior to a potential compensation package on its way. That is on top of the \$29 million loss it had already reported for the financial year 2023-24. This evidence is irrefutable. There is simply no commercial argument to continue native forest logging in New South Wales. Forestry Corporation is losing taxpayers' money while it causes irreversible harm to animals and their homes, contributes to biodiversity loss and worsens the climate crisis. It is time for this madness to end. We must stop logging native forests.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (20:20):** I support my colleague's excellent motion.

*[An Opposition member interjected.]*

I remind the Hon. Wes Fang that interjections are disorderly at all times.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine):** So is responding to them.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Noted. I fully support all of the comments from my colleague Ms Sue Higginson and also place on record my admiration for her diligent and fearless fight in favour of protecting our forests. But let us take the nonsense out of this argument. Let us take out the fake outrage and the attempt to make it into some culture war. Let us look at what is actually in the motion. Paragraph (1) is factual. No-one has said it is not factual. Paragraph (2) is factual. Again, no-one has said that this did not occur. In paragraph (3) the offending subparagraphs appear to be (a) and (d). Though we thoroughly believe we should shut down native forest logging in New South Wales, I now propose an amendment so that the motion will be acceptable to all members of this House, based on what they have just said in their contributions. I move:

That the question be amended by omitting paragraphs (3) (a) and (3) (d).

That leaves us with a motion listing factual statements about how this State owned corporation has behaved. We are calling for a tabling of the revised annual reports and sustainability reports from the corporation and for it to provide to Parliament a complete explanation about the scale and reasons for the false reporting of sustainable yield volumes. That is what a responsible House would do.

The Minister for Finance and the Treasurer are the shareholders of this corporation. If any other corporation had misstated its financial statements and then sat on it for six months without telling anybody, the shareholders would have the heads of that board. All we are asking for now is accountability over what has happened. By moving this amendment, we take away the offending paragraphs, which are the whole reason why the Government has said it cannot support the motion. Instead what we should now see is support from everybody for this corporation to actually own up to its mistakes, tell us exactly what happened and table its revised reports immediately.

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (20:23):** I move:

That the question be amended by omitting paragraph (3) and inserting instead:

- (3) That this House calls on the Government to convert the Forestry Corporation of NSW into a public company with equal shares gifted to all Australian citizens who are residents of New South Wales, including providing additional shares to parents on behalf of their children, allowing the new shareholders to choose whether they want to retain ownership and voting rights or sell their shares, and enabling the new management to choose what to do with the assets of the Forestry Corporation.

The body of the motion goes into some detail about the internal finances and management of Forestry Corporation. Clearly, there is some concern that the current government ownership model is falling short of expectations. It should come as no surprise to anybody who has studied history to discover that government businesses are always poorly managed. This is not new.

About 100 years ago there was a consensus among the bureaucratic and academic elite that socialism was, obviously, going to be more efficient than capitalism, because the bureaucrats imagined they could run a business more effectively than supposedly short-sighted, greedy capitalists. This theory remained popular for decades and is still popular in North Korea, among Antifa and in some corners of this Chamber, but reality made a mockery of those lofty ideals. There were 100 million dead thanks to communism. Time and again, experience has shown us that privately run business is more effective, efficient, innovative and responsible than bureaucrat-run business.

Forestry Corporation should be put into private hands, but that does not have to mean selling it in a normal privatisation process. The point of privatisation is not, as is sometimes claimed, to make money for the

Government; rather, the point is to ensure that businesses are run properly, by people with the right skills and incentives. The Libertarian Party is proposing that, instead of Forestry Corporation being sold, it be, effectively, given away to the people of New South Wales. Forestry Corporation should be converted from a non-financial public corporation into a public company, with equal shares distributed to all Australian citizens resident in New South Wales.

It is sometimes said that the people own public land. We want to make that literally true. This reform would directly benefit the public in the short run and would indirectly benefit society by ensuring that the assets of Forestry Corporation are put to their most productive use. This also provides a solution for people who want to end native forest logging. Such people would be welcome to buy a controlling interest in the public company, and then they would have full, direct control over logging decisions on their land. It is sometimes lamented that there are no interesting new ideas in politics. I invite my colleagues to join me in proving that wrong by supporting this amendment.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (20:26):** The Government will not support either amendment. In relation to the amendment of the Hon. John Ruddick, whilst I appreciate the innovative solutions that have been proposed, as I have outlined in the Government's response and a number of times in the House, we are working on many plans for the future of this industry. I am happy to factor the suggestion into that thinking, as we have been doing a lot of work on that for the past two years, and there is more to do before we start talking to the community about the details of that. But there is a lot of work underway for what the future should look like, so we will not support the amendment.

In relation to the amendment moved by Ms Abigail Boyd, in my contribution I did outline why the other parts of what this motion is calling on the Government to do are not acceptable. I will remind the House of the advice that I outlined on the record, which was that the annual report was not impacted by this error. I already placed that on record. That is in relation to paragraph (3) (b). It did not impact the other reports that have been referred to. The amendment also calls for an explanation to the Parliament, which I have given today. So we will not support that amendment either.

**The Hon. WES FANG (20:28):** I will contain myself to the amendments only, as much as I would like to expand my contribution. I am finding myself in a kumbaya moment with the Minister. This is twice in less than half an hour, and it is somewhat discombobulating. I find myself somewhat agreeing with the Minister's rationale again. But I must say the Hon. John Ruddick has brought an interesting proposal to the House. His idea is that the shares would be on the free market and that perhaps those people who wanted to support the forestry industry could buy those shares and then they could control it without The Greens coming into the Chamber every Wednesday to seek to derail and disrupt and offend and talk down the good, hardworking people of Forestry Corporation and those rural and regional communities who rely on that timber industry for support and the income those jobs bring. I think that is a great idea.

However, it may be just a stretch too far. Whilst it is innovative, I think what we really need to do is send a message to The Greens and their one or two supporters that, ultimately, forestry in New South Wales is an important industry for jobs and for providing a life and an opportunity for people now and into the future in those communities. We will not support either amendment, although I like the idea that we could remove The Greens from having any oversight of Forestry Corporation at all.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON (20:30):** In reply: In earnest, I find it so shocking that a Minister of the Crown and the Opposition have spoken against this motion and that members are interjecting during debate when a State owned corporation has misled this Parliament, the public and the Auditor-General. This is about a publicly owned natural resource. Eddie Obeid is in jail for this kind of offence. Sure, his was serious maladministration, getting it completely wrong. But right now there is genuinely a significant question that needs to be answered. The Minister has stood in this Chamber and referred to this as some kind of skirmish. She has referred to the industry as highly regulated. It was not the regulator who found these errors; it was the community. It was the North East Forest Alliance and South East Forest Rescue.

After months of asking in earnest, sending polite emails for explanations or corrections and highlighting errors and getting terse and rude responses from the Forestry Corporation, finally an admission was made, and then not even an admission. It was a fudging of keyboards, a changing of datasets and a changing of Excel documents that appeared on a website that had been provided to the Auditor-General of New South Wales. If we are not a House of accountability and we are not holding a State owned corporation to account, if we think this is a joke and we should overlook it and literally run a protection racket, that is a serious problem for all of us. The Auditor-General has written to me and said, "We will look at this", and is taking it seriously. Thank goodness a real oversight body will look at it.

The reality is the Forestry Corporation is managing, on trust, 1.8 million hectares of this State. That is 1.8 million hectares of a public native forest estate that is serious ecosystem. It is something that is living, important and hellishly valuable, and those guys are haemorrhaging money. They are serial offenders, according to the institutions of justice, which are the courts of New South Wales. There is literally a misleading maladministration and we are just suggesting it is a skirmish and something we should overlook. We should not. I strongly ask the Government to reconsider its position and at least support the amendment. [*Time expired.*]

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine):** Ms Sue Higginson has moved a motion, to which the Hon. John Ruddick and Ms Abigail Boyd have moved amendments. The question is that the amendment of the Hon. John Ruddick be agreed to.

**Amendment of the Hon. John Ruddick negatived.**

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine):** The question is that the amendment of Ms Abigail Boyd be agreed to.

**Amendment of Ms Abigail Boyd negatived.**

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....6  
Noes .....29  
Majority.....23

#### AYES

Boyd (teller)  
Buckingham

Cohn  
Faehrmann

Higginson (teller)  
Hurst

#### NOES

Banasiak  
Barrett  
Buttigieg  
Carter  
D'Adam  
Donnelly  
Fang  
Farlow  
Graham  
Houssos

Jackson  
Kaine  
Latham  
Lawrence  
MacDonald  
Maclaren-Jones  
Merton  
Mookhey  
Moriarty  
Munro

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

**Motion negatived.**

**The PRESIDENT:** Before I call on the Hon. Natalie Ward, I ask members who wish to continue to converse to leave the Chamber so that the member can be heard in silence.

### REGIONAL ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (20:42):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that the Liberal-Nationals Government invested and delivered critical road infrastructure across New South Wales, in the regions and the city.
- (2) That this House condemns the Government for a go-slow attitude to critical regional road infrastructure including:
  - (a) the Milton-Ulladulla bypass;
  - (b) Muswellbrook bypass; and
  - (c) other roads in regional New South Wales.
- (3) That this House calls on the Government to:
  - (a) stop the talk and start the delivery; and
  - (b) be clear and consistent with the public on when this infrastructure will be delivered, including tender dates, construction timelines and a delivery date.

I speak this day to a subject close to any Liberal or National Party member's heart: delivering infrastructure for regional communities. During the summer, I visited the Shoalhaven, South Coast and Batemans Bay. I caught up with the outstanding candidate for Gilmore, and former Minister for Transport and Roads, Mr Andrew Constance. While Mr Constance has a legacy of delivery in the region, the lack of urgency by Labor to deliver infrastructure is very concerning. Despite the rhetoric, there is no delivery.

It is disappointing to see yet another project—the Milton-Ulladulla bypass—in the go-slow lane under the Minns Labor Government and silence from both the State and Federal local members. All they have to do is build it. The funding is there. The route is there. But it is all talk. The project was announced in 2019 by Federal and State Coalition governments. In 2021 the funding was secured—all \$940 million of it. Under Andrew Constance and the Liberal-Nationals Government it was progressing. Under Labor it has stalled.

We are nearly two years into the Minns Government, and what does the local South Coast community have to show for it? Nothing. There is no timeline to go to tender. There is no start of construction date and there is no completion date. The local State and Federal members have nothing to say. As a former Minister, I say that the project is either off-track or a cover-up is on. Whether it is tender dates, construction dates or completion dates, both the Labor State and Federal governments know the detail but will not say it because they are embarrassed. After all, if Labor does not know when a near-billion-dollar project for the regions is scheduled to start, then we are a lot worse off than I thought.

The Liberals and Nationals know that regional road investment and delivery is critical. The South Coast and Gilmore community deserve this upgrade, having seen firsthand the summer gridlock around Milton during the holiday peak and having been through bushfires and floods. The road will make the community safer, and it will be easier and more efficient to get around. The South Coast community has had enough. They are tired of months of delays and talk. They want action.

That brings me to the second point. I recently heard Labor members—even the Prime Minister—say to Andrew Constance, "How can you say anything about the bypass when you never did anything?" That is an example of classic Labor spin when it comes to infrastructure. It is quite simple. Labor has not initiated a road project in our region in more than 20 years. It is always the Liberals. Let us review what the Liberal legacy is on the South Coast when it comes to roads: Bob Carr did nothing about the Princes Highway, Kevin Rudd and Gillard did nothing about the Princes Highway—and we know Anthony Albanese is more interested in the Central Coast than he is in the South Coast.

When the Liberal Party came to office it was one of the most dangerous highways in Australia. Since then, under the Liberals, upgrades have included: the Gerringong upgrade and the Foxground and Berry bypass, both projects that Labor promised when in government and failed to deliver; Albion Park Rail bypass; the Berry to Bomaderry upgrade; the Nowra Bridge upgrade and the Batemans Bay Bridge replacement; plus nearly a billion dollars for the Milton-Ulladulla bypass. That is delivery for a community. On the other hand, Labor has the gall to ask: "What have you done?" The truth will always be in the pudding. If Labor is fair dinkum, its members should follow their leader's idea and invite Andrew Constance and Shelley Hancock to every project opening from Wollongong to the border because they did the advocacy. They did the work, the planning and the delivery. I ask anyone who is watching in Gilmore or the South Coast: What has Labor actually done for you? Under the Liberals, the South Coast will always have members who sit in Parliament for their community.

Turning to the Milton-Ulladulla bypass, I ask anyone in the South Coast or the Gilmore community to ask their local member when the project will start and why it is so late. Labor is currently talking and doing paperwork—delaying—and the community gets a promise but not a road. There are no shovels in the ground. What we want to see are actual delivery dates and the commencement of work. Only then will the public see the funding turned into actual work. You cannot drive on a piece of paper. You will not find one Labor initiated Princes Highway project in the past 25 years because Labor does not understand infrastructure and does not know how to get things done. I commend the motion to the House.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Ms Abigail Boyd):** I was reluctant to interrupt the member, but there is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I ask members to keep it down.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism) (20:48):** I updated the House recently about the near doubling of funding—that big boost—into Western Sydney roads. That was something that, before the election, we said we would do to lift the airport and Western Sydney. I am pleased to see the shadow Minister sidestepping that important development and turning to regional roads. I am happy to inform members of a good story to tell in the bush as well.

The motion has some gentle criticisms about two infrastructure projects, which I will update members about. I take this motion as an endorsement of the fine work that my colleague Jenny Aitchison and the transport department are doing, such as the M1 to Raymond Terrace, the Hexham Straight, the Rankin Park to Jesmond bypass, the Singleton bypass, the Coffs Harbour bypass, the New Dubbo Bridge, the Jervis Bay Road and the Princes Highway overpass. All those projects were given the green light by this motion. I am happy to respond to some gentle criticisms, but I thank the shadow Minister for her endorsement of these other projects that are well underway. It is not just Western Sydney. Regional roads projects up and down the coast and through inland New South Wales are well underway.

Turning to the Milton Ulladulla bypass, the Government is working on this project. In December 2024 we awarded contracts for concept design and environmental assessment. We must take those crucial steps to get the project ready for construction. We know that it will cut congestion, improve travel times and make the highway safer. I invite the shadow Minister to include in her reply what was missing from the description: Precisely what did the former Minister do? What did the former Government do? What steps were taken?

Today I put on record the steps that this Government has taken. The Muswellbrook bypass will be delivered. I thank the Federal Government for allocating another \$50 million to the project in last year's Federal budget. In the Hunter at the moment, \$3.5 billion worth of works are rolling out. Those are some of the biggest roadworks in the Hunter. A lot of the crews who had worked on the big tunnel project in Sydney have now moved up to the Hunter, given the scale of work in the area. For Hunter kids, it is a generational opportunity to work on some of those projects, and that is good news for that region. I make those observations. I will only invite Andrew Constance when we roll out the regional electric buses, which he promised for 2030. The trouble is that his timeline would have had him delivering it in 2047.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (20:52):** From the outset, I indicate that The Greens will not support the motion in its current form. I move:

That the question be amended by:

- (1) In paragraph (1), omitting "the Liberal-Nationals Government invested and delivered" and inserting instead "both the former Liberal-Nationals and the Minns Labor Government promised to invest and deliver".
- (2) Omitting paragraphs (2) and (3).
- (3) Inserting at the end:
  - (2) That this House notes that successive governments have failed to prioritise regional public transport and have therefore woefully under-invested in regional public transport.
  - (3) That this House calls on the Government to increase its investment in, and delivery of, integrated public transport solutions for the regions. When we receive a motion that in the first paragraph praises the efforts of the former Government and condemns the efforts of this Government, we look at it quite critically. To be honest, it is obviously a motion that is playing politics. I was approached to potentially support an amendment to the motion, which slammed, over two pages, the Opposition and the numerous critical road infrastructure upgrades that this current Government alleges the former Government did not do. We are not going to play that game. We will play another game, which is all about prioritising public transport, because we can all agree that successive governments in this State have not prioritised public transport.

Anybody who wants to get to the doctor or do anything in so many of our regional towns and cities cannot get around unless they have a car. Let's not play politics with this motion. I am sure that we can all commit and agree to support The Greens amendment to the motion, and that we can all agree that successive governments have underinvested in public transport. Let's put politics aside and agree that the regions need public transport. I commend my amendment to the House. If the amendment does not pass, unfortunately The Greens will not be able to support the motion.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (20:55):** I am not sure if members have recently driven the road from Bathurst to Orange. I know the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine did the other day when we had an inquiry hearing at Orange. It is significantly better than it was, say, half a dozen years ago. We put up with a lot of roadworks on that road because we knew what the outcome would be and that it would be worth it. We know the outcomes are always worth it when we have a Liberal-Nationals government. That outcome is better roads for regional New South Wales. Unfortunately we have seen the handbrake come on in the last couple of years. The contrast could not be greater. It is most evident to those of us who drive on regional roads across the State. We can hear the numbers and the big plans, but what we see on the ground does not match up to the rhetoric.

We see it as we are driving our kids to sport. We see it as we go to see our family or medical specialists, or go across different worksites. We used to stop for roadworks on those roads and, unless you were in a hurry, that used to be an enjoyable experience. You could stop and have a look around to see the stock in the paddock. The kids used to love seeing the machinery: bulldozers, scrapers, rollers and graders. But they have all gone. I remember that so much bitumen was rolled out in the State that the former Minister for Roads talked about

looking for new sources and supplies. The issue of country roads is not just important to the current Minister in his role as the Minister for Roads, but also as the Minister for Jobs and Tourism. I point to the *Visitor Economy Strategy 2030*, which I recently spent some time reading. It talks about boosting the annual visitor expenditure to around \$91 billion by 2035. It also talks about the importance of upgrades to our roads and rail, which it said are critical to delivering world-class visitor experiences.

I know that myself. There are some great things to get out and see, like the Animals on Bikes between Molong via Cumnock and Yeoval. That is a great place to see, but it takes the air out a bit when you have a puncture hitting a pothole on the way home. The same can be said for a lovely week out visiting some wineries in Orange. On the way back, people could literally spend double the amount of the usual time stuck in traffic on the Great Western Highway. That road can be very quickly pointed out as one that has been neglected by this Government. One of the first things they did when they won Government was cut that spending. Of course the most critical thing about our regional roads is their safety, getting our friends and families home safe. Already this year there have been far too many fatal accidents around the Central West alone. We need to get those roads sorted out. We need to take the handbrake off and get back to fixing country roads.

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (20:58):** I move:

That the question be amended by:

- (1) Omitting paragraph (1).
- (2) In paragraph (2):
  - (a) inserting "former Liberal-Nationals" before "Government"; and
  - (b) inserting after paragraph (b):
    - (c) M1 to Raymond Terrace;
    - (d) Golden Highway upgrades;
    - (e) Tumby Road intersection;
    - (f) Hexham straight widening;
    - (g) Rankin Park to Jesmond bypass;
    - (h) Singleton bypass;
    - (i) Coffs Harbour bypass;
    - (j) new Dubbo Bridge;
    - (k) Jervis Bay Road Princes Highway overpass;
    - (l) Mount Ousley Princes Highway interchange;
    - (m) Tuross Heads-Princes Highway intersection upgrade;
    - (n) Nowra bypass;
    - (o) Jervis Bay to Hawken Road upgrade;
    - (p) Parkes bypass;
    - (q) Narrabri to Moree heavy duty pavement upgrade;
    - (r) Medlow Bath upgrade;
    - (s) Coxs River Road upgrade;
    - (t) John Renshaw Drive upgrade;
    - (u) Ellerton Drive extension;
    - (v) Pacific Highway upgrade, Wyong Town Centre;
    - (w) Avoca Drive upgrade, Kincumber;
    - (x) M1 off ramps, Dapto;
    - (y) Hillsborough Road upgrade;
    - (z) Gosford bypass;
    - (aa) Marshalls Creek Bridge;
    - (bb) Pooncarie Road sealing;
    - (cc) Brig O'Johnston Bridge at Clarence Town;
    - (dd) Bulli Pass disaster recovery; and

(ee) Picton Road upgrade.

(3) Omitting paragraph (3).

I move that amendment and speak to it. I am pleased to see the shadow Minister has expressed an interest in a couple of projects in regional New South Wales, and a coverall on the many other projects that are currently being delivered by the Minns Labor Government across regional New South Wales. It is interesting that the shadow Minister is asking about only two infrastructure projects in the regions, and my question would be whether this is because she is endorsing our speed on the plethora of other projects that are going gangbusters in regional New South Wales under this Government.

In partnership with the Australian Government, the Minns Labor Government has been getting on and delivering billions of dollars' worth of projects across our State to boost regional growth, improve connectivity and increase safety. In the Central West, for example, those opposite announced the New Dubbo Bridge in early 2017. There was no progress on the ground for nearly six years. I can personally attest to that. It was not until we came to government in March 2023 that construction finally commenced. I visited there recently and it was good to see that the bridge piling is now complete and all 123 super girders have been delivered and other work has been done.

The upgrade of Coxs River Road near Mount Victoria also did not kickstart until we came to government. Asphaltting is progressing at pace and I understand the upgraded road will open to traffic in the next couple of months. In a similar vein, the Medlow Bath upgrade did not start until we came to government after being announced three years earlier by those opposite. I know the locals are looking forward to improved safety and traffic flow after the new pedestrian bridge, intersection and other components open in the middle of this year. Also close to me, the new Parkes bypass is nearing completion. The Hartigan Avenue extension and Condobolin Road roundabout have already opened, and I know the community is looking forward to that project completing by mid this year. In conclusion, communities know the Coalition racked up record debt and took them for mugs. We are getting the job done.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (21:01):** I contribute to the debate on the motion and indicate my support for the amendment of the Hon. Stephen Lawrence. Throughout the South Coast, the Minns Labor Government is delivering major road upgrades, with a particular focus on the Princes Highway corridor. The Liberals, including the current member for Kiama, had more than a decade to build major infrastructure for the South Coast. They never put any money forward for the Milton Ulladulla bypass, the Nowra bypass or the Jervis Bay Road to Hawkin Road duplication until Labor in opposition put pressure on them to pump more cash into the Princes Highway corridor. When Labor came to government, we inherited multiple projects that were in their very early stages, with little to no proper planning work done.

It is a bit rich for those opposite to lecture us about the Milton Ulladulla bypass given their atrocious track record on the project. The project was announced by the former New South Wales Government in 2019 on the eve of the Federal election, but next to nothing was done thereafter. Former Minister for Transport Andrew Constance, who is taking his second tilt at the upcoming Federal election, is giving the Government some free advice about how to get done what he failed to do. What happened on that former Liberal Minister's watch? Precisely nothing. Cast your mind back to when community members were resigning en masse from the alleged community consultation committee and no route could be agreed. We only have to look to the comments of the former Liberal member for South Coast, the Hon. Shelley Hancock, for her view expressed in the other place on 23 February 2022 to get some other views about how well the Liberals did on this project. Ms Hancock said:

While I will raise a number of issues I would like to see resolved over the next few months, there is one issue which concerns me more than any other in terms of the bitter division of the usually congenial people of the South Coast—more than I have ever seen before. That issue is the ongoing saga of the Milton-Ulladulla bypass ...

...

There have been many meetings with residents, the former RMS and the former regional roads Minister, but at the moment there appears to be a wall of silence despite funding allocated for construction to begin. There appears to be no urgency to resolve the impasse from Transport for NSW and no appetite to think laterally and design an exit point ...

She continued:

I will request a briefing from the new Minister and will make it clear to him that this issue, more than any other, is a crucial one to resolve urgently for the people of the electorate of South Coast ... I implore the Government to take seriously the issues I have raised tonight and many times before in public meetings ...

These were prescient words. Mr Constance lost his last tilt at Gilmore, and we have a new Labor MP for the South Coast, Liza Butler, who is a wonderful advocate for the community. The New South Wales Government is doing the work that was left undone by the Liberal Party. Contracts were awarded for concept design and environmental



assessment in December 2024, and I understand that this is critical work to get it ready for the construction. I support the amendment.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (21:04):** I was not going to speak to this motion, but to use the words of the Hon. Cameron Murphy, "I feel compelled to say something." I have great respect for the Hon. Natalie Ward, but I find this motion is one that I cannot support at all. The Hon. John Graham should not smile either, because I will be coming back at his side in a second.

**The Hon. John Graham:** I was in no doubt.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** This is childish, and I will not be supporting the Government's amendment either. In fact, I will be abstaining from voting on this because it is just school-ground politics. People in regional and rural New South Wales do not care who started something, who planned it, who funded it, who built it or who cut the ribbon. They just want the bloody thing done. I think that the Hon. Natalie Ward came up with a list of three road projects in her original motion.

**The Hon. John Graham:** Two.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Two or three—whatever. Labor then says, "No, we will do better and come back with 19. We will see yours and raise you 17." Who cares? No-one cares, because it is ridiculous. Members should get the roads built rather than point fingers at each other. We need to get the roads out there for the regional people that deserve them, because we are losing hundreds of people per year on our roads. We know that the road conditions are not fully to blame, but they are partly to blame. Numerous country roads need fixing. Instead of pointing the finger at each other and playing childish games, members should just get on with getting things fixed. I will not be supporting the motion moved by the Hon. Natalie Ward, nor will I be supporting the amendment moved by the Government.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (21:06):** I support the Government amendment. Unlike those opposite, the Minns Labor Government and the Albanese Federal Labor Government have provided the funding needed to deliver the Muswellbrook bypass. Labor fought to ensure that it remained at the top of the Federal infrastructure list during the infrastructure review. The Australian Government has allocated funding towards this project, with an additional \$50 million provided in the Federal budget last year. In addition to the Muswellbrook bypass, we have \$3.5 billion of works being constructed across the Hunter region right now.

We will not be making the same mistake as those opposite, who had \$20 billion of cost blowouts on Sydney projects which they failed to sequence; put upward pressure on labour, materials costs and supply; and delivered projects either late or not at all. This \$3.5 billion of projects are seeing massive progress. The M1 to Raymond Terrace project was announced by those opposite in 2015. After eight years, major construction had shamefully still not commenced by the time we came to government. We kicked off main works in mid-2023, and the project is now progressing rapidly. Girder installation is underway at the Tomago and Raymond Terrace interchanges and piling for all northern section bridges is complete.

Construction on the nearby Hexham Straight widening has also kicked off under this Government after minimal progress under those opposite. The southbound bridge over Ironbark Creek is now open to traffic, and asphaltting and northbound bridge work is continuing at pace. To continue on a similar theme, those opposite announced the Singleton bypass in 2016. Once again, there had been no major works done when we came to government. In 2024 we kicked off main works. Piling on many of the new bridges is now complete, and others are underway. I know the community is looking forward to that project opening to traffic late next year, and so am I.

The Minns Labor Government is delivering the Golden Highway upgrades to enable the safe and timely transport of large renewable energy equipment components, with funding announced in last year's budget in partnership again with the Albanese Government. Planning is progressing on the John Renshaw Drive upgrade. On the Central Coast and in Newcastle there are upgrades to our road infrastructure also occurring. The Tumbi Road intersection upgrade is kicking off. After first being announced by those opposite over a decade ago, we finally started major works on the Rankin Park to Jesmond bypass, which is expected to open later this year.

The Pacific Highway upgrade through Wyong Town Centre is progressing thanks to \$420 million of joint New South Wales and Commonwealth funding, and early work has commenced. Planning on the Gosford Bypass is also underway. It does not matter where you look, Labor is delivering for our regional communities across New South Wales. Unlike the Liberals and Nationals who failed to plan for, fund and deliver these projects, the Minns Labor Government is getting on with delivering the job.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (21:10):** In reply: I thank members for their contributions. It will come as no shock that the Opposition does not support either of the amendments.

**The Hon. John Graham:** Shame.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** I know! But it is clear to me from the response and reaction that attack is the best form of defence. It is great to see members jumping to their feet to talk about all these regional roads projects. I am pleased that Labor members are talking about regional roads and infrastructure. It is great that we are having the conversation. I take the Hon. Rod Roberts' point, but I say that it has brought about the conversation in this place about regional roads. It will not surprise members opposite to hear me say that is all they do: talk. And talk is cheap. The Minister raised the point about what projects have been delivered. The two current local members, Liza Butler and Fiona Phillips, are very quiet on this issue. I have not heard them talking about what they are doing. What I have seen delivered is because of Andrew Constance. Under the Liberals, he delivered the upgrades in Gerringong, the Berry bypass, the Albion Park Rail bypass, the Berry to Bomaderry upgrade, the Nowra Bridge upgrade and the Batemans Bay Bridge replacement.

It is interesting that members were so compelled to talk about the Jervis Bay intersection. The work was underway under the former Government; it had started and the signage was up. Things happen before delivery, but the signage came down and it disappeared. It seemed that the project was on hold and there was no progress. Then, all of a sudden, when we put some lights up, the signage went up again. I am pleased to see the signage up. I am pleased to see it is happening as it should. I say to the Minister, with the greatest respect—and I do have an enormous amount of respect for him; he has a very big job right now, and I am sure this is on his list somewhere—that concept design is not delivery. I will be pleased to see shovels in the ground and the Minister, or whoever it may be, turning the first sod—so long as that sod is turned.

I thank Ms Cate Faehrmann. I understand her position. I loved the contribution of the Hon. Scott Barrett when he said, "Where are the dig diggers?" The Minister should do it for the kids. Get the diggers on the road; get the road messy. Interrupt and hold us up so that construction work is happening and we can see it. I thank the Hon. Stephen Lawrence, the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine, the Hon. Rod Roberts and the Hon. Emily Suvaal for their contributions. Members talked about Mount Ousley, which did seem to drop off the list at one point as well. It made it onto the 90-day review, which became the 18-month review. Then suddenly it was back on, and then off again. But I am pleased to see that it has happened. I ask the Hon. Stephen Lawrence to define "gangbusters". I am not sure what he meant when he said that. We were a government that got things done. Andrew Constance did that with metro, the light rail and all the projects that members opposite are cutting the ribbons for.

**The PRESIDENT:** The Hon. Natalie Ward has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Stephen Lawrence and Ms Cate Faehrmann have moved amendments. Because it comes first, we will test the Hon. Stephen Lawrence's amendment first. What we do with Ms Cate Faehrmann's amendment depends on whether the amendment of the Hon. Stephen Lawrence is agreed to. The question is that the amendment of the Hon. Stephen Lawrence be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....17  
Noes .....16  
Majority.....1

#### AYES

Buckingham  
D'Adam  
Donnelly  
Graham  
Houssos  
Hurst

Jackson  
Kaine  
Latham  
Lawrence  
Mookhey  
Moriarty

Murphy (teller)  
Nanva (teller)  
Primrose  
Sharpe  
Suvaal

#### NOES

Barrett  
Boyd  
Carter  
Cohn  
Faehrmann  
Fang (teller)

Farlow  
Higginson  
MacDonald  
Maclaren-Jones  
Martin

Merton  
Mitchell  
Munro  
Rath (teller)  
Ward

## PAIRS

Buttigieg

Tudehope

**Amendment of the Hon. Stephen Lawrence agreed to.**

**The PRESIDENT:** Paragraphs (1) and (2) of the amendment of Ms Cate Faehrmann have now lapsed.

**Paragraphs (1) and (2) of the amendment of Ms Cate Faehrmann lapsed.**

**The PRESIDENT:** I will now put the question on paragraph (3) of the amendment of Ms Cate Faehrmann. If successful, it will be added to the bottom of the amendment of the Hon. Stephen Lawrence. The question is that paragraph (3) of the amendment of Ms Cate Faehrmann be agreed to. Is leave granted to ring the bells for one minute?

**Leave granted.**

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....6  
Noes .....27  
Majority.....21

## AYES

Boyd  
Cohn

Faehrmann (teller)  
Higginson (teller)

Hurst  
Latham

## NOES

Barrett  
Buckingham  
Carter  
D'Adam  
Donnelly  
Fang  
Farlow  
Graham  
Houssos

Jackson  
Kaine  
Lawrence  
MacDonald  
Maclaren-Jones  
Martin  
Merton  
Mitchell  
Mookhey

Moriarty  
Munro  
Murphy  
Nanva (teller)  
Primrose  
Rath (teller)  
Sharpe  
Suvaal  
Ward

**Paragraph (3) of the amendment of Ms Cate Faehrmann negatived.**

**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.**

**The House divided.**

*[In division]*

**The PRESIDENT:** The Hon. Natalie Ward wishes to raise a concern.

**The Hon. Natalie Ward:** Mr President, the Leader of the Government and I are both confused about where we are at with the amendment to the amendment. Will you clarify where we are at?

**The PRESIDENT:** I am happy to put the question again. The Hon. Natalie Ward has moved a motion. The Hon. Stephen Lawrence moved an amendment, which was agreed to. Paragraph (1) of Ms Cate Faehrmann's amendment therefore lapsed. Paragraphs (2) and (3) of Ms Cate Faehrmann's amendment were moved in globo and negatived. We have now moved to the substantive motion of the Hon. Natalie Ward as amended by the Hon. Stephen Lawrence.

**The Hon. Natalie Ward:** I think the confusion arose because there was no written copy of the amendment. It was all done orally and on the run. Thank you for the clarification.

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

**Leave granted.**

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....16  
 Noes .....17  
 Majority.....1

**AYES**

Buckingham  
 D'Adam  
 Donnelly  
 Graham  
 Houssos  
 Hurst

Jackson  
 Kaine  
 Lawrence  
 Mookhey  
 Moriarty

Murphy (teller)  
 Nanva (teller)  
 Primrose  
 Sharpe  
 Suvaal

**NOES**

Barrett  
 Boyd  
 Carter  
 Cohn  
 Faehrmann  
 Fang (teller)

Farlow  
 Higginson  
 Latham  
 MacDonald  
 Maclaren-Jones  
 Martin

Merton  
 Mitchell  
 Munro  
 Rath (teller)  
 Ward

**PAIRS**

Buttigieg

Tudehope

**Motion as amended negatived.***Adjournment Debate***ADJOURNMENT**

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

That this House do now adjourn.

**RACING NSW**

**The Hon. MARK LATHAM (21:32):** Racing in New South Wales is one of our biggest industries, contributing more than \$4 billion to the economy, over 30,000 jobs and race meeting attendance of many millions of people. Not many MPs, though, know the track. Not many are regular racegoers. With my interest in the Rosehill issue and Racing NSW, I now field several complaints a week about the administration of thoroughbred racing in New South Wales. Ironically, in 2019 I proposed the policy of establishing a racing ombudsman, and I now feel like I am that person. There is a familiar pattern. The young, bright, articulate participants, who are essentially the future of the industry, detest the dictatorship at Drutt Street—the censorship, the intimidation, the narrowness, the pettiness and the vindictiveness imposed on anyone who does not toe the V'landys line. I have always believed that, at its core, racing should be fun. But now Racing NSW, led by people who have stayed too long and with too much power going to their heads, has taken the joy away. That is a sad development for the industry I love.

But where is the Minns Government and Minister Harris on this? How many malpractices and how much corruption needs to be brought to their attention before they act? Premier Minns promised that integrity would be the cornerstone of his Government. Integrity is a verb, not just a noun—an action word guiding everything Labor does in office. Yet the Premier and his Minister have wilfully turned a blind eye to a racing regulator which has misappropriated JobKeeper funds; avoided fringe benefits tax; illegally surveilled its staff; artificially inflated its provision accounts against regular accounting standards; and developed a toxic workplace with no human resources department, induction procedures or policy awareness sessions. They have also been a bad payer, as I will demonstrate tomorrow in debate. They are notoriously bad at paying their bills.

They have engaged in interference and favouritism in stewards' inquiries. They have looked after their favourites. There is cronyism in their employment, demonstrated through the rising role of Daniel Hadley. We had the scandal of the appointment of Racing NSW as a Category 1 Crown Land Manager and the illegal transfer of management away from the Queanbeyan Race Club. We have had attempts to gain other racecourses by extortion, such as at Goulburn where the race club was told it would not get its grant unless it handed over freehold

title. The Racing NSW Integrity Assurance Committee has been stacked with the leadership of Troy Grant to basically render it ineffective, to do nothing. Racing NSW openly buys influence, as Peter V'landys demonstrated in that notorious letter in response to an article in *The Guardian*. They paid \$10 million to *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph* for the redundant form guide. They took the editor of *The Daily Telegraph* to the Kentucky Derby in 2023. Why? Surely there is a better way of spending racing money.

There has been intimidation of anyone who disagrees, such as the examples concerning Antony Thompson and Vin Cox that were brought to the attention of the House. There was the lobbying of the CEO about the tenure of his own boss, Russell Balding, in this Parliament not so long ago. That is a clear conflict of interest. There is the bypassing of the board of Racing NSW—a bunch of useless acolytes—on the Rosehill decision and on legal action that the CEO commenced against Tabcorp and Racing Victoria, with no board approval. There is mass censorship and a stifling of free thought and expression of opinion in racing. When the CEO, the chair and other officials of Racing NSW appeared before the Rosehill committee, at least 20 misleads of the Parliament were documented. There is the contempt shown for that committee in the correspondence by Graeme Hinton and Michael Cleaver, the race field interference examples brought to the attention of the Rosehill committee by Vin Cox concerning Anamoe and Bivouac, and the clear conflict of interest Racing NSW has between its roles as a promoter of racing and as a regulator, unlike the Victorian model, which has far greater integrity.

There is the taping of conversations in the boardroom of Racing NSW and the way they bought off Garry Charny, who changed his evidence before the Rosehill committee with the promise of reappointment, which has now occurred through this Government. There is the blackmailing of race clubs to hand over their lands such as the Goulburn example I mentioned earlier. At the State Insurance Regulatory Authority, their performance is on a remediation plan for its special workers compensation scheme. It is so bad that its appeals panel has received gifts from Racing NSW, yet it is hearing appeals against the organisation itself. The list goes on and on. When will the Minister act? He has become an enabler of these improprieties and this corruption by turning a blind eye to it.

## RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (21:37):** I was fortunate to spend some time travelling in Israel before Christmas. As a Christian, to be in Jerusalem during Advent and to be at the most significant sites in salvation history is a tremendous blessing, as it is for Jews to pray at the Western Wall, the holiest site in Judaism and for Muslims to pray at Al-Aqsa, the third-holiest site in Islam. Jerusalem is an amazing treasure for adherents of three great religious traditions, and it was wonderful to walk to prayer at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre alongside Muslims being called to prayer at the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jews walking to pray at the Western Wall—different faiths and different languages for prayer, but all living peacefully and respectfully together. They have different Sabbaths even, which led to the wonderful ecumenism of the Old City, where Christians would open shops for Jewish neighbours on a Saturday with the favour being returned on a Sunday.

Since returning I have been in many conversations about the problems in the Middle East because, as we all know, that is a holy land experiencing unholy suffering. A common refrain is that it is all caused by religious zealotry and that we need to do away with religion. From my observation, the absolute opposite is true. Religious believers are united in trying to order their lives around respect for all of God's creation, including each other, and trying to live in loving harmony with each other. The prophet Mohammed is recorded in the thirteenth Hadith as saying:

None of you [truly] believes until he loves for his brother that which he loves for himself.

In Leviticus, the central book of the Torah, Jews are commanded "Love your neighbour as yourself", and Christians in the New Testament, in John 13, received that overwhelming command "Love one another as I have loved you." In Jerusalem, as in much of Australia, I saw three different religious communities, all striving and succeeding to live out these teachings and to live in harmony and peace together. I met Druze communities in northern Israel living productive and prosperous lives and met Arab Israelis, including members of the Knesset, living peacefully in Israel, their numbers having grown from around 60,000 in 1947 to over two million today.

The problems Israel faces are not so much internal as external, not so much caused by religion but by its antithesis: hate. Just as love has fruits, which I hope us to have all experienced in our lives, so too does hate have consequences, consequences we saw in the terrible dislocation and destruction of life in the Holocaust, consequences we saw on 7 October 2023, when Hamas militants, acting without love or respect for human life, used gliders to infiltrate people's homes and a music festival and torture, slay and destroy. To gun down young people enjoying life at the Nova festival, to rape and hack to death young men and women whose only crime was to still be in bed at 7.00 a.m. on a Saturday, to take hostage even a baby as young as nine months, a baby now two years old, who, with his four-year-old brother and mother, has still not been released from captivity, was not done

in the name of any true religion. It was fuelled by hate, a hate we need to call out, name and reject, a hate we have started to see fester in Australia and that must not be allowed to take hold here.

We have managed to build in Australia a largely harmonious and tolerant multicultural society. Israel has done the same but with one key difference. We do not live with constant attacks on our borders. Our Government has not had to build a network of air raid shelters to keep us safe, and we do not put our children to sleep every night in bomb shelters. We are not subject to systematic, hate-filled terror attacks. We do not, like one mother I spoke to, have to hear our 10-year-old sons planning their route to the soccer field to play with friends, walking via a network of bomb shelters in case the sirens sound. We all want peace at home and in the Middle East. It will not come if we keep talking the language of hate. It cannot be present where we have groups chanting hate-filled slogans such as "from the river to the sea"—seeking to sweep all Jews into the Mediterranean—or with groups who believe that kidnapping teenagers and young children is acceptable. Peace will come only when we unite against hate and all its expressions and turn to each other in love and respect, as many in Israel currently strive to do.

### FASCISM

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (21:42):** Earlier this year I took my children to the village in northern Italy where my grandmother was born. We also on that day visited the adjacent village of Pedescaia, a place I have spoken about before in this House. At the end of the war, the retreating Nazi forces murdered all the male inhabitants of this village, old and young, without discriminating. I stood on the viale of the martyrs of 30 April 1945, a tree-lined street where each tree commemorated a victim. One plaque commemorated Claudio Pretto, known as Giovanni, who was a mere four years old.

What struck me was the barbarism, the utter lack of an ability to see in the victims another human being. What distinguishes fascism is its unapologetic embrace of the idea that some human lives are more valuable than others. It is a notion that led ultimately to the gas chambers of Auschwitz. On 27 January, Holocaust Remembrance Day, the eightieth anniversary of Auschwitz's liberation was commemorated. Jews, Roma, gays, socialists and trade unionists all died in the industrial system of mass murder created by German fascism. We say "never again"—a pledge that places a special obligation on all succeeding generations that we must be attentive to the warning signs that alert us to the preconditions of fascism and genocide.

After the horror of World War II and the death camps, the world resolved to make a new order based on human rights and rules, where conflict would be resolved peacefully. It is a rules-based order: where disputes are resolved on just terms, not on the basis of force or strength; where small countries could expect that their interests would not be trampled by the strong; where human rights would be protected; where civil and political rights would be protected; where countries would be obligated to accept refugees and respect their rights to protection and to return to their country of origin; where genocide would never be allowed again; and where those who violate human rights and commit crimes against humanity would be held to account. Today that order is under attack. Fascism is on the march again. Its hallmarks are visible to all who know the history and choose to take note. Thucydides famously observed, "The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must."

Powerful countries are increasingly imposing their wills on smaller neighbouring countries through a reliance on force. The world reacted with horror and unanimity that Russia's aggression in Ukraine should not go unchallenged. But when Israel's disproportionate response in Gaza exposed its defiance of this same rules-based order, the commitment to that order of the United States [US] and its allies started to weaken. Now, Trump proposes to take over Gaza and allow its people to be forcibly displaced, a clear breach of international law. He deploys a form of diplomacy that nakedly relies on the hegemony of US economic and military power. He bullies his allies and neighbours. He sanctions international institutions. He undermines the stability of the world by cutting crucial aid without any care for the human consequences. This is a politics of utter irresponsibility.

Paul Mason describes fascism as a temporary alliance of the elite with the mob. Is that not what we are witnessing with Trump's racialised Make America Great Again coalition of alienated white working-class voters, mobilised to empower a class of billionaires to line their pockets and further entrench the vast gulf of inequality that blights the world? When Japan, then Germany and finally Italy withdrew from the League of Nations over the course of the 1930s, war was the inevitable consequence. Trump's attack on international institutions should alarm all those who cherish peace and democracy.

Meanwhile, in our national debate, each side competes for who is better placed to slavishly ingratiate themselves into the good graces of the Trump regime. Does this nation have any dignity left? Have we not learnt the lesson of history that there is no placating bullies? Why are we tying ourselves through AUKUS to this unstable, unreliable and decaying power? I note the Commonwealth Government is giving funding to enhance Holocaust education. What is the use of that when those who should already know choose to ignore the lessons of history?

Israel continues to dehumanise the Palestinian people. Gaza is a vast ghetto of deprivation and despair, awaiting a final push that will destroy the Palestinian people. At some point, I am waiting for the established leaders of the Jewish community—the Council of Australian Jewry and the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies—to say, "What Israel is doing is wrong. Israel has gone too far. This is not us. Never again. We will not be a party to the extermination of another people." But, instead, they work to shut down criticism of Israel.

Across the globe, allegations of antisemitism are weaponised against those who dare to draw the parallels. Why is it so hard to see Palestinians as people worthy of empathy? Day by day, creeping authoritarian measures batter into submission and silence anyone who dares speak up. The calls to shut down the Palestinian protest grow louder and stronger. Fascism is on the march. Will no-one in our political leadership stand up for what is right anymore? [*Time expired.*]

## V SET TRAINS

**The Hon. TAYLOR MARTIN (21:48):** This evening, I pay tribute to one of the great workhorses of our State. After a 55-year career, their fate has been sealed and the journey to a much-deserved retirement is underway. I am, of course, talking about the V set—the much-loved train that has chugged back and forth from Sydney to Newcastle, the Blue Mountains and the Illawarra for more than half a century. We are blessed in our State with some of the most beautiful train trips in the world, whether it is the winding up and down through the Blue Mountains, the cliffside delights through the Illawarra or—what I think is the obvious number one—the trip with the best views to the Central Coast and Newcastle, via Brisbane Water and Mullet Creek, and the amazing views between Cowan and the Hawksbury River. The trains have been replaced on the Illawarra line for more than a decade now, but they will continue to run on the Central Coast and Newcastle line and the Blue Mountains line until their final retirement in the not too distant future.

The V set has many flaws: the cramped toilets, the heavy manual doors, the inaccessibility for the elderly and disabled, the lack of modern conveniences like destination indicators and a muffled PA system that can rarely be understood, just to name a few. But, despite the flaws, they are still highly regarded by many commuters for their comfort. You knew you were on your way home when you smelt that distinctive smell of a V set in the afternoon. No commute anywhere else in the world can be done in such luxury so cheaply. Each day commuters on the V set had their own little quiet family of people that they did not know. They saw them every day. They caught the same train, waited in the same place on the platform, got in the same carriage and always went up or down the stairs, depending on their preference. If they were travelling in peak hour, just about every carriage felt like a quiet carriage, whether it was signposted as one or not.

The V sets have had a few refreshes and upgrades over the years. The distinctive gold-tinted windows were removed and the smoking carriages were, of course, banished to history long ago. The livery has undergone multiple variations, starting with the Blue Goose, to the iconic candy livery, to the CityRail blue and yellow, and finally the current red, white and grey of NSW TrainLink. The interior was also refreshed about a decade ago from the green that many people such as me would remember to the now familiar Bush Plum—or purple—seats and carpet. The oldest V sets were retired between 2006 and 2012 when they were replaced by the OSCARS, which thankfully will also be soon removed from intercity service. Those trains were ordered by the last Labor Government and will not be missed by commuters. The two-by-three layout and the very uncomfortable seats were dreaded by those who had to travel long distances in and out of Sydney. They were never fit for purpose. Their retirement has taken a little longer than expected.

The replacement Mariyung trains began arriving in 2019 and received the tick of approval from the independent Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator to start carrying customers in 2021. As members know, despite receiving safety approval four years ago, the unions held the State to ransom and the trains sat in storage on the Central Coast until a series of unnecessary modifications were made. Finally, last December the Mariyung trains started operating and the V sets will now be retired as the new modern carriages come on board. Feedback from customers has been pretty good, with the luggage and bike storage, accessible features, in-seat phone and laptop charging and commuter comfort all receiving high marks. But I think it is fair to say that some of us who travel in and out of Sydney from outer areas—whether it is the Central Coast, Newcastle, the Blue Mountains or the Illawarra—will miss those V sets once they are gone, so people should make sure they get a ride on them before they take their final journey.

## SPIRITUALISM AND FAITH

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH (21:52):** Beauty and religion do not matter in today's postmodern world—or so the relativists would have us believe—so it was with some astonishment that I saw how the modern world reacted to the reopening of Notre-Dame cathedral. Unlike a train line, a hospital or a shopping mall, this building serves no utilitarian or functional purpose and yet all the world's eyes were fixated on it. Our weeping eyes after the fire that all but destroyed it were transformed into a jubilant gaze upon its restoration. With an opening

ceremony that boasted a guest list of world leaders such as Macron, Trump, Prince William and Zelensky, it certainly seems as though the relativists may have got it wrong. Notre-Dame cathedral is not irrelevant or outdated; on the contrary it is valued because of its ineffable beauty built by man for the glory of God.

And yet our postmodern world is in a terrible predicament. We are helplessly enamoured with the beauty of what the old world built yet we despise the beliefs that inspired it. Oscar Wilde once said that the cynic "knows the price of everything and the value of nothing". Unfortunately, that statement has never been more accurate in describing today's Zeitgeist. For what is the price of beauty, truth, goodness or love? They are absolutely worthless and yet also absolutely priceless. Humans have a deep-down need for the thing that is not just desired but valued, the unconsumable thing wanted not as a means but for its own sake. We do not ask, "What is the point of beauty, truth, goodness or love?", because they are sufficient in themselves. Almost everything worthwhile is.

When we grieve the loss of a family member, when we love our spouse, when we honour our God or when we take pleasure in the mere sight of something—like a work of art, a beautiful building or a sublime landscape—these activities cannot be neatly translated into a reasoned argument, but they make human life worthwhile. They are not a means but an end in themselves because they have intrinsic value. I believe that at the heart of all things we truly value in this world is love. I know for me it certainly is. I find myself agreeing with that quote often attributed to St Thomas Aquinas that "the things that we love tell us what we are". To me, love takes many forms. There is the romantic love of my fiancé, the perpetual love of my family since childhood, the platonic love of my friends, the patriotic love of my country and the highest love of all—the love of God, who made the world and everything in it, made us in his image and who came to us in human form so that we may be granted salvation.

As a Christian, I find that I do not just love God because He loves me, but also that, by His love, I love everything else. Or as it says in 1 John 4:19, "We love because He first loved us." It is His love which is the foundation of all true love. It is His love which changes our hearts and makes us capable of love. In my brief time on this Earth, I have come to the conclusion that us human beings cannot afford to be spiritually naked or void. I have tried, and I can say that it is all too miserable. If you take away faith, all you are left with is doubt, fear and selfishness.

It is unsurprising to me that the proportion of 18- to 29-year-olds who view their life as meaningless and without purpose has exponentially increased in recent years—an almost perfect correlation with the rise of atheism and relativism. It is silly to blame iPhones or TikTok for our mental health epidemic. We created this epidemic when we jettisoned faith, beauty and love. It took me far too long to figure it out, just like it did for the great C. S. Lewis, but he got it right in the end when he said:

Human history is the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.

### WOLLONDILLY PROJECTS

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (21:56):** I inform the House of a recent visit to my duty electorate of the Wollondilly shire on behalf of Minister Kamper to open a few soccer fields and some cricket pitches which were upgraded. I was pleased to open the new playing fields in the company of the local mayor and the local member, Judy Hannan. The funding envelope was initiated by the previous Government and amounted to \$2,076,000 and the same amount was co-contributed by the local council. The fields are very impressive. In fact, in my short speech I said I wished that the fields were half as good when I played soccer in my youth. There were three expanded soccer fields with what looked like nice green carpet. I kicked a few goals at the conclusion of the event.

It is part of the \$200 million over two years Multi-Sport Community Facility Fund. The New South Wales Government recognises the critical role that local sport infrastructure plays in keeping communities healthy, active and connected. The fund was designed to deliver the best outcomes for the community by creating places and facilities that enable communities to enjoy and take part in sport. The fund has supported the development of well-designed and well-utilised new and improved sport infrastructure projects that can directly impact and support participation and performance opportunities in sports at all levels.

This project created new and significant multi-sport upgrades to the playing surfaces through the redevelopment of the sportsground to achieve three full-size soccer fields, four mini soccer fields and a main turf wicket with four wicket tables. The upgrade of playing field lighting to 100 lux, which means it is a lot brighter than it was, will allow competition night games and significantly increase participation in the region. I was briefed by the local member, Judy Hannan, and the mayor, Matt Gould, who told me that the area was crying out for that facility because the population is exploding. It was an honour to represent the Minister at the opening of a critical sporting facility.

I later attended the Southern Highlands branch meeting, where they regaled me with the problems for the growing population due to the lack of infrastructure in the area. It reminded me how important it is for the Government to also concentrate on bolstering housing supply in those areas by putting in the infrastructure



necessary for those areas to grow. Whilst there is concentration around transport nodes with the transport oriented development concept to increase density and the supply of housing, some of the semi-regional areas will contribute massively to solving the housing crisis if we can get the infrastructure to support them.

It was a very important visit. As I said, the sporting complex will provide a much-needed centre of gravity for that community but there is a lot more work to do. A good part of the housing supply will be helped by developing that sort of infrastructure, in addition to roads, transport and schools, so that the population can grow and take a bit of pressure off Sydney, as well as help the transport oriented developments. I am pleased to have updated the House on that visit.

**The ASSISTANT PRESIDENT (The Hon. Peter Primrose):** The question is that this House do now adjourn.

**Motion agreed to.**

**The House adjourned at 22:01 until Thursday 13 February 2025 at 10:00.**