

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday 19 March 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.

### *Visitors*

#### VISITORS

**The PRESIDENT:** I welcome to the President's gallery the former member for Port Macquarie, the Hon. Leslie Williams, and the elected member for Port Macquarie, Mr Robert Dwyer.

### *Motions*

#### IRISH AUTHORS EVENT

**The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:01):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) on 4 March 2025 the Consulate General of Ireland and Ireland Funds Australia held "An Evening with Irish Authors Niall Williams and Christine Breen" at the New South Wales Parliament theatre;
  - (b) tickets sold for the evening raised funds for the Irish Support Agency, which provides assistance to people of Irish descent in need;
  - (c) moderated with the assistance of Professor Elizabeth McMahon from the University of New South Wales, the writers read passages from their books and answered questions from the audience;
  - (d) in discussion of their new book entitled *In Kiltumper, A Year in an Irish Garden*:
    - (i) the writers described their garden as the "greatest artistic creation of their lives", "the most tangible place" and "a place passed down through relatives over the generations"; and
    - (ii) "the feeling of working the same soil as your ancestors" means that a garden has an almost unique ancestral, spiritual and physical quality of the space.
  - (e) the Hon. Ben Franklin, MLC, President of the Legislative Council, introduced the event and welcomed guests, including the Consul General of Ireland Rosie Keane, the Hon. Nichole Overall, MLC, the Hon. Susan Carter, MLC, and the Hon. Cameron Murphy, MLC.
- (2) That this House thanks the Consulate General of Ireland and the Irish Support Agency for bringing this remarkable literary event to New South Wales Parliament.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### ST PATRICK'S DAY

**The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:02):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) on 6 March 2025 the Consulate General of Ireland held a reception in celebration of St Patrick's Day 2025 at Harbour 220, Macquarie Street, Sydney;
  - (b) at the 2021 Australian census, 2,410,833 residents identified themselves as having Irish ancestry either alone or in combination with another ancestry;
  - (c) St Patrick's Day is an important event for many Australians, including those of Irish ancestry, and celebrations like this reception play an important role in promoting Irish culture and tradition, and providing a connection to ancestors;
  - (d) Dr Hugh McDermott, MP, as representative of the Minister for Multiculturalism, addressed those that gathered on the importance and significance of St Patrick's Day to the Australian Irish diaspora;
  - (e) many prominent members of the Sydney Irish community attended the event along with members of the Consulate Corps of Sydney;
  - (f) Consul General Rosie Keane announced that this would be her last St Patrick's Day event as Irish Consul General in Sydney as her term comes to an end in September 2025 and she will be returning to Ireland;

- (g) the gathering, through a number of spontaneous speeches and toasts, expressed their thanks for Consul General Rosie Keane's excellent work and wished her the best in her future endeavours; and
  - (h) a number of members of Parliament were in attendance, including the Hon. Ben Franklin, MLC, President of the Legislative Council; the Hon. Tara Moriarty, MLC, Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales; the Hon. Cameron Murphy, MLC; the Hon. Susan Carter, MLC; and Dr Hugh McDermott, MP.
- (2) That this House thanks the Consulate General of Ireland for hosting this important event.

**Motion agreed to.**

**INTERNATIONAL DAY TO COMBAT ISLAMOPHOBIA**

**The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:02):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) 15 March 2025 was the International Day to Combat Islamophobia 2025;
  - (b) on 17 March 2022 the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/76/254 proclaiming this day;
  - (c) the Australian Muslim community has in recent times experienced an alarming surge in Islamophobic and anti-Muslim hate incidents that not only threaten the safety of Australian Muslims but also undermine the principles of diversity, inclusion and social cohesion;
  - (d) a report from Islamophobia Register Australia assisted by researchers at Monash University released in March 2025 analysed more than 600 in-person and online incidents, finding:
    - (i) "a steep increase in assaults, abuse and threats based on reports to the Islamophobia Register between January 2023 and November 2024"; and
    - (ii) that Muslim women were overwhelmingly the victims, the number of incidents had doubled from the previous reporting period and about half of the recorded incidents happened in New South Wales.
  - (e) the sixth anniversary of the mosque shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 15 March 2019, where 51 innocent lives were lost, and an equal number injured, underscores the lethal consequences of unchecked Islamophobia; and
  - (f) in 2025 the echo of this tragedy is amplified by recent threats aimed at a Sydney mosque, invoking fears of a potential "Christchurch 2.0", with such threats, especially during the holy month of Ramadan, being not only distressing but painting a stark picture of the dangers posed by persistent Islamophobic rhetoric and actions.
- (2) That this House condemns Islamophobia in all forms.

**Motion agreed to.**

**INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR JUDICIAL WELL-BEING**

**The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (10:03):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) 22 July 2025 marks the International Day for Judicial Well-Being, the first such day;
  - (b) on 28 January 2025 the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the International Day for Judicial Well-Being in Resolution A/79/L.52;
  - (c) the proclamation of the day reaffirms that a well-functioning judiciary exemplifies the core judicial values enshrined in the Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct—namely, independence, impartiality, integrity, propriety, equality, competence and diligence; and
  - (d) it seeks to acknowledge that the physical and mental wellbeing of judges is crucial for promoting competence and due diligence, which highlights the importance of addressing judicial stress and the necessity of providing appropriate support.
- (2) This House expresses its support for the wellbeing of members of the judiciary.

**Motion agreed to.**

**PARKINSON'S NSW**

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (10:03):** I move:

- (1) That this House affirms its support for the provision of essential services to people living with Parkinson's disease and their carers.
- (2) That this House notes that:
- (a) Parkinson's disease is the fastest growing neurological disorder in the world;
  - (b) more than 68,850 people in New South Wales are currently living with Parkinson's disease, 31 per cent of the national Parkinson's population, with this number expected to double by 2040; and

- (c) the burden on the New South Wales health system will significantly increase without early interventions and support services.
- (3) That this House further notes that:
  - (a) for 45 years Parkinson's NSW has independently provided essential services such as counselling, information lines, education, and rural nursing support;
  - (b) these services help prevent unnecessary hospital presentations and reduce strain on the health system; and
  - (c) due to a downturn in community giving, there is a risk that Parkinson's NSW will no longer be able to sustain these services.
- (4) That this House calls on the Government to:
  - (a) urgently review the current funding arrangements for Parkinson's NSW; and
  - (b) consider co-investing in Parkinson's NSW services by funding 50 per cent of their delivery cost at \$1.13 million per year or \$3.4 million over three years, in line with the organisation's budget proposal and the growing needs of the New South Wales population.

**Motion agreed to.****PLASTIC POLLUTION****The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (10:04):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) the NSW Environment Protection Authority [EPA] released a report in September 2024 entitled *NSW Plastics: The Way Forward*, which outlines actions to reduce plastic pollution in our State, to which the EPA sought feedback on that report until November 2024 and that feedback is currently under review, with a consultation paper to be released when the review is complete;
  - (b) the report states that New South Wales alone generated 891,000 tonnes of plastic waste in 2022 to 2023 but that only 14 per cent of this material was recycled;
  - (c) the report states that half of all sea turtles are estimated to have ingested plastic debris and research indicates that a turtle has a 22 per cent chance of dying if it ingests only one piece of plastic;
  - (d) the report states plastic items can take between 20 to 500 years to break down and nearly every piece of plastic ever made still exists in some form today;
  - (e) the report proposed that one way to reduce plastic pollution in New South Wales was to require plastic bottle lids to be tethered to Return and Earn eligible plastic bottles below 600 millilitres and this requirement, according to the proposed actions in the report, is to be implemented by the end of 2030; and
  - (f) to do this, the report states the Government will "introduce a design standard" requiring plastic lids to be tethered to bottles.
- (2) That this House acknowledges that:
  - (a) the European Union [EU] made it a requirement in July 2024 for plastic drink bottles of up to three litres capacity in EU States to have tethered lids;
  - (b) as such, to expect New South Wales to wait until 2030 for plastic bottle lids to be tethered is too long, considering the design standard already exists and is in use in EU states; and
  - (c) Beach Patrol Australia stated in a media release on 26 September 2024, "Plastic straws and lids used for beverage containers have been amongst the most frequently littered single-use plastic items found on Australian beaches, and while plastic straws are now banned, littered lids continue to be a major challenge and must be next in line."
- (3) That this House calls on the Government to:
  - (a) accelerate the time frame to implement the requirement for plastic bottle lids to be tethered to 31 December 2026; and
  - (b) adopt the design standard of the EU for tethered bottle caps to ensure ease of transition to this new requirement.

**Motion agreed to.****ORANGE SOCIAL WOMEN'S CRICKET COMPETITION****The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (10:05):** I move:

That this House notes that:

- (a) Friday 14 March 2025 saw the close of the 2024-2025 Orange Social Women's Cricket competition;
- (b) the competition, in only its second year, was made up of 138 registered players from 13 teams representing the local clubs of Orange City (five teams), Orange CYMS (five teams), Centrals (two teams) and Cavaliers (one team);
- (c) the competition gives women of Orange an opportunity to spend a Friday afternoon with friends, enjoying a drink and some nibbles, as well as playing some social cricket;

- (d) key to the success and popularity of the competition was the supporters of all teams—husbands, partners, friends, parents and kids—all adding to the atmosphere, enjoying the summer evenings as well as helping out with scoring, umpiring and a great deal of vocal support;
- (e) the season was highlighted by immense improvement, a healthy level of competition and above all a great deal of support and encouragement for all players, regardless of skill level;
- (f) in addition to the weekly Friday night games, this season saw the addition of a three match T20 series played between CYMS and Orange City for those who wanted to take the competition up a notch, with the chocolates going to CYMS in the decider;
- (g) the social competition was taken out by Orange City Crusaders, who deserve congratulations on their win, and a special mention to the runners-up, CYMS Green;
- (h) next on the schedule, as a testament to how far this competition has come, will be a 40-over representative game against a Penrith team, and we wish the Orange women all the best for this match on 23 May 2025;
- (i) this growing competition has been a great addition to the sporting and social calendar of the Central West, and all involved deserve praise for their efforts, including the committee, the clubs, the players, the supporters and the volunteers; and
- (j) the importance of this competition and others like it should not be underestimated as they play a critical role in the physical and mental fitness of our regional residents and add immeasurable value to the vibrancy and liveability of our regional communities, and as such the entire State.

**Motion agreed to.**

**MEDICINE SAFETY**

**Dr AMANDA COHN (10:05):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) in February 2025 the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia released its report titled *Medicine safety: Child and adolescent care*, which found:
    - (i) approximately 93 children and adolescents present to emergency departments and 40 are admitted to hospitals daily due to medicine-related problems in Australia, half of which are preventable;
    - (ii) \$130 million in annual costs associated with medicine-related harm in this age group; and
    - (iii) an average of 12 children and adolescents present to emergency departments and eight are admitted each day due to poisoning by medicines.
  - (b) the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has made five recommendations to ensure children and adolescents can use the medicines they need in a safe and effective manner.
- (2) That this House affirms that improving medication safety is the responsibility of both Federal and State governments.

**Motion agreed to.**

**INTERNATIONAL DAY TO COMBAT ISLAMOPHOBIA**

**Dr AMANDA COHN (10:05):** I move:

That this House notes that:

- (a) 15 March 2025 was the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, as designated by the United Nations;
- (b) the date commemorates the tragic Christchurch mosque attacks where 51 lives were lost, underscoring the lethal consequences of unchecked Islamophobia;
- (c) data collected by the Australian National Imams Council Action Against Islamophobia initiative demonstrates a disturbing rise in Islamophobic incidents in Australia, including threats of violence and hate letters sent to mosques and Islamic centres as well as verbal and physical abuse targeting visibly Muslim women; and
- (d) increasing Islamophobic and anti-Muslim hate incidents undermine diversity, inclusion and social cohesion and lead to division and insecurity for the people and communities of New South Wales.

**Motion agreed to.**

**MOSMAN LIBERAL PARTY BRANCH EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY**

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (10:06):** I move:

- (1) That this House recognises the eightieth anniversary of the Mosman branch of the Liberal Party of Australia (NSW Division) as the very first branch of the Liberal Party of Australia.
- (2) That this House acknowledges the first meeting of the Mosman branch was held at Mosman Town Hall on Monday 12 February 1945 and was attended by the Right Hon. Sir Robert Menzies, KT, AK, CH, PC, QC, Australia's longest serving Prime Minister.
- (3) That this House notes the eightieth anniversary occasion was marked with an event held at Taronga Zoo in February 2025 and was attended by the Federal Leader of the Liberal Party, the Hon. Peter Dutton, MP, together with guests including Mr James Griffin, MP, the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, MLC, the Hon. Rachel Merton, MLC, Mr Tim James, MP, the

Hon. Natalie Ward, MLC, Ms Felicity Wilson, MP, Ms Jaimee Rogers, Ms Gisele Kapterian, Miss Fiona Douskou, Ms Amanda Ivaneza, Mr Ben Britton and Mr James Brown.

- (4) That this House congratulates the Mosman branch and its president Peter O'Hanlon on the occasion of the anniversary together with organising committee members, including Mr David McLean, Mrs Rachael McLean, Mrs Michelle Verblout, Ms Louise Cordaiy and Ms Leona Sierakowski.

**Motion agreed to.**

**INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY**

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (10:07):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) Saturday 8 March 2025 was International Working Women's Day, which has become recognised across western countries and by corporate entities as International Women's Day;
  - (b) International Working Women's Day emerged from early twentieth-century activism and organising of working-class women fighting for women's suffrage, workers' rights and class liberation, culminating in the first International Working Women's Day rallies held in the early 1900s across North America and Europe;
  - (c) Australia's first International Working Women's Day rally was held in Sydney's Domain in 1928 and organised by the Militant Women's Movement, demanding equal pay for equal work, an eight-hour work day, fully paid annual leave and a universal basic income for those without employment;
  - (d) despite continued attempts to sanitise, depoliticise and sugar-coat International Working Women's Day with cupcakes, hashtags and business brunches weaponised to advance corporate credentials on gender equality, nothing can erase its radical, feminist, militant protest roots and the strong working-class women it represents;
  - (e) in 2025 corporatised International Women's Day represents a far more palatable and marketable feminism that quashes attempts to confront the reality of misogyny and sexism under capitalism, and this has increasingly meant the exclusion of First Nations women, women of colour, disabled women, transgender women and migrant women because they challenge the heteronormative western status quo; and
  - (f) in marking yet another International Working Women's Day, it has never been more important to grasp onto the roots of intersectional and working class feminism which protests the tangible and continuing inequalities facing all women and oppressed communities across the globe.
- (2) That this House affirms the central role of union women in the ongoing fight for liberation and equality of all people, everywhere, and calls on the Government to act with the urgency required to dismantle the systems that prevent women from achieving true liberation, justice and equality.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Committees*

**PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES**

**Establishment**

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

That the resolution of the House of 10 May 2023 establishing the Portfolio Committees, as amended on 24 May 2023, 23 August 2023 and 11 October 2023, be further amended by:

- (1) In paragraph (1) (b) omitting ", the North Coast".
- (2) In paragraph (1) (d):
  - (a) omitting "Small Business,"; and
  - (b) inserting ", Jobs and Tourism" after " Multiculturalism, Sport".
- (3) Omitting paragraph (1) (f) and inserting instead:
 

**Portfolio Committee No. 6 - Transport and the Arts**

Special Minister of State, Transport, Arts, Music and the Night-time Economy Roads and Regional Transport".
- (3) In paragraph (1) (h) inserting at the end "Small Business, Recovery, North Coast".

**Motion agreed to.**

*Budget*

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2024-2025 TIMETABLE**

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (10:08):** I seek leave to amend Government business notice of motion No. 2 standing in my name on today's *Notice Paper* by inserting after paragraph (3):

- (4) That the NSW Reconstruction Authority be invited to appear from 9.15 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. at the rescheduled Portfolio Committee No. 8 - Customer Service additional budget estimates hearing to be held on Friday 11 April 2025.

**Leave granted.**

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

- (1) That this House notes that:
- (a) on 21 November 2024 the House adopted a schedule of additional budget estimates hearings for 2024-2025 over 12 working days from 25 February 2025 to 12 March 2025;
- (b) the following three hearings were unable to be conducted as scheduled by the relevant committees due to the impact of Cyclone Alfred and the unavailability of Ministers and other witnesses:
- Day Seven: Wednesday 5 March 2025**  
PC 8 Customer Service and Digital Government, Emergency Services, Youth Justice
- Day Eight: Thursday 6 March 2025**  
PC 6 Regional Transport and Roads
- Day Nine: Friday 7 March 2025**  
PC 2 Water, Housing, Homelessness, Mental Health, Youth, the North Coast
- (c) following this, Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health rescheduled the original additional hearing to the following date:
- Day Thirteen: Friday 14 March 2025**  
PC 2 Water, Housing, Homelessness, Mental Health, Youth, the North Coast
- (2) That in view of the inability of Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health to conduct the original additional hearing, the House endorse the further additional hearing held on 14 March 2025.
- (3) That in view of the inability of Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health, Portfolio Committee No. 6 - Transport and the Arts and Portfolio Committee No. 8 - Customer Service to conduct these hearings, the committees be authorised to undertake the hearings as follows under the same arrangements as originally agreed to by the House on 21 November 2024:
- Day Fourteen: Friday 1 April 2025**  
PC 6 Roads and Regional Transport
- Day Fifteen: Friday 11 April 2025**  
PC 8 Customer Service and Digital Government, Emergency Services, Youth Justice
- (4) That the NSW Reconstruction Authority be invited to appear from 9.15 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. at the rescheduled Portfolio Committee No. 8 - Customer Service additional budget estimates hearing to be held on Friday 11 April 2025.
- (5) That for the purposes of the 2024-2025 further additional budget estimates hearings, each portfolio be examined concurrently by Opposition and crossbench members only, from 9.15 a.m. to 10.45 a.m., and from 11.15 a.m. to 12.45 p.m., then from 2.00 p.m. to 3.30 p.m., and from 3.45 p.m. to 5.15 p.m., with 15 minutes reserved for Government questions at 10.45 a.m., 12.45 p.m. and 5.15 p.m., if required.
- (6) That for the purposes of the 2024-2025 further additional budget estimates hearings:
- (a) the committees must hear evidence in public;
- (b) the committees may ask for explanations from Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries or officers of departments, statutory bodies or corporations, relating to the items of proposed expenditure;
- (c) Ministers be invited to appear for the morning sessions only unless requested by committees to appear also for the afternoon session;
- (d) witnesses, including Ministers, may not make an opening statement before a committee commences questions;
- (e) members may lodge supplementary questions with the committee clerk by 5.00 p.m. within two business days following the receipt of the hearing transcript; and
- (f) answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions are to be published, except those answers for which confidentiality is requested, after they have been circulated to committee members.

**Motion agreed to.**

*Motions*

**TRIBUTE TO DAVID POLSON, OAM**

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (10:08):** I move:

- (1) That this House celebrates the life of Mr David Polson, OAM, and mourns his recent passing.

- (2) That this House acknowledges Mr Polson as one of the first 400 men diagnosed with HIV/AIDS in Australia in the 1980s at the age of 29, and as a long-term survivor with his commitment to advocacy supported by the 28 HIV drug trials he volunteered for over almost four decades.
- (3) That this House notes that there are people alive today because of the life work of David Polson.
- (4) That this House recognises David's life work, including that:
  - (a) in 2021 he was recognised as a Community Champion by the National Association of People Living with HIV, Gilead Sciences and Positive Life NSW for his services to HIV education and awareness;
  - (b) in 2023 he was awarded member of the Order of Australia for "significant service to community health through HIV education and advocacy";
  - (c) he was the emeritus founding chair of Qtopia Sydney, Sydney's first queer museum that opened in Darlinghurst in 2024; and
  - (d) he was an ambassador for the St Vincent's Curran Foundation, a community ambassador for the Bobby Goldsmith Foundation, a member of the Positive Life NSW Speakers Bureau, and a worthy recipient of the HIV Hero Award in 2023 at the ACON Honours Awards.
- (5) That this House further notes that the life of Mr Polson was honoured at a state memorial on 12 March 2025.
- (6) That this House expresses its deepest condolences to all those who loved David Polson.

**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 18 March 2025.

#### **MOORE PARK GOLF COURSE**

##### **Variation of Order**

**The PRESIDENT:** According to Standing Order 53, I inform the House that on Tuesday 18 March 2025 the Cabinet Office requested to vary the scope of the order for papers. I certified an agreement reached between the member who moved the order, the Hon. Scott Farlow, and the Cabinet Office, which was published by the Clerk. I table an agreement, certified on Tuesday 18 March 2025, that varied the due date for a second return of documents from the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure to Wednesday 26 March 2025.

The question is that the varied terms of the order be agreed to.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Business of the House*

### **WITHDRAWAL OF BUSINESS**

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM:** I withdraw private members' business item No. 1647 standing in my name on the *Notice Paper* for today relating to the Civil Liability Amendment (Organisational Child Abuse Liability) Bill.

#### *Bills*

### **CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS HATRED LEGISLATION REPEAL) BILL 2025**

#### **First Reading**

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

#### **Second Reading Speech**

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (10:21):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred Legislation Repeal) Bill 2025 seeks to repeal three recently passed bills that curb the ability of citizens of New South Wales to speak and think freely. I understand it is likely that there will be a parliamentary inquiry into those three bills, and I am pleased the Opposition has signalled its intention to support that inquiry. However, I am disappointed that the Opposition has pre-empted what could come out of the inquiry by saying that it will not support a repeal in any case. The Liberal Party's redoubtable founder, Sir Robert Menzies, would be horrified because he was a free speech warrior, and

I know that the Liberal Party membership across New South Wales is overwhelmingly in favour of robust free speech. I encourage the fine members of that party to press for a change in the policy of their party as that inquiry unfolds. I introduce this bill today, but I note the House will not vote on it until after the inquiry has concluded.

The kneejerk and panicked anti-speech legislation should never have been rushed through this Parliament. Unfortunately, while a handful of crossbenchers attempted to push back, the Liberal-Labor coalition won the day, and another freedom was sacrificed on the altar of false security. But the fight is not over. Free speech is too important for us to meekly accept defeat. Free speech is not simply one freedom among many but the core, foundational freedom upon which a free society can be built. It is essential for free thinking, independence and a proper democracy. The Libertarian Party will do everything we can to defend free speech, starting with repealing these most recent anti-speech laws and then going further to unwind all speech restrictions and enshrine free speech in the New South Wales Constitution and, at some point, the Commonwealth Constitution.

The Premier has said that free speech is not compatible with a multicultural society. That was not a slip of the tongue; the Premier has said this on multiple occasions. I do not think he realises what he is saying. If multiculturalism is too fragile to sustain disagreement or criticism, that does not mean we should ban disagreement; it means that modern multiculturalism is failing. The Premier's willingness to sacrifice core western values so quickly is shocking and disappointing.

The Government justified its anti-free-speech laws as a response to antisemitism. This argument fails at a number of levels. First, antisemitism is not caused by too much free speech and so cannot be solved by taking away free speech. Indeed, the laws themselves may actually incite more antisemitism. Second, while I think ethnic hatred is both cruel and dumb, it is not a legitimate role of government to control how people think or feel. Thoughts or feelings should never be illegal to say aloud, even when we strongly disagree with them. Finally, it turns out that the supposed spate of antisemitic attacks used to justify the anti-speech laws were not actually motivated by antisemitism. The laws were built on an exaggerated fear campaign that was based on a hoax.

Based on media reports, it seems clear that the perpetrator of this hoax, who is overseas and is a fugitive from the law, is himself an antisemite. It has been published in *The Australian* that he has said things on multiple occasions. But clearly his motivation was to negotiate a reduced sentence for the crimes of which he has been found guilty. There was a spate of antisemitic attacks for two or three months over the summer. They came out of nowhere and now they have stopped. The spike was caused by this perpetrator, and his motivation was not antisemitism. He was capitalising on the fever pitch of hysteria and thought the best way to get attention and look like he was helping the police, by tipping them off about terrorism, was to exploit this cause.

I want to be clear: The Libertarian Party would be fighting against these anti-speech laws regardless of whether the caravan bomb was genuine or not. We were against these laws even at the height of the moral panic, and our position has not changed. What has changed is that the Government's fig leaf of an excuse has now crumbled. The caravan hoax was mask-off moment for the Government. It has been shown to engage in an exaggerated fear campaign to justify more power to the Government and less freedom for the people, with bills rushed through Parliament with insufficient scrutiny. I have been a member of this House for almost two years. On two occasions this Government has made this House sit until almost dawn. The first was related to transgender issues and the second was about free speech. On both occasions, the Government wanted to rush the legislation through because it did not want parliamentary scrutiny nor public knowledge.

When the Government wants to do something it is ashamed of, it slams the legislation through as quickly as possible and then wants to move on. On this occasion, reality has caught up with it. This is another "weapons of mass destruction" moment. The public was told we had to launch regime-change wars in the Middle East because of the imminent threat of weapons of mass destruction—except it turned out there were none. It was all made up; those in power just wanted the war. Similarly, this Government wanted to restrict free speech, and the caravan hoax was the excuse to bring it about. The Premier should be saying, "Yes, we made an error and we will reverse it. We will support the Libertarian Party's repeal bill." Instead, the Government is doubling down because of pride and reputation. That is not a good way to run government.

Fear is the lifeblood of government power. As a consequence, governments throughout the ages have often repeated the time-honoured tactic of taking a real concern, exaggerating it out of all proportion and using the subsequent fear to justify more money and power for the government. Libertarians have always fought against this tactic, but the sad truth is that it often works. Global warming is a very good example of that and COVID is another. A government gets a fear, whips it up and exaggerates it, brings in new laws and makes itself more powerful. Sometimes these fear campaigns are exposed, showing that our political emperors have no clothes. This is one such occasion. Fear and panicked overreactions are not the basis for good public policy. Now that the exaggerated fear campaign has been exposed, this Parliament should take the opportunity to change direction and support this repeal bill.

The Government rushed through three anti-speech bills, and the Libertarian Party repeal bill aims to remove all three. The Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025 strengthened the laws against thought crime and Nazi symbols. At best, this law is redundant and irrelevant. It will certainly be ineffective, but there is also a risk that it takes us further down the path of criminalising unpopular speech and entrenching thought crimes in our legal system.

The Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025 gave the police more power to disperse unapproved protests. Once again, this law is either redundant or dangerous. Police already have all the power they need to manage protests and prevent trespass. It is worth remembering that free people should not require approval from a government before they are allowed to protest that government. Even worse, the bill forbids protest near places of worship but lacks any definition of what "near" means. Instead, it allows individual police officers to make up their own minds. The Sydney CBD is full of places of worship. A church exists across the road from this Parliament; we often have protests out the front. With this loose definition of "near", we are effectively prohibiting protest in the heart of our great city.

Finally, the Crimes Amendment (Inciting Racial Hatred) Bill is by far the worst of the three because it criminalises speech that potentially incites an emotion. This law is basically section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act on steroids: It threatens people with jail if they talk the wrong way about racial or transgender issues. The Government likes to talk about finding a balance between free speech and the supposed right to not be offended, but it is noteworthy that its version of balance always moves in only one direction. That direction is narrowing free speech and increasing government control.

Libertarians believe that racism is wrong, but the argument for free speech is valid even when some people are saying things that we strongly oppose. Indeed, it is the only time the principle is relevant. It is absurd to claim that free speech means only the right to say things that are pre-approved by the Government and endorsed by the majority. Policing our speech is little different to policing our thoughts, since speaking is often the way that people wrestle with ideas. We must retain our right to think freely about controversial topics, and that right must extend to people we think are wrong. The alternative is a government with dangerous power over public discourse and dissident thinkers being pushed underground or made into martyrs.

All three laws should be repealed. The Libertarian Party would have been against these anti-free-speech laws in any scenario due to our total commitment to free speech, but recent events have strengthened our argument. The revelations that the caravan bomb and other incidents were criminal con jobs have undermined the Government's rationale for these laws. The cynical political ploy of using exaggerated fear campaigns to rush through more government power has been revealed and should now be utterly rejected.

**Debate adjourned.**

### *Documents*

## **ELECTRIC BUS PROCUREMENT**

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

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (10:32):** I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 21 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents created since 25 March 2023 in the possession, custody or control of the Premier, the Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, the Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources, the Premier's Department, the Cabinet Office, Treasury or Transport for NSW relating to bus manufacturing and procurement:

- (a) all documents relating to Bus Panel 4;
- (b) all documents relating to the procurement of 319 electric buses as part of Transport for NSW's Zero Emission Buses program announced on 20 December 2024;
- (c) all documents relating to the bus manufacturing facility in Nowra announced by the Government on 30 January 2025;
- (d) all documents relating to modern slavery provisions in Transport for NSW procurement processes; and
- (e) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

The motion seeks documents relating to the ongoing questions of the Opposition to the Government concerning its procurement of buses and associated issues across the supply chain. It is an important motion for the House to consider. Concerning procurement, in this Chamber we have asked 10 questions of the transport Minister and six questions of the Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement. In the transport budget estimates hearing we asked over 20 questions about procurement. The fact is that the decisions and rationale of this Government are anything but clear.

The rhetoric of this Government fundamentally does not match its decisions. It has all the talk and all the spin, but no substance. Its local manufacturing policy is not resulting in new transport infrastructure being built in New South Wales as promised. Buses are being built in China, and possibly Victoria. Ferries are built in Tasmania. The new metro trains for Sydney Metro West will not be built in Australia. The Parramatta Light Rail trams will be built overseas, and the Tangara fleet is looking at being built in Brisbane. This is all great news for the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, but it is not what this Government promised. If the Government needs to gaslight its union preselectors, so be it—but at least be up-front with the public.

Bus Panel 4 is an unusual scenario. We have had confidentiality requirements, possible phoenixing issues and months of delays to award the contracts. Australian businesses in New South Wales that are current electric bus manufacturers are having to let workers go and are apparently going under. We have allegations of modern slavery within supply chains. We have promises of 100 new jobs in Nowra, but no timeline. We have ready-made buses coming to Sydney from China and a government that does not know—or, possibly, does not want to know—anything about it. Yet what we do not have is the Government being transparent about its policy settings or choices. The most interesting thing I found is the number of allegations being thrown around in the bus industry about the order for wave one of Bus Panel 4. It was as if, in asking a few questions, we stumbled onto a hornet's nest.

No-one can answer whether a company can call its profit "local content" if it buys a bus from China and sells it to the Government. No-one can explain whether a bus can be called "locally manufactured" if it is driven off a ship and then has a few parts attached to it. And no-one can answer what benefit the New South Wales economy receives for buses that are built in China and Victoria—other than us getting a bus. Despite all of that, the facts remain. The Government is providing no detail on the local content component. The Government told its Labor faithful and union mates that buses would be built in New South Wales, yet it is ordering them from China. And there are concerning reports of the conduct of businesses involved in the procurement. The supply chain for buses ordered by this Government appears to have, at a minimum, high risk with concerns of modern slavery being present. The Government is not being transparent or providing detail about that.

We have asked for documents to be laid upon the table of the House that specifically relate to Bus Panel 4, to the procurement of the 319 electric buses as part of Transport for NSW's Zero Emission Buses program announced on 20 December 2024, to the bus manufacturing facility in Nowra announced by the Government on 30 January 2025, to modern slavery provisions in Transport for NSW procurement processes, and to any legal or other advice. We do this because we have taken the steps of asking relevant questions in this Chamber and at budget estimates hearings. We have not received answers that sufficiently satisfy us that the hornet's nest that we have struck upon has those reassurances. More and more, we are hearing from the industry about the disruption and difficulty it is facing merely producing buses in New South Wales, providing those jobs to existing New South Wales manufacturers and their teams.

We would like answers. It would have been very easy to for the Government to say in the Chamber and in budget estimates hearings, "Yes, let us tell you about our program." Instead, I was told to not ask or that I should be happy in getting a bus. We would like to understand why the stated policy of this Government is not being carried out in practicality. We have not seen New South Wales bus builders being prioritised over those in China, and possibly in Victoria. Ferries are being built in Tasmania, and metro trains are not being built in Australia. We know that there is a huge infrastructure program, thanks to the legacy of the former Coalition Government. We are pleased that this Government can continue that. But I say to the Government that it should do as it said it would before the election and manufacture in New South Wales, or tell us what is going on.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (10:37):** I can confirm that the Opposition did ask 20 questions about these issues at budget estimates hearings. I got 20 very good answers, or that was certainly the impression—

**The Hon. Natalie Ward:** You're marking your own homework!

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM:** Not necessarily from the Minister, but with the great assistance of the agencies that responded in detail to the issues that were raised. The Government does not support the motion. It is difficult to turn around the issues that we were left with. I want to be frank about that: It is very difficult to turn the ship around, given the approach of the former Government and some of the former Ministers on this procurement. But the Government is committed to doing it. We have a plan to do it and that is going into action. One of the Government's concerns about some of the documents being sought by the Opposition is that they relate to procurement matters; they relate to commercially sensitive matters.

One of the assurances that the Government will seek from the Opposition is that any commercially sensitive documents will not be inappropriately disclosed. We will also seek assurances that, should this motion be

successful, members will be careful in seeking to remove privilege from those documents, given those commercial sensitivities. Secondly, the Government has concerns about the matters relating to the manufacturing facility in Nowra and that this call for papers will encourage and deepen the Opposition campaign against those 100 local jobs in Nowra. Incredibly, the State Opposition, assisted by former transport Minister Andrew Constance, is campaigning to send those jobs elsewhere, out of the local Nowra economy—out of Nowra, out of Gilmore and out of the South Coast.

Those jobs are desperately needed in that community. There is a systematic campaign that is being led by Andrew Constance, backed by the State Opposition, to send those jobs elsewhere. This Government wants to deliver those 100 jobs to that community. That comes on top of the former Minister's record as privatiser-in-chief, who wanted every form of transport to be privatised. That is not the position of this Government, and we are working through this to achieve that position. For those reasons, we are cautious about the approach of the member. The member is right to ask these questions, and that is why we supplied the answers that we have. However, the Government will not support the motion.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (10:40):** On behalf of The Greens, I indicate that we support this call for papers. We still have buses in circulation in New South Wales that transported people to the Olympics in 2000. For years, the New South Wales bus network has been in desperate need of newer, more sustainable buses that are built and maintained here. Unions in New South Wales have been campaigning for more than 15 years for buses to be built in New South Wales, by New South Wales workers, for the people of New South Wales. Twelve years of Liberal rule in this State decimated our local manufacturing capability. Labor promised buses manufactured here; the Liberals criticised that policy.

Labor has since proceeded with an overseas procurement model once again, following in the footsteps of the Liberal Party. Labor promised that by 2027 buses procured from Foton Mobility Distribution will be manufactured with 50 per cent local content. It is universally acknowledged that this is not enough, but I have some sympathy for the Government that it is starting from a standing start. To be honest, I am not sure it is really trying hard enough, and there has been an unusual amount of secrecy around Bus Panel 4.

That is why we are keen to see these documents—to check under the hood and see how Labor is going towards the policy of local content, local manufacturing, local maintenance and high-quality local jobs. Everyone in this space stands against slavery, and any allegations of exploitative labour conditions should be thoroughly investigated. The Government needs to review the procurement practices of Transport for NSW, and the Parliament deserves the ability to oversight that process as well. The onus must be placed on Transport for NSW and the Government to ensure beyond doubt that any supplier receiving taxpayers' money to provide transport infrastructure does not engage in modern slavery. We support the motion.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON (10:41):** Following on from my colleague Ms Abigail Boyd, I also speak in support of this call for papers under Standing Order 52. It is a reasonable and necessary step to ensure transparency and accountability in government procurement, particularly in a project that has been promoted as part of this State's response to the climate crisis. The Zero Emission Buses program is an important initiative aimed at reducing emissions from the transport sector, which is one of the largest contributors to our State's greenhouse gas emissions. Shifting our public transport fleet to electric buses is absolutely essential if we are serious about meeting our climate targets. I support strong action to decarbonise transport and to modernise our public infrastructure.

However, concerns have been raised about the ethical risks associated with the manufacturing and procurement of those buses, specifically regarding modern slavery in the supply chain. Those concerns must be taken seriously. The community rightly expects that public money will not be used to purchase goods that are linked to forced labour or human rights abuses. This is especially important when the project is being delivered under the banner of climate action and a just transition. This call for papers seeks documents that will allow the Parliament and the public to examine whether the Government has properly identified and managed the risks of modern slavery in this procurement process.

The motion covers four key areas: documents relating to Bus Panel 4, the procurement of 319 electric buses announced in December last year, the bus manufacturing facility proposed for Nowra, and any documents relating to modern slavery provisions in the Transport for NSW procurement. They are all matters of legitimate public interest. The Government has repeatedly promoted the electric bus rollout as a local manufacturing opportunity and a win for regional jobs, but when is the community is entitled to see the detail? We need to know whether those claims stack up and whether the Government has done its due diligence to understand that any materials or components sourced overseas have not been procured using forced labour.

New South Wales has a Modern Slavery Act, which was introduced to prevent exactly this kind of risk, but laws are only effective when they are applied in practice. It is not enough for the Government to say that it

has policies in place. It must demonstrate what steps were actually taken to meet its legal and ethical obligations. If the Government is so confident that it has acted properly, then it should have no issue producing these documents. Transparency is essential to good governance, especially when public money is being spent and when projects are tied to critical climate action. There is no climate justice if the transition to clean technology is built on the exploitation of workers elsewhere. Climate action must be ethical, and it must be fair. This straightforward motion seeks to uphold those principles. I urge the House to support the motion.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (10:44):** The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party supports the motion. I will have more to say in the substantive motion to be moved by the Hon. Damien Tudehope later in the day. Picking up on Ms Sue Higginson's comments about laws needing to be effective, yes, that is right. It is clear from this case and from what I raised in September 2023 that the laws are not effective. Pardon the pun, but you could drive a bus through the loopholes of this legislation. It is important that we see these documents so we can understand how our laws are being exploited so we can tighten and improve them. If we want to make this transition to a green utopia, it needs to be done with clean hands. At the moment that is not happening,

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (10:45):** The Greens support the motion moved by the Hon. Natalie Ward. We genuinely try to support all Standing Order 52 motions before this House, like we did during the previous Parliament. I have to say from the outset that more recently we have seen more reluctance from government departments—some in particular—to return the documents asked of them in these motions. A lot of Standing Order 52 motions are important, but members have spoken in this place today as to why this one is particularly important.

The intention of this Government and the previous Government to electrify our bus fleet is a worthy intention that The Greens support—we would like to see more electrified buses—but that must be done ethically. We have heard reports for a long time now that link modern slavery to the production of those bus batteries—potentially in Uighur camps—and they are incredibly alarming. I have heard responses by successive transport Ministers to those allegations. Frankly, not enough information is being provided to assure the community that enough is being done. That is why we support the motion before the House.

When it comes to motions relating to transport, more transparency is best. Again, I make the point about the apparent silence regarding information. During the latest round of budget estimates it appeared as though the public servants came to the hearings with a view to deliberately withhold information. They were not informing the committee of what they know. There is a growing trend that they are repeatedly taking the facts of the case on notice. It is very concerning. While ever that continues, more and more calls for papers will be supported in this place by most members except Government members, because the Government seems to be clamping down on transparency.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (10:48):** In reply: I thank members for their contributions and for their support for the motion. What happened to transparency and accountability? Where did it go? It is out the window. It was promised before the election. The Government told us, "We are going to have a new era. We are going to be transparent. We are going to be accountable." But it is not. It is dumbfounding. Government members have said, "You can ask questions, but we are certainly not going to give you answers. We absolutely will not produce the documents." No, we will not get the truth.

I pick up on Ms Cate Faehrmann's comments about budget estimates. It was astounding. I had the joy of attending the Treasury budget estimates hearing. The witnesses were very helpful. They gave numbers and talked about the budget. They were great. It was a whole new world. But at the Transport hearing, the witnesses said, "No, we cannot possibly tell you that." They weren't even trick questions. We were asking, "What is the project timeline? What does it cost?" Once again, here we are. I find it Kafkaesque that the Government will not agree to any part of the motion. Members opposite are saying, "No. We will not produce anything." The Minister said that it is commercially sensitive. Who is it commercially sensitive for? For Beijing? For Launceston? For Brisvegas? For Melbourne? They are New South Wales jobs and New South Wales dollars. We need to know what the local content is, so we have asked the questions.

It seems that the Minister is obsessed with Andrew Constance. I do not know if he is having a bromance with him or he is jealous of his legacy. Andrew Constance did leave a legacy. He got things done; he built things. All this Government wants to do is look backwards and talk about the previous Government, Andrew Constance and what we did. Government members do not want to talk about what they are doing. They do not want to talk about what their program is. They certainly do not want us diving into their promises versus their delivery.

I thank Ms Abigail Boyd, Ms Sue Higginson, the Hon. Mark Banasiak and Ms Cate Faehrmann for their contributions to the debate. It is important that the House continues to utilise the Standing Order 52 call for papers mechanism, particularly when we go through the process and ask questions in question time but do not get an answer. We ask questions in budget estimates, and we do not get an answer or they are taken on notice. We are

giving the Government the opportunity to be up-front. If there are challenges, those opposite should tell us. It seems that the Government has misrepresented its position, and it still cannot say whether one can buy a bus from China, sell it to the Government and call that profit "local content".

The Government has not disavowed members of the fact that one can drive a bus off a ship, attach a sticker to it and say it is locally manufactured. We want to know what the benefit is to the New South Wales economy—other than getting a bus—of manufacturing in China, Victoria, Brisvegas or anywhere other than New South Wales. We want to know what the jobs prospects are and when the jobs in Nowra will be delivered. The press release is lovely. That is terrific. We support jobs in Nowra, but we want to know when the jobs are coming, and so do the people of Nowra. I thank honourable members for their contributions. I commend the motion to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Motions*

#### **KELI LANE AND PAROLE LAWS**

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON (10:52):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) Ms Keli Lane has served nearly 15 years in prison and continues to serve out the post-parole period of her 18-year sentence for the murder of her baby daughter Tegan;
  - (b) Ms Lane has maintained her innocence and has at all times cooperated with police in their efforts to recover her baby or her remains;
  - (c) Ms Lane actively tried to locate her daughter, contributing to the police investigation before and during her sentence, including hiring a private investigator outside of the police investigation to locate her child;
  - (d) due to the retrospective application of the "no body, no parole" laws, introduced in New South Wales on 21 September 2022, Ms Lane's opportunity for parole in May 2024 was denied; and
  - (e) there is new and compelling evidence and material about Ms Lane's circumstances and incarceration.
- (2) That this House calls on the Government to:
  - (a) request that the NSW State Parole Authority reconsider her eligibility to be released on parole; and
  - (b) request that the NSW State Parole Authority reconsider Ms Lane's cooperation in locating her daughter's body and in the context of the "no body, no parole" laws' exacerbation of the "innocent prisoner's dilemma".

All members have heard of Keli Lane. She is currently serving an 18-year prison sentence for the murder of her baby daughter Tegan. She was eligible for parole in May of last year but was denied due to the retrospective application of the "no body, no parole" laws. She has maintained her innocence the entire time. She is currently being tortured by the correctional system of New South Wales. She is not in prison; she is in hell. For nearly 14 years, Keli has been a model inmate. She has complied with all the rules of the correctional system to the best of her ability and supported her fellow inmates. We now know that she has been sexually assaulted, harassed, intimidated, abused, bullied and dehumanised by a number of State government-employed corrections officers during her time in prison, including Wayne Astill.

We know that after allowing such harm come to her, the State then relied heavily on her and her painful and honest testimony to obtain the criminal conviction of Wayne Astill, who was found guilty of 27 charges, including aggravated sexual and indecent assault, for abusing at least 14 inmates at the Dillwynia Correctional Centre. He is now serving a maximum sentence of 23 years. Keli Lane is Witness C in the special commission of inquiry into Wayne Astill and Dillwynia Correctional Centre. Ms Lane has personally experienced and witnessed some of the cruellest conditions imaginable while powerless in prison. She has been sexually assaulted and groped by multiple officers, experienced daily bullying and harassment, and has been unfairly persecuted. Keli said:

He would "hot slice me" run his hand between my legs and touch my vagina. I could just feel that he had an erection.

He would tell me and where he wanted to have sex with me, either in the reception office, or in a storehouse near there where we wouldn't be disturbed.

"I would love to lick your pussy" and how "I get a hard on when I watch you train".

Those assaults were taking place daily over years. There were officers who knew what was going on and did nothing. The State has failed Keli in unimaginable ways. Her caseworker, the woman to whom Keli unwittingly reported Astill's abuse, was prison officer Tanya Hockey. Hockey was Astill's de facto partner while his wife was confined to a nursing home. Keli Lane had no idea. The inhumane and degrading treatment was regular. Corrections officers called her a "dog", a "whore" and a "slut". They commented on her body during strip searches

and rampaged her room constantly as a form of punishment. She endured rumours from other inmates that she was giving senior officers head jobs and that they were bribing other inmates to assault her. When she reported it, she was told, "You're not special. That's the kind of talk that goes on in that office. Accept your sentence and fucking get on with it." When she complained, she was punished, segregated and put into the behavioural intervention unit. Sexual assaults, unwanted or in exchange for favouritism, extra "buy-ups", drugs or money, and constant public verbal abuse and humiliation were part of the daily routine. In Keli's words:

Usually in prison you go to segregation for assaulting someone, assaulting staff, for using drugs or bringing drugs into the prison. You go to segregation for serious matters ... you would get charged and you would have multiple punishments. I was being sent to segregation because I had the audacity to speak up.

Keli Lane was smashed by the system that was meant to be caring for her and had lost all trust. I heard that in Keli's words, when she told me:

When police came to me in the jail and asked what I could tell them about Astill, I initially thought it was a setup. But then they said 'Keli, we know, there are so many women. We need your help'.

Of course she helped. That is what Keli Lane has always done. She has helped everyone around her, even if it has made her own life hell. Of course she thought that there was no justice, because there has been no justice for Keli Lane. Keli is now languishing in prison because of the wrong application and retrospective operation of the "no body, no parole" laws. Those laws were designed specifically for a man who killed his wife to marry his student—murderer Chris Dawson. It is not Keli Lane's law. To inflict it upon her is wrong. Keli has a husband and a daughter. They are all suffering and have suffered enough. Keli Lane has elderly parents. She wants to see them again. All the motion asks of members is that today we set a path of consideration for Keli Lane to experience some justice. All the motion requests is that the parole board reconsider Keli Lane's parole. She has done her time.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (10:58):** I say at the outset that the crimes committed by Wayne Astill are utterly horrific. The Government is responding to the Astill inquiry and has accepted all of those recommendations. I note the passion of Ms Sue Higginson in moving the motion, and I commend her for that passion. However, the Government opposes the motion. It is critical to point out that the responsibility for granting parole for inmates serving prison sentences of over three years rests with the NSW State Parole Authority, which is an independent statutory body chaired by a judicial member. It is also critical to point out that there are defined points during an offender's sentence where the State Parole Authority will consider release to parole. Under the law, if an offender is refused parole, they must wait 12 months before they can be considered for parole again.

Ms Keli Lane is currently serving an 18-year custodial sentence, with a non-parole period of 13 years and five months, after being found guilty of the murder of her baby daughter. On 22 March 2024 the independent State Parole Authority considered the parole of Ms Keli Lane. The authority determined that it was "not satisfied that the offender has cooperated satisfactorily in police investigations or other actions to identify the location" of her baby daughter. The determination of the State Parole Authority in the consideration of the parole of Ms Keli Lane was made in line with the "no body, no parole" laws that were introduced by the previous Government in 2022 and passed the Parliament with bipartisan support. The "no body, no parole" provisions were brought into law through the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment (No Body, No Parole) Bill 2022 and became operative on 18 October 2022.

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

*Visitors*

#### VISITORS

**The PRESIDENT:** I welcome to the gallery two guests of the Hon. Susan Carter. Maree Walshe-Harris and Stephen Harris have travelled to the Parliament from Ulladulla to be with us today. They are very welcome.

*Questions Without Notice*

#### MINISTERIAL VEHICLE LOGBOOKS DATA

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (11:00):** My question is directed to the Leader of the Government. What steps have been taken to address the multiple breaches of section 54 (1) of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 by the Premier's Department and the Cabinet Office in failing to consult with persons whose information was provided in response to an access application for the driver logs of former Ministers prior to providing access to that information?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:01):** I thank the member for the question, and I indicate that the Government is taking this very seriously. The Premier's Department and the Cabinet Office unreservedly apologise for the release, in error, of that material. The Information and Privacy Commission, the NSW Police

Force and ID Support NSW have been notified about the incident and are taking appropriate steps to investigate. The departments are now working with the Department of Customer Service on improvements to enable personal information to be more readily identified in responses to future orders and applications.

The departments are also carrying out a post-incident review of the breach to seek to identify its cause, in accordance with the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act and their data breach policy and data breach response plan. The review will include identification of steps that may be taken to prevent similar breaches in the future. I inform the House that the error was quickly identified and that a number of immediate steps were taken to contain the breach, including notifying affected former Ministers. There is also work being done on security assessments.

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (11:02):** I ask a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for that answer, which seems to address what has occurred since the release of the information. But before information is released, there is a duty in the Act to consult affected people whose information may be about to be released. What steps are being taken to address the failure to notify people beforehand?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:03):** I have touched on that. The reporting to the various bodies that are responsible for this is being dealt with. A review is in place around any breaches that occurred in relation to the release of the material, and they are being dealt with very seriously. That is what we are doing.

### ROOFTOP SOLAR AND BATTERIES

**The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (11:03):** My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Energy. Will the Minister please update the House on progress in the uptake of rooftop solar and batteries by households and businesses across New South Wales?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:04):** I thank the honourable member for his question. I report some very pleasing news to the House. The people-powered adoption of renewable energy across the State is going gangbusters. The Clean Energy Council's latest report shows that New South Wales households and businesses are leading the way on the uptake of solar and batteries. New South Wales has the greatest amount of rooftop solar power and household batteries being installed of any State or Territory. This is the second year in a row that we have seen that growth. New South Wales has led the way. As we know, Australians love their solar, and we have had it for decades. We can still drive around and see people's hot water systems. Does the Leader of the Opposition have it?

**The Hon. Damien Tudehope:** I can't get it.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** Why can't you get it?

**The Hon. Damien Tudehope:** Because I have a heritage house.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** You need to talk to your local council about that. I am trying to fix that. It is a local government issue.

**The Hon. Damien Tudehope:** You are the heritage Minister!

**The PRESIDENT:** The Minister will return to the question at hand.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** I have all this good news and I really hope that the Leader of the Opposition is able to get his solar.

**The Hon. Damien Tudehope:** Mookhey can't get it either, probably.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** No, he's got it. Over four million households have rooftop solar across Australia, taking advantage of our abundant solar. Households and businesses are reducing their energy bills and emissions. The latest numbers prove that. New South Wales has installed almost one gigawatt of rooftop solar capacity. Households are not only installing solar but also installing batteries. Around 30 per cent of households that installed solar in the second half of last year opted into a battery as well. In New South Wales that means over 14,000 battery sales in the second half of last year alone. That has not happened by chance.

The significant rise in the number of household batteries in our State comes after last year's announcement of the battery incentive program. The Clean Energy Council report states that there has been a steady increase in sales since that announcement. That is important because the more rooftop solar and batteries we install at a local level, the more we lower bills and enjoy a more reliable energy system, which means less large-scale infrastructure will need to be built. The growth in rooftop solar is such that there is now more rooftop solar capacity in Australia than black and brown coal-fired power combined. The Government is committed to delivering a reliable,

affordable energy system that benefits the residents of New South Wales. The uptake figures show that the rollout is successful and that the growth will continue. The passion of our communities to lower their bills and take advantage of the sun on their rooftops is growing and is to be welcomed. I thank those who are working to roll it out and deliver it to the households and businesses that need it.

### TROPICAL CYCLONE ALFRED RECOVERY

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:07):** My question is directed to the Minister for Agriculture. Yesterday the Minister told the House that emergency fodder was available to primary producers impacted by Cyclone Alfred. Will the Minister advise when the fodder was first made available, what exactly is available for farmers and how they were notified that it could be accessed?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:07):** I thank the member for the question. It is an important issue for farmers and landholders who are grappling with the aftermath of the weather event on the North Coast, Ex-Cyclone Alfred. Yesterday in question time I referred to some of the assistance that we are providing, particularly the plans that we put in place to make sure that assistance could be activated quickly to avoid animal welfare issues. As I indicated yesterday, we set up a hotline for people to contact the department for assistance or advice for dealing with animals or that kind of issue.

The latest advice that I have—and I will check if there are any updated figures—is that 51 people have contacted that hotline looking for assistance, including with emergency fodder. Emergency fodder has been made available and is available if needed. Farmers, as usual, need to be eligible. If people run other businesses or do other things, or maybe work out of Sydney but have properties in Byron that they might have a few animals on, that is different to somebody who might need proper assistance with fodder. There are some eligibility criteria that people have to meet. But there is fodder available, and I would encourage people to contact that hotline if there are any remaining issues for people who may need assistance for feed for their animals.

I again reiterate my thanks, the Government's thanks and the community's thanks to and recognition of farmers who did have plans in place for this kind of weather event and who did prepare to move their livestock to higher ground or to more appropriate locations so that we did not end up having to rescue animals and having them in situations in the aftermath such as those that happened, for example, in 2022. The preparedness and the plans in place meant that we were ready before the weather event. I indicated yesterday that we opened the ag and biosecurity emergency centre that is based in Orange, which is set up for exactly this kind of scenario. We opened it before we anticipated Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred. Again, the hotline is available for people to contact if they need assistance. I believe about 51 people called. If there is more than that, I will update the House. That food is available. I did put a ban on hay coming in from Queensland because we are determined to stop red imported fire ants from coming in. Before doing that, we made sure that it was not going to cause an issue if we did need emergency fodder, which is available.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (11:10):** I ask a supplementary question. I genuinely thank the Minister for her answer. The Minister said about 51 people contacted the hotline. Will she elucidate that part of her answer by clarifying how farmers were notified that that fodder would be available? Was it via press release? What information was sent out to landholders so that they would know that that was available to them?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:11):** I thank the member for the supplementary question. There is fair enough interest in what support is available for farmers, particularly in relation to animals. That is more of an emergency situation than people who are dealing with crops. I visited a macadamia farm last week and talked to the farmer about the trees that he had lost as a result of the damage. That is a really significant situation for him but, obviously, dealing with animal welfare is the more urgent and pressing issue. I believe it is 51. That is the latest information that I have, but I will check the details of that.

People had the opportunity to engage with the people in the department that they would usually have relationships with. Local Land Services was providing support. People have relationships with staff from the agricultural section of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. There are longstanding, ongoing relationships between farmers and their connections inside the department. The phone number for the hotline was provided before the cyclone. I was in Orange, as I have referred to, when the emergency centre was opened. It was ready to go for exactly this scenario. We did a major media event to talk to farmers to give them that information. That was even run in Sydney media. So the information was provided through public channels and networks inside the sector. Again, I encourage people to contact us if they need assistance. A survey is also available online for people to report damage. I encourage farmers to do that so that we can make a proper assessment about what kinds of issues have caused damage or problems for people in agriculture in that part of the State.

### GAMBLING POINT OF CONSUMPTION TAX

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (11:13):** My question without notice is directed to the Treasurer. Gambling companies must pay a point of consumption tax according to the physical location of the person making a bet. Are we collecting point of consumption tax revenue when tourists and visitors gamble online in New South Wales?

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:13):** I thank the member for his question and his ongoing interest in point of consumption tax collection. He is quite right, both previously in this place and through budget estimates and elsewhere, to direct the House's attention to this matter. I am sure the House would recall the point of consumption tax was introduced a few years ago, in the previous Parliament, to address base erosion—that is, the practice of online gambling companies incorporating themselves in the Northern Territory in order to obtain lower tax arrangements that came at the expense of every other State. It was a good thing that the previous Government, as well as governments across the country, established a point of consumption tax regime to deal with that erosion in base integrity when it came to gambling taxes.

The member is quite right to say that we do apply the point of consumption tax to a bet in the place where the bet occurs. The point of consumption tax applies to bets that are made by a person who is located in New South Wales when the bet is made. I advise that the Betting Tax Act 2021 specifies that a betting operator must take reasonable steps to identify the location of the person making the bet. The Act allows for betting operators to rely on an individual's residential address or principal place of residence for a business to be the person's location. For example, when a customer registers to place a bet, the wagering service provider will typically require the person to create an account and provide 100 points of ID, including their residential address, for verification. Based on that information, wagering operators report and pay point of consumption tax to the New South Wales Government.

The member is quite right to say that there are people who visit our economy and visit our State, and there are tourists both intrastate and intranation and from abroad. It is fair to say that I am not advised as to what proportion of our point of consumption tax is collected from tourists from other States or tourists from abroad. I do not know whether or not we hold that specific category of information, but I will endeavour to take that part of the question on notice to see if I can find more data for the member so that we can understand precisely how many tourists from outside of New South Wales are indeed gambling in New South Wales in a manner that should be captured by the point of consumption tax. The member should be aware that this is an interesting area of law and an evolving area of law. It is something that we are going to have to keep an eye on to ensure that the new regime that has been established by this Parliament and other parliaments is not then eroded as well. I therefore very much welcome the member's continuing scrutiny of this matter, and I will see if I can provide any further information to the member about the specific question that he has asked.

### STATE ECONOMY

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (11:16):** My question without notice is addressed to the Treasurer. The national accounts were recently released. Will the Treasurer update the House on what that means for the people of New South Wales?

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:17):** I thank the member for his question. He is quite right to say that all of us Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] nerds were thrilled last week when we got the latest quarterly national accounts that cover the quarter to December 2024. I should say that the ABS national accounts did report the second quarter of 0.6 per cent growth in a row for New South Wales. No-one is doing cartwheels in the street on a 0.6 per cent growth rate but, in the context of where interest rates are, where households are at and the pressure that they have been under, the fact that the New South Wales economy is growing slightly faster than lots of people expected is good.

It is particularly strong compared to other States. It is consistent with Victoria and Tasmania and is more than Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory. What I found particularly interesting about the national accounts last week was that the composition between those States is slightly different. Other States are growing, in essence, as a result of some of the public investments that they are making—and we are too. But what is encouraging about the national accounts is that, unlike those States, we are seeing a bounce back in consumer spending. That is an encouraging sign, given consumer spending has been hit the hardest in New South Wales in recent times as a result of the interest rates and the housing crisis.

Household consumption rose by 0.4 per cent in the quarter after rising by 0.2 per cent in the September quarter. Discretionary spending is up by about 0.5 per cent as consumers shopped in I think it is called the black September sales, or the Black Friday sales. I might be summoning a different history with black September. Essential spending has risen as well. Pleasingly, private investment is showing signs of strength too. We are seeing

a bit more dwelling investment in the economy, which is great. It was 0.6 per cent higher in the quarter and 1.6 per cent higher through the year, driven by new and used dwelling investment. Business investment has been driven by new engineering construction, which is a function of the fact that we are building a new energy system in New South Wales, and our mining industry is making critical investments too.

Of course, I should not neglect the fact that public demand was a leading contributor to the State final demand growth again this quarter, rising by 1.3 per cent. I draw the attention of the House to that because it is tough to judge public demand at a time of high inflation. We have to calibrate that setting very carefully. I am glad that we kept the economy growing in a way that ensured we did not add inflationary pressure and while allowing households the chance to recover their spending without putting upward pressure on interest rates.

#### POLITICAL DONATIONS

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (11:20):** My question is directed to the Leader of the Government. Currently there are no government guidelines or policies requiring grant applicants or prospective appointees to paid government boards to disclose that they are reportable political donors to a political party. Given that the Minns Government has dished out millions on grants and paid board positions to reportable political donors of NSW Labor, will the Minister commit to immediately rectifying that policy gap?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:20):** Is the member asking me this question in my capacity representing the Premier?

**The Hon. Tania Mihailuk:** Yes.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE:** I thank the member for the question. There are obviously strict guidelines around disclosures and the way people are appointed to boards and committees across the State. If the member wishes to pursue the issue, there are a number of ways to do so. One of those is to speak to the Special Minister of State, who is responsible for dealing with those issues, and another is to speak with the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, which also deals with those matters. There are a range of pathways to do that work. We take appointments to boards and committees very seriously. We want the best people in the jobs to give us the advice we want.

We deal with a range of helpful people, including Duncan Gay and Peter Collins. That is totally appropriate. If the member has a specific allegation, she should make it. If she does not have a specific allegation, there are ways in which these matters can be dealt with. It is perfectly appropriate for the member to ask me the question. As I said, this is the way we do things. We take the way that we appoint people very seriously. We did not appoint John Barilaro to be New York trade commissioner—that was an interesting process, we all learnt. But the member asked a serious question and there are ways in which she can pursue these matters if she has questions about or wants to deal with particular people. I encourage the member to pursue the broader policy issue through the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, where those matters are dealt with.

**The PRESIDENT:** I welcome to the Parliament student leaders from schools across New South Wales who are participating in the Secondary Schools Leadership Program conducted by the Parliamentary Education and Engagement team. You are all very welcome to the Legislative Council public gallery today.

#### ARTICULATED BUS PROCUREMENT

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (11:22):** I also welcome the students to the gallery today. My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. In relation to the new articulated buses announced by the Government on 12 March 2025, will the Minister rule out those buses being either fully imported or drivable knockdown from South-East Asia?

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (11:23):** I thank the member for her question. This is very good news for the northern beaches, because articulated buses are on the way to improve the situation. Despite being represented by those opposite for generations, residents of the northern beaches were left without drivers and, eventually, buses, because an articulated bus had not been bought since 2011. That is incredible. That is the situation we are dealing with. As I have mentioned in the House, help is on the way for those suburbs.

**The PRESIDENT:** Opposition members will remember my previous ruling on continual interjections. The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM:** But that is very important. I reiterate the Government's position that we are very grateful for the patience of people on the northern beaches and the North Shore who have been hit hard

by the double whammy of the driver and bus shortages, which was well improved by the former Minister, who put in significant work. There were more than 500 driver vacancies. That number is now much closer to 150.

**The Hon. Natalie Ward:** Point of order: I will resist the temptation to assist with argument. There has been some discussion about previous governments and driver shortages, but none of that is relevant to whether these buses are fully imported or drivable knockdown from South-East Asia. I ask that the Minister be drawn back to my very specific question about those new articulated buses.

**The PRESIDENT:** I uphold the point of order. The question was very narrow in scope. The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM:** I will come to this unusually narrow question—that is the way I would characterise it in agreeing with you, Mr President. I make very clear that the Government's procurement policies—those commitments to local manufacturing that the Government has made—will apply to this and other procurements. The position of the Government is very clear.

### SOCIAL HOUSING

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM (11:25):** My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Housing. Will the Minister update the House on how the State and Federal governments are working together to invest in more social housing?

**The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (11:25):** I thank the member for the question. It is always a pleasure to update the House on the incredible progress this Government is making in delivering more housing. I am sure the student leaders in the gallery will be extremely interested to know that the Government takes the housing crisis incredibly seriously. Young people constantly tell me that they are very fearful about their future in Sydney. They do not know whether they will be able to find a place to buy or rent.

*[Opposition members interjected.]*

The student leaders in the gallery will note that Opposition members are not interested in hearing about the Government's record on housing because they know—and I will keep saying it—that our record is absolutely about cleaning up the mess we were left with, which was a deep housing crisis.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The Minister will resume her seat. Members will be mindful of the guests in the gallery. I understand that the Minister was being mildly incendiary, but we have worked through that. The Minister will be heard in silence.

**The Hon. ROSE JACKSON:** I give the House details of the latest example of the State and Federal governments working together to deliver more money for housing. The \$70 million that I was pleased to announce on Monday with Federal infrastructure Minister Catherine King is yet another contribution from the Commonwealth Government to the work that the State is doing to make sure that more affordable housing is made available. That comes on top of the \$600 million it contributed through the Social Housing Accelerator Fund. There will be 13 projects in New South Wales under the first round of the Housing Australia Future Fund. Of course, on top of that our Government put \$5.1 billion on the table to deliver more houses. That is billions of dollars that the State and Federal governments are putting on the table to ensure that more affordable housing is made available.

Many homes across the State, from Randwick to Campbelltown, have been purchased with that \$70 million. From east to west in Sydney, we have ensured that houses are being delivered right now. We are going regional as well. I particularly note that part of the \$70 million will go towards delivery in the Tweed and Lismore areas. Of course, those areas are very close to our hearts considering the impact of Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred. We are ensuring that more housing is being delivered across Sydney and our regions. As I said, while that \$70 million is welcome, it comes on top of hundreds of millions of dollars that we have already contributed. On Monday we announced that that money is not just for new homes—although that is important—but for infrastructure as well. Every time we talk about housing, we have to talk about infrastructure. Young people want homes, but they want them near transport, parks and schools.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! It seems the Minister is interrupting Opposition members' conversations. She will be a little more respectful in future! The Minister has the call.

**The Hon. ROSE JACKSON:** I was updating the House about all of the work that we are doing to deliver more homes. We recognise that housing needs to sit alongside quality infrastructure, and that was part of the announcement on Monday.

## NSW POLICE FORCE WAGES

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (11:29):** My question without notice is directed to the Treasurer. On 13 November 2024 my colleague the Hon. Mark Latham asked the Treasurer a supplementary question for written answer. It reads:

Is the Government funding its pay increase to the NSW Police Force by making a cost saving in failing to fill vacant positions in the NSW Police Force? How many positions are involved? What are the details?

On 14 November 2024, the Treasurer provided the following response:

No. The pay offer for New South Wales police is funded through reforms to police insurance arrangements.

Is that still the Treasurer's position, or has the Treasurer been advised of information that was disclosed in the recent Police and Counter-terrorism budget estimates hearing that has informed him of a more fulsome answer that he may wish to update the House of?

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:30):** I thank the member for his question. I do recall this question that I received. I do understand the scrutiny that is being applied and I do understand the issues that are being talked about in this respect. I do stand by the original answer. It is funded by the police death and disability insurance scheme. Secondly, I did pay attention to the exchanges that were taking place in the budget estimates hearing last week. No-one has advised me on any of this, but I was paying attention because I do take the scrutiny of budget estimates seriously. When it comes to this particular matter, I think the member is making the point—and I think this was explained in budget estimates hearings, too—that there is not any quarantine being applied to police officer positions.

**The Hon. Damien Tudehope:** Have a look.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY:** The shadow Treasurer should be very careful because what the member is perhaps coming to understand is that we apply what is called a premium adjustment to every government agency—not police but every single agency—when it comes to workers compensation claims. That policy was introduced by those opposite. That is the reason why, when there are increases in premiums for the Treasury Managed Fund, we adjust the premiums that each agency has to pay. That policy has applied since 2021. That is exactly what took place with the death and disability scheme that we reformed. That was a huge part of the reform because we noticed that with police death and disability that we were paying more on workers compensation for police than we were on police salaries. We were paying more on police workers compensation for death and disabilities than the actual wage cost.

In reforming this with the Police Association, we tackled that issue. We used that money to deliver police officers the biggest pay rise in a generation. As a result, the academy is now oversubscribed for places. We are now filling the vacancies that we inherited. I take this opportunity to remind the House that we inherited 1,500 vacant police officer jobs, if not more. That is the challenge that was brought to us. I well and truly appreciate the member's scrutiny. He is absolutely right to ask the question. It is a very good question. I know that he has been on to this issue as well. I get it. But that premium adjustment mechanism that has applied to every single agency in the New South Wales public service was put in place by those opposite to incentivise agencies to put a prevention culture in. I do not begrudge the previous Government for that policy. We have to have broader conversations about workers compensation. But these measures have been in place to manage a system that needs reform—for the sake of the police and for the sake of the rest of the public service.

## TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL (11:33):** My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. In December last year Forestry Corporation sent a letter to timber mills in New South Wales stating it would not be able to meet timber delivery targets this financial year due to the establishment of 106 koala hubs as part of the Great Koala National Park. Given 38 workers have been stood down indefinitely at a North Coast timber mill this week, is the Great Koala National Park having a detrimental impact on the timber industry?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:34):** I thank the member for her question. The first thing I say is that I am not the Minister for Forestry Corporation. The portfolio Minister is in the Chamber, as is the stakeholder Minister. The short answer is no. There are a range of issues. We have talked at length in this place about the Great Koala National Park. Some 176,000 hectares of potentially State forest could make up part of the Great Koala National Park. That issue has been the subject of a lot of modelling and three different community panels have been looking at the issues. The Government is dealing with that.

With respect to the koala hub issue, let me be clear: There is compensation for any loss as a result of the koala hubs. I am aware of the particular timber mill and my understanding of the issue is that for quite a long

period there have been reductions of wood provided to that mill. I will not go into the detail of that because I do not have it all in front of me. The point I make is that, no, the decisions being made in relation to that timber mill are not as a result of the Great Koala National Park. If there are issues with the koala hubs, compensation is being dealt with. We will continue to finalise those matters, being very serious and sensitive about the impact generally on wood volumes occurring in many areas, particularly after the 2019-20 fires where there was significant loss of access to wood volume from which the forests have not yet recovered. There is also the impact of plantation harvesting, which continues.

### LOCAL MANUFACTURING

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE (11:36):** My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement. Will the Minister update the House on the Government's efforts to support local manufacturing businesses and workers?

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (11:36):** I thank the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine for an important question. I, too, take the opportunity to welcome the student leaders to the Parliament. I wish them all the best and encourage them, when pursuing their further studies, to think about the opportunities, particularly in advanced manufacturing, that are available in New South Wales. The Labor Government has a deep and enduring commitment to manufacturing businesses and workers in New South Wales. With our investment in skills as well as through leveraging our procurement dollars and fostering a stable investment environment, we are providing crucial support to local manufacturing workers and industries.

The Treasurer has updated the House on many occasions about the need for open markets, and how they are in the best interests of the people of New South Wales. We lead the nation in selling our intelligence and our goods to the world. We know that businesses, workers and economies around the world benefit from open, fair and free trade. There is no doubt that there have been some global developments lately that we are continuing to monitor closely, looking at the implications for our local industries and particularly our manufacturing industries. We know that for every one job in manufacturing there are a further 3.5 jobs in the supply chain. With the developments in the global sphere that we are monitoring closely we know that it is not just the direct jobs in steel and aluminium that could be affected by tariffs.

New South Wales is a key global supplier of metallurgical coal, which is necessary for the manufacture of steel in Australia, and we are one of the United States' key trading partners. Over 85 per cent of our metallurgical coal in 2023-24 went to the main exporters of steel mill products to the United States. There are clear secondary and consequential effects of global developments, which we are monitoring closely, that will have real implications for jobs in New South Wales. We are using a range of ways to better leverage our government procurement dollars to ensure that we support our local manufacturing industries.

Indeed, the new Minister for Transport has updated the House about the next generation of Tangaras that we are building in New South Wales. The "if not, why not" rules that I updated the House about recently are underway and already in practice to ensure that more of those precious procurement dollars are spent in New South Wales. We will certainly be working closely with our Federal Labor colleagues, who provided \$750 million for the development of new technologies to ensure that our metals manufacturers remain globally competitive. There are many moving parts to this. But there is no doubt our Government is committed to supporting more local jobs, more local manufacturing businesses and more investment in New South Wales.

### INTERNATIONAL AND STATE ECONOMIES

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (11:39):** My question is directed to the Treasurer. Days after the election of anarcho-capitalist Javier Milei as President of Argentina in 2023, the Treasurer told the House he was "quite a student of the Argentinian economy". He and his backbench were dismissive of Milei, but no-one is laughing now. Free market capitalism is making Argentina great again, and now the world's biggest economy, the United States, has embraced Milei-ism and set up its own Department of Government Efficiency. New South Wales has \$160 billion in gross debt and net negative GDP growth on a per capita basis, while Argentina is now soaring. What specific economic indicator would it take for this Government to conclude that Milei, Trump, Musk and, yes, Ruddick have been right about basic economic principles and that the Treasurer's policies are a long march to the old Argentina?

**The PRESIDENT:** Some may argue that there may have been a touch of argument in that question. But we will let this one through to the keeper because I, like everyone else, am looking forward to the Treasurer's response.

**The Hon. DANIEL MOOKHEY (Treasurer) (11:40):** I thank the member for his question and his rather vivid imagination. Every time the Hon. John Ruddick stands up, he is like an old-school nineteenth-century

preacher, calling on us all to repent for the last 150 years of social progress that we have engineered from here, the Legislative Council of New South Wales. It is not every day one gets to hear Milei, Trump, Musk and our own Ruddick mentioned in the same breath. It is the Libertarian equivalent of assembling the Avengers. That is what they are doing. If Trump is Captain America and Musk is Iron Man and Milei is Bruce Banner, then the Hon. John Ruddick is definitely Hawkeye, with his arrow, ready to shoot at every form of government waste he sees. But he is right to say that I did once, and still do, describe myself as a student of the Argentinian economy. But I confess I did not realise that I would end up cast as an understudy of an economic telenovela as epic as this one.

Just to inject a small dose of reality, I was perusing the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook recently. I actually have a standard Argentinian economy note in my folder now. I keep track of all the issues and I always ask, "What is going on in Argentina?". The member extolls the great virtue of the Argentinian economy, but it really depends on where you are coming from. If you happen to be poor in Argentina, it is pretty bad. If you happen to be middle class, it is quite awkward. But the member is quite right to say that, if you happen to be rich, the Argentinian policies are doing very well. Nevertheless, Argentina's debt-to-GDP ratio hit an astonishing 155.4 per cent in 2023, which is the highest since 2002, when it reached 147.2 per cent. That debt spike the member says we should not worry about coincides with inflation in Argentina having peaked at 211.4 per cent. While inflation might be easing, prices in Argentina are still doubling year on year. To the extent to which the member is calling for an Argentinian approach, I prefer inflation more like 2 to 3 per cent rather than the 8 per cent that Argentina is accustomed to.

As for the United States' newly minted Department of Government Efficiency [DOGE], led by Elon Musk, I did see Mr Milei present Mr Musk with a chainsaw last week. I was wondering where the Hon. John Ruddick was in that conference, whether he was there. I would simply say that Elon Musk's DOGE is an example of what we should not be doing in New South Wales. [*Time expired.*]

#### TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

**The Hon. WES FANG (11:44):** My question is directed to the Minister for Agriculture. Given that Forestry Corporation sent a letter to timber mills in New South Wales, stating it would not be able to meet timber delivery targets this financial year due to establishment of 106 koala hubs as part of the Great Koala National Park, is the Great Koala National Park having a detrimental impact on the timber industry?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:44):** I thank the member for what I think is exactly the same question that was just asked of the Minister for the Environment. It will not shock anyone to know I will probably give pretty much the same answer. Before I talk about the specifics of the question, it is important to acknowledge that there were some changes for people working in one of the mills for Pentarch, at Koolkhan. Thirty-eight people have been stood down. That is a real shame. I am sorry for those workers, their families and the community. That is not something we want to see.

But we have talked at length about the work we are doing as a government to set up a road map, a plan for what this industry can look like in the future. This kind of uncertainty has been in place for a long time, including under the previous Government. People did not have certainty. It is all well and good for people to be raising the flag about this now, but the industry did not have certainty at that time either. That is not fair for the workforce. I have said that on the record many times in this place and will continue to say so. The Government is working on a plan for what this should look like going forward so that people are not put in these kinds of situations. As the Minister for the Environment outlined, a range of issues have impacted timber supply for mills in New South Wales, including bushfires.

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell:** They are saying it because of the koala park. It is in their writing.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** A number of the forests have not recovered sufficiently because of the fires that occurred in 2019, and that is a problem for the industry and for people working in the industry.

**The Hon. Sarah Mitchell:** Is Forestry Corp wrong?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Opposition members asked the question; they might want to listen to the answer. That is a supply problem we need to factor in when we make decisions about what the future of all of this should look like. The Government is committed to delivering the Great Koala National Park. That was an election that commitment we made. We have been clear about that. We are working together on what that should look like, the size, the locations, all of those things, and I will refer to the answer given by the Minister for the Environment about that. We have talked about it at length. That work is continuing. We need to give the industry and the workforce some certainty about the situation they will be in in the future. Again, I am disappointed for the 38 people who have been stood down this week. I will continue to engage with the sector and with their unions,

as I and the Government have been, as we work through these plans. Timber supply is an issue facing the sector, and we acknowledge that.

**The Hon. WES FANG (11:47):** I ask a supplementary question. I note that the letter from Forestry Corp, which is a State owned corporation for which the Minister is the portfolio Minister, states that there is a direct link between timber supply and the Great Koala National Park. Is Forestry Corp wrong?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:47):** I thank the member for the supplementary question. We are working through a range of issues with Forestry Corp, which includes the supply issues I have just referred to. We are working with all of the contractors and everyone in the industry who does not have the same levels of supply, including prior to the bushfires. We are creating this park, and we have been consulting widely. It has been discussed at length in this Chamber. That work is underway. I issued an order, on behalf of the Government, to stop harvesting in particular hubs inside of the area being considered. As the Minister for the Environment outlined in her answer, we are working through the process for compensation for the people who are impacted by that—

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** Point of order: The supplementary question was quite narrow. Mr President, I would ask you to bring the Minister back to the question, which was whether Forestry Corp was wrong in its letter.

**The Hon. Penny Sharpe:** To the point of order: A supplementary question is necessarily an elucidation of the answer previously given. The Minister was absolutely doing that accurately. There is no point of order; she is being directly relevant. But she is also within the standing orders of supplementary questions, which is that a Minister elucidates an answer previously given.

**The Hon. Wes Fang:** Further to the point of order: I contend that the Leader of the Government is incorrect to suggest that when asking a supplementary question, the Minister can just elucidate on any point she made in the original answer. The supplementary question was the question that was asked, and the supplementary question is the one that needs to be answered. The Minister needs to be directly relevant to that supplementary question, and I contend that the Minister was not being directly relevant. I ask you to bring her back to the point about whether Forestry Corporation was correct or incorrect.

**The Hon. Penny Sharpe:** Further to the point of order—

**The Hon. Daniel Mookhey:** To the point of order—

**The PRESIDENT:** There are further contributions to the point of order. I will hear first from the Leader of the Government.

**The Hon. Penny Sharpe:** The Minister was being directly relevant.

**The PRESIDENT:** I have worked out what I am going to do, but the Treasurer can take his point of order if he likes.

**The Hon. Daniel Mookhey:** I observe that, arguably, one could have taken a point of order regarding the supplementary question because it calls for an opinion. But now that the question is being answered, in explaining whether Forestry Corporation is wrong, everything is within the purview of relevance if it has informed the Minister's assessment of that question. If the Minister has assessed a factor as being relevant for the purposes of deciding whether Forestry Corporation is wrong, she is well and truly entitled to share her logic and thinking with the House.

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

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Whilst I do not have the letter that is being referred to in front of me, I am familiar with it. Asking questions that cherry-pick bits and pieces of information to create a misleading impression, as usual, is not really helpful to anyone in the industry. I know they will be tuned into this because people are at a high level of pressure, so dealing with facts is really important in this particular situation. When Forestry Corporation wrote to people across the sector about this, it referred to a range of issues that are impacting timber supply, just as I have and just as the Minister for the Environment did in her answer. A range of issues are impacting timber supply. We are committed to delivering the koala park, as has been regularly discussed in the public domain, and there will be costs associated with that. We are working through those processes and we have included the industry in those discussions. I will continue to work with the industry and the workers who will be involved in whatever this sector and this area look like into the future.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (11:51):** I ask a second supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate that part of her answer where she talked about compensation? Given that Forestry Corporation of NSW

has accepted the compensation on behalf of the mills, will the Minister give clarity as to whether this round of compensation will impact any future transition assistance packages when the park is opened?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:52):** I thank the member for the supplementary question. I think I understand what he is looking for but, if not, I am sure he will pull me up on it. A couple of things are being worked through here, as I have indicated regularly in this place and in my answer. We are working through the process for setting up the national park and what size it should be. Whilst we do that, we have put an order in place for particular hubs inside of the geographical area that is being considered.

There is a financial impact to having that order in place to ask Forestry Corporation to stop harvesting in those particular areas, and that part is in the public domain. That is one of the things that we have done while we are working through the broader issues and giving consideration to, again, what the size should be, what will be impacted and all those things. What I have talked about today is the hubs where we have stopped logging. That financial consideration is happening. At the same time, we are having this broader discussion about all of this. That will be explained in the public domain and to the industry, just as we have up until this point.

**The Hon. Mark Banasiak:** Will it be subtracted from the final assistance package?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** If the member wants to add to the question, that is fine, but this is part of the work that we are considering. This really significant decision will impact a very significant industry in New South Wales.

### WATER BUYBACKS

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (11:53):** My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Agriculture. Will the Minister update the House on how the New South Wales Government is supporting basin communities affected by water buybacks?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:54):** Water buybacks are happening in the southern basin in New South Wales. As members will be well aware, that decision was made by the Federal Government. I know that the Minister for Water has been active in explaining the New South Wales Government position, as I will be. We do not support the buyback program that the Federal Government in its current form is undertaking; however, it is doing it. As part of our responsible representation of those communities, we have managed to get \$160 million out of the Federal Government to spend across that region, investing in those communities to mitigate and deal with some of the costs following changes resulting from the water buybacks.

Last week I was delighted to host a round table in Griffith to directly engage with people about the best way for us to invest that money. Included were local leaders from across the region, including mayors from Leeton Shire Council, Griffith City Council, Murrumbidgee Council and more; local businesses; Business NSW; and agricultural groups. It is a significant amount of money that will have a positive impact on those communities, despite the reduction in water from the buyback process. I have said from the outset that we will not make decisions from Sydney about how that should be spent. We have gone down to those communities and will continue to engage with them about how they think the money should be best invested to enhance and protect their futures.

In Griffith I launched the first \$15 million round of the program. That money is available for people, communities and businesses to apply for right now if they have job-ready, shovel-ready ideas for investment. The early investment round has opportunities for programs, initiatives and capital investment projects of between \$50,000 and \$1 million, and between \$250,000 and \$4 million for infrastructure projects. Those projects have to be things that will provide jobs for the local community into the future and economic development opportunities for businesses, councils and others across that community. The Government has the back of those communities and will continue to engage on the best way to invest.

### WATAGANS NATIONAL PARK ROAD MAINTENANCE

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (11:57):** My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. With disruptions to key access routes in Watagans National Park, such as the recent gate closure at Whitemans Lane and the ongoing neglect of Prickly Ridge Road—which has remained in a state of disrepair for an extended period—what action is the Minister taking to ensure that public roads in the Watagans and more broadly are properly maintained and reopened promptly, rather than being left closed and effectively off limits to the public?

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (11:57):** Obviously we want access to national parks. There is a range of reasons why various areas get closed off. Sometimes it is because operations are occurring, sometimes it

is in relation to invasive species and sometimes it is because there is damage as a result of flood or fire. I am not familiar with the details of the particular closures referenced in the question, but I am happy to take it on notice and get the member more information about what is happening.

There are times when areas are closed off for a range of reasons. Where they have been open and sit within the agreed plan of management and the operation of the park, we are keen to have them open as soon as we can. I am not across the detail of the particular roads mentioned but I will find out. I know that there is general interest in this. People love the parks and want to be able to get to them. If they are able to drive through them and use them, they want to be able to do that. Let me work through those particular roads and come back to the member.

### TROPICAL CYCLONE ALFRED RECOVERY

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (11:59):** My question is directed to the Minister for Agriculture. When will the Government make small farm recovery grants available to help primary producers repair fences, replant crops and dispose of flood debris as a result of Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (11:59):** I thank the member for the question. As I have indicated, a range of support is available for the sector. The category assistance that has been allocated following Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred is category B. People may or may not be aware that it means financial assistance is available through low interest loans, which they are able to apply for now if they need assistance. It also means that transport subsidies are available for people to apply for now if they need assistance. As I have outlined over the past couple of days in the House, financial assistance is also available across the community, including to councils to assist with some of the issues that the community is dealing with.

Last week I visited the North Coast and met with people in the sector. I visited a farm to understand the damage that had been caused and to hear directly from impacted people. During the visit I asked the people in the community to fill in the survey that the department issues after situations like this, which I have also done widely through the media. It is for farmers and primary producers to outline any damage that has occurred on their properties so we can feed that through. As members would also be aware, decisions for category levels of assistance are made jointly between the Federal and State emergency services Ministers. I do not have a role to play in that. But I have asked farmers and primary producers to fill in the survey. If the data or information resulting from the survey tells the Government that other particular assistance is needed, then we will work directly with producers on that. Again, I was there last week to talk to people directly. I will continue to work with farmers on any support that they may need.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (12:02):** I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate the part of her answer about the surveys? What information from those surveys would trigger the Government to make small farm recovery grants available to help primary producers?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (12:02):** Again, we have asked people across the sector to fill in this particular type of survey, which they would be familiar with, to provide details of any damage that may have occurred so that we can make some assessments and work with people on what may need to be considered. Members opposite are laughing about this but the sector is familiar with these surveys. It is normal for farmers to participate in surveys, which they do, to provide feedback to the Government. The lack of understanding of those opposite is a bit shocking. We want landholders to fill in this particular survey so that the information can be reported by those who believe they have damage. That can be considered with the facts. That is the normal course of events.

I encourage farmers and primary producers to provide that information so that the Government can work with them on things like—as I outlined before—where the need is for emergency fodder, which we have provided, or where biosecurity issues might be. As I mentioned earlier, I put a ban on hay from Queensland to protect the State and farmers on the North Coast from fire ants. We make decisions based on the information provided by primary producers. The random thought bubbles that the Leader of The Nationals wants to spout on 2GB saying, "Just give us X amount of money," with no consideration for who it should go to, what it should be paying for or what kind of support is needed, is not the way that this Government operates. We will consider the information that we are asking farmers to provide. If assistance needs to be provided, we will work with the sector on it.

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

## TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (12:04):** I provide additional information relating to the forestry mill issue. As members would be aware, there is a consultation from Pentarch Forestry to stand down employees at the Koolkhan operation near Grafton. That decision impacts 38 workers. Pentarch claims that decision is due to shortfalls in supply and that, year to date, the Forestry Corporation has only delivered 63 per cent of its contracted log volume. As I said previously in my answer, that is not a result of the koala hubs or the pending decision relating to the Great Koala National Park. As the Minister and I have both emphasised on numerous occasions, the Forestry Corporation has had challenges meeting its contracted log volumes for a number of years due to the 2019-20 bushfires, wet weather, flooding and other factors. For example, most recently Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred closed work in forests in the north-east because it was unsafe. From 2021 to 2024 the Koolkhan mill has been receiving less timber than their contracted supply. That lower supply is not a result of any decision regarding the Great Koala National Park.

Pentarch has the largest wood supply agreement with Forestry Corporation on the North Coast. That wood supply agreement covers four mills: Koolkhan, Herons Creek, Bostobrick and Kempsey. However, only the Koolkhan and Herons Creek mills are operational. The other two mills—Bostobrick and Kempsey—closed in 2006 because the Herons Creek mill could more efficiently process large logs. Of the two remaining mills, Herons Creek receives the majority of wood provided under the Pentarch wood supply agreement. Herons Creek took in between 31 to 39 per cent of high-quality logs and 15 to 19 per cent of all products. The Government understands that there are challenges in this industry. They are longstanding and we are working through them with the creation of the Great Koala National Park and the impact that will have. We are also working for the future of forestry through the Forestry Industry Action Plan.

### *Supplementary Questions for Written Answers*

## MINISTERIAL VEHICLE LOGBOOKS DATA

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (12:07):** My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Leader of the Government. Was the Premier's office advised of the access application for the driver logs of former Ministers before access was granted? If so, when? What advice did the Premier's office give to the Premier's Department or the Cabinet Office about dealing with any personal information covered by the application or about compliance with section 54 of the Government Information (Public Access) Act?

## POLITICAL DONATIONS

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (12:07):** My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Leader of the Government, representing the Premier. Will she provide the Government's current guidelines and policies that are issued to grant applicants and prospective government board appointees to ensure that conflicts are disclosed, including any reportable political donations to a political party?

## TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (12:08):** My supplementary question for written answer is directed to the Minister for Agriculture. Will the acceptance of compensation at this point for forestry mill workers or forestry mills be subtracted from or preclude them from future assistance when the park is opened?

### *Questions Without Notice: Take Note*

## TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I move:

That the House take note of answers to questions.

## TROPICAL CYCLONE ALFRED RECOVERY

## TIMBER INDUSTRY AND GREAT KOALA NATIONAL PARK

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (12:08):** I talk about two issues that were raised by my Nationals colleagues and me during question time today. The first is on the support—or the lack thereof—for people who are living up in the Northern Rivers, particularly our primary producers. We have concerns the needed support that the industry is asking for is not being made available. I appreciate what the Minister said in relation to those who have contacted the hotline and the fodder that is being made available. From our perspective, however, we think more needs to be done to support primary producers and landholders on the North Coast and in the Northern Rivers who have been impacted by Tropical Cyclone Alfred.

I briefly mention the question asked by my colleague the Hon. Scott Barrett about those small farm recovery grants. I appreciate and agree with the Minister that, obviously, the immediate attention needs to be on livestock and animals. However, as has been reported in the media in the past few days, a number of landholders have been impacted by fences being washed away, issues with their crops and flood debris. It is important that the Government is timely in its response to this weather event so that those primary producers are not left in the lurch. We are concerned about the delivery of these grants, and we would like to make sure that they are offered by the Government. We will keep raising this as an issue in this House until that is the case.

Turning to the issues around Forestry Corporation, we are particularly concerned given that 38 people in the Grafton area are without a job. There is no pay cheque coming in for them. Those opposite pretend to be the party for the workers and stick up for industry, but they are letting people down. There are people who will now be thinking about how they will put food on the table or how they will pay their bills because that timber is not being provided. It is quite extraordinary that both the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Regional New South Wales say that it is not about the Great Koala National Park and that there are issues going on, when direct correspondence from Forestry Corp to timber mills says that part of the issue relates to the Great Koala National Park and the uncertainty that it causes for the timber industry and the establishment of those 106 koala hubs.

The Opposition is not making this up. It has been written in black and white and sent to timber mills to say, "This is a factor why we cannot give you the allocations that you needed." As I said, there are now 38 people living in the Grafton area who do not have a job, who do not have a pay cheque coming in and who cannot provide for their families. We are incredibly concerned about the uncertainty for an important industry. Again, we will keep pushing this point in this House as often as we need to, to ensure that someone is sticking up for the timber industry and those workers in this State.

#### **GAMBLING POINT OF CONSUMPTION TAX**

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (12:11):** I take note of the answer given today by the Treasurer. It was a surprising non-answer by the Treasurer, who is usually pretty nimble and very much across his game. I sent him the question on notice, and he said that he is not advised as to whether or not we are collecting point of consumption tax on online gambling from visitors to this State. I think that means it is highly likely that we are not and that there is a massive loophole in the point of consumption tax where we are not generating revenue from interstate or international visitors to this State. It is a significant number.

New South Wales has 40 million visitors a year. Many of them come here to go to events and to gamble. High rollers come to this State. They go to the casino and use online betting platforms that are registered in this State. Do some sums on the back of the beer coaster, as I am wont to do, and that quickly comes up to hundreds of millions of dollars in the forward estimates that could be available to this State to put into Racing NSW—I hope it is paying attention; this is revenue that it could get—Greyhound Racing NSW and, dare I say it, gambling harm reduction and other good causes. We introduced this tax for a reason.

Looking at the half-year review, as I am sure everyone has, and evidence from budget estimates, it is clear that point of consumption tax has flatlined in this State. Why? Online gambling is going through the roof. We have problem gambling as more people gamble with multi bets online. Gambling ads are absolutely everywhere, encouraging people to gamble at all times of the day with their mates, no matter where they are—even on the toilet. It is gamble, gamble, gamble. Yet point of consumption tax is flatlining going forward. Why is that revenue base flatlining? Why is it being eroded? It is an area that needs serious thought.

The Treasurer said it is a complex area of law. Well, if we are allowing betting companies just to rely on the residential address of users on their apps, that is not good enough. All we would have to do is ask those gambling companies to make sure that their customers turn on their location services. That could be anonymous information, which is not provided to the Government. Then we know when they are in New South Wales and when they are subject to the tax, and those rivers of gold would flow into the hands of our Treasurer. I know he would love that for the benefit of the people of New South Wales.

#### **SOCIAL HOUSING**

#### **LOCAL MANUFACTURING**

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (12:14):** I take note of answers given today by the Minister for Housing. In her answer today, the Minister talked about the importance of enabling infrastructure and the good work of the Minns Labor Government, in conjunction with our Federal colleagues and local councils across the State. The recent announcement by the Albanese Government of a \$76 million investment to boost social housing in key areas is another welcome investment in our State. We look forward to working further with our Commonwealth partners in this space.

Enabling infrastructure is crucial in unlocking and allowing housing developments across the State. We have seen examples of this being done badly under the planning and housing priorities of the former Government. That is no more evident than in places like Marsden Park, Box Hill and Schofields. Even in the Hunter, where I live in the estate of Huntlee, which is a wonderful development, the previous Government said it did not need a school, but the Minns Labor Government committed to delivering and is delivering a school for that growing community. It is a much-needed piece of infrastructure to go alongside housing in the area.

I also take note of answers provided by the Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, in which she spoke about the importance of the manufacturing sector. This sector has declined nationally over the past two decades. Importantly, under the former Government, it only grew in two out of 10 years. Fast-forward to now, and under the Minns Labor Government we have seen growth in the manufacturing industry two years in a row. The average annual manufacturing growth under the former Government was minus 0.7 per cent.

The average since 1990 overall is 0.1 per cent, and the Minns Government's average is 2½ per cent. Local manufacturing, and the introduction of policies such as our "if not, why not" policy, ensures that we are supporting our local manufacturing sector and boosting the industries that we need for a resilient economy in New South Wales now and into the future. It is an important policy framework that the Minister has referenced and introduced. I commend the Minister for her work, and I look forward to assisting in those portfolios.

### ARTICULATED BUS PROCUREMENT

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (12:17):** I take note of answers given today, starting with the Minister for Transport. To give him credit, he has inherited a few problems, and he is looking a bit weary, but I have no doubt that he is giving it his all. I asked a very specific question about the articulated buses, which was, again, another great Labor announcement—"Do the fanfare. Do the announcement. Let's have the press release. Let's talk all about it." But when there is actually no delivery behind it, it is terrifying for the people on the northern beaches. The Minister said, "It's good news for the northern beaches." Well, it is also good news for jobs in Malaysia, which is where these buses are being built.

I asked him specifically, "Can you rule out the buses being either fully imported or driveable knockdown?" During budget estimates, I had to educate the Minister about what drivable knockdown is—which is a surprise, because it seems that that is what they are doing—from South-East Asia. I have heard all of this talk about local manufacturing and what a great job that the Government is doing, how it is all being done here and how the Government is committed to it—again, a great press release and a noble pursuit, but the delivery tells a different story. When ferries are made in Tasmania, we are sending bus contracts to Victoria and buying buses from China, and now we are looking at buses from Malaysia, there seems to be a theme here. There is a New South Wales Labor Government initiative that has not been announced yet: jobs and manufacturing for overseas. It is good news for them.

I also talk about the delivery of the buses. It is quite right that the people of the northern beaches and the North Shore, who will not be getting a northern beaches tunnel under this Government because it does not build any infrastructure, now rely on the great bus system and the B-Line bus. We now have the great announcement that it is okay because help is on the way. The Government has stolen the logo, by the way, but help is on the way. I asked when the buses would be delivered, and the Minister did not want to answer. At the earliest, it will be November. For those people queuing up around the block waiting for buses at Dee Why, it is okay because help is on the way in eight months time. If they keep queuing, they will be there for another eight months. It is not a solution. It is not good news. It is not great for the people of the northern beaches. Government members say those things and laud the press announcement, but that is not the case.

Members do not have to believe me that the Government will not rule out the problems; people on the ground are telling me about the problems. Lee Furlong from Fairlight told me about the 172 and the 170X. There have been lots of complaints in Facebook groups. Government members can make all the announcements they like, but they should look at social media, where someone has written, "Coming home is an absolute nightmare on the 150X. It has been late or cancelled every day last week and this week so far." That is not good news.

### NSW POLICE FORCE WAGES

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (12:20):** I take note of the answer provided by the Treasurer to my question. Late last year I was provided with certain documents from within the NSW Police Force. They clearly outlined that the NSW Police Force executive team had agreed to quarantine 912 sworn officer positions to pay for the police pay rise, student police officers, the new police insurance scheme and 100 administrative positions. That is 912 police officers who will be removed from the front line in the middle of our State's crime crisis.

On 13 November last year I asked in the House, "Will the Minister confirm whether the Commissioner of Police has quarantined 850 positions to pay for the new police wage rise?" The Minister replied, "No positions have been quarantined to pay for the new police award offer." I resolved to get the correct answer during budget estimates. Under questioning, the police Minister stood by her answer, which can be found at page 34 of the transcript. I later tabled a document that clearly showed that the police have quarantined sworn officer positions. I quote from the transcript:

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** Yes, I can see that that's on here, but I'm telling you that that's not correct.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** That is not correct?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** No.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** What is correct, then?

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** No positions have been quarantined to pay for the pay rise. Could you confirm that, Commissioner?

**KAREN WEBB:** Yes.

Even with the facts placed before them from their own documentation, they refused to accept the truth of their own decisions. I then put the question to Deputy Commissioner Dean Smith, who is in charge of personnel. His answer is on page 35 of the transcript:

The document which is outlined, as I said, does attribute and has an allocated number and a dollar figure, and, yes, the words that are listed there do look at quarantining positions.

The police did more than just look at quarantining positions; the commissioner and her executive team agreed to do so. I was also in possession of a document that put forward the argument for the commissioner's team to quarantine a minimum of 812 positions to balance the budget. Under questioning, Deputy Commissioner Dean Smith agreed that it had been agreed upon by the commissioner and her executive team. Here is the clincher: The Minister was aware of the decision, yet the Minister has categorically stated that no positions are being quarantined. That was backed up by the Treasurer today when he stated that the new police insurance arrangement was funding the wage increases. The Government is either being led by the nose or thumbing its nose at the House. Either way, it is on the nose.

#### NSW POLICE FORCE WAGES

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (12:23):** I contribute to the debate, particularly in response to the question that the Hon. Rod Roberts asked the Treasurer about the police pay increase and related matters. One of the most unforgivable things about the previous Government's wages cap was its impact on the police. That is certainly not the only unforgivable aspect, but it stands out. It was a crude measure to indiscriminately apply a uniform cap across the public sector, irrespective of need, particular specialties or things happening in the labour market. It had a dire impact across the public service. This Government inherited a crippling police shortage. Living in a regional community, I can say that the police shortage is felt in many ways. It impacts on the capacity of police to attend to a range of operational matters, and it becomes known in communities. I can personally attest to that. There are discussions online about police shortages and unfilled positions. That impacts community confidence and levels of fear.

The question of crime is about the reality, but it is also about perception. Our police are equipped to deal with fear, and the presence and operational duties of police help to reduce the level of fear. That is an aim of policing in and of itself. The Government has done many positive things that stand in contrast to that crude wages cap. That includes a 19 per cent pay rise for police over four years. The pay rise is staggered at different levels and has different impacts. It will provide a powerful inducement for people to enter that line of work. We are paying police officers to train at the Goulburn academy in circumstances where so many people, especially mature-age people and people with kids or other responsibilities, have not been able to consider that important line of work because they simply cannot afford to take months off to train.

The Government is doing real things. Rebuilding the police force lets the Government do things like what was announced this morning, with 60 specialist police to be deployed to parts of regional New South Wales to tackle high-prevalence youth offenders—kids who are ringleaders of criminal gangs, inflicting so much harm and causing fear in regional New South Wales. That is the way to deal with the issues. If there are 1,500 to 2,000 vacancies statewide—and vacancies always impact the country more—the police cannot do that good work.

#### POLITICAL DONATIONS

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (12:26):** I take note of the answer to the question that I asked the Leader of the Government in her capacity representing the Premier. The question asked her to provide to the House the guidelines and policies that are currently available to the Government with respect to grant applications by prospective government board employees and declaring their conflicts, including any reportable political

donations to a political party. The Minister was not happy to receive the question and suggested that I put the question to the Special Minister of State. I remind the Minister that she is the Leader of the Government and has a duty to provide those answers to the House. I also remind her that the issue became quite evident during budget estimates with two different Ministers. I raised the matter of donations involving Macarthur Football Club, which donated over \$4,400 to Sussex Street and was later awarded a \$14.5 million Football in Schools grant. The Minister was not aware of the donation, and neither were the bureaucrats.

I also questioned the Special Minister of State, in his capacity as the Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, about Sound NSW. A board member had disclosed a reportable donation to the Labor Party and was subsequently appointed deputy chair of Sound NSW. I am not suggesting that anything improper happened; I am suggesting that grant applicants and any prospective government board appointees should be disclosing that they have made those types of donations. Those guidelines and policies should exist. There is no point blaming the former Coalition Government and using examples like John Barilaro. We know that the former Government did not do things properly, but the Labor Party must remember that the last time Labor was in government, it was neck deep in ICAC investigations and inquiries.

We do not want those types of issues to ever rear their ugly heads again in New South Wales. Let us make things better. There is an opportunity to tighten up the guidelines and policies around disclosure, particularly reportable political donation disclosure. It is not good enough that that information is only provided on the Electoral Commission website. Ministers and senior bureaucrats in governments who are issuing grants and making government appointments should be made aware as well, and there should be a process. That should not necessarily preclude the person from applying for a grant or being an appointee, but there certainly should be disclosure. That is the minimum that we expect in New South Wales.

#### INTERNATIONAL AND STATE ECONOMIES

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (12:29):** I take note of the Treasurer's comment that Elon Musk's DOGE, the United States Department of Government Efficiency, is an example of exactly what we should not be doing in New South Wales. The United States Government today has \$36 trillion in debt. Under the Biden administration, that debt was increasing by around \$1 trillion every 100 days. The debt was an existential crisis. Many great nations have imploded because of a public debt crisis. Public debt crises are caused by politicians who prioritise winning office over sound policy. The mighty American economy was on track to a financial crisis. It still may be, but President Trump and Elon Musk are applying the only remedy that can turn the ship around. That remedy is cutting spending, taxes and regulation in a massive manner.

The people will flourish when the politicians are less powerful. Everyone knows that governments are wasteful and inefficient. What the DOGE has so far exposed is that there is an enormous amount of outright theft. When Joe Biden passed the Orwellian-named Inflation Reduction Act, the Biden White House ended up with around half a trillion dollars in its private kitty that it could dole out to its mates. Its mates went and set up endless institutions, organisations and non-government organisations, all with the words "climate change" in them, which were showered with public funds, and all its mates got paid huge salaries. That was just the beginning of the theft. It reminds me of Cato the Elder 2,000 years ago, when he said:

Thieves of private property pass their lives in chains; thieves of public property in riches and luxury.

Ever since 9/11 western governments have abandoned prudent fiscal restraint. It is distressing to hear the Treasurer ridicule the DOGE. I can only conclude that either he thinks that the New South Wales budget has no waste and inefficiency and so there is nothing to cut, or he approves of endless waste and inefficiency. Either way, stagnant growth and the debt hanging over New South Wales are here to stay until this Parliament takes a sharp turn towards fiscal sanity and looks to the great Javier Milei of Argentina for inspiration. That day is inevitable. The only question is whether we have to descend to pre-Milei levels of economic failure and poverty before we come to our senses.

#### INTERNATIONAL AND STATE ECONOMIES

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (12:32):** I feel compelled to respond to the previous contribution by the Hon. John Ruddick. Measuring the health of an economy, whether it be the economy of New South Wales or Australia—or of any jurisdiction, for that matter—by the level of debt is false economics, to be quite frank. The comparison of Argentina with New South Wales is a false dichotomy. In New South Wales, notwithstanding the fact that under this Treasurer debt is coming down, one's ability to service that debt is what matters. Debt can be a good thing, if it is borrowed on behalf of servicing the people that members are elected to look after. That is exactly what is happening in this State. Those opposite, including the Hon. John Ruddick, know that Labor was elected on a platform of lifting the wage cap and restoring frontline workers, who were totally disrespected. Frontline worker wages were suppressed and government roles and responsibilities were outsourced to the private sector, which patently failed the New South Wales taxpayer.

If we look at gross national product and gross State product per head or gross domestic product, Australia and this State are almost second to none in the world. We cannot compare our country to a country like Argentina, which, as the Treasurer pointed out, has runaway inflation. Members should have a look at the equality indexes. The spread of wealth and income is really what matters. The fact is that in Australia we have a modern, vibrant and successful social democracy, largely thanks to the Labor Party's time in government, both Federal and State, but I admit that at times the Liberal Party did some good things too.

We have a social pact whereby we run a social democracy based on equality of opportunity and outcomes and access to decent health, education and living. If we compare the granular level of things like Gini coefficient, the equality index, gross domestic product per capita and gross State product per capita, members will find that this State does exceedingly well thanks to the stewardship of the Treasurer, the Minister for Finance and, indeed, the Minns Government at large. Billionaires might cut government debt, and that looks good on a balance sheet for conservative economists; yet the people who need the most help are suffering worse than ever. Those comparisons are fraught with danger and are a crude and inaccurate portrayal of the real picture.

### 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) (12:35):** I reflect that some interesting questions were asked today and some interesting contributions were made. Government Ministers were focused on speaking about how we are delivering on the commitments that we made to the people of New South Wales and delivering in key parts of our portfolios, addressing the crises confronting the State. The Minister for Energy spoke about the rollout of rooftop solar. The Minister for Housing spoke about our historic investment in social housing and the way that is being rolled out in partnership with our Federal counterparts. The Minister for Agriculture spoke about a range of issues, indeed, peppered by some questions by the Opposition to show that they were catching up. Yesterday we spent the entirety of question time talking about the way our Government is addressing Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred, and today the Opposition finally caught up and asked questions. It was good to see they are with the program.

I particularly address the contribution made by the Hon John Ruddick towards the end of the take-note debate about the State's economy, and the very considered and informed answer that the Treasurer provided to the question about the National Accounts figures. There is no doubt that our Government has been very careful in its fiscal approach. I reject the premise of the Hon. John Ruddick's contribution in the take-note debate. Look at the figures: When we came to government, inflation was 7.8 per cent; it is now 2.4 per cent. We inherited the largest budget deficit ever and we have been able to fundamentally change the trajectory of that debt. We have delivered real wages growth. There is wages growth of 1 per cent in the public and private sector, after removal of a wages cap. New South Wales has the second lowest unemployment rate in the country, behind only Western Australia. I completely reject the notion that the economy in New South Wales is not being carefully managed by this Government, with the levers it has at its disposal. The Treasurer updated the House on the figures coming from the National Accounts that were released last week, and those figures show our careful management.

Finally, I address the slightly audacious questions from those opposite in relation to domestic manufacturing. Let us be clear about what their Government did. It explicitly outlawed local content. It issued a ministerial direction to New South Wales government agencies and said, "Do not take local content into consideration." We have overturned that. Fixing it will take some time, but we certainly have that program of work well underway.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Written Answers to Supplementary Questions*

#### **ELECTRIC BUS PROCUREMENT**

In reply to **the Hon. NATALIE WARD** (18 March 2025).

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

I am advised:

The framework for Bus Panel 4 procurement, including the request for proposal [RFP], was determined under the former Government. It was published in accordance with the approved Procurement Strategy on 24 October 2022.

Transport for NSW is progressively introducing local content requirements during the delivery of the first stage of the Zero Emission Buses [ZEB] program for the procurement of buses from Bus Panel 4 [BP4] to align with building capability and

capacity of local industry. This phased approach is targeting a minimum 50 per cent local content by 2027. This is supported by the New South Wales Government NSW Industry Policy.

Local content is taken into consideration regarding the procurement of battery electric buses for the Greater Sydney Stage 1 ZEB program. Other factors include quality, value for money technical requirements, delivery capacity and capability and the ZEB program timelines. Transport for NSW is leveraging the ZEB program and associated pipeline to provide industry with the opportunity to progressively increase local industry capability and capacity over time.

Transport for NSW is open and transparent in the way local content is calculated with BP4 suppliers. As part of the procurement process, manufacturers complete a local content schedule that breaks a bus down into key components identifying local and overseas content. This is used to determine the overall local content for the bus.

With regard to the level of local content in the recent procurement, manufacturers will supply a mix of vehicles consisting of either buses built in Australia, or where key bus components are imported and the bus is fitted out locally. All buses will have some local equipment as a minimum for the ZEB program's first bus order. Based on self-reporting, I am advised that the amount of local content across the four named suppliers ranges from 32 per cent to 68 per cent.

**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*

#### **DOWN SYNDROME**

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (14:02):** Ninety-nine per cent of people with Down syndrome report that they are happy with their lives. It appears that there is a happiness gene on that extra chromosome 21. Educational outcomes for children with Down syndrome are improving through taking account of how they learn best—from pictures and practical activities, communicating and being with other people, and following a familiar structure and routine. This Friday is World Down Syndrome Day, which celebrates the achievements of those with Down syndrome, the families that welcome a child with Down syndrome through birth or adoption, and the researchers who contribute to the improved health, education and social outcomes for those with the happiness gene.

However, there is a dark side that cannot go unremarked. In Australia genetic screening, coupled with abortion, tragically results in the destruction before birth of children having, or suspected of having, an extra chromosome 21. That eugenic conveyor belt often involves providing outdated, prejudiced information to expectant parents about the alleged burdens of raising a child with Down syndrome and how such a child's life will be miserable. Les Murray wrote about how failing to compose a sentence with the words "dog", "fox" and "field" in it meant that you were destined for the gas van. He wrote:

These were no leaders, but they were first  
into the dark on Dog Fox Field:

Anna who rocked her head, and Paul  
who grew big and yet giggled small,

Irma who looked Chinese, and Hans  
who knew his world as a fox knows a field.

Hunted with needles, exposed, unfed,  
this time in their thousands they bore sad cuts

for having gazed, and shuffled, and failed  
to field the lore of prey and hound

they then had to thump and cry in the vans  
that ran while stopped in Dog Fox Field.

Our sentries, whose holocaust does not end,  
they show us when we cross into Dog Fox Field.

When we celebrate World Down Syndrome Day, we should take the opportunity to, and vow to, celebrate the lives of people born with Down syndrome, and celebrate and congratulate their parents.

#### **WORKERS COMPENSATION**

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (14:05):** Some details of the New South Wales Labor Government's cruel plans to slash workers compensation entitlements in pursuit of budget savings have now been dragged out into the daylight. We all understand and accept that our workers compensation system is in need of reform, but the Government is currently depriving us all of the ability to meaningfully consult and contribute to that reform and is using deliberately misleading messaging in the scant communications it does make. Across the board in New South Wales, claims for workers compensation are up. More workers are being injured in New South Wales today than 10 years ago, five years ago or even two years ago.

Psychological injury claims have increased, but the overwhelming majority of the volume of additional claims on the workers compensation system have been and continue to be physical injuries. Workers with claims for psychological injuries suffered at work are off work for too long, but for 40 per cent of workers who leave work due to a work-related psychological injury, it is the fault of their employer—usually a government agency—that has failed to make the necessary changes after 12 months to provide a psychologically safe environment for them to return to work.

The proposal being floated by the New South Wales Labor Government is not to reform workplaces and help injured workers return to work; it is to prevent workers from entering the scheme in the first place. That is a needlessly cruel policy twice over. Vast numbers of workers will be denied the help they need in the first instance and those who do make it onto the scheme will be left to languish in a workers compensation system incapable of helping them back into work. The Government is arguing that the increase in psychological injury claims is putting unreasonable pressure on small businesses through their premiums. But look at the data and you see that is not strictly the truth. Premiums as a percentage of wages have remained steady for the past 10 years.

The New South Wales Labor Government is using small businesses as a fig leaf to cover the true source of injured workers in this State: the New South Wales Government itself. Responsible for only 8 per cent of workers, the New South Wales Government is delivering over 40 per cent of all psychological injury claims. Those injured workers are teachers, nurses, paramedics, community sector workers, child protection workers, police and Corrective Services workers. The Government's plan is to continue injuring its own workers, raise the drawbridge behind them and rip away their access to compensation.

Which claims does the Treasurer want to reject: the psychological injury claims for public sector workers that are a result of workplace violence, or those due to exposure to a traumatic event, or those directly attributable to work intensification? Those claims make up the clear majority of psychological injuries. The reforms are too important and consequential to the lives and wellbeing of the State's four million workers to be rushed through without rigorous scrutiny and appropriate time. We are talking about people's lives, not just a budget bottom line. I call on the Treasurer to stop, slow down, really consult and treat this Parliament and the working people of this State with respect and dignity.

#### **ROUSE HILL HOSPITAL**

**The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE (14:08):** I will speak about the new Rouse Hill Hospital and correct the record regarding the spurious statements being circulated by members of the Liberal Party, including the current member for Kellyville and the Liberal mayor of the Hills, who is working to replace him. As someone who lives in the Hills, I waited 12 years for those opposite to actually build a hospital in the Hills district. There were many announcements, but after 12 years we were left with empty promises. Around 2019, a site was announced with full fanfare. The then Liberal Minister and local Liberal members all turned up to show off what they had allegedly done. But, as it turned out, the site was not suitable, and in the end nothing else happened. Then in 2021 another site was found across the road.

Contrary to current claims by local Liberals, the Government owns the land where the Rouse Hill Hospital is now being built. That land was acquired in 2021. Those opposite know that, and they are causing uncertainty in the community by misrepresenting the facts. In November 2022 there was another media release—by this stage there had been so many that I had lost count. It included this statement by the then member for Castle Hill in the other place. It said:

I look forward to seeing early works commence in early 2023 following the review and finalisation of the clinical services plan and planning approval.

What was achieved by early 2023 and right before the State election was another sod turning by the then Liberal health Minister. Early works consisted of erecting temporary fencing and putting tattered plastic bunting around the project. When the Labor Government was elected in March 2023, it got straight to the task of sorting out the new Rouse Hill Hospital and all the planning approval obligations that are required for such a hospital. The previous Liberal-Nationals Government left behind a mess that needed to be sorted, and the Labor Government is sorting it out, led by my friend and colleague Minister Ryan Park. Let us correct the record: Under this Government, the Rouse Hill Hospital is being built, and there will be more than a sod turning and some tattered plastic bunting. Lastly and categorically, despite the misrepresentations of local Liberals and other would-be MPs, the government owns the land where the hospital is being built.

#### **PINK ELEPHANTS SUPPORT NETWORK**

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (14:11):** On 15 February I had the absolute privilege of attending a really great community event in Armidale to raise money for the Pink Elephants Support Network. Members of the House would be familiar with the network because I have spoken about it before. It does incredible work to

help people going through the journey of miscarriage and early pregnancy loss. I am very proud to have been associated with the Pink Elephants over the past few years, and I have spoken personally about my own experience with pregnancy loss, so I was delighted to be asked to attend the trivia night.

I mention a couple of the incredible women who made the night possible—firstly and most importantly, the wonderful Claire Brett. Claire lives just outside Armidale, in Kentucky. She is a mum of two and wife to her husband, Jake. Unfortunately, she has also experienced early pregnancy loss. She wanted local support when she went through that journey herself, so she decided to fundraise for that particular issue. She started a foundation called Lighting the Way, which works with local therapists, sells candles and organises fundraising events. Since then, Claire has teamed up with Pink Elephants to become one of their regional and rural ambassadors. The 15 February event was the network's second trivia night, and it sold out in 15 minutes. It was held at the Welder's Dog in Armidale, which is a great location. I highly recommend members head there when they are in Armidale.

I spoke on the night, along with Sam Payne, the CEO of Pink Elephants, and Dr Maha, who is the most wonderful GP. She has helped many families through the pregnancy loss journey. We had trivia with Jackie Daniels and Amber Rosé, and a groove DJ to dance the night away. It was a really wonderful opportunity for us to talk about a very serious issue that impacts many women in regional communities, and we had fun while we did so. I am pleased to inform the House that we raised a total of \$14,140 on the night, with all proceeds going to the Pink Elephants to help support women and families who have experienced early miscarriage and pregnancy loss. Those funds will provide vital resources and comfort to help families navigate an incredibly difficult journey.

I acknowledge the major sponsors, Regional Australia Bank and Brett AG Contracting, and all the locals who attended. They had a great time and, most importantly, they put their hands in their pockets to donate to a cause that is important to many of us. I say particularly to Claire, who is an absolute superstar, that we are so lucky to have strong women like her in regional areas. Her efforts to raise awareness and much-needed funds to support women who have been through journeys like hers is extraordinary. It is such a pleasure and privilege to know her, work with her and support her, and the same goes for Samantha Payne from Pink Elephants. They are incredible women doing incredible things, making a difference for people at their most vulnerable.

#### INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (14:14):** I condemn in the strongest terms the interference of the International Narcotics Control Board [INCB] into the right of New South Wales to reform its cannabis laws. It is not the role of an unelected international body to dictate how we regulate cannabis. The New South Wales Parliament alone has the authority to determine what is best for its citizens, and its members are accountable to the people of New South Wales, not the bureaucrats in Vienna. The overreach of INCB is emblematic of a body stuck in the failed war on drugs ideology of the 1960s. It has consistently attempted to intimidate nations and even subnational jurisdictions against legalising cannabis for adult use. In 2019 it criticised Australia for the Australian Capital Territory's modest cannabis reforms, claiming they violated international drug conventions, despite growing global recognition that prohibition has failed.

The evidence is overwhelming: Decades of prohibition has not reduced drug use or enhanced community safety. Instead, drug policy experts have called it a complete failure, citing rising illicit trafficking, organised crime and human rights abuses. Even former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and leaders like Helen Clark have condemned prohibition as a disaster. Meanwhile, the INCB largely ignores the real crisis—the deadly fentanyl and synthetic opioid epidemic. The United States suffered over 100,000 overdose deaths last year, driven largely by illicit fentanyl, yet the INCB has chosen to fixate on cannabis, a substance with no recorded overdose deaths.

We know also that the INCB's fears about legalisation are unfounded. Look at Canada, a Commonwealth nation that fully legalised cannabis in 2018 while remaining a signatory to United Nations drug conventions. Its regulated market has undercut criminals, protected consumers and reduced cannabis-related arrests, particularly among young and marginalised communities. The INCB's own reports admit that Canada's illegal market share has shrunk to 40 per cent, which is a major success in reducing criminal control over cannabis. If Canada can do it, so can we. Across the world—in Uruguay, Germany, South Africa and multiple states in the United States—governments are rejecting prohibition and embracing evidence-based regulation.

New South Wales must not be left behind, clinging to outdated dogma while other jurisdictions move forward. That is why a coalition of parties including the Legalise Cannabis Party, the Libertarian Party and The Greens has introduced bills to legalise adult personal use and home cultivation. Public support for these reforms is strong. A YouGov poll found that 50 per cent of Australians support legal home cultivation, while 54 per cent back decriminalisation outright. The INCB's meddling is not just unjustified; it is undemocratic.

Australia is a Federation, and New South Wales has sovereign authority over its criminal laws and health policies, and long may that be so.

### WOMEN'S SPORT

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY (14:17):** I spoke in the House on 26 September 2024 about the appalling treatment of and impacts on females competing in individual and team sporting competitions against males who identify as female or call themselves female. Tragically, virtually every week the media in New South Wales and elsewhere in Australia is reporting on female competitors being put to the sword in women's sporting competitions by trans women in the most disgraceful circumstances. This has had and continues to have the most unequivocally negative impacts on female competitors in a range of ways, including foregone prize money, forfeited trophies, denied sponsorship opportunities, humiliation, injuries and the denial of enjoyment, satisfaction, and camaraderie.

Tragically, once again we saw that awful nightmare play out in the 2025 pre-season Beryl Ackroyd Cup, which North West Sydney Football teams participate in. Last year the team that called itself the Flying Bats Football Club, which regularly fielded up to five males who identify as female or call themselves female, laid waste to all the female teams they went up against. The Flying Bats won the competition by a country mile and took away the \$1,000 jackpot prize. What is galling, at least—if not more than that—is the utter indifference towards this farce from North West Sydney Football, Football NSW and Football Australia. As I have said this year—and I say it again today—what is going on is manifestly unfair, unreasonable and dangerous for the female players.

I encourage interested members to visit the North West Sydney Football website. Regarding this year's Beryl Ackroyd Cup game results that have been uploaded, the scores for the Flying Bats Football Club against all-female teams have been 7-1, 8-0, 4-3 and 2-4. This is not quite the whitewash that we saw last year, but the cricket score results in the first two games reflect the absurdity and unfairness of requiring all-female teams to go up against teams that include males who identify as females or call themselves females. What, therefore, needs to be done? It is clearly apparent that North West Sydney Football, Football NSW and Football Australia are incapable of correcting the situation. It is my opinion that a review of all public funding they receive will make them sit up and pay attention.

### FREE TRADE

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH (14:20):** Free trade is objectively good. It is good for Australian producers who can sell more on the world market without barriers. It is good for Australian consumers who can buy a greater variety of products at a lower cost. It is good for humanity, with 800 million Chinese alone lifted out of poverty once they opened their borders to trade and capitalism. And it is good for world peace, as economically integrated nations that freely trade together do not go to war with each other. There is no economic concept as perfect or as efficaciously beautiful as free trade, both in theory and in practice.

Unfortunately, and increasingly of late, there has been a significant push by some on the populist right of politics towards protectionist and nationalist economic sentiment. Indeed, in the United States, President Trump has gone so far as to impose near-universal tariffs on trade partners across the globe. To say something of the economics, tariffs are objectively harmful. The consequences are simple: higher consumer prices; inefficient allocation of capital and labour; retaliatory trade barriers, which multiply the price pressures; and a reduction of overall economic welfare as consumers across the world lose access to their preferred goods. It is even more disappointing to me that President Trump would choose to impose tariffs on key strategic allies. I fail to see how Australia, the United Kingdom or the European Union adding value to the American economy in the form of voluntary exchange presents a threat to the American way of life.

I pose this simple question to those legislators who believe in protectionism: In times of warfare, when we impose a blockade on an enemy nation by forcibly preventing all forms of trade or exchange with other nations, are we doing so to encourage their domestic industries and to build a strong manufacturing base in that enemy country? Are we blockading them to create jobs in that enemy country? Do we put trade sanctions on North Korea or Iran to strengthen their dollar? The answer is very clearly no. If protectionism in its purest form—a blockade—is economically destructive, then surely even mild forms of protectionism like tariffs are also economically harmful. We must reject a protectionist and mercantilist view of the world, and favour 250 years of economic progress and empowerment.

### MENTAL HEALTH CARE

**Dr AMANDA COHN (14:23):** The Minns Labor Government is privatising mental health care by stealth. Mental health care in New South Wales was fragmented, under-resourced, reactive and crisis-driven when it came to government two years ago. Since then, things have only got worse. Staff specialist psychiatrists have resigned en masse in protest of chronic understaffing of public mental health services after 12 years of a public sector wage

cap. Under the cover of the urgency of responding to this exodus, the Government is making frightening decisions that will have a lasting impact on our public health system, on our health workforce and on some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in this State.

The Government's contingency plan of further fragmenting and privatising the workforce by employing the same psychiatrists back through visiting medical officer and locum contracts is, outrageously, costing the taxpayer more than simply bringing staff specialist salaries in line with other States. Ministers keep repeating that they cannot fix the wage gap between New South Wales and other States in one year, but they are very clearly making a choice not to. And the cost of that choice is more than just financial. It is disrupting continuity of care for people with complex and chronic illnesses and disrupting the training of the next generation of mental health clinicians.

At least 10 hospitals in New South Wales are currently at risk of being stripped of accreditation to train junior doctors to become psychiatrists in response to lack of supervision and risks to safety. Interest among junior doctors in New South Wales to become psychiatrists is half compared with Victoria. The Government is exploring sending involuntary patients to private for-profit hospitals. This would place some of the State's most vulnerable people in hospitals not built, not staffed, not accountable and not appropriate for this level and kind of health care. The absolute debacle that is the Northern Beaches Hospital public-private partnership should have been enough of a lesson that a profit motive in public health care can be lethal. The Minister for Mental Health knows this. In opposition, she was vocal about the risks of privatisation. She has described privatisation as "an outrageous breach of faith with the community". She is now defending recent decisions by stating that they are temporary and not proactive policy from the Government.

But it does not matter to the people who are directly impacted whether it was proactive policy or not. What is being operationalised today and what the Government is choosing to pay for instead of paying for staff is harming people. Even worse, we now know these changes are indefinite and uncosted. Yesterday courageous advocates with lived experience of mental ill health, including Sarah Logan, Carly Richardson, Kaerizma Roth and Jessica Hatherall, came to the New South Wales Parliament to hand the Minister for Mental Health a petition with over 5,000 signatures calling for urgent reform to the mental health system, including supporting psychiatrists and other mental health professionals to continue their crucial work. It is a disgrace that people are waiting for days in emergency departments or turning to fundraising through GoFundMe pages to access essential health care. The solutions are not complicated. The Government should do what it was elected to do.

### SILICA DUST EXPOSURE

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (14:26):** Over the weekend, *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported that 13 people working in tunnelling for CPB Contractors on the M6 stage one project have received a silicosis diagnosis. Silicosis is an incurable lung disease caused by exposure to silica dust. The disease can be fatal. SafeWork NSW first started investigating CPB Contractors on this matter in 2023 following a SafeWork inspector finding that the contractor had not disclosed 12 silicosis cases. Employers are required to report to SafeWork when a worker is suspected by a doctor to have a condition caused by silica exposure. The cases were not necessarily caused by work on the M6 stage one project. The Australian Workers' Union has advocated for the health and safety of tunnelling workers for many years and raised the alarm on the danger of exposure to silica dust. The AWU's assistant national secretary, Chris Donovan, noted in the article that no prosecutions have been made against a company regarding silica exposure.

Minister Cotsis is quoted expressing that SafeWork is expected to "strongly enforce legislation to protect workers". Minister Cotsis also strongly reaffirmed the Government's zero-tolerance approach to employers who fail to protect workers from exposure to high levels of silica dust. Addressing the dangers of silica dust is of the highest importance to the Government. It cannot be resolved overnight, but we have begun work to address it. For example, earlier this month the Government established a new expert taskforce to target the health of tunnelling workers exposed to silica. This is on top of the silica compliance team that the Government established last year. We are providing \$5 million of funding to the Asbestos and Dust Diseases Research Institute for silicosis research and a support initiative. The Federal Government also instated a ban on the importation of engineered stone products with 1 per cent or more silica, and a ban on the use, supply and manufacture of engineered stone products, which was a world first.

Further, last month I joined Minister Cotsis at the launch of the \$2.5 million Lung Health Mobile Clinic, also known as the Lung Bus. The brand-new bus will be travelling across the regions, offering free lung screenings, which can assist with the early detection of dust diseases like silicosis. Lung screening services are also available in Sydney. Unions' ongoing advocacy on these issues is why we see the changes that are occurring today and the Australian Workers' Union is at the forefront of this issue. I congratulate the union on its ongoing advocacy and the Minister on her initiatives.

## ADVANCE AUSTRALIA AND BETTER AUSTRALIA

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (14:29):** On 2 March this year, investigative journalists Wendy Bacon and Yaakov Aharon published the article *Israel activists infiltrate Labor Party in 'grassroots' putsch to hit Greens*. They outlined how Ofir Birenbaum and Sophie Calland, who are ultra-Zionists, social media influencers and NSW Labor party members, are heavily involved in far-right groups Advance Australia and Better Australia, who have made it their mission to attack The Greens because of The Greens' criticism of the ongoing war by the Israeli Government in Gaza. Sophie Calland is a key organiser for Better Australia, a new right-wing extremist group hiding behind a facade of being an authentic and diverse community, and an active member of Labor Friends of Israel. Calland's husband, Ofir Birenbaum, is a close friend of the Australian Jewish Association [AJA] and a member of the Rosebery branch of Labor. Advance Australia has close connections with the AJA and is currently rolling out a \$14 million campaign to target The Greens in the Federal election.

These groups are funded by big business, including coal and gas, and Advance's biggest donor last year was the Liberal-aligned Cormack Foundation. Calland and Birenbaum were both key players in Better Council's campaign in the local government elections last year. They authorised materials, trained volunteers and targeted candidates while wearing shirts saying, "Put Greens last." In December last year, Birenbaum began secretly recording a Palestine protest occurring outside the Great Synagogue's entrance. Birenbaum happened to have an Israeli flag with him, which he unravelled while standing across the road from the protest. Police moved Birenbaum on, alleging that his action was provocative. The AJA tweeted:

A Sydney Jew and friend of AJA, Ofir Birenbaum was detained by police for having an Israeli flag ...

This incident provided part of the political context for Premier Chris Minns to condemn the Palestine protest as disturbing and to call for urgent change to laws about protests outside places of worship. Birenbaum was also behind the Cairo Takeaway incident on Enmore Road, when he teamed up with *The Daily Telegraph's* Danielle Gusmaroli to document alleged antisemitic experiences in Sydney. The plan backfired when it became apparent he was provoking a response to be recorded when he walked into the cafe, wearing a Star of David cap. Cairo Takeaway has been silenced by the threat of legal action by Birenbaum. Minns and Albanese have rushed through laws that Birenbaum, Calland and other extreme Zionists have lobbied and clearly executed a deliberate campaign for. Their tactics must be called out, and Labor must condemn its members who are working with extreme-right radicals who want Dutton in power and will stop at nothing to make it happen.

### *Motions*

## KELI LANE AND PAROLE LAWS

### **Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (14:32):** I will conclude briefly with a few remarks. Under the "no body, no parole" laws, as I mentioned earlier, it is not open to the Government to direct the State Parole Authority to have an offender's parole reconsidered. It is an independent authority chaired by a judicial member. We will not support the motion today.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (14:33):** In December 2010, following a trial in the Supreme Court of New South Wales, Keli Lane was found guilty of the murder of her baby daughter, Tegan. Ms Lane's non-parole period expired in May last year, and she is currently eligible for parole consideration. There are statutory criteria for the grant of parole. Relevantly, these are found in sections 134 to 135A of the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999, which set out the factors the State Parole Authority must consider when considering whether to make a parole order. These factors focus on the safety of the community and do not include the views of this House.

Sadly, they also do not include the experience of the person in prison. I listened with great concern as Ms Sue Higginson informed us of the situation Keli has faced in jail. That is appalling. It should be dealt with by the prison authorities in the proper manner. "Appalling" is not even the word for the fact that it was able to continue for as long as it did. It is just wrong on every level. Sadly, that is not a relevant factor for parole. Ms Lane, because of the nature of her crime, is subject to section 135A, which requires that a parole order must not be made unless the authority is satisfied that the offender has satisfactorily cooperated with the police to identify the victim's location. In this case, it is the grave and the remains of baby Tegan.

As a serious offender, her parole was considered last March. As we have heard, it was refused. In its determination, the authority, importantly, with the benefit of submissions from Ms Lane's legal counsel, considered the effect of section 135A. It was agreed by all parties that baby Tegan's body has still not been located. It was recognised that the police report required by section 135A provided "the offender has not cooperated with or assisted police with searching for or locating the deceased". The State Parole Authority held that, as a matter of statutory construction, section 135A creates a separate and distinct regime that must be followed for offenders

such as Ms Lane and that the provisions of this section had not been met. It is open to Ms Lane to appeal. I am not aware of any appeal in relation to that finding by the authority.

Keli Lane maintains her innocence and that there is no body to find. But both the jury at her trial and the Court of Criminal Appeal rejected these claims. We can all feel sympathy for Ms Lane. But, at the end of the day, if this motion asks us as a legislative body to interfere in the statutory decision-making of an arm of the Executive, the State Parole Authority, it is improper, and we should resist the invitation to do so.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (14:36):** I support the strong words and contribution and work in this area by my colleague Ms Sue Higginson and also thank her for the incredible work she has been doing to get justice for women behind bars. I place on record these facts. The material that Keli Lane was preparing for her testimony at the Astill inquiry was copied from a computer she was using at Milk Pro, where she was an inmate worker. The documents were copied and taken from where she was preparing them for the testimony she was to give at the Astill inquiry. She was using her memory and her own diaries, diary entries and dates to prepare her evidence.

It has now been proven that those documents were taken from the computer and passed on to senior Corrective Services officers who were assisting prison officers giving evidence at the Astill inquiry. We cannot know at this point whether they were passed directly to the legal team or barristers who were assisting those Corrections officers, but we do know definitely that they were passed on to senior Corrective Services officers who were assisting officers under scrutiny at the inquiry. What we know also is that Keli Lane was extremely surprised by some of the questions she was being asked during her testimony in the inquiry and that she kept being thrown off her evidence, not understanding how the prosecuting barrister seemed to know so much of what she had put together in her notes. Was that another injustice faced by Ms Lane?

**The Hon. ROBERT BORSACK (14:38):** Today I must regretfully express my outrage at Ms Sue Higginson and The Greens for yet another disgraceful attempt to undermine the core principles of justice that the "no body, no parole" laws, known as Lyn's law, represent. Ms Sue Higginson earlier graphically recounted Ms Lane's claims of suffering in prison, but we must remember that, during her trial, Ms Lane was found to be a serial liar, someone who repeatedly deceived the investigators, those around her and the court itself. Given her history of dishonesty, any statements she now makes about circumstances must be treated with the utmost caution.

Last May, during debate on a motion I moved in support of the "no body, no parole" laws, Ms Sue Higginson stood in this Chamber with cold detachment and dismissed the anguish of the families of victims like Lynette Simms. Nothing has changed. Again, Ms Sue Higginson is more concerned about convicted offenders than the victims or shattered families left behind. Let us be clear: Lyn's law was born out of the tragedy of Lynette Simms, a woman murdered and never returned to her family. It is about justice and the moral obligation of offenders to disclose the location of their victims. Instead of supporting that principle, Ms Sue Higginson twists this into an attack on a law that gives families hope for closure.

Today's motion is another calculated insult. By focusing on one case, that of Keli Lane, Ms Sue Higginson once again ignores the overwhelming public support behind these laws. Over 30,000 people signed a petition to back "no body, no parole" because they understand its importance. The Greens, however, continue to put offenders ahead of victims. Ms Sue Higginson argues that Lyn's law has not yet resulted in bodies being recovered, but that is because the law was only passed in 2022. Change takes time, but the law's message is clear: If you take a life and conceal the body, you will not walk free until you reveal the truth. Ms Sue Higginson and The Greens would rather prioritise legal hypotheticals over lived reality. They show more compassion for those convicted of murder than for the grieving families who deserve answers. We will not let The Greens trivialise the suffering of those families. The Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party and I reject this motion.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (14:40):** Before I address the core of this matter, let me begin by acknowledging how deeply serious and disturbing the issue of inmate mistreatment is within our correctional system. It is not okay for Keli Lane; it is not okay for anyone. Let me be unequivocal: No-one, no matter their crimes, should be subjected to abuse while in the custody of the State. Prison is a place of lawful punishment, not unlawful trauma. The State has failed in its duty of care, and for that there must be accountability and reform. But we must not conflate the two issues here. As appalling as it is, the grave misconduct of corrections officers highlighted by the member does not alter the fact that Keli Lane is in prison for the murder of her newborn daughter Tegan Lane. She remains behind bars because she has refused, for nearly three decades, to tell the truth about what happened to her child.

Keli Lane is a convicted murderer, found guilty by a jury of her peers for the cold and calculated killing of her newborn daughter Tegan. For over two decades she has told lie after lie, spinning falsehoods about mystery carers, imaginary adoptions and fabrications so outrageous they insult the intelligence of every decent Australian. This is not a case of judicial overreach or wrongful conviction. The facts are chilling. Lane hid multiple pregnancies, gave birth in secret and returned to social events as if nothing had happened. She showed no concern

for Tegan's welfare because, according to the evidence, she ensured there was no child to worry about. Now, in 2025, she sits in prison not because the system has failed her but because she has failed to tell the truth.

The "no body, no parole" laws that this Parliament passed in 2022 exist for a reason—to compel killers like Lane to take responsibility and bring closure to grieving families. Those laws recognise the fundamental truth that a convicted killer who refuses to reveal the location of their victim does not deserve the privilege of parole. Those laws are not punitive. They are just and they are measured. The only cruelty here is the continued torment of a society that still does not know where Tegan Lane lies—whether she was buried, dumped or discarded like rubbish.

I ask the individuals who campaign for her release what justice they serve. What message do they send to the families of real victims? Is it that silence pays, that deception is a currency that can be traded? Until Keli Lane tells the truth and reveals where her daughter is, she deserves not a moment of freedom. Let her sit in her cell and think about the life she took and the lies she has told. The law is clear, the evidence is damning and the public should not tolerate cowardice. Keli Lane has one pathway to freedom: the truth. Until she tells it, she should remain exactly where she is, behind bars. Let us not become a society that forgets its victims or a Parliament that rewards silence. Let us remember Tegan Lane, the innocent girl whose life was taken from her before it had even begun by the one person tasked with the blessing of nurturing and caring for her.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON (14:43):** In reply: I am incredibly disappointed. If Government members thought that this motion could not be supported because of the call contained in paragraph (4), they could have come and talked to me—as could Opposition members—about how we could work together to achieve the outcome. It does not sound to me like the Government or the Opposition are remotely attempting to justify the continued wrongful incarceration of Ms Keli Lane. I have no comments about the lynch mob over in the corner, members of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, and their contributions, other than to say that the real fact here is that when one has to face an innocent prisoner's dilemma, it is so important to understand what one is dealing with.

Even if Ms Keli Lane today decided to say, "Okay, I did this", she cannot possibly know where her baby, or the person, is now—and she knows this. If she did know, she would say so. She has gone to extensive lengths to assist police to locate the remains or where her baby Tegan is or was. She has hired private investigators. When the police gave up looking, she continued. She has been an exemplary prisoner. She has done her time and assisted everyone around her. She has assisted the police. She has satisfied everything she possibly can. However, right now the retrospective application—it is wrong and always has been wrong to make criminal laws that apply retrospectively—provides one of the grossest and gravest injustices that anyone might face. The innocent prisoner reality is too much. It should not be happening.

This is not the end. Keli has suffered too much and has done her time. It is time the Government, the Opposition and all members worked together to see some justice. The injustice this woman has faced and the pain and suffering she has experienced are enough to keep us all awake at night. I acknowledge Keli's husband is in the gallery, along with her dear colleague Rebecca, who has always stood by her side. Right now Keli has a daughter and a husband who are suffering. These are unjust laws. We have caused so much harm, yet together we have the power to end this.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....7  
 Noes .....31  
 Majority.....24

**AYES**

Boyd  
 Buckingham  
 Cohn

Faehrmann (teller)  
 Higginson (teller)

Hurst  
 Ruddick

**NOES**

Banasiak  
 Barrett  
 Borsak  
 Buttigieg  
 Carter  
 D'Adam

Jackson  
 Kaine  
 Lawrence  
 MacDonald  
 Maclaren-Jones  
 Martin

Munro  
 Murphy  
 Nanva (teller)  
 Overall  
 Primrose  
 Rath (teller)

## NOES

Donnelly  
Fang  
Farlow  
Graham  
Houssos

Merton  
Mitchell  
Mookhey  
Moriarty

Roberts  
Sharpe  
Suvaal  
Tudehope

**Motion negatived.**

### ELECTRIC BUS PROCUREMENT

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (14:54):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) VDI-Yutong and Foton Mobility Distribution [FMD] are approved suppliers of electric buses to Transport for NSW on Bus Panel 4, which was established on 1 March 2024;
  - (b) in December 2024 VDI-Yutong and FMD were given orders to supply electric buses to Transport for NSW;
  - (c) in January 2025, a joint media release from the Premier, the Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement and the then Minister for Transport referred to "our partners at Foton" and to "many more orders to come" for electric buses;
  - (d) both VDI-Yutong and FMD import buses from China include batteries manufactured by Contemporary Amperex Technology Co., Limited [CATL];
  - (e) the June 2023 Globalworks research report *Supply Chain Screening: Forced Labour at Battery and Electric Bus Manufacturers in China* identified CATL and Yutong as companies with a Risk Category of Very High for the use of Uyghur forced labour and the use of forced labour in the Democratic Republic of the Congo;
  - (f) in January 2024 the Anti-slavery Commissioner advised Transport for NSW that "all procurement of electric vehicles carries 'High' inherent risk of modern slavery", including "risks of child and forced labour in the production of cobalt used in lithium-ion (L-ion) batteries used in electric vehicles";
  - (g) in September 2024 an article published in Australian Strategic Policy Institute's *The Strategist* warned that the emphatic denial by CATL of forced labour in its supply chain "contradicts the substantial media reporting, academic research and investigations done by members of the United States Congress, making it highly doubtful that Australian governments and companies should derive any confidence from it as a guide to the risks of these supply chains";
  - (h) on 7 January 2025 the United States Department of Defense added CATL to the list of "Chinese military companies" under section 1260H of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021; and
  - (i) on 12 March 2025 Australian Uyghur Tangritagh Women's Association president Ramila Chanisheff stated that too many imports into Australia are "tainted by Uyghur blood" and called for government contracts with FMD and Yutong to be cancelled.
- (2) That this House unreservedly condemns the use of forced labour, including the forced labour of Uyghur people in the People's Republic of China, and the use of child and forced labour in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- (3) That this House calls on the Government to:
  - (a) make compliance with the Anti-slavery Commissioner's Guidance on Reasonable Steps mandatory by issuing a Procurement Board direction to this effect;
  - (b) take steps to ensure that no further contracts to supply goods or services to the Government, its agencies or its State owned corporations are entered into with CATL or with any company that would use CATL in that supply, including contracts for the supply of electric buses or for the supply of energy storage batteries; and
  - (c) terminate, as soon as legally possible, all such existing contracts.

In January 2024 the Anti-slavery Commissioner explicitly warned Transport for NSW of the "risks of child and forced labour in the production of cobalt used in lithium ion batteries used in electric vehicles" and flagged the inherent high risk of modern slavery in the supply chain for electric vehicles. Notwithstanding that timely warning, Transport for NSW proceeded to procure electric buses from two companies that import electric buses from China which use batteries made by Contemporary Amperex Technology Co., Limited. It appears an over-reliance has been placed on self-attestation by CATL that there is no forced labour in its supply chain. Siddharth Kara, author of *Cobalt Red: How the Blood of the Congo Powers Our Lives*, conducted extensive research in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He writes:

Cobalt is toxic to touch and breathe—and there are hundreds of thousands of poor Congolese people touching and breathing it day in and day out. Young mothers with babies strapped to their backs, all breathing in this toxic cobalt dust.

That is where the cobalt in CATL batteries is mined. The Chinese government is carrying out the suppression of the Uyghur people, including through the large-scale use of forced labour in factories. The Minister for Transport

has attempted to draw a clear distinction between proof that CATL is using Uyghur forced labour in its supply chains and the considered assessment by reputable independent bodies that there is a "very high risk" of this use.

In April 2023 China expanded its counter-espionage law to include industrial espionage. That has effectively halted the work of audit firms that previously conducted on-the-ground research to validate that a Chinese company was not using forced labour. We made use of some of those audit firm reports back in the COVID years, when queries were raised about some of the personal protective equipment we were procuring. Now that this level of on-the-ground scrutiny can no longer be carried out safely, it would be absurd to suggest that the use of Uyghur forced labour in a supply chain must be proved to some high evidential standard before declining to procure from a company like CATL, which is rated as being at "very high risk" of using such forced labour.

At budget estimates the Premier read out a list of car manufacturers that had links to CATL batteries. When the Opposition asked about modern slavery during question time yesterday, the Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement heckled that CATL has over 30 per cent of the market share. CATL will continue to enjoy this market share as long as governments continue to turn a blind eye to the forced labour of children and the poor in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the forced labour of Uyghur people in the People's Republic of China by demanding an unattainable level of proof before declining to procure from such companies.

One of the key moments in the fight for the ultimate abolition of black slavery in the British Empire was the boycott in which over 300,000 ordinary people joined in a campaign against sugar that was produced on slave plantations in the West Indies. Those 300,000 people refused to use that sugar. A boycott of CATL and the users of child labour should be enacted now. This Government should take steps now to ensure that contracts with companies with links to slavery, or that are assessed as posing a very high risk of connection to slavery, are boycotted.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (14:59):** I move:

That the question be amended by:

- (1) Inserting in paragraph (1) after "That this House notes that:":
  - (a) the previous Government failed to bring into force and effect the Modern Slavery Act 2018 until 1 January 2022;
  - (b) the previous and current governments procured buses with CATL batteries, including Yutong and Foton Mobility, since at least the year 2020;
- (2) Inserting in paragraph (2) "and other contraventions of labour standards" after "condemns the use of forced labour".
- (3) In paragraph (3), omitting subparagraphs (a), (b) and (c) and inserting instead:
  - (a) continue to work with the Anti-slavery Commissioner to implement best practice contract lifestyle management to identify, mitigate and respond to modern slavery risks when procuring goods and services; and
  - (b) take reasonable steps in collaboration with the Anti-slavery Commissioner to ensure the supply chain for bus procurement is free of modern slavery.
- (4) Inserting after paragraph (3):
  - (4) That this House notes that non-compliance with the supplier code of conduct by a supplier when doing business with the Government can lead to the termination of contracts.

This very important issue has been canvassed in this House for years. It is important that this motion reflects that long history, and the long history of action taken by Labor in opposition and now in government to address the issue. I affirm again what I said yesterday in question time: The New South Wales Government is committed to ensuring that our government supply chains are free from modern slavery. Under the Public Works and Procurement Act 1912, a government agency must take reasonable steps to ensure that goods and services procured are not the product of modern slavery, and each agency is responsible for its own contract management, including the use of modern slavery clauses and contracts.

This House has stood largely united on this issue, both when Labor was in opposition and now in government. In budget estimates I outlined the range of methods by which this Government is addressing modern slavery, specifically in relation to procurement but also in working with the Anti-slavery Commissioner across a broad range of reforms that the New South Wales Government is pursuing. Indeed, we continue to respond to the most recent report of the Modern Slavery Committee, a joint standing committee of both Houses of Parliament, to consider how we can continue to improve the work of the Anti-slavery Commissioner. It is an incredibly important issue, but CATL batteries have been procured by both this Government and the previous Government.

It is worthwhile noting that those concerns from the mover of the motion were not acted upon when he was the Minister responsible for procurement. It is important that we continue to improve, but we must be judged on our record. It is easy to move motions in this place but far more difficult to actually make changes, but that is what this Government is doing. As I said yesterday in question time, the Anti-slavery Commissioner has issued guidance on reasonable steps, and individual agencies are working with the Anti-slavery Commissioner to put them into practice.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (15:03):** On behalf of The Greens, I indicate that we will support this motion, with the amendments moved by the Minister. I am glad we all agree now on the importance of ensuring best practice labour standards throughout procurement supply chains. That is a good place for us all to be in. I move:

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

- (4) That this House further calls on the Government to provide additional funding towards the Anti-slavery Commission's monitoring functions under the Modern Slavery Act 2018.

This issue was discussed in the Standing Committee on Social Issues procurement inquiry. In fact, I moved an amendment to try to secure more resourcing—or at least a recommendation for more resourcing—for the Anti-slavery Commissioner. I was supported in that by everyone except for the Labor members, unfortunately. It is not enough to say the words and to change the law if it cannot be enforced. If it cannot be enforced because the resources are not available, then it is not worth the paper that the words are written on. I am looking at a letter that was written to the Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine in her capacity as chair of the Standing Committee on Social Issues by the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner. He wrote:

As we have previously discussed, under arrangements approved by the previous Government, and not yet revisited by the current Government, my team currently has access to less than 1.0 FTE staff to conduct our monitoring functions, spread across myself and two other team members. With this we are expected to monitor more than 420 agencies' annual reporting under the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW).

He continued:

In late 2022 and early 2023 I provided modelling to the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, out of whose budget my work is funded, suggesting that by the second half of 2024 we would likely need around 10 to 15 personnel to satisfy our statutory monitoring functions.

It is all well and good to talk about procurement rules and best practice standards to ensure that we do not end up with modern slavery in our procurement supply chain, but I do not see how we can do that without adequately resourcing the Anti-slavery Commissioner. That is the reason for moving that amendment. Other than that, we support the motion.

**The Hon. MARK BANASIAK (15:06):** I speak in support of the motion moved by the Hon. Damien Tudehope. I thank Opposition members for taking an interest in this matter, given that they invited modern slavery to our doorstep by introducing the Electricity Infrastructure Act, which shackled us to the Chinese supply chain and made us complicit in modern slavery for the transition to a green utopia. I first raised the matter on 19 September 2023, and I draw members' attention back to that day. I asked the Treasurer, representing the Attorney General, about modern slavery risks with renewable energy, particularly highlighting that at that stage we did not even have a code of practice to guide us. I noted that the real issue was not local manufacturing but the sourcing and manufacturing of components that are then utilised in our renewable projects. In the Treasurer's answer, he stated:

... as part of people participating in tenders, they do have to disclose modern slavery requirements and adherence. But I think the point that the member is making is that those disclosures tend to go to the first degree, second degree and third degree, where we know that a lot of modern slavery takes place below the chain.

At first glance the Treasurer is demonstrating some maturity, acknowledging that there are issues and not hiding from those issues as some politicians like to do. Unfortunately, in his deferred answers, the Attorney General decided to go the other way and impersonate an ostrich, speaking to arrangements that he believed meant we were stopping modern slavery with renewables. Unfortunately, I blew that answer apart in an adjournment speech on 17 October, and I will do so again now.

First, on the response about the publication of modern slavery statements on the Federal register if an entity has revenue over \$100 million, I refer members to the disclaimer on the website that states that the publication of modern slavery statements does not indicate compliance with requirements of the Act. So why have a register at all? We should just bring back the *Yellow Pages*. There are companies on the register only declaring domestic-based risks, as is the case with this bus procurement issue. Large companies are funnelling operations through smaller companies under \$100 million revenue to avoid reporting, as is the case with this issue. Since 1 July 2022, according to the Attorney General, 400 public organisations have had legal obligations to take reasonable steps to ensure that they do not procure products of modern slavery. It would be great if the New South Wales Government led by example.

He also talks about the requirements under the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap to report to the Federal register via the Border Force, but the same issues around the Federal register exist for that as well. He then talks about how the Anti-slavery Commissioner is developing a more detailed code of practice to deal with modern slavery. I draw members' attention to the New South Wales Government's website on that, where there have been no changes since 13 May 2024. The Government should accept the fact that no matter what the Anti-slavery Commissioner comes up with, no matter how much money we give him or her, if the Government wants the green energy transition, it needs to remain dependent on countries like China supplying the raw components. We are going to be third-party slave traders unless we sever that tie.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (15:10):** I speak in support of the motion and thank the Hon. Damien Tudehope for bringing it to the House. I congratulate him on his fine work, dedicated research, and commitment to prosecuting the case and calling it out. In January 2024 the Anti-slavery Commissioner explicitly warned Transport for NSW of the "risks of child and forced labour in the production of cobalt used in lithium ion batteries used in electric vehicles". It was specific, explicit and known. Transport for NSW proceeded to procure electric buses from two companies that import electric buses from China that use batteries made by Contemporary Amperex Technology Co., Limited [CATL]. As the Hon. Damien Tudehope has quoted, Siddharth Kara, author of *Cobalt Red: How the Blood of the Congo Powers Our Lives*, has conducted extensive research in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He writes:

Cobalt is toxic to touch and breathe — and there are hundreds of thousands of poor Congolese people touching and breathing it day in and day out. Young mothers with babies strapped to their backs, all breathing in this toxic cobalt dust.

We are on notice. This is the very place where we should prosecute this motion, call out the issue and stop it. The Minister for Transport has attempted to draw a clear distinction between proof that CATL is using Uyghur forced labour in its supply chains and the considered assessment by reputable independent bodies that there is a "very high risk" of that use. At budget estimates, the Premier read out a list of car manufacturers that have links to CATL batteries, as if that is a justification for it being okay. That is the very reason why we should do more, and the motion speaks to that.

The Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement was heckling during question time yesterday when the Opposition asked questions about modern slavery and the fact that CATL has over 30 per cent of the market share. Question time is the appropriate time for those questions to be asked. It is the right forum to ask those questions, and the Government should welcome them, particularly having been in opposition so recently. Government members are interjecting and laughing about it now. That is the proof in the pudding.

**The Hon. Courtney Houssos:** Point of order—

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst):** The Clerk will stop the clock.

**The Hon. Courtney Houssos:** We were absolutely not laughing. It is an incredibly important issue. I ask that the member withdraw that comment.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Emma Hurst):** I heard some conversation and laughter. I take the Minister's position that she was not laughing at the motion that is being debated. With that, I ask the member if she wants to withdraw the comment.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** I observed some laughing. If it was not related to the motion, I withdraw the comment. Missing from the Government's response is any action. There is quibbling over the questions. There is quibbling over the sources of concern. There is a lot of obfuscation, but there is no action. The motion is calling for action. Modern slavery had a difficult birth in this place. I honour the Hon. Paul Green for his commitment and hard work. I back in the motion that calls on the Government to make the compliance direction to that effect and terminate all such existing contracts as soon as legally possible. It should be simple.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (15:13):** The Opposition puts the case that if there is a risk, then the contracts should be terminated. The truth of that position, given the facts the Opposition is putting on the table, is that there will be no electric bus or electric battery purchases in New South Wales. The Government puts the position that there are serious risks. The Government is focused on those and will take reasonable steps to combat them. The issues that have been raised about transport will form a real test case for New South Wales about how the State pursues those reasonable steps. That is the Government's case. It is true, as the Opposition said, that CATL produces about one-third of the world's electric vehicle batteries. It is true that the batteries are used by many reputable companies. It is true that CATL manufactures batteries worldwide, including in Germany and Hungary. It is true that those batteries are able to be purchased in the United States, but the Opposition says

they should not be purchased in Australia. Those things are true. That is not the case that the Government is seeking to make.

The serious reports that the Government is working on with the Anti-slavery Commissioner highlight the risks. The Opposition goes further than that. Opposition members say that there are links and that they have evidence beyond what the reports say, but they have not provided that evidence. The Government will cooperate fully with the Anti-slavery Commissioner. The Opposition calls for an investigation by the Anti-slavery Commissioner. It also says that an investigation has commenced. The problem is that the legislation that the Coalition passed when in government did not allow for that function for the Anti-slavery Commissioner. That is why that is not happening and has not happened. The Government will take reasonable steps, but the Opposition leaps to say that the contracts should be terminated if there is a risk.

There is a risk. I agree with the case and the research that there are risks. Members opposite say that the contracts should be terminated immediately if there is a risk. Given that there are risks in the chain, particularly for electric vehicles, there would not be an electric bus in New South Wales under those opposite. We would be immediately moving to termination. That is a serious case to make. I do not believe they have done that. Regarding The Greens amendment calling for additional funding, the Government takes seriously its obligation to respond to the report. The Government is open to discussing resourcing. That will be shaped, in many ways, by the investigation. The Government will not agree to the amendment. It will deal with it through the usual budget processes, as any government would.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (15:16):** The extent to which we are prepared to entertain the risk of using forced labour to make products or services that we acquire is perhaps one of the most serious issues that the Parliament will ever consider. There are risks inherent in everything we do. Sadly, there are possible risks of slavery inherent in everything we do. But there are not "high" risks of slavery inherent in everything we do. The Government has the attitude that everything carries risks and that it will take "reasonable steps". What is a reasonable step to end slavery? What is a reasonable step in saying that we will take labour from somebody who has not freely given it or who will not be adequately compensated for it?

Are we going to say, "That slavery is reasonable," or, "That amount of forced labour or risk is reasonable"? Are we going to force mothers, children, husbands and fathers to work against their will, against their personal safety, without adequate safeguards or adequate remuneration, to be used as chattels by other people, and take benefit from it? I am sure that electric buses are a great public good, but can we pursue a public good at the expense of people's lives? It is shocking to suggest that is somehow a reasonable step or a reasonable risk mitigation strategy. I dissociate myself with any Government policy that implies that is a reasonable risk assessment measure.

**The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (15:18):** In reply: I thank all members who contributed to the debate, being the Hon. Courtney Houssos, the Hon. John Graham, Ms Abigail Boyd, the Hon. Mark Banasiak, the Hon. Natalie Ward and the Hon. Susan Carter. I start by addressing the Government amendment, which seeks to remove the actual thrust of the motion calling on the Government to do something in response to the report that identifies a high risk of slavery. The motion calls on the Government to:

make compliance with the Anti-slavery Commissioner's Guidance on Reasonable Steps mandatory by issuing a Procurement Broad direction to this effect

Guess what? That is what the Anti-slavery Commissioner asked for. That is what he wanted. To water that down and replace it with "continue the work of the Anti-slavery Commissioner to implement best practice" is, quite frankly, ignoring the problem. The Anti-slavery Commissioner has identified the problem and potentially identified a part-way solution. The second thing that the Government seeks to remove from the motion is:

take steps to ensure that no further contracts to supply goods or services to the Government ... or its State owned corporations are entered into with CATL or with any company that would use CATL in that supply ...

In her contribution the Hon. Susan Carter absolutely and completely dealt with the Minister's response. What does the Government say is a tolerable level of slavery? Today the Government made the argument that because it might be difficult to source the batteries from somewhere else, it will tolerate it. Is that seriously the moral position on slavery that a Labor government is prepared to embrace? The Government is proposing to remove that paragraph and replace it with an argument that says, "There are levels of slavery we have to tolerate because it is difficult to source these products elsewhere. The imperative of procuring these buses is so high on our list that we will tolerate slavery." That is the argument from a Labor government. That is the way a Labor government treats workers. The Government amendment is an absolute disgrace and does the Government no credit whatsoever. The Opposition opposes it.

**The PRESIDENT:** The Hon. Damien Tudehope has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Courtney Houssos and Ms Abigail Boyd have moved amendments. The question is that the amendment of the Hon. Courtney Houssos be agreed to.

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....24  
 Noes .....16  
 Majority.....8

**AYES**

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

**NOES**

Barrett	Martin	Rath (teller)
Carter	Merton	Roberts
Fang (teller)	Mitchell	Ruddick
Farlow	Munro	Tudehope
MacDonald	Overall	Ward
Maclaren-Jones		

**Amendment of the Hon. Courtney Houssos agreed to.**

**The PRESIDENT:** The question is that the amendment of Ms Abigail Boyd be agreed to. Is leave granted to ring the bells for one minute?

**Leave granted.**

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....20  
 Noes .....20  
 Majority.....0

**AYES**

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

**NOES**

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

**The PRESIDENT:** There being 20 ayes and 20 noes, the question is not resolved and so it falls to me to issue my casting vote—the first of this parliamentary term. The established principles guiding a casting vote,

arising from the practice of the United Kingdom Parliament and adopted clearly in the practice of the Legislative Council, are many, but the one I particularly draw members' attention to on this occasion is this:

... where no further discussion is possible, decisions should not be taken except by majority ...

For that reason, I cast my vote with the noes.

**Amendment of Ms Abigail Boyd negatived.**

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Committees*

## **SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DURAL CARAVAN INCIDENT AND PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES ON LEGISLATION**

### **Establishment, Membership, Chair and Deputy Chair**

**The PRESIDENT:** I am conscious of the gravity of this motion. Members will leave the Chamber if they wish to continue their conversations.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (15:34):** I move:

- (1) That a select committee be established to inquire into and report on the relationship between the Dural caravan incident and parliamentary debates on legislation, and in particular:
  - (a) evidence and knowledge about the incident held by the Premier, the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter, and the Attorney General at various times between 19 January 2025 and 20 February 2025;
  - (b) relevant briefings given by the NSW Police Force prior to or on 20 February 2025;
  - (c) relevant briefings given by the Australian Federal Police prior to or on 20 February 2025;
  - (d) any references to the incident in any briefing materials prepared for the development, introduction and debate on the:
    - (i) Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025;
    - (ii) Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025;
    - (iii) Crimes Amendment (Inciting Racial Hatred) Bill 2025.
  - (e) statements made by members of the Executive Government in the press and during debate on the bills;
  - (f) the provision of information to the public and Parliament prior to and during the debate on the bills;
  - (g) any decision to release or withhold information;
  - (h) the impact of any such decision on parliamentary deliberations; and
  - (i) any other related matter.
- (2) That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the standing orders, the committee consist of eight members comprising:
  - (a) three Government members;
  - (b) two Opposition members, one being the Hon. Susan Carter; and
  - (c) three crossbench members, being Ms Sue Higginson, the Hon. Rod Roberts and the Hon. John Ruddick.
- (3) That the chair of the committee be the Hon. Rod Roberts and the deputy chair be the Hon. Susan Carter.
- (4) That, unless the committee decides otherwise:
  - (a) all inquiries are to be advertised via social media, stakeholder emails and a media release distributed to all media outlets in New South Wales;
  - (b) submissions to inquiries are to be published, subject to the committee clerk checking for confidentiality and adverse mention and, where those issues arise, bringing them to the attention of the committee for consideration;
  - (c) attachments to submissions are to remain confidential;
  - (d) the chair's proposed witness list is to be circulated to provide members with an opportunity to amend the list, with the witness list agreed to by email, unless a member requests the chair to convene a meeting to resolve any disagreement;
  - (e) the sequence of questions to be asked at hearings alternate between Opposition, crossbench and Government members, in that order, with equal time allocated to each;
  - (f) transcripts of evidence taken at public hearings are to be published;

- (g) supplementary questions are to be lodged with the committee clerk within two business days following the receipt of the hearing transcript, with witnesses requested to return answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions within 21 calendar days of the date on which questions are forwarded to the witness;
- (h) answers to questions on notice and supplementary questions are to be published, subject to the committee clerk checking for confidentiality and adverse mention and, where those issues arise, bringing them to the attention of the committee for consideration; and
- (i) media statements on behalf of the committee are to be made only by the chair.

Mr President, I acknowledge your contribution about the gravity of this matter. I am not moving this motion lightly. Members should know and realise that this is the first time I have moved a motion to establish a select committee in my entire time as a member of this House. This motion to establish a select committee revolves around what I will now call the Dural caravan incident and what followed on from that. Let me cut to the chase. Basically, the bottom line is who knew what and when, what the impact of that knowledge was, and what the non-spreading of that knowledge led to.

The committee the motion seeks to establish goes to the heart of the integrity of the parliamentary process. I suggest that the members of the New South Wales community would demand and insist that parliamentarians who make legislation—no matter the subject—are fully informed and apprised of all the available facts before they are asked to legislate. I assert that did not happen in this case and I will shortly outline why. I suggest that the New South Wales Parliament was misled because we were not informed of the full circumstances surrounding the discovery of the explosives in the caravan. It is quite apparent that Premier Minns and some of his Cabinet members would have been fully aware of the fabricated terror plot prior to the introduction of and debate on the contentious bills impinging on freedom of speech that this House passed at 4.00 a.m. on 21 February.

To support my point, I refer to page 67 of the recent Police and Counter-terrorism budget estimates hearing. I asked Deputy Commissioner Hudson, the deputy commissioner in charge of counterterrorism, this question:

Mr Hudson, let's go back to Dural and the caravan and stuff like that. Correct me if I'm wrong here; we're trying to record stuff as we go. I think you said around about 21 January you informed the Premier that you had a suspicion—a suspicion only—that maybe it wasn't a terror plot with the caravan. Is that correct?

Hudson said, "I think the words I used were that there may have been alternatives to a terrorist incident." Further—on page 68 of the transcript—I said to Hudson:

At that point in time, did you inform either the Minister or the Premier in briefings of your suspicion in relation to the authenticity of a possible terrorism attack in relation to the caravan? Did you also tell them, "Listen, we're also suspicious about the true motives behind these arsons and malicious damages"?

Hudson replied:

At the time of the briefings—and they were short but ongoing at different stages, and quite frequent at different stages, with the commissioner—we did identify or declare that we believed the incidents were linked and that the potential suspicions surrounding not just the caravan but also those other jobs were similar.

Despite the Minister's attempts to not answer any questions at budget estimates hearings, the deputy commissioner has belled the cat and told us the truth. I put on record that no-one is diminishing the threat and fear that the Jewish community experienced around that time and throughout this summer. Their fear was real and palpable. I am not at all suggesting that that is not the case. But what we have here are targeted attacks on the Jewish community that were not motivated by hatred per se but carried out as part of an ongoing criminal activity, using the Jewish community as leverage for criminal self-gain. One should note that, since the arrests have taken place, there has not been one other incident of graffiti or arson on any Jewish properties. It is apparent that they were part of the ongoing sinister plot by criminals to further their own benefit.

Personally, I feel betrayed and used by Mr Chris Minns and his Government. I put clearly on record that I voted for this legislation because I believed the Jewish community needed support and that the Government was putting it forward based on a real and imminent antisemitic threat to the community by bad actors. But budget estimates told us otherwise. The Government was possessed of other information that it did not share with the Parliament, thereby denying members the true facts of the situation and preventing us from debating the matter while in full receipt of all available information.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON (15:39):** I strongly support the motion to establish a select committee of inquiry into the relationship between the Dural caravan incident and the rushed passage of yet more draconian anti-protest laws in February this year, this time by the Minns Labor Government. This is a necessary and urgent inquiry. Thanks to evidence at budget estimates and other reporting since, what we now know is, frankly, disturbing. The Government presented the Parliament and the people of New South Wales with a legislative package that it claimed was needed urgently. It morally bullied the Parliament, and the Legislative Council in particular, into passing laws under false pretences. Central to the public narrative was the discovery of the caravan in Dural, filled with explosives and accompanied by a list of targets.

Premier Chris Minns declared, "This is the discovery of a potential mass casualty event. There's only one way of calling it out, and that is terrorism." That is what he said, but now we know that serious doubts were raised very early on in the police investigation. The explosives were old; there was no detonation device. Deputy Commissioner Hudson confirmed in budget estimates that New South Wales police suspected from the outset that this was a criminal con job—a fabrication designed to create panic for personal gain. Yet while those doubts were known to police—and the Premier's briefing notes were updated—the Parliament was not told. The Premier, the police Minister and the Attorney General pushed ahead with legislation designed to expand police powers and limit protest rights, allowing the Parliament to legislate on a deadly serious matter without the full facts at our disposal.

This incident also speaks to a wider and deeply concerning pattern from Premier Chris Minns—a Premier who has repeatedly used his party, this Parliament and especially this House for his own political purpose. Time and again, the Premier has shown disdain for the role of the Legislative Council in holding the Executive to account, rushing through laws under the cover of fear and misinformation, minimising scrutiny and treating this House as a rubber stamp. That is not how democracy works in New South Wales. This contempt undermines public trust in our institutions.

This committee is necessary because the Parliament and the people we represent deserve to know when the Premier and the Minister knew this was not a terror event, why the Government did not correct the record in debate, what role the Dural incident played in shaping the content and urgency of these laws, and who made the decision to withhold the critical information from the Parliament and public. The community deserves better than being used as political cover for unnecessary rights-restricting laws. The select committee must do the work that the Parliament was denied the opportunity to do at the time: to get to the truth of what happened and ensure that trust in our democratic processes is restored.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (15:42):** I speak in support of the motion to establish a select committee to inquire into and report on the relationship between the Dural caravan incident and parliamentary debates on legislation that were said to respond or relate to this incident. This is a matter of extreme public interest and concern, so it is not surprising that even before this motion was considered, it was the subject of public debate and comment. The motion is clear about what the scope of this inquiry is. Essentially, it goes to the relationship between the Executive and the Legislature, and whether the Legislature is being appropriately informed so that we can do our job well.

Given public comment on the matter, it is important to state what the scope of this inquiry will not do. It will not reconsider whether the Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025, the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025 or the Crimes Amendment (Inciting Racial Hatred) Bill 2025 should have been passed, or whether they should be repealed; and it will not question at all the reality that our Jewish community has been subject to vicious and hateful attacks, and that a climate of fear has been created which no-one in our community should be expected to endure. I am proud to be a member of the Coalition, which has always stood strong against antisemitism and continues to do so today.

Our concern about the increase in antisemitism in our community motivated our motion to establish an inquiry into the underlying causes of antisemitism and to look specifically at how community safety may be enhanced. To the extent that the recent amendments to the Crimes Act work to enhance community safety, they are welcome. In one sense, this inquiry should not be necessary. Members of this House should be able to expect that all necessary information is shared with them so that legislation can be properly considered. But, sadly, the Government has a poor track record in this regard. Reforms of section 93Z of the Crimes Act were always intended to be iterative.

When the issue of a low prosecution rate was raised and amendments were enacted, by his own motion the Attorney General committed to a statutory review of the effect of the changes and to keeping this Parliament fully apprised of the impact of these changes on moderating the behaviour that section 93Z was designed to curb. This statutory review is now three months overdue. It should have been available for this Parliament to consider before the most recent changes were made, but we have still not seen it. At budget estimates it became clear that relevant information may not have been shared with MPs before legislation was considered. As things currently stand, we don't know what we don't know. The purpose of this inquiry is to find out not just what information was provided to Parliament, but what information may have been inappropriately withheld from the public. No-one expects the details of an active police investigation to be shared. [*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (15:46):** The Government does not support the inquiry, and the Opposition should not either. Members of this House have sincere concerns about the laws that were passed to deal with hate speech in our communities. They raised those concerns when these bills were debated several weeks ago. They lost that argument, and they lost it for good reason. The Government and the Opposition supported

those bills because there is a need to do so. Let us remember what we are trying to address. We have seen attempted arson, firebombings and aggravated graffiti on people's homes, businesses and places of worship. This summer has been a shocker, with a loss of community harmony and rising antisemitism.

The action taken by the Government was important and necessary. We also had a very significant law and order response. Strike Force Pearl, which has 40 detectives, laid 143 charges against 29 individuals, and 191 people were arrested under Operation Shelter, resulting in 479 charges. It was not a small group of people doing this; it was widespread across the community. Action to tackle the scourge of antisemitism was well underway before the so-called Dural caravan incident. That was not the cause of the legislation. The reasons for the laws still stand, so the Government asks why on earth the Opposition supports this inquiry. No-one knows or understands.

I listened with interest to the Leader of the Opposition when he was asked about this by Mark Levy on 2GB this morning. Mr Levy tried to get an answer, but the answer was unclear. The general vibe was "Yes, we support an inquiry. No, we're not going to change the laws. Maybe we've done a deal with The Greens to get this inquiry up, but I'm not really sure." He could not explain why on earth the Opposition supports the inquiry. This is a very simple issue. Hate speech has increased in our State; we cannot turn away from that. The Government has taken these issues seriously, and mostly with the welcome support of the Opposition. We have put in place laws to address this challenge, which the Opposition supported, and representatives of the Jewish community also recognised and welcomed the bipartisanship with which we worked on those matters.

Let us be clear: The Opposition should stop with its support for this inquiry. It should pull the lazy politics, get behind the challenge to tackle hate speech in this State; listen to the Jewish community, which does not support this inquiry; and be clear about why it does support the inquiry. The laws will either be changed or not. If the Opposition says it will not change them, then the inquiry is unnecessary and we do not need to keep debating the motion. We must continue the work to try to stop antisemitism in our community.

**The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (15:49):** The Liberals do not support a repeal of the hate speech laws. We continue our deep commitment to staunchly defending the Jewish community in Australia and acting against antisemitism. The Liberals are committed to truth and accountability. The proposed inquiry must answer this critical question: Did Premier Minns use the Dural caravan hoax and associated acts as a political catalyst to avoid calling out the true proponents of rabid antisemitic hate speech—Islamic extremists and neo-Nazis? Did Chris Minns exploit the fear of a traumatised Jewish community to appear tough and unequivocal while avoiding the ire of certain community leaders? Chris Minns knew about the hate speech spreading across our State and nation long before January 2025.

Chris Minns knew that Sheikh Ibrahim Dadoun of the Australian National Imams Council publicly venerated the October 7 terrorist attack, stating, "I'm smiling and I'm happy. I'm elated. It's a day of courage, it's a day of pride, it's a day of victory. This is the day we've been waiting for. Allahu Akbar." Chris Minns knew that a sermon was delivered at a mosque in Bankstown, which stated that Muslims were "being killed, oppressed at the hands of the worshippers of cows, rats and monkeys" and where the audience was then encouraged to take action in response: "If you abandon jihad, Allah will send upon you humiliation and he will not remove it." Chris Minns knew that radical cleric Abu Ousayd preached hate against Jews, saying, "Anyone who supports Israel, whether verbally, with money or any type of support, is a criminal. So sit and wait. Soon Allah will send punishment upon you." He knew that Imam Ahmad Zoud told congregants in Lakemba and on his YouTube page:

... betrayal and treachery are among the characteristics of the Jews ... the most important characteristic of the Jews is that they are bloodthirsty ... from an early age they raise their children on violence, terrorism and killing.

I can go on. If Chris Minns was so committed to quashing hate speech, why did he not act earlier? A full year ago the Premier said:

We are not averse to changing the laws around hate speech if we don't believe that they are capturing the kind of inflammatory and racist rhetoric that's designed to pull people apart.

Yet another year of hate speech ensued and nothing changed. Then this moment appeared where the Premier could use an incident, apparently not motivated by ideological extremism, to overcome his reluctance, his inaction. The ash from using the Dural caravan as a burning platform would be dry in his mouth. A true leader would have seen the horror of antisemitism in our State and across our country over the past 18 months and acted upon it without question—without needlessly and irresponsibly causing more harm. There is no doubt that the Dural caravan plot—

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

**The PRESIDENT:** The Clerk will stop the clock.

**The Hon. Penny Sharpe:** I have been listening to the member's contribution. This motion relates to establishing a select committee of inquiry. It is not an opportunity for members opposite, or for this member in particular, to make inappropriate comments about the Premier and his motivations, and imputations in relation to those. If the Hon. Jacqui Munro wants to do that, she must do it by way of substantive motion.

**The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO:** To the point of order: I am addressing the questions that I believe this inquiry should raise.

**The PRESIDENT:** The Hon. Jacqui Munro has only 14 seconds left. I have sympathy with the point of order taken by the Leader of the Government. If any epithets or suggestions are made about motivations of members of the other place, that should be done by way of substantive motion. That being said, I understand the point made by the Hon. Jacqui Munro that she is providing context for her remarks. In her final 14 seconds, she will be mindful of the point made by the Leader of the Government.

**The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO:** This inquiry should answer whether the Premier knew that this was not the same kind of hate-filled antisemitism that is being fuelled by Islamic extremists and neo-Nazis in New South Wales, which he has failed to call out, and then used this hoax for his own political purposes— [*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (15:53):** The Libertarian Party supports the creation of a parliamentary inquiry to review the recently passed anti-free-speech laws championed by the Government and the Opposition. We thank the Hon. Rod Roberts for proposing the inquiry. Laws should never be rushed. Laws should never be passed in the midst of hysteria. Every new law passed is an erosion of the freedom of the people. Every law passed in this place is underwritten by a threat of State violence if disobeyed. When Libertarians use that language, people think it is overstating things. But it is true. If someone gets a \$100 parking ticket and they refuse to pay it, after two months it will probably go up to 200 bucks and they will get a late notice. If that person says, "No, I'm still not going to pay it", it will then go up to 1,000 bucks and they will have to go to court. If they do not turn up at court, men with guns will knock on your door and coerce behaviour—

**The Hon. Penny Sharpe:** No, they don't. They cancel your licence.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK:** If someone continues to evade the law, eventually men with guns will come around in every respect.

**The Hon. Penny Sharpe:** It's not true.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! The Hon. John Ruddick will be heard in silence.

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK:** This is what underpins the Parliament. This is why I am an anarcho-capitalist. We believe in voluntary cooperation—

**The Hon. Anthony D'Adam:** We still need people with guns to uphold property rights.

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK:** The Government has a monopoly on guns. That is what you want. That is why the Government gets its way.

**The Hon. Anthony D'Adam:** We want property rights defended.

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK:** Yes, but I believe there should be a counterbalance.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I remind all members that interjections, and responses to them, are disorderly at all times. The Hon. John Ruddick has the call.

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK:** Given all of this, we should always be cautious in passing new laws. In fact, the Libertarian Party believes that for every one new law we should abolish 10. But that is a subject for another day. If there is any doubt about any proposed law, we should of course not hesitate in sending the bill to an inquiry where the public can both participate and watch proceedings, and the press can take an interest in it. That is called transparent democracy. Inquiries into bills be should the default position, especially when they are contentious. Twice in my time as a member of this place I have seen this Government rush laws through via an all-night sitting. I am quickly learning that the Government does this when it has shame in passing new laws. It does not want scrutiny. I note that it is always on a Thursday, because they want everyone to go home and forget about it.

This inquiry should have been done before the legislation was rushed through the Parliament. The Libertarian Party looks forward to a robust inquiry and we look forward to everybody soberly considering the conclusions with care. For those parties already committed to supporting the rushed anti-free-speech laws, we

implore them to at least wait until the committee process has fully played out before committing themselves to supporting government control over individual freedom. Thank you very much.

**The Hon. TANIA MIHAILUK (15:56):** I just indicate that I support the inquiry. I have not been asked to be a member of the inquiry, but that is fine. I am very happy with the members who have been chosen for it. The Leader of the Government made reference to Strike Force Pearl. Nothing that the inquiry is suggesting would in any way impact the work that is currently being undertaken by the police in relation to that strike force. We know that people have been charged and will probably continue to be charged. I think everyone in this Chamber is supporting the work of Strike Force Pearl. I do not think it is fair—in fact, it is disingenuous to some extent—to suggest or imply that this inquiry would impact that.

I support the inquiry because I do not think that all the information was available to us as members of Parliament when we made decisions on which amendments to support or not support, or whether to support the bill. Ordinarily, members of Parliament in this place have an opportunity to move that matters and bills go to a committee or to an inquiry, and that opportunity was denied. We were told that those bills were imminently needed by the Premier and by the police Minister and by Government members. We now know that they had no impact whatsoever on the work that the police were undertaking, and that the police were in no way suggesting they were a necessity. More so, we know that some information became available during budget estimates hearings that was certainly not available to us as members of Parliament.

I think it is right to pursue this inquiry. I congratulate the Hon. Rod Roberts on moving this motion. In fact, the Hon. Rod Roberts did indicate that he was one of the members of Parliament that supported the bill and he is quite within his rights to now indicate that he is concerned that he supported something without all the information being made available to him. It is not fair for the Government to attack the Opposition over this issue. The Opposition is doing what it can to look at this matter with open eyes. Let us really examine what actually happened. It is not necessarily a criticism of the Premier or the police Minister, but I know what the Labor Party is like. We can bet our bottom dollar that, had this been the Coalition Government, Labor would have been moving for this very same inquiry. Let us not play semantics. If I were the Leader of the Government or any of the Opposition members, I would say to the Premier and to the police Minister, "Let's back the inquiry. Let's do the right thing and support transparency and accountability in this State."

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (15:59):** In reply: I thank all those who contributed to this debate. I want to get a couple of clear points on the record. First, I refute the inference that was drawn that if members do not support this legislation, they are against the Jewish community. That is a long bow to draw, and the inference is completely incorrect. The record will show that I have been calling for changes to section 93Z for over 18 months. It is all recorded in the media. I have been a strong advocate to change hate speech laws to protect people. The Labor Party does not hold a monopoly on the Jewish community. Nor do I. But yesterday I had a cordial meeting with the Australian Jewish Association.

On Friday I will meet with a good friend of mine Mr David Ossip from the Jewish Board of Deputies. A cordial conversation was had with my staff today over the phone. They are well aware of my motivation in moving this motion. It is to get to the truth behind this matter and to have a look at the manipulation of this Parliament. The role of this Chamber is to hold to account and challenge the Government to ensure that we get good laws. And I pose the Dirty Harry problem to Labor members. Do they think that the end justifies the means? They got what they wanted. Perhaps it was what I wanted too. But did they go about it in the right way, with integrity? Did they inform this Chamber of the facts? This is a Chamber of free thinkers and inquiring minds, and we have all asked ourselves various questions as a result of the information that has come out.

Those who have been here for some time, such as the Leader of the Government, know that the validation bill was passed in the middle of the night. Members of her party have said that had they been informed of the facts surrounding that, perhaps there may have been a different vote that evening. This is not that different. Also I might raise the *Tampa* situation—children overboard—where things were not explained to the Parliament correctly. Certain legislation was made, and it took a Senate inquiry to eventually reveal the truth of what happened there. In fact, this is matter is no different. I thank members who have contributed to debate, and I urge all members to support the motion for the reasons I have outlined, that being the integrity of the parliamentary process.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....23  
 Noes ..... 14  
 Majority.....9

## AYES

Banasiak	Farlow	Mitchell
Barrett	Higginson	Munro
Boyd	Hurst	Overall
Buckingham	MacDonald	Rath (teller)
Carter	Maclaren-Jones	Roberts
Cohn	Martin	Ruddick
Faehrmann	Merton	Ward
Fang (teller)	Mihailuk	

## NOES

Buttigieg	Kaine	Nanva (teller)
Donnelly	Lawrence	Primrose
Graham	Mookhey	Sharpe
Houssos	Moriarty	Suvaal
Jackson	Murphy (teller)	

## PAIRS

Tudehope

D'Adam

**Motion agreed to.***Visitors***VISITORS**

**The PRESIDENT:** I welcome representatives of Royal Far West to the Parliament of New South Wales today. I acknowledge in my gallery CEO Jacqueline Emery; the general manager of strategy, Claire Taylor; and the head of government relations and policy, Jenny Stevenson. I thank you all for the work that you do. You are all very welcome indeed.

*Motions***ROYAL FAR WEST**

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (16:11):** I move:

- (1) That the House notes that Royal Far West will be celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2025.
- (2) That the House acknowledges that:
  - (a) Royal Far West is a charity that improves the health and wellbeing of rural and remote children; and
  - (b) on 6 December 1924 Methodist minister Stanley Drummond envisioned bringing country children to the beach for respite, and since its founding in 1924 Royal Far West's care of rural and remote children has expanded from providing dental services and medical care to developmental, behavioural and mental health care.
- (3) That this House commends the work of Royal Far West and its incredible journey and positive impact on the children and families of New South Wales.

Today I honour the truly remarkable organisation, Royal Far West. It has been a lifeline for families for 100 years, ensuring that children in rural and remote areas receive the health care they need and deserve. The Royal Far West story began in December 1924, when Reverend Stanley Drummond, a minister from Cobar, shared his vision to support country children who lacked access to essential health care. He found a kindred spirit in Dr George Moncrieff Barron, who, when describing their partnership of faith and medicine, famously declared, "You look after their souls, and I will look after their bodies." From that, Royal Far West was born. Some 100 years on it is one of Australia's most trusted charities, built on innovation, dedication and an unwavering commitment to the health and wellbeing of children in rural and remote communities.

In 1925 the first seaside camp was held in Manly, welcoming 58 children from Far West New South Wales. Those camps provided not only medical care but also a chance for children to experience the healing power of the ocean. Over the decades, the organisation expanded its services, introducing programs like the travelling baby clinics in the 1930s, which brought health care to remote communities by rail and air. Between the 1940s and 1970s the organisation expanded its facilities and services, with a growing emphasis on specialised medical care, including dental and eye health services.

During the 1980s Royal Far West shifted its focus to include developmental and mental health services. This included support for children with disabilities, learning difficulties and behavioural challenges. Royal Far West recognised the importance of a holistic approach to child wellbeing, working closely with families, schools and communities to provide tailored support that addressed the unique needs of each child. In response to the challenges of reaching remote communities, Royal Far West embraced telehealth technology. Today it is a pioneer in telehealth, using technology to connect children in remote areas with specialists they would otherwise never be able to access.

Today Royal Far West supports families across four States, adapting to meet the changing needs of country children. Royal Far West now operates with a team of more than 130 health professionals, including paediatricians, psychologists, speech pathologists and occupational therapists, offering services that address the medical, developmental and mental health needs of children. Through telehealth programs and outreach initiatives, it has embraced modern solutions to reach those in the hardest to reach places.

The impact of this organisation is far reaching. In the past year alone, 3,998 country children received direct support from Royal Far West which addressed a wide range of health needs, from developmental delays and disabilities to mental health challenges and chronic conditions. Its care extends beyond children to encompass the support systems around them—teachers, parents, carers and communities. When we account for those who have benefited indirectly, the number reaches an astonishing 24,358 people. In New South Wales, Royal Far West supports families from 470 towns across 182 postcodes. It is truly remarkable to think that no matter how remote or isolated a family might be, they are not forgotten.

Every child deserves the chance to thrive, and Royal Far West ensures this through a holistic approach that integrates health care, education and family support. Access to quality health care is a fundamental right, yet for many rural and remote communities it is still a privilege. Royal Far West has been a trailblazer in addressing this inequity, championing solutions like telehealth and outreach programs to bridge the gap. These services are not merely reactive but proactive, identifying health issues early and intervening before they become lifelong challenges.

This extraordinary milestone is marked by the *100 Years of Caring for Country Kids* photographic exhibition being launched in Parliament House this evening. This exhibition showcases photographs and artefacts that tell the incredible story of an organisation that has changed countless young lives. Throughout its history, Royal Far West has remained committed to its mission to "boldly go where the system stops, to wherever we are needed, using technology to ensure no child and no community is beyond our reach". I commend Royal Far West on its century of remarkable service and extend my gratitude to the dedicated professionals, volunteers and supporters who make this vital work possible. Especially, I acknowledge the work of Jacqueline Emery, CEO, and chair Joan Treweeke for their outstanding leadership, along with all board members who continue to steer this legacy. I urge all colleagues to take the time this evening to visit the exhibition. Together, we can ensure that Royal Far West continues its mission for another hundred years.

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (16:16):** I indicate that both the Government and I support this motion. I, too, acknowledge the CEO and other officials of Royal Far West in the President's gallery. It is important to celebrate an incredible 100 years of service and dedication that has shown to improve the health and wellbeing of children, especially in regional New South Wales. Families and children in rural areas face a significant barrier to accessing needs-based and appropriate health and educational support services, and 100 years of service is a powerful investment in the lives, wellbeing, health and development of kids in the bush.

As the duty MLC for Barwon, I celebrate the fact that Royal Far West was first conceived by Cobar-based founder Reverend Stanley Drummond with support from others. Western and Far West New South Wales is a region this organisation has strongly supported since its inception, and it continues to do so. I marvel at the role Royal Far West played in introducing mobile baby health clinics in 1931, bringing basic paediatric services to New South Wales rural and remote communities via the Bourke, Cobar and Brewarrina railway lines. I commend the significant additional funding boosts provided by the State Government through NSW Health to paediatric services in the western region.

Royal Far West continues to provide programs to support an increased number of children with developmental and mental health concerns through its child and family services and its "our schools and early years" services. In the last financial year it supported 515 children, 149 parents and carers, 128 educators, 21 schools and one early childhood centre. The service took on 30 per cent of referrals from the western and Far West region to the Centre for Country Kids. In particular, I highlight its focus on the delivery of critical health and development checks for four-year-olds.

Royal Far West deploys multidisciplinary teams and services via virtual care and in-community visits and has a large geographical footprint across the region, from the Bathurst Plains to the far north-west of the State.

This virtual care delivery model was innovative and pioneering but has now become a mainstay in the practice of paediatric health care. The success of Royal Far West programs and the contributions from its staff, volunteers, donors and partners have had a longstanding impact to the vast benefit of regional communities. A centenary is a significant milestone indeed and should be recognised and lauded.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (16:19):** I also offer my support for the motion moved by my colleague the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, and add my congratulations to the team at Royal Far West on the amazing things that they have done for children in this State for over a century. I only have three minutes, but I could probably talk for 300 minutes about all the things that I admire about Royal Far West and its work. I have been a big supporter of the organisation for many years—the whole time that I have been in Parliament, really. I have been lucky to work with them in my various roles on a number of occasions.

The organisation's Healthy Kids Bus Stop ran for almost eight years. I first saw that onsite in Gunnedah, where Claire gave me a tour to show me what it was like to take health screening to kids in remote areas to make those early assessments so that they do not miss out on key developmental checks. That phenomenal program has literally changed the lives of thousands of kids. That early access to screening picked up on any developmental issues. I am happy to say it was the inspiration for the previous Government when we were looking to roll out a full suite of developmental checks for all children. We saw how well it could be done by an organisation like Royal Far West. I commend it for that.

I also commend the team for their incredible fundraising efforts. They have done lots of different things over the years. A highlight for me was the Ride for Country Kids. I did not ride, but one year I went out with the support crew. It was so much fun seeing hundreds of people coming to celebrate them in different towns along the way—people who would come every year to ride for Royal Far West, people whose families have been touched or impacted by Royal Far West and people who want to help fundraise and send a message about what the organisation does. The event has been going for more than a decade and has raised millions of dollars. It is an extraordinary effort to make that much money from community goodwill and donation, and shows the high esteem in which Royal Far West is held.

Certainly in my time as an MP, but particularly as education Minister, I have met a number of families. When I visited schools or was in more remote areas people would talk about their kids going to Manly for the week to access specialist support. For a lot of those families it was the holiday that they would not have had without Royal Far West. For the mums, dads and siblings, it meant they could be a part of the experience while the child got the extra support they needed. It is a fantastic model. I say well done and congratulations on 100 years to Royal Far West. I acknowledge the team: chair of the board Joan Treweeke from Angledool—who I think is in Parliament for the exhibition tonight, which has a photo of me so I am quite chuffed—Jacqui Emery, Mark Driessen, Kim Casburn, Sally Davies, Danielle Chapman, Dr Marcel Zimmet, Claire Taylor and Jenny Stevenson. I thank them for what they do. They literally change the lives of children in rural and regional New South Wales. We are so proud to honour them in this place today.

**Dr AMANDA COHN (16:22):** The Greens support the motion. Royal Far West has been making a difference to the lives of children and families in country communities for 100 years. I congratulate it on this milestone. Over the century Royal Far West has worked to the principle that country kids have the right to equal critical developmental, behavioural and mental health services. We are unfortunately nowhere near this equity, with staggering differences in health and educational outcomes for children in rural and remote New South Wales. As Deputy Mayor of Albury back in 2019, I was delighted to cycle with Royal Far West on their Ride for Country Kids, which departed from Albury to Lake Cargelligo. Over the past ten years the Ride for Country Kids has travelled some 5,000 kilometres to visit many of our State's spectacular country towns, including my own community, to raise funds to support country families. But they really should not have to. This care should be provided in the public health system.

In major rural centres, including Wagga Wagga, Dubbo, Orange, Tamworth and Bega, waitlists for public and private paediatric assessments have blown out to up to four years where the books are not closed altogether. It is unacceptable to hear that Royal Far West "regularly receives phone calls from GPs across the State in despair about the lack of paediatric access and assessment support for children who are developmentally vulnerable". The onus is on the Government to address this and not to continue to rely on charitable organisations to plug the gaps—for example, by retaining and attracting health workers like nurses, midwives and staff specialist doctors to NSW Health by paying them at least what they would earn in other States. In supporting the motion, The Greens also support Royal Far West's calls for the New South Wales Government to ensure adequate paediatric and developmental services, address health workforce shortages and ensure that country kids receive the support they need before delays in care create preventable lifelong disadvantage.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (16:24):** I congratulate the Royal Far West. One hundred years is a great achievement for any organisation, but for an NGO it is a particularly great achievement. An idea born in Cobar in

1924 is now an institution for children's health in regional New South Wales. More than congratulations, we need to say thanks for the work being done by the Royal Far West. Talk to anyone who has visited the site at Manly and you will hear nothing but praise and glowing reports of the building and the environment that is created within those walls. More than the location—which, for many kids, is their first chance see the beach—are the interactions with the staff. They are kind, caring and dedicated people who genuinely care about the kids and their families.

When I spoke with the users of the service there were some common emotional themes that came through, and it was hard not to be moved by the life-changing impact that the Royal Far West had on children, parents and families. I spoke to one particular parent, who quite emotionally told me that she was on the verge of giving up. She doubted her ability to parent and did not know where to turn next. After a week in Manly, for the first time in a long time, she walked away feeling hopeful and confident in her ability to parent her children. It gave her validity as a mother. That was a tough story to hear and the more I think about that statement, the more impactful it is. It speaks to the immeasurable benefits of Royal Far West.

My personal interactions came when I was working for GIVIT, a charity that worked with Royal Far West on flood, bushfire and drought recovery. Our job was to provide essential items to Royal Far West so that they could get on with the caring. It was a privilege to have played that role. In addition to the care being offered in Manly, the outreach programs in allied health have provided huge benefits across regional New South Wales, particularly when done in partnership with our regional schools. Concerningly, though, we are hearing reports that some of our smaller rural schools are having to pull out of the "schools and early years services" that allow kids to access speech pathology, occupational therapy and psychology through telehealth and outreach programs.

The last thing we need is more children in remote areas slipping through the cracks; early intervention gives these kids the best chance at life. I ask the Government to work closely with Royal Far West on those programs. Royal Far West is such a wonderful organisation, and we are lucky to have it. Again, I congratulate Royal Far West on its centenary and thank the team for their work. To everyone else in the building, look out for this 100-year anniversary book that I know we will see more of this evening.

**The PRESIDENT:** Props are not normally allowed, but I will make an exception on this occasion.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES (16:27):** In reply: I thank my colleagues the Hon. Stephen Lawrence, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, Dr Amanda Cohn and the Hon. Scott Barrett for their contributions. Also, as we have all said, I congratulate and thank not just the current team but also those who have worked over the past 100 years to make Royal Far West what it is today. In particular, I give a shout-out to the volunteers, who work tirelessly to provide support and assistance, as well as the donors and those who do the fundraising. The Hon. Sarah Mitchell referred to local communities, particularly in regional and rural areas. I also give a shout-out to those in the northern beaches area, from Manly through to Palm Beach, who are strong supporters of Royal Far West and have been for many years, the local businesses and individual schools. I thank them very much. I again congratulate Royal Far West and wish it all the best for tonight's event—and also for another 100 years.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

## ROAD TOLLS

**The Hon. BOB NANVA (16:29):** I move:

- (1) That this House acknowledges that the Government's \$60 toll cap is a critical cost-of-living support measure for hundreds of thousands of drivers across New South Wales.
- (2) That this House encourages drivers who have spent more than \$60 a week on toll trips to visit the Service NSW website and claim if eligible.

In moving this motion, I must confess that it has been remiss of me in merely seeking to acknowledge the Government's toll cap, because acknowledgement significantly downplays the Minister's efforts to upend the toll-mania orthodoxy that has prevailed in New South Wales for over a decade. The short-term cost-of-living relief provided by the toll cap is important, but so too is the need for longer term structural reform, which would not have occurred under the previous Government. Indeed, if those opposite had had their way, more and more of Sydney's roads would have been tolled and sold. I am reminded again of the incredible, damning evidence of former Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] CEO Paul Forward in relation to WestConnex:

... the final design was an attempt to maximise the value of the motorway when it was put out for sale, because it had a larger number of toll trips on it than some of the previous options.

Talk about fattening the cow and selling it off. That captures perfectly the prevailing orthodoxy of the previous Government when it came to building infrastructure and delivering basic services: taking the easy way out, palming off costs to motorists through tolls and then, most disgracefully, transferring the significant long-term

profits from those roads to multinational corporations rather than taxpayers. So bad had the infatuation with tolling become that 13 of the nation's 21 toll roads are in Sydney alone—toll roads that encircle the metropolitan area, that cut off our outer suburbs and impose a road tax on families who need to pay, and pay big, to lift the boom gates to enter their own city and their own CBD. This is not to mention the myth that was routinely perpetrated by former Ministers that people would still have the choice of using a free public road at the same time that those roads were being cannibalised in favour of tolled roads, all of which resulted in alternative routes becoming unviable.

The bottom line is this: It has all been a dud deal for families, a dud deal for small businesses and, ultimately, a dud deal for the Government. It came as absolutely no surprise to families in Western Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Central Coast to hear Professor Allan Fels conclude that the toll network is broken and in need of serious reform. I do not just acknowledge the \$60 toll cap; I also acknowledge the end of the dud orthodoxy that got us to this point, and I praise the Minister's efforts to disentangle tolling contracts that were left behind by the previous Government. I am particularly proud that Western Sydney residents are among the greatest beneficiaries of this immediate and important cost-of-living measure as well as the longer term reforms, when they are made, because those residents have been disproportionately impacted by the former Government's addiction to toll roads.

When we consider that, after rent and mortgages, tolls are one of the biggest household expenses to families, this renewed focus could not come soon enough. The Government has allocated \$520 million over two years to the toll cap, to provide immediate financial relief to approximately 720,000 motorists. Hundreds of thousands of motorists have already accessed the scheme. But, to date, there is approximately \$120 million in unclaimed rebates. I pay tribute to the Treasurer for resisting the urge to transfer those funds into consolidated revenue and allowing the Minister to passionately plead for motorists to claim money that belongs to them—a plea that I wholeheartedly endorse this evening and one that I expect the Opposition will also back in by wholeheartedly supporting this motion.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (16:33):** The Hon. Bob Nanva has moved yet another tolling motion. However, this motion is missing something: It is missing any mention of the toll review. It is gone. It is missing from the motion. We did this great toll review, and I want to know where is the 714-day toll review? Where is Allan Fels? Allan Fels is not even on the negotiation team and is nowhere to be seen. What has the Government done in this time? Congratulations! It has done a 714-day toll review. The Hon. Bob Nanva is a grizzled veteran of this House now, but, as the former State secretary of the Labor Party, surely Bob remembers what his Premier promised: no new two-way tolling on the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and cheaper tolls.

In budget estimates, I asked the former Minister for Roads, "Is the Harbour Bridge an old road?" The Minister agreed. He said the bridge is an old road; it is almost 100 years old. That is funny, because I did some research into Labor's campaign on two-way tolling on the Sydney Harbour Bridge, even after the Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government had ruled it out. What did I find? I found a petition against two-way tolling on the people's bridge on the Australian Labor Party [ALP] website, authorised by Bob Nanva—"Authorised by Bob Nanva, Australian Labor Party". It is extraordinary to go to an election with that petition and then bring this motion to this House.

Despite my jokes, the Hon. Bob Nanva can actually help out his Minister with the tolling policy, because the truth is with the Fels report. Despite calling him a tough customer who will do a good job, the Government does not want to talk about the report that it paid for—actually, that we all paid for. Taxpayers paid millions for it, and Mr Fels has been sidelined. There was chest-beating before the election, but where is the chest-beating once the report was actually handed down? Twenty-four months and over \$5 million spent, yet the Minister still does not have a position on the report.

We know what the plan is: more tolls, higher tolls, toll reform taxes and drivers paying tolls for longer. We know that. The Government's toll reform proposal is "You are going to pay new tolls. You are going to pay higher tolls. You are going to pay them for longer, but they will be cheaper." It is all talk and no action. It is all press release and no policy—just like this motion. The Opposition supports toll reform. I know; I did the work on it before the election. But it has to be a good deal, and we need to see the detail for us to support it. A \$60 toll cap is fine, but fewer people receive it than other schemes, and it runs out at the end of this year. Even that is not clear. Where are we heading on this? The Hon. Bob Nanva can fill time with his motion, but instead of bringing up tolls with this House, he should bring it up with the Government and with his Minister. Even I think he will not get much substance from them.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (16:36):** I speak on the motion moved by the Hon. Bob Nanva regarding the \$60 toll cap. The Greens support the \$60 toll cap as a measure to provide relief for households that we know are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. But let us be clear: Households have had to have some kind of relief. It is the only solution on the table right now to a problem of successive governments from both sides and of their own

making. Sydney is already one of the most tolled cities in the world. The Independent Toll Review led by Allan Fels and David Cousins found that motorists will pay a staggering \$195 billion in tolls between now and 2060. Of Sydney's 13 toll roads, WestConnex alone accounts for about 52 per cent of that figure. That is for a road that has, as The Greens well know, so many negative impacts on communities. Transurban and its investment partners own 18 of Australia's toll roads, and it is making squillions off this motorway network. Its contracts guarantee toll increases tied to inflation, or even higher, with a locked-in 4 per cent increase.

The same review by Professor Fels found that nearly 50 per cent of people avoid toll roads because they simply cannot afford them. That means more rat-running through local streets, more congestion and more pollution. The Fels review also pointed out that all taxpayers contribute to the cost of tolled motorways by either paying to use them or subsidising the bills for others as a result of these rebates. It also found that the toll relief is unsustainable, that it is inadequately targeted and complicated to administer, and that it created unintended beneficiaries. The review said:

Increased traffic and patronage of toll roads, through induced demand created by toll relief, directly benefits operators by increasing their revenues.

...

Toll reform is preferable to toll relief.

I agree with the Coalition in asking where is the response? Where has the Independent Toll Review gone? Where is the reform? However, it is a bit rich, I have to say, coming from the Coalition, which, frankly, got us so badly into this mess in the first place. Throughout budget estimates and throughout every discussion that we have on motorways and tolls, it must be very uncomfortable having been the Coalition transport Minister. I admire some of the work of the Hon. Natalie Ward but, on this particular issue, it must be difficult for her to stand in this place and have a go at Labor about tolls with a straight face.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM (Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy) (16:39):** I have spoken about tolls many times in this Chamber, so I will not speak for long. I agree with Ms Cate Faehrmann that, given the former Government's record, the shadow Minister for Transport and Roads does a superb job of prosecuting the case and putting the best case that she can. The trouble is that it is weighed down by a \$195 billion dead weight.

**The Hon. Natalie Ward:** Let's talk about what we built.

**The Hon. JOHN GRAHAM:** The shadow Minister interjects and says, "Look at what we built." That is true. A \$16.8 billion road was built. It is a superb piece of road infrastructure. The trouble is that drivers are left with a \$195 billion bill for that and other ancillary roads. That is the issue. It is the price we pay. It is the nature of the privatised toll road deal that we are now sorting through in this State. I thank Allan Fels and David Cousins. They are closely engaged as advisers to the Government. The \$60 toll cap has been in place for about 450 days. The shadow Minister is correct that it runs out at the end of the year. The Government is not apologising for that. It is moving to reform. That is one of the issues. We cannot afford to keep paying for toll relief. There are issues with toll reform. We do not want windfall gains for tolling companies. That is why reform is pressing. The shadow Minister is right to raise some of the issues, but it is weighed down by that heavy \$195 billion bill that motorists have been left with by privatised toll contracts.

I admire the way that she presses the case. It became clear as she raised issues about the money that was being spent on toll reform. For the money that this Government has spent trying to get motorists out of the contracts across every one of the toll roads, the former Government spent at least twice as much privatising half of just one toll road. That record is weighing heavily on the debate. It is a tough policy problem and economic problem to undo, but we can have an impact on it. That is the view of Allan Fels. The Government's view is that it is greatly in the public interest. That is why we are going to battle through it.

**The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY (16:42):** I start by saying that I agree with the shadow Minister for Transport and Roads, the Hon. Natalie Ward, that the motion is missing something. It is not what she thinks is missing, but it is missing something. I move:

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

(3) That this House calls on the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals to confirm their support for the \$60 weekly toll cap.

It is important because the weekly toll cap has been an absolute godsend for people in Western Sydney and on the Central Coast in a cost-of-living crisis. Labor was left in a position when it came to government where Sydney was the most tolled city in the world. New infrastructure was opened, but it was so unaffordable that most ordinary working families struggled to pay the toll bills each week. When a person drove down a motorway, they literally heard the ka-ching as their toll device went off, pinging them for this toll or that toll. At the end of the week,

people were left with hundreds of dollars worth of tolls that they had to pay. They would struggle to manage that along with rent and groceries.

One of the most important and impressive things that this Government did as soon as it came to power was deliver on the election commitment of a \$60 weekly toll cap so that people are protected in a cost-of-living crisis from the extraordinary costs that were inflicted upon them through the network of toll roads. Toll reform will take a lot of work. The work is being done by Allan Fels and others to analyse the toll network and figure out how to make it fair. The Government is embarking on the work to unpick that mess in order to create a toll network that is fair for the people of the city into the future. It is unfortunate that we are in that position. Roads should be accessible to everybody. They should not be there for the privileged few and the rich who can afford to pay tolls. The problem with the network is that people have been funnelled into it so that they have no alternative. I commend the motion and my amendment to the House.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD (16:45):** I speak to the amendment. It gives me great joy. Of course the Opposition supports it. For the record, the Liberal-Nationals Coalition started toll reform but also built WestConnex. It would not exist under a Labor government. Labor opposed it. The former Government built NorthConnex, which everyone loves, because it gets them there faster. The former Government built four metro lines and two light rails. The WestConnex funds went into the WestInvest fund, which the Government is now using. Toll roads were built by Labor as well. Labor has contributed to the problem. Members opposite come into this place with revisionist history.

The Minns Government is using the money from WestConnex and the WestInvest fund to build hospitals. It would not be able to build hospitals and use that capital without it. If Government members want to close WestConnex and think that it is a bad idea, that is on them. I am proud of our history of building transformational infrastructure in this State to get people where they need to go. The only tunnel funnel that existed was built under a former Labor government, which funnelled people into the Cross City Tunnel, which went broke not once but twice. Labor could only build half a train line, so it had to change the name of the train. I stand by our transformational infrastructure program. I stand by leaving the Government with a \$116 billion pipeline of transformational infrastructure.

I question the Minister for Transport telling the people of south-west Sydney that the Government will not be building a new metro until 2040. Under the Labor Government, a child born today will not get a metro until they are 20 years old. Members opposite can cut the ribbons on our projects. We are happy for them to do so, because the people of New South Wales are better for having a Coalition government that committed to building things like NorthConnex, WestConnex, four metro lines, two light rails and countless hospitals, which those opposite are still opening. I am happy to support the amendment, but I would like to see the detail of what the Government is doing about toll reform, rather than tinkering around the edges, talking about press releases and getting Allan Fels in. There must be another night of him staying at the Capella hotel. He could be part of the negotiation team, but apparently not.

Members opposite cannot lecture me about infrastructure. They cannot tell the people of New South Wales that they are going into bat for them. I am proud to talk about toll reform. The former Government committed to toll reform. It is happy to do it. But it did not two-way toll the Harbour Bridge. It did not say to the electorate that there would be no new tolls on all new roads. It did not say that it would lower tolls. It did not say that there would be tolls for longer. The Government said those things and it is breaking its promise on that. Government members should be embarrassed. I support the motion and the amendment.

**The Hon. BOB NANVA (16:48):** In reply: I thank Ms Cate Faehrmann, the Hon. John Graham, the Hon. Cameron Murphy and the Hon. Natalie Ward for their contributions to the debate. The Hon. Natalie Ward, in her criticism of the motion, said that it did not include anything about the toll review and that my contribution was a bit light on the toll review. The only thing I say in response to that is that good things come to those who wait. The Minister for Transport has not just committed to ending the "toll mania" orthodoxy in New South Wales, but he is doing it. The best and most permanent form of cost-of-living relief with respect to tolling is to reform the structure, and the Minister is committed to doing that. Do not be alarmed by the words in my motion. Good things will come to those who wait, and the Minister is committed to doing it. He is also committed to making tolling more equitable.

The problem is that, fundamentally, the task of making access to our roads more affordable and equitable is not straightforward due to the contracts that were left behind by the previous Government. That has made the task of equitable tolling almost insurmountable, but for the competence of Minister Graham. Do not be alarmed; it will come. I am sure members will welcome it when it does. What was missing from the Hon. Natalie Ward's contribution was pretty self-evident to members on this side—that is, no real commitment that the cap will not be scrapped under a Coalition government.

"Of course we support the amendment" and "of course we support the cap" are weasel words. Members opposite should give an undertaking that they will not scrap the cap. The people of New South Wales know all too well the orthodoxy of those opposite. Also missing from the Hon. Natalie Ward's contribution was any acknowledgement of the impact of tolls, the pressure they have placed on household budgets and the fact that the toll cap is a critical cost-of-living measure put forward by the Minns Government. I welcome her contribution, but there were elements missing from it. That was blatantly clear for all to see.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Rod Roberts):** The Hon. Bob Nanva has moved a motion, to which the Hon. Cameron Murphy has moved an amendment. The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

### *Documents*

## **IVAN MILAT CRIMINAL RECORDS**

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

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (16:51):** I move:

- (1) That, under Standing Order 55, the following Address be adopted and presented to Her Excellency the Governor relating to the production of documents concerning the administration of justice:

To Her Excellency the Hon. Margaret Beazley, Companion of the Order of Australia, King's Counsel, Governor of the State of New South Wales in the Commonwealth of Australia.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY—

We the members of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, request that Her Excellency cause to be laid upon the table of the House within 28 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents in the possession, custody or control of the Attorney General, the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter, the NSW Police Force, the Department of Communities and Justice, Corrective Services NSW or the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (State Records Authority NSW) relating to Ivan Robert Marko Milat:

- (a) all documents relating to Ivan Robert Marko Milat, including:
- (i) all documents relating to criminal charges against Ivan Robert Marko Milat in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s; and
  - (ii) all prison records from the 1960s until the time of his death.
- (b) any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.
- (2) That the rules contained in standing orders 52 to 54 be applicable to this Address, and to documents laid before the House in response to this order of the House.

The motion is a request by the House to the Governor under Standing Order 55 for all Ivan Milat's police and prison records to be made available to the Parliament. It is clear that the whole, terrible story of Ivan Milat has not been revealed and that justice for potentially hundreds of victims, their families and our entire society has been denied. This week, as reported in *The Daily Telegraph*, two former New South Wales detectives Neville Scullion and the late Paul Gordon, who worked on the Milat case, stated that they believed that Milat was responsible for possibly another 80 murders as far back as the 1960s and that these matters have not been investigated as thoroughly as they should have been.

It is a view that I share with an increasing number of people—that the picture of Ivan Milat as a reclusive, lone-wolf serial killer is incorrect or at best incomplete. It is my strong view that Milat was a participant in organised crime and human trafficking, feeding men, women and children into paedophile and sadistic, murderous sex rings. The idea that Milat was an antisocial loner, hiding out in south-west Sydney, patrolling lonely highways for hitchhiker victims is not the complete picture. I also believe that he was highly social and active, moving and working across the State, particularly in the Kings Cross area, where he worked on the Kings Cross Tunnel. Six of the seven murdered backpackers were last seen alive not on the Hume Highway but at Kings Cross and Darlinghurst. I believe it is possible that Milat's long-term relationships with powerful and corrupt interests protected him from investigation, prosecution and justice for many decades before he was convicted for the Belanglo murders. Who were his friends? Who else knew about or participated in his crimes? The judge that convicted Milat of the Belanglo murders accepted that he had not acted alone.

According to his brother, Milat admitted that at age 17 in 1962 he shot Neville Knight in the spine during an attempted robbery. He left the young father paralysed from the waist down. In 1971 Milat was released from prison after being twice jailed for theft. In 1971 Keren Rowland, 20 years old, was murdered. The following day, Milat boasted to his workmates that he had killed a man and buried his body in the bush. In 1971 Milat committed an armed robbery with his brother Michael and others. Inexplicably, he was not convicted for the armed robbery, but his brother and the others were convicted and jailed. His lawyer at the time, John Marsden, described that occurrence as corruption.

Six weeks later Milat picked up two 18-year-old female hitchhikers, produced a knife, raped one and said, "I am going to kill you. You won't scream when I cut your throats, will you?" After being raped, the 18-year-old asked him whether he had done this before, to which Ivan replied yes. He said that he often picked up hitchhikers and always carried knives and ropes in case an opportunity arose. The girls managed to escape. Milat was charged, but never convicted. In 1971, according to police, Ivan Milat went on the run, faking his suicide at the gap. His activities until April 1974 are unclear. Was he in New Zealand? Was he hiding out in Ashfield? Was he being sheltered?

In 1974 Milat was captured. While on remand in Long Bay jail, cellmate Noel Manning described Milat getting special treatment in prison—clothing washed and ironed, and plenty of food. Milat also described to his cellmate that the Cross was a goldmine where he had picked up scores of girls and boys and raped and killed them. Milat told him in gory detail how he had tortured and murdered a succession of young people in the early 1970s, burying their bodies in bushland near Liverpool. In 1977 two 18-year-olds were attacked hitchhiking from Liverpool by a man in his early 30s with black, straggly hair. They managed to escape in the bush. One of the women later identified Ivan Milat. In 1978 Stephen Lapthorne, 21 years old, and his girlfriend, Michelle Pope, 18 years old, were last seen in a distinctive lime green Bedford CF van. In 2019 a matching van with one number difference in the serial number was located by a member of the public close to the Belanglo murdering grounds of Ivan Milat. I will have more to say in reply. This motion must be supported by the House so that the Parliament can see the documents and uncover the evolving and complete picture of Milat's terrible history.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON (16:56):** I thank the member for moving the motion and indicate that The Greens will be supporting it. Ivan Milat is the most notorious serial killer in Australian history. He was convicted of seven murders; however, it is likely that he was involved in many other unsolved cases. The New South Wales police continued their investigation into those cases after Milat's cancer diagnosis, but they did not receive the deathbed confession they were looking for. During his life he maintained his innocence, despite the damning testimony and evidence against him. That response and the death of the serial killer has brought great pain to the loved ones of his victims who were seeking closure. It has also meant that the friends and families of unconfirmed victims have no information regarding what happened to their loved ones. My heart goes out to those whose lives have been impacted by Ivan Milat. I hope that any justice that can be brought to the victims and their families will be.

With The Greens' support of the motion, we hope that any suspicious conduct, miscarriages of justice and other information will be brought to the forefront and dealt with appropriately. There is significant evidence and testimony that brings suspicion to the case of Ivan Milat. Former Assistant Commissioner of Police Clive Small, who led the Milat investigation, believes Milat committed at least one other murder. Other sources claim that he could be responsible for at least 80 more deaths. Milat's younger brother has claimed that there are numerous more bodies that have not been uncovered.

Milat's case initially remained open due to the possibility that he had an accomplice. Whilst it was later concluded that Milat acted alone, there are still many suspicions that he could not have done what he did without help. Victim testimony from unsolved cases has detailed how the police did not follow up on certain leads and how they had issues gathering evidence. The Police Force at the time of the Milat killings was not what it is now. Over the years, Milat has been linked to the disappearance of other young men and women in areas where he worked with a road gang. Prior to Milat's killings, the police were also responsible for other matters that were severely mishandled, most notably the 1979 Sydney ghost train fire.

Considering the historic mishandling by the New South Wales police of cases involved with organised crime and Ivan Milat's association with organised road gangs, the need to produce the documents being sought grows ever more pertinent. I believe that a motion to address this matter is important to ensure that anomalies, misinformation or facts can be uncovered. Through the motion, I hope that the interests of justice can be better served and that loved ones who are pleading for some kind of closure and information regarding the victims of Milat can get more insights into what actually happened.

**The Hon. PENNY SHARPE (Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) (16:59):** The Government will not oppose this call for papers under Standing Order 55. Let me be clear: Ivan Milat was a scumbag and a serial killer, and he clearly harmed many people. I know that many people are concerned that there were crimes that went unpunished and crimes that were

misunderstood, and families and victims for whom there has been no justice. There is a significant pursuit of what could have happened and should have happened in relation to that. The Government understands that. Just so members understand the breadth of what is being asked for, though, I place on record that while we are not opposing the motion, there are records being asked for that go back to the 1960s from both corrections and police. Government is going to seriously struggle to meet that within a 28-day time frame.

However, having said that, I have indicated to the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham that we are very happy to talk about what we can release in what order and how that will happen. I also flag with the House that there is likely to be material that people might want that we will not be in a position to release. But at this time we understand what people are trying to do. We will not oppose the motion. I also give a shout-out to the police working on unsolved homicide crimes who continue to work on and look at new evidence as it comes forward. We, of course, welcome that. This is step one of a very long journey that the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham is on. We will work with him where we can. We will not oppose the motion today.

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (17:01):** The Libertarian Party supports the motion. I have all my life been a consumer of newspapers and TV news. I followed all the Milat stories, like everybody else, and I accepted the mainstream story. I did not know there was an alternative. But just before Christmas I happened to have a conversation with the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham, and I was impressed with how much research he had done on this subject. There are very serious questions that need to be asked. It could be a lot bigger than we think. Let us get to the bottom of the matter and let us get the documents.

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH (17:02):** I indicate the Opposition's support for the motion. It is an unusual motion but not unprecedented. The only thing I would say is that Opposition members have dug around and the last time that we can see, at least, that a Standing Order 55 provision—or its predecessor, Standing Order 53—was used was in 2010, when a former member of this place, the Hon. Rick Colless, wanted documents relating to Captain Thunderbolt from 1870. It was a request, obviously, to the Governor, and the Executive Council refused that request. I hope the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham has a little more success than the Hon. Rick Colless did. It is not an unprecedented motion—certainly unusual, but not unprecedented. In the interests of accountability and transparency, and for the reasons put forward in the course of the debate, the Opposition will support the motion.

**The Hon. JEREMY BUCKINGHAM (17:03):** In reply: I thank all members for their contributions and support. I put on record more of the concerning parts of Milat's untold story. Members would be aware that I raised the appalling number of unsolved homicides and missing women on the North Coast of New South Wales. I, too, congratulate the police on redoubling their efforts in some of those cases. In that regard, 20-year-old Leanne Goodall was last seen in 1987 at the Star Hotel in Newcastle, where Ivan Milat was staying. Robyn Hickie, 17, went missing in 1979 while waiting for a bus. Ivan Milat was working a few kilometres away. A fortnight later Amanda Robinson, aged 14, was abducted in Swansea. Amanda Zolis, aged 16, was last seen in the midafternoon on 21 April 1979 walking to a coffee shop in Hamilton. Former New South Wales coroner John Abernathy said, "These are missing teenagers; they just don't disappear into thin air."

In 1979 a 15-year-old boy was abducted by Ivan Milat in Liverpool and driven to the child paedophile brothel called Costello's in Kings Cross in an attempt to sex-traffic him. The boy managed to escape. In 1986 a solicitor working for Marsdens lawyers represented Ivan Milat on assault charges. Milat had groped and chased a 19-year-old woman. There was a witness; however, the woman withdrew her allegation at the hearing. Milat told the solicitor he knew where she and her family lived, implying he had threatened her. In 1987, 18-year-old Peter Letcher, a young hitchhiker, was murdered. Bullets at his murder scene came from the same gun used in some of the future backpacker murders. In 1987, 16-year-old Debbie Ashby was last seen leaving her family home at Leumeah at 1.00 p.m. Ivan Milat lived in Eagle Vale, less than five minutes away.

The atrocious crimes for which Milat served his sentence began in 1989. We all know of the disappearance and murders of Deborah Everest, James Gibson, Simone Schmidl, Gabor Neugebauer, Anja Habschied, Caroline Clark and Joanne Walters, and the courage of Paul Onions, who managed to escape. But how many more are there that we have failed to look at comprehensively? On 11 May 1994, just 10 days before Ivan Milat was arrested for the Belanglo murders, police Minister Terry Griffiths said the following to the member for Heffron in opposition to a motion in the other place that led to the Wood royal commission:

The honourable member for Heffron is awake but not too worried. She will be. Let us be serious for the moment. Would the Opposition support an inquiry into the two tragic cases, the Belanglo State Forest murders or the Wanda Beach murders?

The question is why the police Minister linked the Wanda Beach and Belanglo murders and did so in the context of a political scandal. Hopefully, the documents produced will shed more light on the darkest of chapters in this State's history and on why Ivan Milat was held accountable for only a 2½-year window of murder and mayhem in a life of crime.

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

**Motion agreed to.***Motions***CONSTRUCTION, FORESTRY AND MARITIME EMPLOYEES UNION****The Hon. CHRIS RATH (17:06):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes the latest revelations of union thuggery and criminal conduct within the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union [CFMEU], including institutional involvement of organised crime figures, violence against women on worksites, racketeering and blatant theft of taxpayer funds.
- (2) That this House further notes that the Labor Party has received over \$11 million from the CFMEU across Australia since Anthony Albanese became leader, with the New South Wales branch of the Labor party alone receiving approximately \$500,000 since 2019.
- (3) That this House condemns the Australian Labor Party for maintaining national secretary of the CFMEU Zach Smith on their national executive.
- (4) That this House calls on Premier Chris Minns and the New South Wales Government to establish a royal commission into the CFMEU's pattern of criminal and corrupt operations and the safety of workers on worksites with CFMEU involvement within New South Wales.
- (5) That this House calls on Premier Chris Minns and the New South Wales Government to audit the involvement of the CFMEU with all taxpayer-funded and taxpayer-supported construction projects in New South Wales, in light of revelations that taxpayer funds are being misused in Victoria.

Time and again I have spoken in this place to condemn in the strongest of terms the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union. You could say that I was anti-CFMEU before it was cool. What has come out in the past few days has demonstrated, as we have known for some time, that the CFMEU might be better described as the front of shop for thugs and gangland crime figures. It is rotten to its core. Even the most fervent Labor hack can recognise that what has overtaken the CFMEU has absolutely nothing to do with workers' rights. It has nothing to do with the thriving construction industry, and it certainly has nothing to do with health and safety.

Quite the opposite seems true when we see footage of a woman being bashed at her workplace by a bikie-linked CFMEU official. Another woman was locked in a small room on a CFMEU-operated government worksite by a man previously jailed for violence against women. He was smoking ice as he detained her. Yet another woman was targeted and bashed outside her worksite by a man with deep criminal connections and close ties to CFMEU figures. I note once again that that heinous attack took place in the context of a taxpayer-funded construction project.

Deep-seated rot within the CFMEU extends far beyond violence. When trying to seek help from male harassment, female construction workers have instead been asked for nude photos. A victim of such treatment has bravely gone on record to share that the men who meted out that shocking treatment to women appear to have protection from the CFMEU. I say "bravely" as there is evidence of organised crime being involved in those incidents, including to shut whistleblowers up. It is understood that an extensive network of CFMEU officials, their relatives and criminal underworld figures have been involved in fraud, racketeering and bashings of the very workers the CFMEU purports to represent.

I will save explaining in detail the recent findings of CFMEU chief investigator Geoffrey Watson into extensive gangland infiltration across the Victorian division of the CFMEU. In short, he traced the funnelling of taxpayer funds from the CFMEU to organised crime. Regrettably, those opposite may claim that this issue is limited to Victoria. I simply refer them to the disturbing facts that are already known in New South Wales. Last month a senior CFMEU organiser in Sydney had his car firebombed as his wife and children slept mere metres away inside their house. That same property has also been vandalised in the past. Last year footage was revealed of Darren Greenfield, the former New South Wales CFMEU secretary, receiving a \$5,000 bribe in cash in the CFMEU Sydney office.

Veteran CFMEU figure Mario Barrios, a CFMEU delegate for 38 years and a member of the union's New South Wales branch committee of management for 28 years, believes corruption in the New South Wales construction industry is "more aggressive than ever". In the past Mr Barrios has been subjected to violent threats for attempting to interrogate questionable conduct in New South Wales. He believes the CFMEU government-appointed administrator is failing to identify and tackle the industry's problems. He said:

There are a number of credible allegations made by some subcontractors or union members to the NSW administrators and no response or investigation has taken place.

I call on Premier Chris Minns and the Government to come on board with the proposal to investigate what we do not yet know about the CFMEU in this State. What we do know, however, is more than enough cause for alarm to justify a comprehensive examination of the CFMEU's abhorrent conduct and criminal associations in this State.

Only an investigation with the probing strength of a royal commission will grant justice in its entirety to the victims of the CFMEU's darkest chapters.

There is also a broader public interest argument. New South Wales taxpayers must be assured that their money in no way supports the thuggery of the CFMEU. That can be accomplished by means of an audit across taxpayer-funded and supported projects. An administrator only has the power to address the issues it is conscious of. If Chris Minns and Labor were serious about the statement they released last year—that there is absolutely no tolerance for criminal or corrupt behaviour in the building industry—then I urge them to support a royal commission and an audit of New South Wales construction projects.

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (17:11):** The Government opposes the motion. Of course it is aware of the very serious allegations aired in the media over the weekend about the CFMEU in Victoria. In August last year, this Government took decisive action by putting in place a scheme of administration. In doing so, all executive officers—the committee of management and State council delegates—were removed from their positions in the New South Wales branch of the CFMEU. In short, more than 60 official positions were vacated. Since its appointment, the Government has been in regular contact with the administrator, seeking to identify ways to support its work in cleaning up the CFMEU.

The Construction Compliance Unit [CCU] within the Premier's Department is the regulatory body where complaints regarding unlawful behaviour on New South Wales government building and construction sites are directed for action. The CCU has undertaken proactive outreach to building contractors who operate on New South Wales government construction sites to remind them of their obligations under the guidelines and the importance of reporting concerns or allegations such as those high-profile examples raised in the media. Further, the CCU has met with the CFMEU administrator to facilitate an exchange of information and intelligence regarding corrupt behaviour on New South Wales government sites. Detailed information in writing was also provided to outline, step by step, how to make a complaint or report allegations and what to expect as part of the CCU investigation process.

The CCU remains in close and regular communication with the Fair Work Ombudsman regarding its ongoing work on matters relating to the CFMEU. The CCU is also communicating regularly with the Fair Work Ombudsman regarding the review of enterprise agreements in New South Wales involving the CFMEU. More broadly, the CCU ensures compliance with the New South Wales building and construction procurement guidelines, which have been in place since 2013. Industry compliance with those provisions is assessed through regular reporting obligations, audits of workplace relations management plans and site visits. Importantly, the CCU also receives complaints directly from members of the public. Federal administrator Mark Irving has also set up a whistleblower service so union members and employers can report misconduct to him directly, and the Fair Work Ombudsman has done the same.

Members opposite rubbed their hands with glee when they saw this happening in Victoria, and they have tried to conflate the two States. But the Premier has taken very decisive action. The organisation is in administration and will be cleaned up by those Government actions. To try to ascribe the happenings in Victoria to New South Wales is patently unfair, given the action we have taken.

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH (17:15):** In reply: That was a much shorter debate than I expected. All I would say to the Hon. Mark Buttigieg is that it is not enough to appoint an administrator. Much more must be done to stamp out bribery, corruption, bikies and other shadowy underworld gangland figures. It is not simply enough to appoint an administrator and say, "We have done everything we can." Only the probing powers of a royal commission can get to the bottom of what is happening in New South Wales. Government members think it is a Victorian problem alone but, as I said, this week senior CFMEU officials in New South Wales have said to the media that this is a New South Wales problem too. That is why we need a royal commission—to investigate how far the problems in the Victorian branch of the CFMEU have seeped into the New South Wales branch, and there is a huge amount of material. A royal commission is a good place to start.

We must make sure also that all the taxpayer-funded infrastructure projects—there is a huge pipeline of infrastructure projects in this State, as the Hon. Natalie Ward has said in a previous debate—are not misappropriated or used to prop up dodgy CFMEU officials with links to bikies and gangland figures. A complete audit of our infrastructure book must be done to get to the bottom of this, along with a royal commission—and maybe a New South Wales version of the Australian Building and Construction Commission as well. That is always a good place start. That was not included in the wording of my motion because I thought of it afterwards, but I think it is an excellent idea. We had it at a Federal level, and it should be restored. A Dutton government would restore the commission, and I think we should have one in New South Wales as well. I commend the motion to the House. By supporting this motion, members are saying there should be no place for bikies and shadowy underworld figures in the construction industry in New South Wales.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes ..... 14  
 Noes ..... 18  
 Majority.....4

**AYES**

Barrett	Maclaren-Jones	Overall
Carter	Martin	Rath (teller)
Fang (teller)	Merton	Roberts
Farlow	Mitchell	Ward
MacDonald	Munro	

**NOES**

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

**PAIRS**

Tudehope

D'Adam

**Motion negatived.**

*Documents*

**MOBILE DRUG TESTING**

**Production of Documents: Order**

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (17:25):** I seek leave to amend private members' business item No. 1758 by omitting in paragraph (a) "all documents, including all data, relating to" and inserting instead "all data relating to".

**Leave granted.**

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

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 35 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents created since 1 January 2022 in the possession, custody or control of the Attorney General, the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter, the Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, the Minister for Roads, and Minister for Regional Transport, the Minister for Health, Minister for Regional Health, and Minister for the Illawarra and the South Coast, the Ministry of Health, the NSW Police Force or Transport for NSW relating to mobile drug testing in New South Wales:

- (a) all data relating to:
  - (i) mobile drug tests conducted, including by drug type;
  - (ii) positive tests, including by drug type;
  - (iii) the number of positive confirmatory tests, including by drug type; and
  - (iv) the number of false positive tests, including by drug type.
- (b) all documents, including all data, relating to drivers that have a valid prescription for medicinal cannabis, when a positive test for delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol [THC] is detected;
- (c) all documents on the cost of conducting the mobile drug testing program;
- (d) all documents that detail the funding provided to NSW Police Force for the mobile drug testing program, including:
  - (i) the annual budget;
  - (ii) the cost of each initial test; and
  - (iii) the name and value of any external contracts and consultants for the program.

- (e) all documents relating to all assessments or evaluations of the mobile drug testing program; 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 is to get more transparency around the mobile drug testing regime, particularly in relation to the way in which the scheme or regime deals with medicinal cannabis. The motion calls for details of the number of positive and false positive tests, broken down by drug type, and it calls for the data on positive tests of THC. We are trying to determine whether drivers are also being asked whether they have a valid prescription for medicinal cannabis when they defend these charges. I have had a very quick conversation with the Minister about the amendment. I put on record that the amendment aims to very clearly indicate that we are not after every single document pertaining to every single case of somebody with drugs detected in their system by mobile drug testing since 1 January 2022. That would be ridiculous and is not the intent. What we are after is data.

At this point I draw the attention of the House to Drive Change, the organisation that has been campaigning for reform of roadside drug testing of medicinal cannabis patients for a number of years. In February 2022 the organisation released a report which provided an overview of recent data provided to the Legislative Council through questions on notice that I put to the police Minister. However, there is a distinct lack of available data and information to assess the value and effectiveness of the mobile drug testing program. A lot of money is being spent on this program. In fact, in 2016 it was revealed by the police that each initial roadside saliva test costs \$25.50 and each second screening drug test costs \$31.00.

Considering how far behind New South Wales is in reforming our drug laws, I think it is imperative that we know whether these regulations are actually keeping people safer and whether they are worth the money we are spending. Releasing the data is all about providing transparency so that the program's effectiveness can be assessed. It is difficult to get any information about the program. It seems that the only thing available at this point is what this House has been able to get released. I certainly hope we get the support to do the same today.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (17:30):** The Government agrees with this motion.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Motions*

### SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (17:31):** I move:

- (1) That this House notes that:
  - (a) special religious education [SRE] programs are integral to the moral and spiritual development of students, teaching about faith, ethics, tradition and values;
  - (b) SRE programs benefit young Australians, as they are taught to foster tolerance, respect, understanding and other key values; and
  - (c) volunteers are central to the delivery of the SRE program in the school environment and their service is commendable.
- (2) That this House acknowledges that:
  - (a) on 12 November 2024 in the Parliament of New South Wales, an occasion was held to celebrate the importance of SRE in New South Wales;
  - (b) Deputy Premier, and Minister for Education and Early Learning, the Hon. Prue Car, MP, and shadow assistant Minister for Education, representing the shadow Minister for Education and Early Learning, Matt Cross, MP, addressed the large gathering; and
  - (c) the event received bipartisan support and attendance from members of Parliament, including the Hon. Mark Speakman, SC, MP, the Hon. Susan Carter, MLC, Mr Tim James, MP, Mrs Sally Quinnell, MP, and the Hon. Rachel Merton, MLC.
- (3) That this House recognises the SRE program as being an integral part of the education environment in New South Wales.

I am pleased to move this motion, which notes the value and inherent worth of the special religious education program in our education system. Many of us in this place would remember when it was known by the much more sensible name of "scripture". To be honest, when I originally listed this motion as formal business, last year, which occurred in the wake of an event held at Parliament House to celebrate SRE in New South Wales, I did not expect there to be much opposition. The motion simply recognised the long and proud history of SRE in our schools. It recognised the bipartisan support SRE enjoyed and noted that the Deputy Premier, as well as my friend the

member for Davidson, from the other place, addressed, on behalf of the Government and the Opposition, the large gathering held to recognise SRE. Indeed, I was pleased to note at budget estimates hearings last August that the Deputy Premier reconfirmed the commitment of the Minns Labor Government to SRE. She said that the Government had no plans to make changes to the program.

This stands in contrast to the reprehensible and deliberately destructive behaviour of the failed socialist Victorian Labor Government under Daniel Andrews, where classes were shifted to after school or lunchtime, resulting in a drop in participation of 99 per cent in a decade. Of course, The Greens objected to taking this motion as formal business when I presented it last year, which is why we are debating it now, many months later. Upon reflection, that should have been no surprise. When it comes to classrooms, The Greens appear to endorse the dissemination to students of a left-wing and extreme ideology on everything from Gaza to global-boiling alarmism, so it is hardly a surprise that they oppose any teachings about religion, faith and values in our schools. In their world, the Teachers and School Staff for Palestine guide to activism is welcome in the classroom, yet the most consequential book ever written, the Bible, seemingly is not.

I go back to the substantive motion. SRE has a long history in this State. Since 1880, provision for religious education has been included in education policy in New South Wales. This came about through the Public Instruction Act. Section 17 of the Act permitted special religious instruction to be provided by visiting clergymen or other accredited religious teachers of their persuasion. Section 18 made provision for parents to object to their children attending SRE lessons. Various reviews have been undertaken in the years since, and special education in ethics was introduced as an option in 2010, but those key planks—of parental choice and the right to attend instruction in a particular religious persuasion—remain today.

Delivered almost entirely by many thousands of hardworking volunteers, including my mother, who was one for many years at Annangrove Public School and Dural Public School, SRE has played a vitally important role in informing students about faith, their beliefs and their role in the world. I also recognise the churches and other religious institutions that recruit, train and provide resources to these volunteers, without a cent of funding from government. In 2015 there were approximately 11,400 approved SRE teachers in New South Wales, with just 3 per cent of them being paid. That is volunteerism we can all be proud of.

The widespread presence of SRE in our public schools demonstrates the strong support it enjoys. A significant number of metropolitan schools offer a wide range of religious denomination choices for SRE. The 2015 review of SRE in New South Wales government schools showed that 87 per cent of schools were delivering SRE classes, with 81 per cent of secondary schools and a massive 92 per cent of primary schools having SRE available. In primary schools the participation rate was over 70 per cent. All of that was despite the woeful attempts of the likes of the NSW Teachers Federation, disingenuously claiming it takes up time from the curriculum, to have SRE removed from our classrooms.

In 2017 the Coalition Government published findings from an independent review into SRE. The review noted that SRE plays a positive role in schools, links schools with communities, makes a great contribution to student welfare and is, undoubtedly, good for student wellbeing and spiritual care. On top of this, SRE is delivered by trained volunteers at no cost to taxpayers. Participation is voluntary, meaning there is freedom of choice for parents and students. The motion recognises that SRE is good news for all education stakeholders. I commend the motion to the House.

**The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS (Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources) (17:36):** I thank the Hon. Rachel Merton for moving this motion recognising the value of special religious education [SRE] in our public schools and the acknowledgement of the biennial celebration of special religious education, which was held last year, on 12 November, in Parliament House and was attended by the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Education and Early Learning. The Government is supportive of and committed to special religious education and special education in ethics as outlined in the Education Act 1990. SRE has been an integral part of our public school system since its inception. It plays an important part in the partnership between schools and their local communities. For all our students, SRE is an opportunity to connect with their faith and culture. It reflects the diverse beliefs and values of many families who call Australia home.

Our strong and successful society is not something that happened by accident. It takes all of us playing a role to respect each other's faiths and cultures and to be open to learning about those who may be different to us. SRE is a critical way in which our public schools support this. SRE gives students the chance to learn about faith, values and ethics and how to live those values every day. As was acknowledged by the Deputy Premier at the SRE gathering in this building last year, there is close collaboration between the Department of Education and its consultative committee for SRE and special education in ethics, which has led to improved training for SRE teachers, better curriculum development and a more responsive approach to addressing community feedback,

ensuring that these offerings are meaningful and effective for students. SRE reflects the Government's commitment to going beyond delivering education. It is a commitment to our communities.

Public schools in New South Wales embrace people of all faiths and value the many cultural, linguistic, religious and spiritual backgrounds that students and their families bring. Many of our public schools are celebrating Harmony Week in that same vein. I finish on a point that the Deputy Premier emphasised at the biennial celebration of special religious education. Special religious education and special education in ethics are key components in supporting students' moral and spiritual development, and we are proud to uphold those traditions within our education system. On behalf of the Government, and as a parent, I thank the amazing SRE volunteers across our school communities, who work together with our public schools to create school environments that celebrate diversity, foster respect, teach values and ensure that every student feels safe and valued.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (17:38):** On behalf of The Greens, I oppose this motion. I cannot speak on this topic without instantly thinking of the late Dr John Kaye and his work exposing the content and delivery of special religious education [SRE] classes in public schools. His work as an MLC in this Parliament revealed a series of shocking facts and extreme material taught in New South Wales public schools which, for example, promoted sexism, homophobia and discrimination against students with disabilities and from multicultural backgrounds. John established that SRE materials and teaching were not adequately monitored to ensure they complied with Department of Education guidelines and fought hard to ensure that ethics classes would be an alternative to SRE in public schools. My colleague Senator David Shoebridge carried on John's work, exposing among other things that SRE lessons were being taught by far-right Hindu extremist organisations in some New South Wales public schools.

Unfortunately, we still hear regular concerns about the teaching of SRE in our public schools. Despite significant numbers of students opting out of classes, Coalition and Labor governments continue to be committed to SRE. In response to reports late last year of Hindu instructors teaching caste as part of SRE classes and seating children according to caste hierarchical order, the Department of Education, on behalf of the education Minister, maintained that religious organisations are free to teach whatever materials and pedagogy they wish in SRE lessons. In a letter to community group the Rationalist Society of Australia, the department stated:

It is ... the approved provider's responsibility to make their curriculum scope and sequence(s) accessible publicly and in sufficient detail for parents/carers to be able to understand what is covered in lessons.

The Government's complete abdication of any responsibility over the content of these lessons is completely unacceptable. When I confronted the education Minister about this in budget estimates hearings last month, she claimed to have no knowledge of this letter being written by the Department of Education. To her credit, she said she would look into it. But the idea that we have a Department of Education that does not view itself as having any responsibility for intervening to stop children being taught that they are lesser because of their caste or any other marker—whether it is a person with disability, a person of a particular sexuality or whatever it happens to be—and that this is taught in these lessons in our New South Wales public schools is really concerning. School curriculums must be evidence based and free from religious interference. The Greens know how crowded the teaching week is, and we know there is no place for preaching in public schools. Our policy is for special religious education to be abolished and to return the lost learning time to the curriculum.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (17:42):** I support the motion. As is the practice of the House, I declare my personal interest, having spent many years as a special religious educator. I almost feel guilty saying that, because people have said such lovely things about the volunteer work that is done. The privilege of being able to work with children to help them understand their world and introduce them to God gave me more pleasure than I think I provided any benefit to those children. We make sure that in schools our kids engage in sport. We make sure that in schools our kids engage in music and drama. What we are trying to do with education is not just teach the three Rs. We want rounded, whole people. We need education that engages with every aspect of a child—the physical, the emotional, the educational and the spiritual as well.

Special religious education [SRE] introduces children who have been nominated by their parents into the particular spirituality that family has selected. As a Christian, I believe we have free will—and I have seen the exercise of that in my own children and in many of the children I taught in SRE. I reject the idea that SRE is indoctrination from practical experience. It exposes children to Bible stories, if it is Christian, and to prayer and a set of beliefs that they are then free as adults to either accept or reject. They are free to either integrate them into their lives or to choose some other way of creating meaning in their world.

It is a very important part of education that all aspects of being a child are explored and that children have the freedom to ask some of the big questions of life. The enormous philosophical questions that eight-year-olds have are amazing, and it is really important to say there is a set of answers. It may be a set of answers for life.

It may be a set of answers till high school. It may be a set of answers that disappear when they walk out the door. But I think it is important for children to know that they can and should ask big questions—and that there are big answers to those questions. I commend the work done by special religious educators in this State. I commend the value they bring to children and I commend the value they bring to an educational program that tries to develop rounded human beings and not just people who can pass the NAPLAN very well.

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH (17:45):** Since its very inception, formalised education has always been about more than simply career progression. If we look back to the cradle of Western civilisation, ancient Greece, we find the origin of the word "school" as "skhole", which actually means leisure. Formal education stems from this rather counterintuitive word "leisure" in recognition of the fact that schooling was once a privilege of the elite. It was a pleasurable endeavour of immense social and cultural value. Today, though, a robust and universal education system where everyone has the chance to be a scientist instead of a serf—or even a political staffer instead of a peasant—is a very good thing and a great blessing. But with quality education now accessible to nearly all, we cannot lose the skhole behind education, those elements of cultural and personal enrichment that make education worthwhile.

The NSW Department of Education website states that public schooling in this State has six focus areas, including strengthening student wellbeing and development. I posit that there is no better means by which students may be strengthened in their wellbeing and development than through giving them the opportunity to think about those questions that science or mathematics cannot answer, as the Hon. Susan Carter mentioned in her contribution. How was the world created? Who created mankind? What happens after we die? What things are right and what things are wrong? Those are questions that are not answered through science or in biology or mathematics classes, which is why I think special religious education [SRE] is so important.

SRE is also a great equaliser. Faith, ethics, tradition and moral values—each pillars of many of our State's most popular private schools—are objectively good to understand from an early age and good to discover and debate through one's formative years. SRE should not just be at Scots College but throughout all public schools as well. If we were to take it away, it would essentially be only on offer to the rich and powerful. That is why SRE is so important in our public schools. SRE tries to explain why some things are right and others are wrong; why things like love, service and patience are good, and why others like selfishness, vengefulness and hatred are not. The children and young people of this State will eventually encounter questions of spirituality or human meaning in good times and hard times. It is fundamental to the human condition to question our very existence and meaning. That is why SRE is important, and that is why I support the motion.

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (17:48):** I support the motion moved by the Hon. Rachel Merton. I am a very proud supporter of special religious education [SRE] in our schools. Historically, of course, it has been a great legacy in New South Wales. I note the comments of the Hon. Rachel Merton about SRE being banished from Victorian schools, and the impact that has had on the delivery of SRE. As has been noted by other members in this debate, SRE is not just Christian scripture. It is not just the Anglican and Catholic scriptures, as it may have been when I went to school. A diverse range of religions and faiths take part in special religious education in New South Wales.

Unfortunately, Ms Abigail Boyd has come into this Chamber and again repeated the absurdities of now Senator David Shoebridge with respect to one of those organisations, Vishva Hindu Parishad [VHP]. Members may remember that we moved a motion in this Chamber previously to call on Mr David Shoebridge to apologise for his line of questioning during budget estimates hearings and misleadingly saying that that organisation was deemed to be a terrorist organisation in the Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook—which I was surprised that Mr David Shoebridge, now a Senator, was so au fait with.

Vishva Hindu Parishad is an organisation that has 250 volunteers across New South Wales schools, providing special religious education for those of the Hindu faith. Each one of those volunteers is there to ensure that children and their families who subscribe to the Hindu faith are able to learn about their faith in the public education system. As the Hon. Chris Rath outlined, we do not want religious education in our schools to be only for the elite or for the independent and Catholic systems. Of course, the Hindu faith has aspirations for its own school of faith, but there is no Hindu school of faith at the moment. Special religious education is a wonderful opportunity for students to be schooled in the that faith.

I have addressed conferences of the VHP. I have met with many of their volunteers. They are not far-right Hindu nationalist extremists. They are good people who want to preserve their religion and to pass it on to the next generation. They want to be able to teach students in our SRE system, which is not just for the Christian faith but is for the Islamic and the Jewish faiths. It is, of course, for the Hindu faith and Sikhs as well. It is one of the great things that we have in New South Wales and something we should preserve. Again, I call on members of this Chamber not to discriminate against people of the Hindu faith like that.

**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL (17:51):** I speak in support of the motion moved by the Hon. Rachel Merton and particularly acknowledge the role that special religious education [SRE] plays in our school communities. I was meant to speak at an event that was held on 12 November last year, but I was sick. I put on record that that was the reason I was not there. In my absence, the shadow Assistant Minister for Education, Matt Cross, very ably stepped up to address that gathering of faith leaders and members of this place. I have spoken at that event in the past, as the shadow Minister and as the Minister as well. There has always been good bipartisan support at that event for the faith leaders and the members of the special religious education communities, and the volunteers who come and celebrate the work that they do with us at Parliament House.

Most of this was covered by other members, but it is important to put on record that special religious education gives parents the opportunity to choose what their children receive at school. I also acknowledge the introduction of special education in ethics, which is something that some community members asked for as well. The point is that we want our young people to come out of school well rounded. The education of a young person at school should be about them as a whole. This touches on what the Hon. Susan Carter said. Obviously reading, writing and arithmetic is important, but we also want our young people to have values, morals, tolerance and understanding, identity in terms of who they are and, if they are of faith, their faith-based community. There are a lot of good people who work in this space. Over the years I had the chance to meet many faith leaders who are very passionate about providing that opportunity for their community, including people like Murray Norman. Many members in this House know of him and his work with Better Balanced Futures.

Importantly, over the years more and more communities have been able to offer special religious education in their schools for different faiths and religions. There are about 100 providers these days. When I was at Gunnedah South Public School in the late '80s and early '90s, the Catholic students went to the library and everyone else stayed in the classroom for what then was scripture. I am not quite sure why that happened, but I remember it vividly. That was what was offered then and there were not really many other choices. Now, as the Hon. Scott Farlow said, many faiths can offer an SRE provision in communities. It is important to a lot of families for that to be available. The fact that special religious education had enough bipartisan support to be in the Education Act for decades shows that it is important to offer it to our school communities. I thank all the volunteers who take time to be part of that in school communities, which they do because they are passionate. I thank the member for moving the motion.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD (17:54):** I seek to speak again under Standing Order 92, explanation of speeches, which applies when a member has been misquoted or misunderstood. I do not need leave; that is my explanation. I draw to the attention of the House the contribution of the Hon. Scott Farlow where it was reflected that my contribution was in some way a reflection against people of the Hindu faith. It is an unfortunate aspect of a lot of ignorance in our society that people conflate and make homogenous statements about all people of a certain faith or religion, to the extent that one cannot criticise one aspect of that. I want to clarify so that it is very well understood that I was talking about a form of religious education by a particular organisation within the Hindu faith that was teaching casteism. That is what I was talking about. I was not talking about all people of the Hindu faith. Not all people of the Hindu faith actually believe in casteism. So I think that reflection was unfair and unwarranted.

**The Hon. RACHEL MERTON (17:55):** In reply: I thank all members for their contributions to the debate. This motion recognises that special religious education [SRE] or scripture in our schools has, quite simply, been a great New South Wales success story for well over a century, and one that I strongly believe this place should endorse and celebrate. Quite frankly, religion is part of our society. We should continue to facilitate and promote our kids choosing to learn about their faith and culture. The suggestion of The Greens tonight that SRE should be abolished would simply alarm and disappoint thousands of parents. Murray Norman reports 100,000 direct supporters and thousands of parents across New South Wales for SRE. They cite that a majority of parents want religious education and independent research and that 80 per cent believe schools should be a safe place to explore deeper questions of faith and belief. That is the principle of SRE.

The idea that voluntarily learning about faith, religion and the traditions attached to religion somehow undermines the idea of a secular public education is both narrow-minded and misguided. Those who want SRE out of public schools are really saying, for example, that the Bible has no place in a school or that learning about the Gospels is somehow a corrosive idea. We have plenty of time in the failing national curriculum to learn about Indigenous culture and beliefs across a range of subjects. However, are we saying in the same breath that learning about Christianity, Judaism, Islam or Hinduism is somehow wrong and has no place in our schools? Our special religious education system has stood the test of time since 1880. I look forward to it being available in government schools for another century and a half, and beyond. I congratulate all those involved in delivering SRE in our schools, as well as those parents and students who are availing themselves of these very valuable classes every day. I commend the motion to the House.

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

**The House divided.**

Ayes .....28  
 Noes .....6  
 Majority.....22

**AYES**

Barrett	Lawrence	Murphy
Buttigieg	MacDonald	Nanva (teller)
Carter	Maclaren-Jones	Overall
Donnelly	Martin	Primrose
Fang	Merton	Rath (teller)
Farlow	Mitchell	Roberts
Graham	Mookhey	Ruddick
Houssos	Moriarty	Suvaal
Jackson	Munro	Ward
Kaine		

**NOES**

Boyd (teller)	Cohn (teller)	Higginson
Buckingham	Fachrmann	Hurst

**Motion agreed to.**

*Documents*

**ANTISEMITISM AND POLICE BRIEFINGS**

**Production of Documents: Order**

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (18:06):** I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 14 days of the date of passing of this resolution all documents created since 18 January 2025 in the possession, custody or control of the Premier, the Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early Learning, and Minister for Western Sydney, the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter, the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage, the Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, the Premier's Department, the Cabinet Office or the NSW Police Force relating to all briefings of Government members by the NSW Police Force on antisemitic or hate crimes in New South Wales, including briefing notes, draft briefing notes, diary entries, file notes, emails, and electronic messages, and any legal or other advice regarding the scope or validity of this order of the House created as a result of this order of the House.

I do not intend to speak long. In all honesty, I could incorporate my speech from earlier today in relation to the select committee, because the issues overlap. If it was ever a possibility to pass cognate motions, this would have been the great opportunity to do so. It must be remembered that a few hours ago this House endorsed the formation of a select committee to investigate the circumstances of what the Government—and, in particular, the Premier—knew about the Dural caravan incident. This Standing Order 52 motion will help that committee do its job. That is why I move this motion today.

The motion calls for briefing notes, draft briefing notes, diary entries, file notes, emails, electronic messages—anything, particularly in the possession of the police, that was used to brief the Premier or the police Minister on this matter. We know that the police briefed them because the Minister herself and the Premier have said they had briefings, and the police have agreed that there were briefings. I will repeat two of the important issues. Under questioning from me in budget estimates, Deputy Commissioner Dave Hudson, who is the lead joint counter-terrorism expert in New South Wales, a highly experienced senior police officer and someone whom I have the greatest deal of respect for, said the following:

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS:** Mr Hudson, let's go back to Dural and the caravan and stuff like that. Correct me if I'm wrong here; we're trying to record stuff as we go. I think you said around about 21 January you informed the Premier that you had a suspicion—a suspicion only—that maybe it wasn't a terror plot with the caravan. Is that correct?

**DAVID HUDSON:** I think the words I used were that there may have been alternatives to a terrorist incident.

Then, further on in the transcript, Mr Hudson says:

At the time of the briefings—and they were short but ongoing at different stages, and quite frequent at different stages, with the commissioner—we did identify or declare that we believed the incidents were linked and that the potential suspicions surrounding not just the caravan but also those other jobs were similar.

The other jobs that he refers to are the arson attacks and the malicious damages to properties. In furtherance of the work of the committee that this House has endorsed, we want to know who knew what, when they knew it and what they were told. It is important that this House, whose role is to hold the Government to account and to review and scrutinise the actions of the government of the day, is provided this information so that we can extensively and exhaustively investigate this matter.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (18:09):** On behalf of the Government and the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, I indicate that the Government will not oppose the call for papers. I again put on the record that there seems to be a view that there is some sort of conspiracy theory. That has been well ventilated. I am advised that the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism received confidential briefings from the police on a highly sensitive matter and kept the contents of those meetings confidential, as people would expect in a highly sensitive investigative situation. I also put on the record that the Government has played a strong role in not allowing racism or antisemitism to take root in New South Wales. That was the purpose of the laws that were passed in this place last month.

Members will remember that hateful crimes were still occurring on Sydney streets with alarming frequency. That is what the legislation related to. It was not just the "caravan event", as it is now referred to. The motive has been established regarding some attacks, but those incidents still occurred and were antisemitic. We cannot walk away from the fact that those hateful acts were occurring on our streets and that the Jewish community was experiencing an extraordinary level of fear. The Government acted on that and has been clear about that. Our laws criminalise intentionally and publicly inciting hatred towards another person or group based on race. The Government has always made it clear that they would apply to anyone preying on any person at any time. The scale of what was occurring at that time required a response from the Government, and that was what was provided. I acknowledge the other items of business that have been debated in this place today, and they will run their course, but the Government does not oppose this call for papers.

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH (18:11):** I briefly speak in debate to indicate that the Opposition will support the Standing Order 52 call for papers of the Hon. Rod Roberts in the interest of accountability and transparency. It will help guide the inquiry that was established today, in terms of what types of questions to ask and what types of witnesses to call. It is good that those papers will come before the House. The Opposition supports the motion.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON (18:12):** I speak on behalf of The Greens to indicate that we too will support the call for papers. As the Hon. Chris Rath stated, it goes hand in hand with the inquiry that was established today. In response to the Government's contribution, I do not think anybody has suggested that there is a conspiracy going on. It is an insult to suggest so. Everybody who has been part of the debate in the public arena, in the parliamentary arena, in each other's offices, with colleagues, with constituents, with stakeholders or with civil society knows that it is about the processes that took place, the lack of accountability, the withholding of information and who knew what, when, where and how. That is what it is about.

It is unfair and wrong to come to this place and say that there is a conspiracy and that we are all attacking that. It lowers the debate, the work that we have done, the sleep that we have lost in the process and the good faith that we have engaged in with each other and everyone else to consider whether it was the right course of action and whether we are taking the right steps. None of us have done this lightly. It is a bit flippant and regrettable that that is the Government's contribution. I appreciate that the order for papers will get underway and the work will happen so that we can get transparency and provide some understanding about how, who, what, where and, most importantly, why we ended up in the position we did.

**The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (18:14):** In reply: I endorse something that Ms Sue Higginson said, which I had already written down in my notes. She mentioned the word "conspiracy". At no stage, during any of my contributions today, have I mentioned the word "conspiracy". Simply because we are challenging the Government and holding it to account does not mean there is some sort of conspiracy theory. It is our job. Government members need to remember what they did when they were in opposition. Members are here to hold the government of the day to account, and the Government needs to clearly spell out to not only members of this place but also the New South Wales public why it took a particular course of action.

We are forced into this. At budget estimates, the police Minister, under questioning, refused to discuss anything about any of the briefings she had. Minister Moriarty said that the police Minister received high-level, confidential briefings and that she did not want to disclose anything, but sitting right beside the Minister was Deputy Commissioner David Hudson, the lead for the joint counterterrorism taskforce in New South Wales. He had no problems answering the questions that I put to him. He did not hide behind confidentiality or secrecy. He

is the most experienced police officer in the commissioner's executive team. He would not have answered the questions that I put to him if he had any fear that it would interfere with any ongoing investigations or would lead to the outgoing of any methodology that the police had engaged in. He was prepared to answer. The Minister chose not to answer, hence why we are here today. I understand that the Government does not oppose the call for papers. We have got enough on the record. I leave my contribution there.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

*Business of the House*

**POSTPONEMENT OF BUSINESS**

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH:** On behalf of the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones: I postpone private members' business item No. 1773 until a later hour of the sitting.

*Motions*

**REGIONAL WOMEN AWARDS**

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (18:17):** I move:

- (1) That this House congratulates the:
  - (a) finalists of the 2025 NSW Regional Woman of the Year award:
    - (i) Kate Cleary from Hilltops;
    - (ii) Kirsty Evans from Orange;
    - (iii) Jan Frikken from Eurobodalla; and
    - (iv) Penny Lamaro from Armidale.
  - (b) regional finalists for the 2025 NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year award:
    - (i) Aunty Fay Green from Walgett; and
    - (ii) Aunty Rhonda Towney from Parkes.
  - (c) regional finalists for the 2025 NSW Community Hero award:
    - (i) Kelly Lamb from Port Macquarie-Hastings; and
    - (ii) Sandy Rogers from Tweed.
  - (d) regional finalists for the 2025 Ones to Watch award:
    - (i) Cloe Croker from Goulburn;
    - (ii) Kat Mulcair from Yass Valley; and
    - (iii) Emilia Trustum from Richmond Valley.
  - (e) regional finalist for the 2025 Premiers NSW Woman of Excellence award, from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Professor Annette Cowie from Armidale.
- (2) That this House acknowledges the success of women in regional communities.

It is an honour to speak about regional women, particularly after the role that regional women have played over the past couple of weeks. The Minns Labor Government has just promoted three amazing regional women within its ranks. It is a wonderful occasion to be talking about regional women. I speak about NSW Women's Week and the 2025 awards. The NSW Women of the Year Awards was held on Thursday 6 March. I, along with a number of colleagues from across Parliament, attended the awards. I particularly pay tribute to a woman who won the Community Hero award. Her name is Sandy Rogers. She is from Tweed. Sandy flew down early to attend the awards, given the threat of Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred. She was there despite knowing all of the issues back home. I met Sandy at that breakfast.

When I met Sandy that morning, she told me that where she lived she was out of immediate danger but that she had a number of people and pets who were sheltering at her home. At that stage, she did not really know when she would be able to safely return. Sandy was a wonderful nominee and award recipient for the NSW Community Hero Award. As a woman who has lived in the Tweed area, she has started up and run various charities. She has important lived experience through losing her child who had quite complex needs. She has a wonderful story to tell. She gives so much to that community.

A record number of nominations were received for the 2025 NSW Women of the Year Awards across all categories, which included the NSW Community Hero, which I just spoke about, and the NSW Regional Woman

of the Year. The nominations reflected a really broad range of women who work across various industries, from STEM industries to health, and people who are at the cutting edge of expertise. It was a wonderful occasion to honour the contribution that regional women make across the State.

I highlight the NSW Regional Woman of the Year, Kirsty Evans, from Orange. Kirsty led efforts to provide pro bono legal advice to the community of Molong, which was affected by severe flooding in 2022. Her work was really well acknowledged at the breakfast, and her advocacy in the community continues. I commend her for her work. The NSW Young Woman of the Year was won by an amazing young woman, Dr Jessica Teoh, who is not only a domestic violence advocate but also a Churchill Fellow. She is one of only two women under 30 in Australia to receive the honour.

The events were well attended from across all sides of politics and reflected the diversity and richness across the State, particularly in the regions. This occasion was a wonderful example of recommitting to do more as a government and as a State when it comes to advancing women's causes; gender equality; combating domestic violence, particularly in regional areas; and recognising that these women do a lot of work in the community that goes unpaid and often unrecognised. It was a fantastic occasion. I thank all of my colleagues who attended, particularly the Minister for Women and the Minister for Regional New South Wales in this place. I commend the motion to the House.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL (18:22):** I am excited to be leading for the Opposition to absolutely, full-throatedly support the motion, acknowledging the success of women in regional communities. With only three minutes to speak, Madam Deputy President, you might have to call me to order to get me to sit down again. There are so many examples in so many places, but first let me focus on some of the amazing examples who are rightly being recognised as finalists in the 2025 NSW Women of the Year Awards. I had the incredible honour, which I was completely surprised by, of being the Monaro Woman of the Year in 2020. I know with certainty that, like me, none of those women do all that they do for the awards or recognition; they do it because it is about being part of community.

I offer my heartfelt congratulations to all nominees as well as the finalists in the 2025 NSW Regional Woman of the Year and the other categories—Aboriginal Woman of the Year, Community Hero and Ones to Watch, as well as Professor Annette Cowie, the regional finalist for the 2025 Premier's NSW Woman of Excellence Award. On 8 March I was in Armidale and Glenn Innes—fantastic regional centres—as a guest speaker for International Women's Day. I was delighted to spend some time with the 2022 Premier's NSW Woman of the Year, Anna Barwick, then a PhD student, mum and practising pharmacist focused on rural health and women's health. Anna started PharmOnline with the goal of connecting every household in Australia to accessible pharmacy services.

To go back to the current awards, I acknowledge some of those who similarly live in my wider regional area. I acknowledge Kate Cleary from Hilltops for her commitment to supporting women recovering from alcohol and other drug abuse, equipping women for independent living and restoring real hope in their lives. Also representing the next generation of rising stars from regional New South Wales is 15-year-old Chloe Croker from Goulburn, recognised in the Ones to Watch category. Chloe is youth mayor at Goulburn Mulwaree Youth Council, a volunteer position where she promotes youth involvement in the community and provides a youthful perspective on local issues.

Another special mention goes to another of our young female regional champions, year 6 student Kat Mulcair from Yass Valley, who raised more than \$8,000 for the Newborn Intensive Care Foundation. It is so tremendous to see such fabulous examples of young women stepping up in and for their communities. Coming back to International Women's Day, I give a big shout-out to more than 70 amazing regional and rural women from Gunnedah, Manilla, Tamworth and Glen Innes who were there for the VIEW Club's luncheon. With that, I wholeheartedly commend the motion to the House as we highlight these amazing women.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (18:25):** I, too, support the motion. I acknowledge all the incredible women who were nominated—a record number—and the recipients and finalists, who received very well-deserved recognition. I was delighted to attend the breakfast and present the Regional Woman of the Year award. It was an incredibly inspiring morning, being able to hear the stories of all of the people who were nominated and all of the winners. Some incredibly amazing women, who are unsung heroes, are doing incredible things in communities across New South Wales, particularly in our regions. I also acknowledge the Minister for Women, Jodie Harrison, who presented and hosted the awards, and MPs from across the divide and every political persuasion, who were there supporting their local nominees for woman of the year. It is an important event that occurs in New South Wales each year and an important time to recognise the work that women are doing.

I particularly highlight the work of the regional finalists and the winner of the regional award, which I was honoured to present again this year. The Regional Woman of the Year award recognises the accomplishments of an exceptional woman living in regional New South Wales who inspires and advances their community and contributes to the fabric of their local area. This year's winner was Kirsty Evans from Orange. We have heard about her today and her incredible efforts to provide pro bono legal advice to the community of Molong after it was affected by severe flooding in 2022. She dedicated over 250 hours to helping 12 business owners, delivering over \$100,000 in pro bono legal services. That was an incredible thing to do for her local community after a traumatic experience—which that severe flood event in that community certainly was. I congratulate Kirsty.

I acknowledge the nominees: Kate Cleary, who is the founder of the Farm, a sanctuary for women recovering from alcohol and drug misuse; Jan Frikken, a community advocate and leader who has created numerous community-based activities and groups, including English classes, diversity nights and multicultural celebrations, on the South Coast; and Penny Lamaro, who leads an innovative community-owned crisis service supporting women fleeing violence in regional New South Wales. Finally, I give a particular shout-out to one of the nominees for the Premier's Woman of Excellence award because she works in my department. Professor Annette Cowie is an incredible globally recognised climate scientist whose research focuses on managing the climate impact of agriculture through bioenergy and sustainable land management. She is fantastic.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL (18:29):** In reply: I thank all members who participated in tonight's debate. I thank the Hon. Nichole Overall, who was the Monaro Woman of the Year in 2020, for her contribution. I also thank her for the work that was acknowledged by that award. In terms of the nominees and finalists, we heard a lot about contributions from regional women, but I echo the words of the Minister, the Hon. Tara Moriarty, singling out Professor Annette Cowie. We are very fortunate as a government to have some of the most brilliant minds in the world, such as Professor Annette Cowie, when it comes to areas of expertise. It was wonderful to see her expertise acknowledged that morning. The other thing that struck me when I attended the event was the recognition of women working in fields that would have been considered perhaps non-traditional not that long ago. They are at the cutting edge of things like agriculture, industry, technology, marine and bioscience, and obstetrics and gynaecology. It was wonderful to see such a wide variety of women acknowledged for their work in those industries. I commend the motion to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

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

#### *Documents*

### **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE SECTOR**

#### **Return to Order**

**The CLERK:** According to the resolution of the House of Wednesday 13 November 2024, I table:

- (a) a return received on Wednesday 19 March 2025 from the Cabinet Office, together with an indexed list of documents; and
- (b) a return received on Wednesday 19 March 2025 from the Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of personal information.

### **INNOVATION BLUEPRINT**

#### **Return to Order**

**The CLERK:** According to the resolution of the House of Wednesday 19 February 2025, I table:

- (a) a return received on Wednesday 19 March 2025 from the Cabinet Office, together with an indexed list of documents;
- (b) a return received on Wednesday 19 March 2025 from the Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of privilege; and
- (c) a return received on Wednesday 19 March 2025 from the Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of personal information.

### **MOORE PARK GOLF COURSE**

#### **Return to Order**

**The CLERK:** According to the resolution of the House of Wednesday 19 February 2025, I table:

- (a) a return received on Wednesday 19 March 2025 from the Cabinet Office, together with an indexed list of documents;
- (b) a return received on Wednesday 19 March 2025 from the Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of privilege; and

- (c) a return received on Wednesday 19 March 2025 from the Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of personal information.

## ROSEHILL RACECOURSE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

### Return to Order

**The CLERK:** According to the resolution of the House of Wednesday 12 February 2025, I table:

- (a) a return received on Wednesday 19 March 2025 from the Cabinet Office, together with an indexed list of documents;
- (b) a return received on Wednesday 19 March 2025 from the Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of privilege; and
- (c) a return received on Wednesday 19 March 2025 from the Cabinet Office of documents subject to a claim of personal information.

### Motions

## RESIDENTIAL DWELLING AUDIT

**The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (20:03):** I move:

- (1) That this House acknowledges that:
- (a) housing approvals in New South Wales have dropped to the lowest level in 12 years;
- (b) New South Wales is 40 per cent behind our National Housing Accord target, while Victoria meets theirs;
- (c) Sydney rents have significantly increased, marking a 6.4 per cent rise in one year;
- (d) Sydney's rental vacancy sits at 1.5 per cent; and
- (e) the anecdotal reports of the number of residential dwelling vacancies suggests that Australian Bureau of Statistics data is under-recording residential dwelling vacancies.
- (2) That this House notes the contempt the Minns Labor Government has demonstrated towards two motions passed by this House on 13 September 2023 and 6 June 2024 regarding the undertaking of a residential dwelling audit and reporting on its progress.
- (3) That this House calls on the Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces to:
- (a) urgently update the House on the progress of a residential dwelling audit, as agreed; and
- (b) come clean to the people of New South Wales if no progress has been made.

The Government's record on housing delivery is woeful. We know that. Government members should be delighted to have in front of them an idea that may actually deliver some homes for people, because people are still waiting. Hundreds of thousands of people may be on the edge of homelessness and are considerably stressed out. The vacancy rate for rentals is about 1.5 per cent. Rents in Sydney have increased significantly. We are 40 per cent behind our National Housing Accord target. In 2023 the Government set a record for the lowest number of housing approvals since 2014, for nine years. Some 23,000 dwellings were approved. Last year, it beat the record. It was even lower. Some 22,000 dwellings were approved, which means there is no pipeline for New South Wales. Despite housing supply being an apparent focus of the Government, the reality is it is not delivering. The Government is certainly not delivering when it comes to this housing audit, which it agreed to do in this place and then agreed to follow up in June last year, to provide some accountability for and transparency of the state of housing in New South Wales.

I am so passionate about this because, although the Government says it relies on the Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] data, which relies on water and electricity connections, I am incredibly sceptical of it. It shows about a 1 per cent vacancy rate. But the Government's own data, particularly through Transport for NSW and Planning, includes Travel Zone Projections 2022, TZP22. I got nerdy about this spreadsheet. There is a record of the expected number of structural private dwellings [SPDs] and the number of occupied private dwellings [OPDs]. If you subtract the OPDs from the SPDs, you get the number of unoccupied private dwellings. It is a clear and simple calculation, actually. It suggests that there were 400,000 unoccupied private dwellings in New South Wales, and that number is increasing as time goes on. I tried to update the figures because TZP22 is from 2022. There is data available for 2024, but it is much less easy to navigate. How the Excel spreadsheets and the data have been collected and presented is much less transparent than it was, which should be cause for concern, regardless, because we cannot easily find the figures.

I want to impress upon the Government how important the issue is to the people of New South Wales. I was on ABC Radio Sydney after I first proposed the audit, in 2023, and the response from listeners was huge. I was sent some of the messages that came in. One stated:

Excuse my ignorance but won't this just mean that "caretakers" will leave taps dripping and lights on?

I live in Lindfield that has some very expensive houses. Many sold to overseas investors that then sit empty for many months. This has ruined the community. One house sold 18 months ago for \$10 million, and no one has moved in. They do have caretakers who come in and maintain the property. I'm sure these investors can afford to pay more tax. It is a joke.

That is from Jackie. Someone else wrote:

There is about 12 units on Concord Rd, the lawns are maintained but no one in there for years.

Clearly, the ABS data the Labor Government relies on to answer these questions is not useful if there are anecdotal examples of how these numbers can be changed, essentially, to suit a different reality. Another message stated:

There's a completed complex which has been empty for around 12 months or so ... at Merton and President Ave Kirrawee probably around 16 to 20 town houses ... I keep asking myself what's happening here.

Another person wrote that his friend, who is a postie, said more than a couple of years ago:

... there are dozens of homes in Wahroonga that are empty. Prime RE, 4 or 5 bedrooms. What a waste.

The final sensible suggestion was that a database needs to be a living document and not just a snapshot. An eye needs to be kept on it over time. That is what the people of New South Wales deserve. [*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Youth) (20:08):** I thank the honourable member for the motion. The Government will not be supporting it. The motion calls on me and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces to commence the dwelling audit. For the benefit of the member, I indicate that, as the Minister for Housing, I have responsibility for government-owned and -tenanted housing. We have a clear understanding of who lives in those properties and their utilisation, under-utilisation, vacancy et cetera. The motion refers to private property. That is the responsibility of Minister Chanthivong, who has advised me that the audit is not a priority for the Government. It is pretty clear why.

There is a considerable amount of work—not data collection, but actual work—already happening in the housing space. The reality is that the resources of government are finite, and the Government has to make decisions about where they are going to be most impactful. Right now Minister Chanthivong is leading reforms such as the implementation of no-grounds evictions; the implementation of a scheme to facilitate pets in rentals; the compliance process around the banning of fees for background checks; the Portable Rental Bonds Scheme design and implementation; the rent bidding crackdown compliance process; the priorities of the Rental Taskforce; and a general enforcement blitz on matters such as minimum property standards and dodgy real estate practices.

On top of that, the Government is also doing all of the work on planning reforms; the ongoing work of the land audit to identify government sites; the implementation of the transport oriented development program; low- and mid-rise housing reforms; the Housing Pattern Book process; the work of the Housing Taskforce to identify and resolve barriers within government agencies to housing approvals; and supporting the Housing Delivery Authority and State significant development application process to deliver land rezonings and development applications. Of course, I am doing all of the work to deliver the Building Homes for NSW program, ensuring we build the social housing we need; roll out the Homelessness Innovation Fund; implement a new maintenance contract for housing; reform temporary accommodation and more.

Amongst all of that work, a residential dwelling audit is not straightforward and does not contribute to actual results. The data sources for measuring a private property's occupation status are limited and not easily accessed. The authority to compel private home owners to provide information on their property's occupation status is unclear and not something that government necessarily has the power to do. The process would be time-consuming. It took the former Government almost three years to build a data profile of buildings with combustible cladding, which highlights the time and resources required for audits of private property. Of course, it also increases the risk that the data becomes outdated, as the property status of private homes is constantly changing. Of course access to data is a priority, and we like to use data in government, but it should not come at the expense of real action and reform. Finally, what would the member have us do with that information? I thought I was the progressive! She is proposing the most bold interventions into the private property market that I think I have ever heard from the Liberal Party. I welcome her new tax on private properties— [*Time expired.*]

**The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW (20:11):** It is funny that about 18 months ago, when the Hon. Jacqui Munro first proposed this idea in this place, the Minister said the Government will not stand in the way of a good idea. At the time the Minister thought it was something that could be added to the list when trying to solve the housing crisis in New South Wales. But it is similar to what the Minister has outlined before. A year ago it was the time for submissions to end, but we were supposed to have a short-term rental accommodation review in this State as well. Again, it is on the backburner, a policy like the one proposed in this motion that is just looking for information, despite the scare campaign of those opposite. We are not the talking about any taxes. If members

opposite want to look at records when it comes to taxes on properties, they might have a look down south at their Victorian Labor colleagues and what they are doing to put a tax on every property in the State.

What the Hon. Jacqui Munro is calling for is what the community is calling for. We want a bit more information so that we can have policy solutions in place to get more houses on the market and more people living in them. Maybe some properties are waiting because it is not feasible to build at the moment. They might be owned by developers who are looking to put additional housing on them but cannot get it to stack up because the Labor Party has put a \$12,000 tax on every new home that might be developed in New South Wales. Maybe some of those things are holding back some of that building. Maybe, as the Hon. Jacqui Munro has outlined, it is because of some foreign ownership restrictions that are in place. Maybe it is because these places are on the short-term rental market and are not currently being used at their highest efficiency. Those are all things that an audit like this might actually uncover, which in turn might inform some policy solutions from the Government.

Eighteen months ago in this House the Government said, "Bring it on. We are happy to do it. Great idea. Thank you very much." There might have been a few barbs along the way—the debate was not that clean-spirited—but it was something the Government undertook to do. Now it is all too difficult. Just like the short-term rental accommodation review, it is another one on the backburner and the Government has other priorities. But it is funny that the Government was happy to accept it at the time. Similarly, the strata review was supposed to be something the Minister was spearheading that would revolutionise housing in New South Wales. However, that is another thing that is on the backburner—another thing that is all too hard for this Government. The community is calling for it as a way to look at why we have residential vacancies. All we are asking for is an audit, which is something this House moved 18 months ago and the Government accepted to do. The Government should get on with it.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN (20:14):** The Greens say bring on the audit, so we absolutely support this motion—but let us do more than that. Let us look at disincentivising those roughly 43,000 homes across the State that for whatever reason are vacant. Let us look at tax measures and other ways to disincentivise leaving so many houses vacant. As the Opposition has pointed out, this has been promised by this Government—or at least committed to in some way—as was looking at the impact of short-term rental accommodation in this State. Basically, we have no idea what the Government is considering. I acknowledge that the Hon. Rose Jackson was representing Minister Chanthivong but, to be honest, her response to this motion was rather concerning. It does not seem like the issue of the roughly 43,000 vacant homes in New South Wales is going to be dealt with.

For example, in some coastal communities—for example, areas of the South Coast—upwards of 60 per cent of homes were vacant on census night. Obviously, a lot of those are holiday homes and Airbnbs. But we cannot just do an audit, have the information and say, "Gee, isn't that interesting?" We need to do much more. At the Federal level The Greens want to reform capital gains tax and negative gearing, and the Liberals, The Nationals and the Labor Party will not support it. But how can we encourage and incentivise—and, yes, incentivise financially, because it has to be financial—people who have additional properties to rent them long term as opposed to putting them up for short-term rental? Clearly that is one of the major issues. Another is downsizing. What can be done at the State level to incentivise older couples with a big fat house and lots of bedrooms to rent them long term? An audit will let us know what the problem is, and then we can work out the solutions.

**The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO (20:17):** In reply: I thank members for their contributions. Evidently, if the Government has decided that it no longer wants to do this audit then it is a broken promise. I appreciated the spirited contribution to debate by the Minister for Housing, but we have this opportunity to understand what our housing market actually looks like and where our land is being utilised. The Minister wants to verbal me about tax reform. I am a proud proponent of the land tax reforms that the Coalition Government made.

The worst decision that Labor has made since coming to government is to ignore the advice of decades of economic expertise that we should be moving towards a land tax, getting rid of stamp duty, improving mobility and allowing the people of New South Wales to use land in its most efficient form. However, this Government has no vision. It has no results. There is no housing. It has outdated ideas of data collection. There are so many companies available to determine how homes are being utilised in a much more effective way.

I note Ms Cate Faehrmann's contribution about the 43,000 vacant homes. The concern is that the figure is drastically underestimating the real number of vacancies in New South Wales. We cannot make policy unless we have good data. That is fundamentally what this gets down to. The Government can say that it is doing all of these things but, like Milton Friedman said, one cannot judge a government by its intentions; it must be judged on its outcomes. The outcomes that this Government has delivered are lacklustre at best and negligent to the people of New South Wales at worst. I received one message saying:

I know of a house empty I'm in Mosman. Owners are in HK.

Another person said:

There are three houses in a row on Northcote St Canterbury that have been closed off by construction fencing since at least 2016.

Another message said:

There appears to be a considerable number of large vacant houses in Strathfield. It is easy to spot at least one vacant house in most streets.

That is what people are experiencing day to day. They look down the street and see empty homes without their lights on and with gardens falling into despair. Those are homes that could potentially provide shelter for people who do not need to wait five years for another home to be delivered.

**The Hon. Rose Jackson:** It's private property.

**The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO:** The Minister likes to interject and impugn my motives or think that I have a particular policy solution. I have already said that they should be looking at land tax reform. There is no doubt about that; we have heard it from Ken Henry. This Government does not want to take action. It is a broken promise from them. [*Time expired.*]

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### *Documents*

## **ANTISEMITISM LEGISLATION**

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

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (20:21):** I move:

That, under Standing Order 52, there be laid upon the table of the House within 21 days of the date of passing of this resolution the following documents created since 1 January 2024 in the possession, custody or control of the Premier, the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter or the Attorney General relating to antisemitic crime in New South Wales:

- (a) all documents relating to incidents of criminal antisemitism in New South Wales;
- (b) all documents relating to the drafting of the following legislation:
  - (i) Crimes Amendment (Inciting Racial Hatred) Bill 2025;
  - (ii) Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025; and
  - (iii) Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025.
- (c) all correspondence sent to or received from the following:
  - (i) NSW Police Force;
  - (ii) Australian Federal Police;
  - (iii) Australian Security Intelligence Organisation;
  - (iv) Premier's Department;
  - (v) the Cabinet Office,
  - (vi) Hills Shire Council;
  - (vii) Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter;
  - (viii) Premier;
  - (ix) Attorney General;
  - (x) Commissioner's Executive Team [CET];
  - (xi) Governance Command;
  - (xii) Police Prosecutions Licensing and Enforcement Command [PPLEC];
  - (xiii) Office of General Counsel [OGC];
  - (xiv) Forensic Evidence and Technical Services Command;
  - (xv) Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet;
  - (xvi) Australian Signals Directorate; and
  - (xvii) police or intelligence forces in foreign jurisdictions.
- (d) all evidence that informed the preparation of the following legislation:
  - (i) Crimes Amendment (Inciting Racial Hatred) Bill 2025;
  - (ii) Crimes Amendment (Places of Worship) Bill 2025; and

- (iii) Crimes Legislation Amendment (Racial and Religious Hatred) Bill 2025.
- (e) the full list of more than 700 antisemitic incidents referred to by the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, and Minister for the Hunter, during the budget estimates hearing held on 12 March 2025; 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 Standing Order 52 call for papers seeks transparency around the Dural caravan plot and its potential impact on shaping this Parliament's recently passed anti free speech laws. On 7 February last year Premier Minns said via a media release on integrity reforms, "Restoring trust in government is of the highest priority". Does the Minns Government still stand by this approach to public policy? I note that the Premier has pledged transparency on planning approvals, grant schemes and even on parking fines, which is all good. This same spirit of transparency must also apply to the Dural caravan plot and matters investigated by Strike Force Pearl. Have we passed laws in this Parliament based on the fabrications of criminals? That could well be the case, so we cannot just sweep this under the carpet. We cannot dig our heels in over pride and reputations.

Attorney General Michael Daley told the ABC on 14 March that he had not been briefed that the caravan plot was "unlikely to be terrorism". I assume that is accurate, but it only opens up questions as to why the Attorney General was kept out of the loop. The Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, Yasmin Catley, read from a document in the budget estimates hearing on 12 March stating that there had been over 700 incidents of antisemitism in recent months in New South Wales. That is alarming and may have helped persuade this Parliament to pass the anti-free speech laws. There should be some level of parliamentary transparency around this list so that members can understand the magnitude of this threat.

Premier Minns has said the Dural caravan plot was a potential mass casualty event and that it was terrorism. But—borrowing a phrase from the Watergate era—what did the Premier know and when did he know it? Government members have stated that they were briefed by a variety of local, State, Federal and international authorities and intelligence agencies over this matter. I do not doubt that, but the Parliament should have visibility on that advice. Some of the key questions that must be answered are these: When did it become the consensus view that the Dural caravan plot was not terrorism but instead a criminal hoax? Why did the Government feel it necessary to proceed with the bills if we had all been misled by a criminal enterprise? Was the Dural caravan plot the only plot, or was that conspiracy connected to the other violent incidents? This call for papers will answer those questions and the most important question of all: Did the Government mislead the Parliament?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY (Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales) (20:23):** I contribute to debate on this motion on behalf of the police Minister, and I indicate on behalf of the Government that we do not oppose this motion. The Government again places on record that racism and antisemitism are not condoned in this State. I am saddened, as we all are, by the hateful crimes that were occurring on Sydney streets with disturbing frequency earlier in the year. The legislations passed in February are designed to combat that distressing and horrific behaviour that was driving fear into the Jewish community across our State. While a motive was established regarding some attacks, they used antisemitism while committing these crimes to instil chilling fear. Those incidents occurred and they were antisemitic. We cannot walk away from the fact that these hateful acts were occurring on our streets and that the Jewish community experienced extraordinary fear.

Our laws criminalised intentionally and publicly inciting hatred towards another person or group based on race. One antisemitic or racist incident is, frankly, one too many. It is true that there have been many hundreds of antisemitic events since October 2023. Between the NSW Police Force and the Community Security Group alone, many hundreds of incidents have been recorded; sadly, many more have not. We took action—which has been debated a lot in this place today—to deal with the situation that was confronting the whole community. The laws were passed on that basis. Obviously, there is interest in that. We do not oppose this call for papers. The documents will be provided.

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH (20:26):** I indicate that the Opposition will support this Standing Order 52 request in the interests of accountability and transparency.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON (20:26):** I make a contribution to debate on behalf of The Greens. I initially thought maybe there were some concerns with crossover of the calls for papers under Standing Order 52 that have been passed today. But, after some brief discussion, it appears—hopefully—that there is not too much of a crossover in the information that is being sought by the Hon. John Ruddick and the Hon. Rod Roberts, on the motion he moved earlier today. In that vein, I think this is really about trying to get access to all of the information that underpins the events and the circumstances that we found ourselves in. All of these documents will ultimately assist the committee that has now been established to look into the matter with the depth, breadth and forensic capacity that it needs. A lot of calls for papers seem to be going on, possibly for a number of reasons. As the Hon.

Chris Rath indicated on behalf of the Opposition, this is all about accountability, transparency and good governments.

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (20:27):** In reply: I thank the Government, the Opposition and The Greens for supporting the call for papers.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### *Adjournment Debate*

#### **ADJOURNMENT DEBATE**

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

#### **STAMP DUTY**

**The Hon. CHRIS RATH (20:28):** Tonight I wish to take on the foe of the first homebuyer, the downsizer's detractor, the rival of the relocation—that is, of course, stamp duty. Almost every tax review, most notably the Labor-commissioned 2010 Henry Tax Review, has identified State-based stamp duties on property as among the most inefficient taxes in Australia. Stamp duty, paid on the value of a house sale, is a volatile revenue source for governments. It is inherently subject to Australia's ever changing property market. It is inequitable, as people who change homes more frequently pay more tax, irrespective of their income or wealth—think paramedics or members of the Defence Force. Stamp duty is therefore inefficient because of the tax's high deadweight loss. Housing is not bought when the market signals it should be.

A specific example might be a paramedic refusing to move to the Central Coast for a promotion, as they have already bought in south-west Sydney. Naturally, they do not want to pay tens of thousands of dollars in tax to rehome. Stamp duty means first home buyers face a huge barrier to entering the market. Those aiming to upsize to suit their family needs are inhibited from moving, elderly Australians are remaining in their oversized homes for longer than is necessary, and investors find their assets even more illiquid as they hold on to their properties for longer to recoup the cost of stamp duty. Yet despite these clear flaws, stamp duty is a lucrative tax for State governments. It accounts for approximately one-quarter of State government revenue. State governments are addicted to a bad, productivity-stifling tax. NSW Treasury modelling has previously indicated that if stamp duty were abolished entirely and replaced with a land tax model, home prices would be reduced by 3 per cent to 4 per cent and gross State product would rise by 1.7 per cent due to productivity increases.

To address this, the former New South Wales Liberal Government passed significant reforms to stamp duty in the form of First Home Buyer Choice. For the first time, home buyers were given the choice between paying stamp duty up-front or paying a small annual land tax on home purchases under \$1.5 million. Home buyers overwhelmingly chose the latter, as 80 per cent of first home buyers opted for the land tax. It was a reform based on individual choice—or, as I always say, if you give people choice, they do not choose stamp duty. On average, stamp duty adds 2½ years to the time required for first home buyers to save for a deposit, serving only to disadvantage young people and lock them out of the housing market. When the Liberal Party's reforms were introduced, young families could get into the market faster. It is a great shame that NSW Labor took that opportunity from first home buyers by reversing the reform.

All is not lost for families in this State, however. Mark Speakman and the NSW Liberals are committed to restoring First Home Buyer Choice in full if elected in 2027. Mark also recognises the need for further reform. We have committed to removing the stamp duty barrier for empty-nesters, to incentivise—not force—empty-nesters with large homes to downsize and free up appropriate housing supply for younger families. Over 1.4 million people in New South Wales occupy a three- or four-bedroom home on their own or as couples without children; nearly three-quarters of them are over 55 years old. Dr Nick Garvin from the economic research institute e61 found that stamp duty is deterring close to a quarter of potential downsizers from making the decision to move. His team found that a 1 per cent increase in stamp duty causes home transactions to drop by 7.2 per cent. In removing the stamp duty disincentive to move homes, we have an opportunity for one generation to support another. On the issue of stamp duty, I am reminded of the intergenerational compact. We cannot block the young people of this State today from the Australian dream by keeping stamp duty as it is. Our State's prosperity depends on serious reform, and the end goal must be to abolish this dreadful tax.

#### **ANIMAL SEXUAL ABUSE**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST (20:33):** Animal sexual abuse is an act of violence. It is an act that by its very nature can never be consensual. I know this is a topic that nobody wants to talk about—and I get it. But it is

actually not something that we can ignore. The link between animal sexual abuse and child sexual abuse is well known. When we talk about animal sexual abuse, it is both a child and animal protection issue. Perpetrators are often found guilty of offences against both animals and children. In fact, of the 102 people currently incarcerated in New South Wales for animal cruelty offences, 58 have a bestiality charge or conviction and 57 have a charge or conviction for a child sex offence. In September, two men were arrested in Sydney on child and animal sexual abuse charges. In November, a Tasmanian man was sentenced for accessing and possessing child and animal sexual abuse materials. In February, a Sydney man was charged in Victoria with 92 offences of animal sexual abuse and accessing child abuse material.

Based on Australian police reports, when a person has been found guilty of animal sexual abuse offences, they are often also implicated in child sexual abuse offences. And I am sorry, but it gets more shocking. We have heard anecdotally that animal sexual abuse is on the rise. Given that the number of people incarcerated for animal sexual abuse has risen from 8 to 58 in just a year, now more than ever we need to ensure that our laws are fail-safe to protect animals and children from those perpetrators. New South Wales has started taking steps in the right direction, thanks to successful campaigning and legislation passed by the Animal Justice Party, but there is more to do. I have spoken with lawmakers, prosecutors and police, all of whom confirm that there are problems with the current law and that cases of animal sexual abuse are falling through the gaps. But we can fix this. It is not complicated, and I have introduced a bill to address some of the shortcomings.

First, we need to use victim-centred language. We need to call animal sexual abuse what it is rather than allowing perpetrators to hide behind a term like "bestiality", which is obscure and indirect and implies that the act is somehow different from animal sexual abuse. We also need a definition of animal sexual abuse. It is already illegal in New South Wales, but the crime itself is not defined. Instead, the definition is left up to the discretion of the judicial system to determine what constitutes animal sexual abuse. The problem with this approach is that the common law has a very limited and incomplete understanding of animal sexual abuse, often restricting the offence to acts of penetration. We know that sexual abuse is perpetrated in other ways, and to suggest it is limited to penile penetration is ridiculous. Yet, without a statutory definition, grievous acts often fall short of the common law threshold for what constitutes abuse. The limitations and ambiguity around this crime are problematic for prosecutors, defence lawyers, police and judges alike, and they allow dangerous people back into the community to continue to harm animals while also having a high likelihood of harming children. Other jurisdictions have a definition, and it is time we set clear prohibitions in New South Wales as well.

We also need to establish an offence for knowingly advertising, selling or transferring an animal for use in acts of animal sexual abuse. This is essential, as so many animals are procured online for illegal purposes, but, as the law stands, complicit sellers cannot be prosecuted. We must close this loophole. This is not a minor issue, though I wish it was. Just this month, I wrote to the police Minister after my office received a tip-off about Australian users on a website designed to encourage acts of animal sexual abuse. It is rife across Australia, and New South Wales is no exception. When I google the link between child abuse and animal sexual abuse, I get a string of media articles, all with cases where people have been charged with both. While the acts are shocking, the link is not. We know that those who harm animals are also likely to harm children. As a society, we have a responsibility to protect both, and the only way we can do that is with strong legislation that allows the prosecution of all forms of sexual violence.

## YOUTH JUSTICE

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE (20:38):** Today the National Children's Commissioner, Anne Hollonds, part of the Australian Human Rights Commission, attended the Parliament for an event hosted by me, the co-chairs of Parliamentary Friends of Youth Justice Reform and the Hon. Aileen MacDonald. The commissioner attended to brief the parliamentary community on the 2024 report entitled "*Help way earlier!": How Australia can transform child justice to improve safety and wellbeing*". I should acknowledge that I have been assisted by the report and its introduction in preparing this speech. This incredibly important report investigates opportunities for reform of child justice and related systems across Australia, based on children's rights and sound evidence. The report includes the voices of children and their families, stakeholder submissions, interviews and round tables. I had the opportunity to move the vote of thanks to the commissioner, and I highlight two particular aspects of her presentation, which I really appreciated.

The first was her candid acknowledgment of the relevance of fear to the issues. Commissioner Hollonds acknowledged from the outset that people are entitled to not live in fear of crime, especially violent crime. She also stated that children should not be living in a state of fear. She was highly critical of punitive bail and sentencing laws but very respectful and understanding of the community and political dynamics that produce those types of laws. I observed that fear can also drive political responses to youth crime—fear of being seen as not responding adequately to what may be presented as a "crisis" of criminal offending, often irrespective of the facts. Sometimes the relationship with fear is more complex, insidious and dark. Recently in Queensland we saw

the amping up of fear of crime to achieve a political benefit. Fear becomes not merely something that the community and politicians respond to in a defensive way but a positive tool of political strategy.

The second aspect that I highlighted was her insightful and succinct point that the incarceration of children, whether through onerous bail provisions or harsh sentencing laws, does not drive down crime rates in communities but, indeed, produces more crime. I observed in my vote of thanks that the reasons for that are somewhat counterintuitive and the situations are multiple but, in my view, the reasons include that most offences are not detected, so the idea that all or even most offending will be intercepted by bail refusal or sentence is not right. Many children who are refused bail or imprisoned would or might not have offended in the remand period anyway. Most periods of remand, especially for children, will be relatively short. Kids will emerge at some point, and some will then commit more offences. The incapacitation factor will be small at best. Perhaps most importantly, incarceration produces more crime. Those left behind at home, little brothers and cousins, are more likely to offend. The child that is the subject of detention is more likely to offend. Any incapacitation effect of detention is offset by that.

We need to tackle, in a transformational way, the underlying causes of offending if we are to deal with higher crime rates in regional communities. The report tells us that the treatment of children in the criminal justice system, sometimes as young as 10 years old, is one of the most urgent human rights issues facing Australia today. It is a scourge on our national reputation that is being replicated by hardline authoritarian States globally. Children's rights are set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments that Australia has ratified. The social determinants of offending show that children's rights to health, safety, culture, participation, non-discrimination, adequate standards of living and education are not being realised. Kids commit crimes because of an epidemic of unmet needs. The trajectory for children involved with crime is predictable and preventable. Repeated incarceration leads to institutionalisation.

Reports and inquiries continue to highlight how our systems fail to protect their human rights. We have removed detention as a last resort. Many children at risk of or in contact with the criminal justice system are dealing with multiple and complex issues in their lives, which often contribute significantly to their chances of offending and reoffending. Their lack of basic rights often manifests as the drivers of their contact with the criminal justice system in the first place, including poverty, intergenerational trauma, violence and abuse, racism, homelessness and inadequate health care.

When children enter the justice system, they may face additional breaches of their rights. For example, despite what we know about the harmful effects of detention on children, children as young as 10 can be detained in most parts of Australia. The overwhelming majority of those children are unsentenced and on remand, with some detained because there is no safe place for them to live while on bail. Despite evidence of social disadvantage being the root cause of offending behaviour, policy responses are centred on policing, stricter bail laws and incarceration. In many cases, those responses worsen the trauma and inequality driving children's contact with the criminal justice system in the first place. The report tells us that Australia needs transformational change that puts the wellbeing of children first.

## CONSCIENCE AND FREEDOM

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER (20:43):** At the St Patrick's Day mass at St Mary's Cathedral on Monday, we sang the old standard *Faith of Our Fathers*, which reminds us that:

Our fathers, chained in prisons dark,  
Were still in heart and conscience free;

I started thinking about conscience and the connection between conscience and the state. George Orwell explored that theme in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the way in which it is the individual conscience that is often the only thing that those resisting a totalitarian state can maintain. A state that seeks total control will always work to reduce, minimise and eliminate individual conscience. While Orwell's work was a thought experiment, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn chronicled the reality of the conflict between the individual and the totalitarian state in *The Gulag Archipelago: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*. Speaking from his personal experience as a prisoner in the Gulag, he wrote:

How can you stand your ground when you are weak and sensitive to pain, when people you love are still alive, when you are unprepared? What do you need to make you stronger than the interrogator and the whole trap? ... you must put your cozy past ... behind you. ... you must say to yourself: 'My life is over, ... I shall never return to freedom. I am condemned to die— ... I no longer have any property ... For me those I love have died, and for them I have died. From today on, my body is useless and alien to me. Only my spirit and my conscience remain precious and important to me.'

Confronted by such a prisoner, the interrogation will tremble.

Only the man who has renounced everything can win that victory.

It is a powerful description of the role and power of conscience, and the importance, in a free society, of protecting the individual conscience. Those of us raised more on the literary offerings of Walt Disney than Russian dissidents often dismiss conscience as the offering of a three-foot-tall green cricket called Jiminy, but in a free society—in any society—our conscience and the right to exercise it is one of the most important things we possess. Our free society relies on us to form our conscience—essentially our ability to self-regulate and know right from wrong—and to do right because it is right, not because we are scared of punishment. The definition of conscience that I love, or perhaps it is more of an example, is that it is that internal force that stops us from throwing an ice cream wrapper on an empty street at two o'clock in the morning. We know that we will not get caught. We know that there will be no sanctions. But we do not do it, because of our internal understanding of what is right and what is wrong.

What are the consequences of a lack of conscience and doing what one can get away with, rather than what is right? We have seen some of them in business dealings over the past 40 years, especially in the context of franchise and retail leasing arrangements. They inevitably lead to misery, especially for the person who is weaker in that relationship. We have responded as a society by trying to legislate to stop corporations from behaving against conscience, or unconscionably. The continual tweaking, adjusting and adding to that body of law over years—always trying to address problems after the fact—shows the social problems that are caused by a lack of acting according to conscience and the difficulties of the state trying to graft an artificial conscience onto persons or corporations that have not accepted the responsibility and undertaken the work of developing their own conscience, ordering their activities accordingly.

It is clear that law, no matter how carefully drafted, cannot create an external conscience. It is the great strength of conscience that it is internal, it is personal and it creates an inner strength that sustains a free society. It calls us all to behave in a way that is right. When we all behave in a way that is right, we have a set of right relationships in society and a well-ordered and respectful society. Without conscience, that is difficult to maintain without external force, which is rarely successful. Totalitarianism seeks to limit conscience. As Orwell, Solzhenitsyn and the Irish martyrs have all taught us, it is the only thing that a totalitarian state should really fear. Perhaps the best thing we can do to defend our freedoms is to protect, at all costs, our right to maintain our own conscience and to act according to it.

#### FEDERAL ELECTION SENATE CANDIDATES

**The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK (20:48):** In coming weeks, there will be a Federal election and New South Wales will elect six new senators. At the previous Federal election, 1,763,074 people in New South Wales gave their first Senate vote to the Liberal-Nationals ticket. As a result, they won three of the six senate positions. At the top of this year's New South Wales Coalition Senate ticket is incumbent senator Andrew Bragg. I do not know Senator Bragg well, but he strikes me as a bit more enthusiastic and smarter than the average senator. To his credit, Bragg has spoken up a few times about reasonably good micro-economic reform. Senator Bragg is a self-described "moderate Liberal". He wrote a book urging Liberal voters to vote yes in the Voice referendum. He was the public face of Liberals for Yes. But exit poll analysis reveals that only 10 to 15 per cent of Liberal voters voted yes in the referendum. Senator Bragg is out of touch not only with Australia but also with his own party members and voters.

In 2022 Bragg described global warming as "a huge economic opportunity for our country" and said that "we need to embrace climate change to maintain our international competitiveness". Bragg went further and referred to those sceptical of spending endless billions on a fairytale to change the weather as "conspiracy theorists". I am sure that some Liberal voters agree with Senator Bragg, and they should vote for the Coalition ticket. But I suspect that many, and possibly most, Liberal voters in New South Wales have a different political outlook to Senator Bragg.

The lead Libertarian Party Senate candidate in New South Wales is former Liberal Federal MP Craig Kelly. Mr Kelly should write a book called "I Was Right about Everything". Let us go through Craig Kelly's greatest hits of getting it right years before the political class caught up. The process that gave us the Voice began with the Turnbull Government, like many other bad things. Craig Kelly was the first public figure in Australia to warn against a "de facto third chamber, a separate body with people voting for people based on race". Well said.

Anyone today with half a brain now looks back at the COVID hysteria and is ashamed of our collective response. But in those dark early days, when the world lost its marbles, it was the libertarians all around the world who took a stand to argue against the hysteria. Craig Kelly was the first Federal MP to speak out against the COVID madness. The worst people attacked him with venom, but Craig Kelly never repays venom with venom. He repays venom with cold, hard facts. Warp-speed vaccines did not work, and it was diabolical that we were all forced to get them. I am sure no member in the Chamber is up to their ninth booster shot. But if they are following the science and what the bureaucrats say, they should be.

Has anyone in Australia been more courageous than Craig Kelly when it comes to exposing the madness of the climate cult? John Howard, Tony Abbott and Peter Dutton are all too smart to have fallen for that cult, but they were all too weak to admit that they did not believe it, particularly when they were in office. Vote Craig Kelly for courage. When the Albanese Government introduced the Morrison Government "misinformation and disinformation bill"—the biggest attack on free speech we have seen—it was Craig Kelly who, out the back of the Parliament, at Speakers' Corner, organised a successful rally against the bill.

There is your choice, Liberal Party voters. If you want more Malcolm Turnbullism, vote for the Coalition ticket and Andrew Bragg. But if you want gutsy, truly Liberal leadership, vote for Craig Kelly and the Libertarian Party Senate ticket. In fact, people across the country should vote for the Libertarian Senate ticket everywhere, in all six States. Voting Libertarian has two upsides. A Libertarian Party Senator will overwhelmingly vote the same way as a Liberal, as I do in the House, except for when the Liberals betray their founding principles. But if we do not get elected and people prefer the Liberal Party, they get the consolation that they will not be as bad as a Labor Senator, which is generally true.

In conclusion, and politics aside, Craig Kelly is a truly terrific guy and a very courteous Aussie gentleman. I have had the great privilege of getting to know him quite well since we both fought for democratic reform of our former party. For those who have not had that privilege, I assure them that Craig Kelly is as kind-hearted as he is wise on policy. I urge everyone who hears this speech to draw up a list of five friends and then convince them to vote for Craig Kelly and all the Libertarian Party candidates across Australia.

### PARKLEA CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

**The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG (20:52):** The Minns Labor Government is taking Parklea Correctional Centre back under public ownership, ensuring the best value for money for taxpayers; ensuring the best outcomes for the community, workers and inmates; and reaffirming the Government's commitment to restoring public assets. The action follows a decade of advocacy from the Public Service Association [PSA] of NSW. One of our key messages during the 2023 election was that the Minns Labor Government would be committed to rebuilding the public assets we all rely on. We have done just that, not only with the de-privatisation of Parklea Correctional Centre but also with our legislation to ensure Hunter Water and Sydney Water stay in public hands, and our work to overhaul the toll system, boost our health system and keep the remaining electricity assets in public hands.

Parklea is not the first correctional centre this Government has returned to public ownership. June Correctional Centre will officially be back in the hands of Corrective Services NSW on 1 April this year. There can be no cutting corners when it comes to ensuring the effectiveness of our corrective services to minimise recidivism and keep workers and the community safe. Privately owned services ultimately prioritise profit. Despite that, in the long run, privatised essential services end up being much more costly to the taxpayer. The PSA's secretary, Stewart Little, said it best:

Private companies are trying to make money, and the way they do that with prisons is by cutting staff, paying them less and working them longer. It results in less staff on the ground, inmates spending longer inside cells and having less time having a structured day or being rehabilitated because they're locked in. It is also part of the reason for the increased violence like the deaths in custody, increases in assaults, both assaults on our members, the officers and inmates to each other.

On the other hand, government-owned correctional centres prioritise reducing the number of reoffenders. With government ownership, workers and inmates are able to access more services, including Justice Health, education, training and skills. Importantly, I note that the approximately 400 frontline staff working at the Parklea Correctional Centre will keep their jobs. Yes, Parklea was originally privatised by a former Labor Government. But, as Premier Chris Minns said at the announcement, we need to be able to acknowledge missteps, and the privatisation of Parklea was one of them.

The transition is set to be finalised by October next year, allowing time for a thorough handover between the Government, the PSA, employees, the local community and the current operators of the correctional centre, the Management and Training Corporation, which is a company originating in the United States. I congratulate the Minister for Corrections, Anoulack Chanthivong, on his leadership in making this happen. I also acknowledge the Minister for Industrial Relations, Sophie Cotsis, and the local MP, Warren Kirby, all of whom supported and joined the announcement.

This is a Labor government doing Labor things, putting things into public ownership not for the sake of it but where it is necessary. We have lost our way in the past. Those opposite are high on the list of culpability, but we were part of it as well. If you get an economic textbook and take it to its extreme conclusion—that is, not read it properly but ideologically drive policies—you privatise everything, including toll roads and electricity assets. That is what they did. Assets that are not subject to natural competition and the free market should not be sold. That is economics 101. We do not want to operate, for profit, public goods like health, education and prison systems. A for-profit prison system creates an incentive to lock people up and keep them locked up. We want to

educate prisoners, look after their health and, hopefully, rehabilitate them into society. A private operator will not do that. We must drop the ideology, keep things in public hands when the government can do a better job, and let the market look after that which is generally subject to competition. This Government is about doing things based on economic theory and facts, not ideology. I congratulate the PSA and the Minns Government for taking Parklea back into public hands.

#### **CANOWINDRA CRICKET CLUB**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT (20:58):** I congratulate the Canowindra Cricket Club, which recently took out the Molong District Cricket Association for the second year in a row. It was a very successful season for Canowindra, although they did get into the grand final the hard way in their semifinal. But they were there and they were victorious over Millthorpe in the big dance. They scored 195 off their 40 overs, with Ben Schaeffer scoring 50. Pat Tree picked up 4-fer in bowling. When it came to batting, Millthorpe fell short after being bowled out for 132. Brendan Traves picked up three of the wickets to win the victory. Congratulations to Canowindra, Millthorpe and everyone else involved in the Molong District Cricket Association's season.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine):** I also congratulate Millthorpe and Canowindra on their success.

The question is that this House do now adjourn.

**Motion agreed to.**

**The House adjourned at 20:58 until Thursday 20 March 2025 at 10:00.**