

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 5 April 2005

Mr Speaker (The Hon. John Joseph Aquilina) took the chair at 2.15 p.m.

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

DEATH OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II

DEATH OF AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE PERSONNEL

Mr SPEAKER: It is with regret that I inform the House of the death of His Holiness Pope John Paul II on 2 April 2005. I also inform the House of the death of nine Australian Defence Force personnel who were killed in a helicopter crash at Nias Island, Indonesia, on 2 April 2005. On behalf of the House I extend the deep sympathy of the Legislative Assembly to their relatives and friends. I ask members and officers to stand as a mark of respect and observe one minute's silence.

Members and officers of the House stood in their places.

VARIATIONS OF PAYMENTS ESTIMATES AND APPROPRIATIONS 2004-05

Dr Andrew Refshauge tabled variations of the receipts and payments estimates and appropriations for 2004-05, under section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of specific purpose payments in excess of the amounts included in the State's receipts and payments estimates, dated 4 April 2005.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Report

Mr Speaker announced the receipt, pursuant to section 78 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, of the report entitled "Report on Investigation into Certain Transactions of Koombahtoo Local Aboriginal Land Council", dated April 2005.

Ordered to be printed.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Mr SPEAKER: I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Dr Kevin Foley, a former member of the Victorian Parliament, and his wife, Kathryn.

AUDIT OFFICE

Report

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of the performance audit report of the Auditor-General entitled "Follow-up of Performance Audit: Management of Intellectual Property", dated March 2005.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 10 of the Legislation Review Act 1987, of the report entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 4 of 2005", dated 4 April 2005.

PETITIONS

Gaming Machine Tax

Petitions opposing the decision to increase poker machine tax, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock** and **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Kurnell Sandmining

Petitions opposing sandmining on the Kurnell Peninsula, received from **Mr Barry Collier** and **Mr Malcolm Kerr**.

Bungonia Quarry Construction Application

Petition opposing the application to construct a quarry at Ardmore Park, Bungonia, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

Luna Park Development Application

Petition opposing the latest development application for Luna Park, received from **Mrs Jillian Skinner**.

Jervis Bay Marine Park Fishing Competitions

Petition requesting amendment of the zoning policy to preclude fishing competitions, by both spear and line, in the Jervis Bay Marine Park, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Lake Wollumboola Recreational Use

Petition opposing any restriction of the recreational use of Lake Wollumboola, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Crime Sentencing

Petition requesting changes in legislation to allow for tougher sentences for crime, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Campbell Hospital, Coraki

Petition opposing the closure of inpatient beds and the reduction in emergency department hours of Campbell Hospital, Coraki, received from **Mr Steve Cansdell**.

Public Hospital Security and Staffing

Petition requesting that the Department of Health guarantee the safety of patients and employ sufficient staff in public hospitals, received from **Mr Barry O'Farrell**.

F6 Corridor Community Use

Petition noting the decision of the Minister for Roads, gazetted in February 2003, to abandon the construction of any freeway or motorway in the F6 corridor, and requesting preservation of the corridor for open space, community use and public transport, received from **Mr Barry Collier**.

Oxford Street Clearway

Petition requesting removal of the Oxford Street clearway and imposition of a 40 kilometres per hour speed limit in Oxford Street, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Old Northern and New Line Roads Strategic Route Development Study

Petition requesting funding for implementation of the Old Northern and New Line roads strategic route development study, received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Forster-Tuncurry Cycleways

Petition requesting the building of cycleways in the Forster-Tuncurry area, received from **Mr John Turner**.

Pacific Highway Overpass

Petition requesting the construction of an overpass for the Pacific Highway at the Tea Gardens-Hawks Nest intersection, received from **Mr John Turner**.

Newcastle Rail Services

Petitions requesting the retention and improvement of Newcastle rail services, and implementation of an integrated public transport plan for the Lower Hunter, received from **Mr John Mills, Mr Matthew Morris** and **Mr Milton Orkopoulos**.

Southern Tablelands Rail Services

Petition opposing any reduction in rail services on the Southern Tablelands line, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

South Coast Rail Services

Petition opposing any reduction in rail services on the South Coast, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Pets on Public Transport

Petition requesting that pets be allowed on public transport, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Murwillumbah to Casino Rail Service

Petitions requesting the retention of the CountryLink rail service from Murwillumbah to Casino, received from **Mr Neville Newell** and **Mr Donald Page**.

Macdonald River Signage

Petition requesting that the Macdonald River be provided with signage stating "4 or 8 knots, no skiing, no wash", received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Mid North Coast Airconditioned Buses

Petition requesting that the new airconditioned buses assigned to the mid North Coast are not removed, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

CountryLink Rail Services

Petition opposing the abolition of CountryLink rail services and their replacement with bus services in rural and regional New South Wales, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

Milton-Ulladulla Public School Infrastructure

Petition requesting community consultation in the planning, funding and building of appropriate public school infrastructure in the Milton-Ulladulla area and surrounding districts, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Skilled Migrant Placement Program

Petition requesting that the Skilled Migrant Placement Program be restored, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Colo High School Airconditioning

Petition requesting the installation of airconditioning in all classrooms and the library of Colo High School, received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Shoalhaven River Water Extraction

Petition opposing the extraction of water from the Shoalhaven River to support Sydney's water supply, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Hastings Water Supply

Petition opposing the fluoridation of the Hastings water supply, received from **Mr Robert Oakeshott**.

Hawkesbury Electorate Sewerage

Petition praying that funding be provided to construct a reticulated sewerage system for Glossodia, Freemans Reach and Wilberforce, received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Wisemans Ferry Electricity Requirements

Petition requesting an assessment of the electricity requirements of the Wisemans Ferry district, received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Agnes Banks Village Sewerage

Petition requesting that the village of Agnes Banks be connected to the reticulated sewerage network of Hawkesbury City Council, received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme

Petition objecting to the criteria for country cancer patients to qualify for the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

Wagga Wagga Sports Ovals

Petition opposing the sale of Staunton and Weissel ovals in Wagga Wagga, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

Sydney Cricket Ground

Petition requesting that the Sydney Cricket Ground remain the home of cricket in New South Wales, received from **Mr Barry O'Farrell**.

Tweed Shire Council Inquiry

Petition requesting the immediate cessation of the public inquiry into the Tweed Shire Council, received from **Mr Andrew Fraser**.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

ORANA JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTRE STAFF AND INMATE BEHAVIOUR INQUIRY

Mr JOHN BROGDEN: My question is directed to the Minister for Juvenile Justice. Why does she continue to cover up the actions of staff at the Orana Juvenile Justice Centre who high-fived the killer of nine-year-old Brendan Saul by now claiming the evidence was "not sufficiently reliable" when that evidence was provided to her director-general by two Dubbo police officers?

Ms DIANE BEAMER: The allegations in this matter have been subject to the most rigorous investigations. From the first time they were raised they have been treated extremely seriously and with due

regard for the ongoing pain caused to the family involved. Following an initial departmental inquiry a legally qualified independent investigator was appointed to fully investigate the allegations.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order and allow the Minister to answer the question.

Ms DIANE BEAMER: The independent investigator found that there was not sufficient evidence, after statements and interviews with a number of people, to support these allegations. The investigation was further broadened to take in any allegations that were raised. The director-general and I were acutely aware of the sensitivity and controversial nature of the allegations and the need for both probity and thoroughness. The Chairman of the New South Wales Parole Board and former Chief Magistrate of New South Wales, Mr Ian Pike, AM, was commissioned to review the investigation process and its findings. Mr Pike found that the investigation was "thorough, fair, objective and professional", and had "given consideration to all the available evidence". Mr Pike agreed with the findings in this report. Neither the independent investigator nor Mr Pike has made any statement or comments that call into question the integrity and truthfulness of police in this matter. Once again I stress that the veracity of any statement made by the police in relation to this matter is not in question.

Mr John Brogden: Point of order: That report said the evidence was not sufficiently reliable. You don't know what you're talking about. Make the report public!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No point of order is involved. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Ms DIANE BEAMER: The Opposition has called into question the credibility and accuracy of the independent investigation, and the subsequent review by Mr Ian Pike, former Chief Magistrate of New South Wales and Chairman of the Parole Board. It is outrageous that the Opposition would question Mr Pike's integrity. As I have said, Mr Ian Pike is the Chair of the New South Wales Parole Board, a consultant to the Judicial Commission and a former Chief Magistrate. His legal qualifications and credibility are beyond question.

JUDICIAL COMMISSION OPERATION

Mr PAUL LYNCH: My question without notice is directed to the Attorney General. What is the Government's response to community concerns about the operation of the Judicial Commission?

Mr BOB DEBUS: I thank the honourable member for his continuing interest in matters concerning the judicial system. An independent judiciary is one of the cornerstones of our democratic system—judges who administer the law, without fear or favour, who have regard only to the evidence before them in the court, and who cannot be swayed by political pressure or by media campaign. In this respect New South Wales is indeed fortunate in the integrity and moral standing of this State's judiciary. In many other countries citizens cannot have the same assurance that all are equal before the law. A highly placed politician makes a secret phone call to ensure that a rival is gaoled or an ally acquitted. A court dispute over a commercial contract is mysteriously settled in favour of a company with government contracts. Judges themselves are dismissed or thrown into prison if their decisions do not meet with the orders of the government of the day.

Because the integrity of our system is so important, our law and constitution take great care to protect judicial independence. It is for this reason that judges are appointed for life, with their pay and entitlements protected, and cannot be dismissed at the whim of government. With judicial independence, of course, comes the necessity for openness and accountability. In New South Wales, uniquely among Australian States, we have a formal body, the Judicial Commission, which, among other functions, investigates complaints against judicial officers. This body was created 20 years ago. In the meantime, other States—most lately Victoria—have considered and rejected the idea of creating a similar body. Those States have decided that a formal investigatory body is too intrusive on the independence of the judges.

New South Wales has taken, and continues to take, a different view. Although any complaint mechanism must be very carefully managed to avoid abuse of the system by litigants, we are confident of the view that the Judicial Commission is the most important institution of accountability. There is no room for complacency. The Judicial Commission is now almost 20 years old. Many of its procedures and practices, and

the legislation that governs it, were cutting edge, indeed revolutionary, when it was established. But most of us, Mr Speaker—with respect to you and to me in particular—looked younger and fresher and more exciting 20 years ago than we do now. It is time to take a fresh look at the commission. Following discussion with the Chief Justice I can advise the House that heads of jurisdiction, jointly with the head of my department, are now commencing a review of the Judicial Officers Act 1986 in advance of that twentieth anniversary.

I can also advise the House that we will be ensuring that all newly appointed judicial officers will undergo an induction course approved by the Judicial Commission. I expect that these induction courses will draw on the excellent training courses developed by the commission and by the National Judicial College. The Chief Executive of the Judicial Commission has also written to me advising that the commission will give priority to practical training on the question of sexual assault. Awareness training of the unique dilemmas presented by sexual assault, and the trauma experienced by complainants during trials, is essential for all judges and magistrates hearing criminal matters.

The position of a judge can be lonely, isolated and stressful. To avoid any perception of taint or bias, newly appointed judges often find that they must withdraw from various professional associations and ordinary forms of social life. The pressure of interpreting complex legislative provisions and common law principles can be intense. Relentless exposure, in criminal matters, to the darkest side of human nature has a debilitating effect on all who work in the criminal justice system, whether police, lawyers or court staff, and judicial officers are by no means immune. With all that in mind, I can advise that we are moving today to establish a new assistance scheme for judicial officers. The scheme will be administered by the Supreme Court and will provide assistance for all judicial officers in New South Wales.

We want judges and magistrates to seek support and medical advice about health problems before they start to affect their performance and the administration of justice in this State. Under the new scheme judges will have access to 24-hour counselling, to treatment for serious health issues and to annual medical checks. The scheme has the endorsement of the heads of jurisdiction and will be funded by my department. The scheme is designed to support and assist judges, particularly newly appointed officers, as they deal with the pressures of office, and I am confident that judges will seek out the confidential support and assistance that the scheme will offer. But it is clearly a scheme designed to improve the administration of justice in our State. Justice is not served by a judge or magistrate in the grip of serious health problems, when those health problems are unaddressed or unresolved. It is far better to face up to problems and to seek treatment than to risk a miscarriage of justice.

Our law provides that where a judge is incapable of performing the duties of office, and refuses to confront the consequences of that medical incapacity, the matter can be made the subject of a report by the Conduct Division of the Judicial Commission; and, indeed, by votes of both Houses of this Parliament, a judge can be dismissed. No-one wants to see this kind of extreme response to a medical problem. We need to have preventative measures, support and assistance rather than draconian and punitive responses once the crisis has emerged. I am confident that the new measures for support and assistance, and for effective training of judicial officers, will serve to strengthen and enhance our judicial system and therefore our democracy.

MR PATRICK O'KEEFE MEDICAL TREATMENT

Mr ANDREW STONER: My question is directed to the Premier. Why, on 24 March in this House, did the Premier humiliate and belittle chronically ill Macksville man Patrick O'Keefe, and at the same time seriously breach the privacy of an unrelated Coffs Harbour urology patient when, in his haste to make a joke of Mr O'Keefe's case, he revealed the medical details of the wrong man?

Mr BOB CARR: The House will recall that I did no such thing. I interrupt the noble discourse of this Chamber to answer a question on the minds of many members about the sweep by police dogs that just went through the Chamber. Despite the most comprehensive police search, no Opposition policy has been found, not even a scrap of policy! But the search did find a record—

Mr Andrew Tink: Point of order: In relation to what the Premier just said, either we take security in the building seriously or we do not. If security is a concern, I suggest it be taken seriously. I also suggest that you, Mr Speaker, as the chairman of the Parliament, make the point to all members that if security in this building is an issue it ought to be taken seriously. The Premier parades around the Chamber talking about terrorism and all sorts of other things. If there is a security issue that requires dogs to be brought into the building, he, above all others, ought to take it seriously. You ought to make that clear to every member, in particular the Premier.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I thank the honourable member for Epping for his comments, even though there is no point of order.

Mr BOB CARR: I take security very seriously. I am concerned about the security of the honourable member for Cronulla, the honourable member for The Hills, the honourable member for Baulkham Hills and the Hon. John Ryan, MLC, who are all threatened as to their preselection by this shocking attack on them.

Mr Andrew Stoner: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. This is a very serious matter. The Premier is attempting to make a joke of a question about his misleading the House, giving the wrong information about a man who had not been asked to release the information, and ignoring the needs of a chronically ill man in Macksville. Answer the question, you clown!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of The Nationals will cease making derogatory remarks in the Chamber. I am sure the Premier has concluded his opening remarks.

Mr BOB CARR: Taking that point about the honourable member for Cronulla, who I think is looking very sick in the Chamber—

Mr John Brogden: Point of order: The Leader of The Nationals has asked a very important question. If the Premier thinks it is a joke, it displays his callous nature more than anything else. We want an answer from the Premier, not a clown show.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has the call.

Mr BOB CARR: My attention has been drawn to a statement by the honourable member for Cronulla published in the most recent issue of the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* in which he said he will fight to save his preselection against the onslaught of branch stacking. But what I object to is that he quotes me as saying in the Parliament that he is a champion parliamentarian! That is his biggest claim to being given preselection! I stand by the advice I shared with the House on the last occasion I addressed this issue.

[*Interruption*]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chair will not tolerate such calling out in future. I ask the Premier to return to the leave of the question, and I ask all members to observe the rules of the House. The Premier has indicated he has concluded his answer.

DRUG SEIZURES AND ARRESTS

Mrs KARYN PALUZZANO: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Police. What is the latest information on drug seizures and arrests in New South Wales?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Upper Hunter to order.

Mr CARL SCULLY: We are all aware drugs are a devastating curse on our society. Drug addiction leads to crime and, unfortunately, in many cases it can lead to death. That is why we all support our police in their fight against the scourge of drugs. I want to report to the House about last year's tremendous efforts by NSW Police in fighting against drugs and the crimes associated with them. In 2004 NSW Police seized 5.7 tonnes of cannabis, more than 50,000 cannabis plants, 380 kilograms of ecstasy, 24 kilograms of amphetamines, 10 kilograms of cocaine, and just five kilograms of heroin, reflecting the heroin drought under way in Sydney since late 2000. NSW Police made more than 12,000 drug-related arrests last year and smashed many drug-manufacturing operations.

Fifty-three clandestine laboratories were located and shut down—that is just over one a week. These laboratories can be used for simple processes such as extracting cannabis oil from plants, or more complex procedures involving several chemicals and a range of equipment to make speed and ecstasy. As I have said on other occasions in this House, the other area in which police are making serious inroads is the production of hydroponic cannabis in suburban homes. In 2003 only seven hydroponic houses were detected. Last year that number jumped to 77. In 2004 police seized more than 11,000 cannabis plants and 71.6 kilograms of cut cannabis leaf from hydro houses. Those drugs would have been worth more than \$38 million on the street.

Other drug investigations conducted by the State Crime Command and local area commands resulted in the seizure of more than 41,000 cannabis plants and almost four tonnes of cannabis leaf. These operations netted a cannabis haul worth an estimated \$83 million on the street. Police arrested 66 people as part of these investigations. Success has also been achieved with the Cannabis Eradication Program, which has led to the arrest of 13 people, and the seizure and eradication of some 12,000 plants with an estimated street value of more than \$20 million. Another drug police have targeted is ecstasy. Ecstasy is attractive to young people, who take it for its mood-altering effects or the alleged attainment of euphoric feelings. Unfortunately, however, the drug has side-effects. I am not sure to what extent young people know about those side-effects, but they can be quite serious. That is why we should all support police in endeavouring to find out where ecstasy use is occurring and seizing it where it is being produced. Last year 340 kilograms of ecstasy was seized at Sydney Airport, worth an estimated \$68 million on the street.

Another problem is pseudoephedrine. As members may be aware, many pseudo-runners are employed by illegal drug manufacturers to purchase cold and flu tablets. The pseudoephedrine in those tablets is then used to produce amphetamines. Police have been quite successful in dealing with this problem. In fact, last year more than 66,000 pseudoephedrine-based cold and flu tablets were seized and 63 pseudo-runners were arrested. Police have been working well with the pharmacy community in addressing this issue. The Government has given police powers to deal with drugs, and to attack and weed out offending drug manufacturers. The Disorderly Houses Amendment (Commercial Supply of Prohibited Drugs) Act 2002, the Police Powers (Drug Premises) Act 2001, and the Police Powers (Drug Detection Dogs) Act 2001 are examples of the Government being fair dinkum about dealing with drugs in our community. On behalf of us all, I congratulate NSW Police on a job well done.

PSYCHIATRIC PATIENT TRANSFER

Mr JOHN BROGDEN: My question without notice is directed to the Premier. Why does the Premier continue to ignore people with mental illness, including a 78-year-old Brigidine nun suffering from severe psychosis and dementia who was denied an ambulance transfer to the Prince of Wales Hospital because Maroubra police did not have the resources necessary to escort the ambulance?

Mr BOB CARR: Police numbers at Maroubra have been vastly increased, as they have been in every command, since this Government has been in office.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Willoughby to order.

Mr BOB CARR: The Coalition when last in government closed, from memory, 780 mental health beds. That is the record!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Premier has the call. I call the honourable member for Willoughby to order for the second time.

Mr BOB CARR: I am advised that at 9.30 a.m. on 18 March 2005 the Sydney Operations Centre received a call from St Joseph's Nursing Home for a routine, non-emergency psychiatric patient transport to Prince of Wales Hospital Euroa Centre.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Willoughby will come to order.

Mr BOB CARR: I am advised that the Sydney Operations Centre informed the nursing home that ambulance protocol required a police escort to accompany the patient while being transported by ambulance. I am further advised that ambulance officers arrived at 3.04 p.m. and were advised that the patient had already been transported to Prince of Wales Hospital by alternative means. I am advised that the ambulance service was not advised by the nursing home prior to arriving that the patient had already been transported—

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

Mr BOB CARR: That is totally pathetic. What juvenile interjections!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has asked a question of the Premier. The House has every right to expect that the Leader of the Opposition will listen to the Premier's reply.

[*Interruption*]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will listen to the Premier in silence.

Mr BOB CARR: As I said, I am advised that ambulance officers arrived and were advised that the patient had already been transported to Prince of Wales Hospital by alternative means. The ambulance service advises that they were not advised by the nursing home prior to arriving that the patient had already been transported by nursing home staff. New South Wales Ambulance Service divisional manager Ken Pritchard advises that this was a case where the ambulance and police services should have worked better together to ensure a smooth transfer. I regret, as they regret, any inconvenience caused to the Sisters at St Joseph's and any undue distress this has caused.

MENTAL HEALTH PATIENTS SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

Ms NOREEN HAY: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Health. What is the latest information on community accommodation for mental health patients?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Willoughby will cease interjecting or she will find herself on three calls to order.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I am pleased to provide that information to the honourable member for Wollongong and to the House. Last month the Government released its plans for more beds, more staff and more services for people with mental illness. Today I am pleased to provide information to the House on the next phase of the Government's plans to improve mental health services across New South Wales. This next phase involves a unique partnership between our health care professionals, the Department of Housing and community organisations; it is a plan called the Housing Accommodation and Support Initiative, or HASI as it is known in the non-government sector.

The plan involves \$13.8 million over the next three years for 460 supported accommodation places to enable people to remain living in public and social housing with support. The plan targets those who are assessed as being at risk of losing their tenancy because of a lack of support to enable them to continue living independently. Those participating in the plan will receive the support of the three agencies involved in this unique partnership. Our dedicated mental health professionals will provide the health care for those receiving the places. The Department of Housing will provide the accommodation and non-government organisations—community sector organisations such as Mission Australia—will provide the non-health care support to enable participants in the program to remain living independently but with support in the community.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Willoughby will cease interjecting.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The key objective of this program is to enable 460 tenants with a mental illness to continue living in supported accommodation in the community, to receive health care support from health care professionals in the mental health area and to receive non-clinical, non-health care support from a whole range of worthy, dedicated and valuable community organisations so that they can live independently in the community.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for North Shore to order.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The plan will make a real difference to community mental health services and to the support that those participating in this program will receive. I am pleased to inform the House of the successful tenderers for the 460 places: Mission Australia; the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association; Neami, a Victorian-based organisation that is delivering great outcomes in the area of community mental health; Aftercare; Parramatta Mission; and New Horizons.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Willoughby will stop calling out.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Stage two of this plan will be implemented across all area health services, reaching out to metropolitan and regional New South Wales. For example, I advise the House that 40 people with mental illness will be assisted in Greater Southern Area Health Service, including Queanbeyan, Young, Goulburn, Griffith and Albury; an additional 40 people in Greater Western Area Health Service, including the communities of Dubbo, Mudgee, Broken Hill, Walgett and Wentworth; an additional 50 people in Hunter and

New England; 40 people in the North Coast, 60 people in northern Sydney and the Central Coast, 65 people in south-eastern Sydney and the Illawarra, 80 people in Sydney South West Area Health Service; and 85 people in Sydney West Area Health Service.

This is part of the Government's plan to increase the services and care for those suffering mental illness, targeting the community sector and providing valuable support to enable people to continue living independently in the community. This is a successful partnership and phase two of what is proving to be a successful plan. I can also inform the honourable member for Wollongong and the House of the results of the first phase of this plan. The first phase of the HASI plan had support for 118 places and it has been very successful in avoiding hospital readmission for those living in public and social housing. Today's announcement is phase two, and I look forward to coming back to the House and reporting on further phases of this very worthwhile plan.

MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING, AND MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES DRINK-DRIVING CHARGE

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources. Does the Minister stand by his Saturday public statement that he told police he "had somewhere in the order of three glasses of wine" between 7.00 p.m. and 9.00 p.m. on Friday night, even though three hours later the Minister recorded a mid-range blood alcohol reading of 0.085?

Mr CRAIG KNOWLES: As I said on Saturday, I acknowledge my mistake. My behaviour was wrong. I accept the consequences of my actions, and they will be determined by the court.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

Ms VIRGINIA JUDGE: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Transport. What is the latest information on public transport and special events in New South Wales?

Mr JOHN WATKINS: Members will recall the overwhelming efforts of the people of New South Wales during the Sydney Olympics. The fact that public transport worked so well was one of the reasons why the Sydney Olympics have been called the best games ever. I am pleased to advise the House that Sydney has just recorded its busiest weekend since the 2000 Olympics, with record passenger movements throughout the Easter long weekend. Public transport services to the Easter show, the Easter racing carnival, a Soccer International game and three National Rugby League matches all enjoyed massive public transport patronage.

The records began to break on Good Friday at the Royal Easter Show; it had its biggest single public transport day since the 2000 games. More than 114,000 people took public transport to the Royal Easter Show on Good Friday alone. More than three quarters of the total number of visitors to the show on that day travelled by public transport. The support for our bus, train and ferry services was also reflected across Sydney at Moore Park and Randwick. Over the Easter long weekend more than 355,000 people travelled to the show and to soccer and football matches by train and bus. That is, 70 per cent of the total crowd numbers, or 7 in 10 people visiting the show or sporting events used the public transport system. An overwhelming number of the 70,000 punters who went to the Randwick races took advantage of the free shuttle buses to and from the course for the Easter racing carnival. It was an outstanding result and public transport really delivered for the people of Sydney over the Easter long weekend.

The Treasurer has advised me that the Royal Easter Show attracted more than one million people this year and helped to inject \$460 million into our economy. Public transport is the best option for people travelling to these major events. It is convenient, it is excellent value for money, it cuts down traffic congestion and it allows people to get home quickly and efficiently. Patrons of the Royal Easter Show also enjoyed the extra benefit of integrated ticketing through Showlink, a combined entry and transport option. In previous years the bus ticket for the show alone cost about \$10. Now all transport to and from the Olympic precinct for the show is included in the integrated ticket, which costs about \$5 for the public transport option. The inclusion of the transport component into the ticket works; the figures do not lie. In 2003 at the Australia versus Wales Rugby Test held at Homebush Bay only 45 per cent of the crowd used public transport. Now, with the creation of integrated tickets, up to 75 per cent of crowds use public transport.

I thank and congratulate the travelling public in New South Wales on using public transport. In particular, I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the public transport workers who gave up their time

on the Easter long weekend to serve the hundreds of thousands of patrons who used those public transport services. We express our appreciation to the train drivers, the bus drivers, the ticket sellers, the signallers and others in our public transport areas. These people delivered a remarkably successful public transport experience this Easter, and will be involved in future events. This success serves to reinforce the Government's commitment to further enhance public transport to deliver a safer and more reliable bus, train and ferry network.

CAMPBELL HOSPITAL, CORAKI

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. Will the Minister immediately rule out closure of the 14 in-patient beds at Coraki's Campbell Hospital, given that it serves mainly pensioners who have no transport, and that its closure will result in the withdrawal of essential medical services to the North Coast?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I can advise the House that a 12-week consultation process is currently under way in respect of changing the mix of services provided at Coraki. The proposed changes to services in this region include the replacement of the acute beds at Campbell Hospital with a \$2.3 million investment to provide a broader and more appropriate range of health services. A mid Richmond health services advisory committee is being established to consider the proposed changes to Campbell Hospital and provide advice to the North Coast Area Health Service. The committee will be chaired by Mr Crawford, the chief executive, and will consist of 22 members, 11 of whom will be community representatives from the Richmond Valley.

Under the proposal that is being considered, an additional 3.5 full-time community and allied health employees would be appointed to the new integrated health clinic at Coraki and a new Aboriginal health post would be established at Box Ridge, with a full-time Aboriginal health worker. The proposal also includes an additional six acute beds at Casino Hospital for seven months of the year and an investment of \$50,000 in non-emergency health-related transport to ensure access to higher-level care for residents of the Coraki district. Under the proposal Lismore Base Hospital emergency department would receive an additional \$200,000 for nursing and medical staffing and \$600,000 would be invested in additional surgery, including joint replacement, at that hospital. The community committee will report back to the chief executive of the North Coast Area Health Service.

WATER CONSERVATION

Mr MATTHEW MORRIS: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Energy and Utilities. What is the latest information on the Government's efforts to save and recycle water in Sydney and save energy across the State?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: I thank the honourable member for Charlestown for his continued interest in water energy conservation. Honourable members will be familiar with the Metropolitan Water Plan, a strong and detailed plan that will secure Sydney's water supply. The plan is only part of the \$30 billion that will be spent on infrastructure over the next four years.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of The Nationals will come to order.

Mr FRANK SARTOR: One feature of the Metropolitan Water Plan is the Metropolitan Water Recycling Plan, which my colleague the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, and Minister for Natural Resources will finalise in the middle of the year.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for South Coast will come to order.

Mr FRANK SARTOR: Under this plan it is envisaged that 80 billion litres of water will be recycled in Sydney's west. About 15 billion litres of water have already been recycled in Sydney as a result of the programs of the last decade. A plan is in the pipeline to recycle another 14 billion litres of water. That plan includes the Bluescope proposal, which will bring an additional 7.3 billion litres on stream in the next few months. I am pleased to inform the House today that recently I had discussions with a number of major industries that use a lot of water. Those industries included Caltex Oil Refinery. I have set up a working party to look at ways in which Caltex and Continental Carbon can recycle their water on the Kurnell peninsula, which would potentially provide up to 2.3 billion litres of water per annum. That working party involves my department, Sydney Water and private sector users, who will access tertiary treated water from the Cronulla sewage treatment plant.

I have set up another working party to deal with the potential reuse of about 12 megalitres a day of water that will be produced by the plant that Orica is constructing to clean up the Botany Bay ground water aquifer. That will yield potentially three billion litres of water per annum. Those two initiatives alone will have the potential to yield up to six billion litres of recycled water per annum, which will be highly suitable for use in industrial processes. Those members who are not asleep will recall that today I tabled the Sydney Water operating licence. In the year 2003-04 Sydney Water reduced its water losses by 16 billion litres. I have now taken the opportunity to renew the licence for another five years and to require Sydney Water to reduce its losses by a further 25 per cent. This will mean that Sydney Water will be an example of best practice compared to other water utilities, as articulated in the water licence.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Wakehurst will come to order.

Mr FRANK SARTOR: The licence also requires Sydney Water to significantly reduce the use of potable water in its sewerage treatment plants. The Malabar, Bondi and North Head plants must cut the use of potable water by 80 per cent from the 2003-04 benchmark by mid-2009, and all sewage treatment plants in the Sydney Water system must use at least 85 per cent recycled water. In addition, I have addressed response times to major mains breaks, which is another provision of the licence. Sydneysiders have done a terrific job conserving water. Last week they conserved 16 per cent. It is incumbent upon us to encourage Sydney Water to do more to help conserve water, which we are doing in light of the terrific community response. In the Metropolitan Water Plan, the strong and detailed plan to produce the water, there is a component dealing with water-saving initiatives and creating a water-saving fund.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Wakehurst to order.

Mr FRANK SARTOR: I can inform the House that I will be introducing legislation to provide for a fund of \$30 million per annum over the next four years to promote water conservation and savings initiatives. That will go side by side with the legislation that will require larger users—it will probably be the top 200 users initially—to prepare water-saving action plans. Then there will be a fund that they can compete against on a contestable basis. At least half of that fund is already funded in Sydney Water's revenue; the balance will be considered by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal dealing with Sydney Water's pricing submission. So that will create water-saving action plans, and we have a water-saving fund.

The flipside of that, which will also be dealt with in the legislation I will introduce, is to do with energy across the State. Legislation will be introduced to provide for energy conservation and energy-saving plans for the major users of electricity across New South Wales. It will generate a fund of \$40 million, which will again provide a contestable pool of resources that will achieve two things. First, it will save energy users \$370 million from this particular five-year program, compared to an investment of less than \$200 million in net present value terms. Second, it will be a major achievement for the environment because we will reduce energy consumption by 900,000 megawatt hours. The equivalent of 800,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere will be reduced per annum once this program is completed.

Two-thirds of the energy consumption in this State is by business; the other one-third of energy consumption is residential. The likely impact on residential consumers will be a mere 0.5 per cent approximately. Even with this change, where the funds will be obtained from the energy distributors, Sydney's electricity prices will still be \$200 per annum less (for the average Sydney household) than for those in Melbourne. We are creating a pool for contestable funding to promote energy conservation, greenhouse benefits and savings which will, overall, benefit the community substantially. This is a responsible thing to do. Some 25 American States which have completed this program achieved savings of at least 2 per cent. There are similar schemes in Victoria and South Australia. This Government is determined to take sensible measures as part of its comprehensive plan for the infrastructure of this State. I commend the new initiatives to the House.

Questions without notice concluded.

BRANCH STACKING

Personal Explanation

Mr MALCOLM KERR, by leave: Today the Premier sought to damage my reputation by saying that I was the subject of a report in the latest issue of the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader*.

Mr Bob Carr: You heard it.

Mr MALCOLM KERR: Yes, I heard it. In response to that interjection, I should say that that had absolutely nothing to do with the serious question put to the Premier. In fact, the latest edition of the *St George and Sutherland Leader* contains no such report. It is time the Premier got a new speech writer or another newsagent.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Routine of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Motion by Mr Carl Scully agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide that:

- (1) the House at its rising this day do adjourn until Wednesday 6 April 2005 at 10.00 a.m.;
- (2) at the conclusion of private members' statements the House shall adjourn without motion;
- (3) on Wednesday 6 April 2005 at 7:30 p.m.:
 - (a) a motion of condolence be moved for the death of the Australian Defence Force personnel killed in the helicopter crash at Nias Island in Indonesia, followed by a motion of condolence for the death of Pope John Paul II, to take precedence of all business for the remainder of the sitting;
 - (b) no divisions or quorums to be called for the remainder of the sitting; and
 - (c) at the conclusion of the consideration of the condolence motions, as a mark of respect, the House adjourn without motion until Thursday 7 April 2005 at 10.00 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF URGENT MOTIONS

Citrus Industry

Mr PETER BLACK (Murray-Darling) [3.25 p.m.]: This matter is urgent because the citrus industry is worth \$140 million to New South Wales. This matter is urgent because the New South Wales citrus industry employs more than 3,000 people. This matter is urgent because it affects not only the seat of Murrumbidgee but also the seat of Murray-Darling. The three major growing areas of citrus in Australia are Riverland, Sunraysia and the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area [MIA]. The fact is that one-half of those growing areas—that is half of Sunraysia and the MIA—lie within New South Wales. This matter is urgent because the Federal Government has refused to rule out action against the intention of Florida Oranges to bring into Australia and, indeed, New South Wales the citrus canker disease.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr PETER BLACK: This matter is urgent because citrus canker has the ability to wipe out our citrus export industry. This matter is urgent because once again the National Party has failed, and failed miserably, to stand up for its former constituent base, demonstrating its disinterest in defending the orange industry and the citrus industry generally against American imports of material with infections. This matter is urgent because last year we saw an outbreak of citrus canker in Queensland, which sent great waves of dread through the New South Wales citrus industry. Yet we found that the honourable member for Murrumbidgee did nothing about it.

This matter is urgent because Labor members are interested in standing up for primary producers and for a great industry that has produced many, many dollars for New South Wales. Finally, this matter is urgent because last year Auscitrus approached me with the proposition that it relocate its facilities from Gosford to somewhere else in New South Wales. This matter is urgent because last week we announced a deal with Auscitrus to re-establish its research and development for budwood and seed from Gosford to Buronga in Murray-Darling. The project announced last week will be carried out by private treaty. This matter is urgent because we want to see orange research remain in New South Wales, not go to another State, and it can only do so in the long term if we force The Nationals at the Federal level to stand up for the citrus industry in New South Wales.

Drink-driving Laws

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.28 p.m.]: The motion of which I have given notice states:

This House supports drink-driving laws in New South Wales.

In four days' time public schools in New South Wales break up for the holidays at the end of the first term. As many people know, that is a time for many families, including schoolchildren, to go on leave. We also know that nearly 30 per cent of fatal crashes across New South Wales involve a driver with an illegal level of alcohol. We are told by area health services and other authorities that drivers with a level of .05 or more are double the crash risk. We know the seriousness of this because the Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act 1999 sets out in an addendum a table that not only refers to the consumption of alcohol—the three standard glasses in the first hour and one each hour to stay within the limit—but also sets out the elimination time for the removal of alcohol from the body in hours and minutes. For instance, according to the statutory table attached to the legislation, it would take three hours and 24 minutes for one's blood alcohol level to go down from 0.090 to 0.045.

This matter is urgent because this House has a proud record of standing up against drink driving. It is urgent because this House has a proud record, through the Staysafe committee, of introducing random breath testing in the State. This matter is urgent because three hours versus an alleged claim of three drinks simply does not stack up. Under the Act the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources could not have had the number of drinks he claims he had and three hours later have recorded that blood alcohol reading.

Mr Richard Amery: Point of order: Perhaps some guidance should be given to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. He is now talking about a specific member of Parliament, a specific incident and a specific charge, which is now before the courts. I believe it is against the sub judice rule for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to canvass evidence that will be before the court in the weeks ahead.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: To the point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I caution the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to keep his comments general, rather than make specific references.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I point out by way of elucidation in my own time that the sub judice rule never applied in cases that do not involve a jury. This case does not involve a jury.

Mr SPEAKER: That is not so.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am simply responding to the honourable member, but I am happy to go on.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I caution the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that the statement he has made to the House is incorrect.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I know I am on the wrong side of the House to make incorrect statements during question time, but there have been successive rulings about sub judice in trials that involve juries and sub judice in trials that involve magistrates and judges. But I am prepared to move on and raise the general issue. The reason we need to urgently debate this matter is that there is a huge conflict between the Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act and the table involving the elimination of alcohol from one's bloodstream or body and claims made on the weekend about the number of drinks had and the result of a blood alcohol test in this State. It is of importance to this House that the veracity of the Minister be questioned. The Minister needs to answer the questions.

Mr Alan Ashton: Point of order: Mr Speaker, you have already ruled on this following the point of order taken by the honourable member for Mount Druitt. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has now mentioned a Minister in this Government, who has just answered a question from the Opposition about this matter. If the honourable member is going to attack a Minister he should do it by way of substantive motion.

Mr Donald Page: That is what this is.

Mr Alan Ashton: No, it is an urgency motion. You have already ruled, Mr Speaker, that any matter that might prejudice a decision of any court should not be discussed in Parliament. There is a presumption of innocence, and that applies to everybody.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have heard enough on this matter. Again I caution the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to keep his references general.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: To illustrate the point, if I had three drinks between 7.00 p.m. and 9.00 p.m. and drove to a restaurant at 10.30, I would not have had a reading of 0.085. The claim is that the Minister drove to the restaurant in the highly moderate range of blood alcohol limits. [*Time expired.*]

Question—That the motion for urgent consideration of the honourable member for Murray-Darling be proceeded with—agreed to.

CITRUS INDUSTRY

Mr PETER BLACK (Murray-Darling) [3.34 p.m.]: I move:

That this House supports the New South Wales citrus industry, which is worth more than \$140 million at the farm gate, and supports the more than 3,000 jobs associated with the sector.

New South Wales has 12,000 hectares of orange trees in traditional citrus-growing regions such as the Riverina, the Murray, the Central Coast and the Sydney basin. These areas produce 275,000 tonnes of fruit per year, or almost half of Australia's citrus product. Australia's largest juice company, Berri, has one of its major processing plants based in the heart of the New South Wales citrus territory. Berri's Leeton facility employs 130 people. The Leeton plant processes 70,000 tonnes of fruit annually, accounting for 60 per cent of Berri's total citrus juice processing, which underscores the deafening silence of the honourable member for Murrumbidgee, who has done nothing to protect these jobs. I acknowledge the presence in the House of the honourable member for Lachlan, who has a deep and abiding interest in matters agricultural. On 5 July last year I received an email from Auscitrus, which read:

Thank you for agreeing to meet with Auscitrus Directors at Wentworth about 11 am on Monday 12th July ... the proposed closure of the Gosford NCGH Research Station of NSW Agriculture has been announced by the Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon. Ian Macdonald.

Under a Deed of Licence between Auscitrus and NSW Agriculture, signed on 1st August, 2001, to operate for a period of 10 years, "*NSW Agriculture agrees to undertake and maintain citrus plantings at Gosford NCGH ... and to provide propagation material from such citrus planting to the Licensee (Auscitrus) for the term of this Deed.*"

The closure of Gosford Research Station (Somersby and Narara sections) will severely affect Auscitrus' operations and the supply of rootstock seed to the Australian citrus industry. In particular it will threaten the proposed 1400 ha juicing orange plantings in NW NSW—

The honourable member for Lachlan would know that many of these plantings were proposed for Bourke. Cotton is being produced uneconomically. We are looking for alternative uses of that water, and the operation of Auscitrus is important, particularly to organisations such as Clyde Industries, to give an alternative to the operation. The email continued:

... and others proposed for the Riverina. 79% of Auscitrus seed of *P. trifoliata* (the principal rootstock which will be used in these developments) and 45% of all citrus rootstock seed sold by Auscitrus, comes from Gosford.

The meeting referred to was held in Sunraysia, and I am pleased to report that following that meeting I advised the Minister for Primary Industries that I had met with Messrs Mike Arnold, the president, Michael Keenan, a director, and Tim Herrmann, the operations manager of Auscitrus, in Wentworth. I reported that Auscitrus was anxious to secure two blocks of land located on River Road, Dareton, for the purpose of relocating its citrus seedstock, budwood and rootstock operations from its current Department of Agriculture location in Gosford. This is great news. The land concerned is currently vested in the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources and was, until 1995, occupied by the CSIRO. Both blocks, one approximately 20 hectares and the other approximately 16 hectares, contain land suitable for citrus propagation as well as marginal land.

In order to relocate efficaciously, a lead time of five years is required: in other words, four years at Dareton to grow citrus to a reproductive capacity and a further five years at Gosford to ensure continuity of production. Auscitrus is a most important growers association that intends to produce seed stock, with its proposed 1,400 hectare juicing orange planting to be located in the north-west of New South Wales, including

Bourke, and, in addition, seed stock for Hunan in China. The news from last week is exceptionally good: the Minister for Lands, the Hon. Tony Kelly, has agreed to sell the land by private treaty. That is exceptionally good news for Murray-Darling. There can be no doubt as to the importance of this to my electorate. Three times in the last month or so the *Land* has reported the threat of citrus canker. I am reluctant to allow a debate such as this to descend into a debate concerning the American free trade agreement but no provision has been put in the American free trade agreement that satisfactorily prevents the importation of citrus canker from Florida oranges into Australia.

The honourable member for Lachlan, a former Minister for Agriculture, will recall that approximately 15 years ago local government campaigned assiduously against the import of raw chickens from Thailand. As a result of the continuing exports Newcastle disease was introduced to this country. The chook industry at Ourimbah, which ironically used to be a major orange growing area, fell over. It was riddled with Newcastle disease and there were major problems. If we do not do something about citrus canker there will be a similar problem. Citrus canker was discovered last year in the Emerald district in Queensland. Additional outbreaks followed in October last year and then in February and March of this year, also in the Emerald district. It is a highly contagious bacterial disease that causes citrus trees to stop producing fruit. It can bring entire growing regions to a standstill.

In March the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries completed surveys of more than 120 citrus orchards in the southern part of the State, including orchards in the Griffith and Leeton areas as well as the Hillston, Wakool, Murrumbidgee, Berrigan and Wentworth areas. The surveys found no sign of the devastating citrus canker—good news for New South Wales. The assistance of local growers was phenomenal, with many producers providing Department of Primary Industries staff with detailed maps of their properties to assist with on-the-ground work. I also recognise the role of the Riverina Citrus Committee and the Murray Valley Citrus Board, which supported this important effort and helped in the planning processes.

In relation to the trees to go in at Buronga, I refer to a speech that I gave in this place on 21 September 1999. I wish to revisit this because the research to be carried out at Buronga is looking at no less than 14 different varieties of citrus that have the capacity to produce juicing oranges in Australia 12 months of the year—in autumn, spring, winter and summer. Way back in 1999—I am sure the former Minister for Agriculture will recall this—there was a ridiculous claim by McDonald's that Australia could not produce consistent quality orange juice all year round. I mention McDonald's only because McDonald's is the biggest outlet of fresh orange juice in Australia. In the years 1987 to 1990 Senator Bolkus, the then Federal Minister for Consumer Affairs, at my behest, ironically looking after Griffith—I did a far better job in those days than the current member—agreed to the relabelling of orange juice containers sold in supermarkets from "Made in Australia" to "Product of Australia". That helped the orange juice industry of Australia tremendously. At the time I asked that the plastic cups provided by fast food organisations such as McDonald's should also be clearly labelled with "Made in Australia" or "Product of Australia".

Major outlets for orange juice in Australia are still marketing overseas product. It is not identified. The consumer is entitled to know where this orange juice is produced. The Nationals—it goes straight back to Warren Truss—are not doing anything to enforce appropriate labelling in the fast food chains. If the plantings at Buronga are to be successful in breeding the new stock for places such as Bourke—I have mentioned Clyde industries—we need to ensure that the consumer can support Australia by buying Australian. I commend the motion to the House. [*Time expired.*]

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI (Murrumbidgee) [3.44 p.m.]: I would like to touch on a couple of issues raised by the honourable member for Murray-Darling. As the electorate of Murrumbidgee contains significant citrus plantings, both naval and Valencia varieties for juicing purposes, I have come to know a fair bit about the citrus industry, particularly the difficulties it is facing. The price of Valencia oranges has been depressed for at least 10 years. In the last five years many Valencia trees have been pulled out, not just in the Riverina but also in Wentworth and other parts of south-western New South Wales. This has brought supply and demand back to something approaching equilibrium. But any citrus farmer will tell you that the price of juicing oranges means that most times they are not worth growing. So I am a little concerned about the proposals to plant significant acres of Valencia oranges for juice. The people presently growing Valencia oranges are struggling to make any money out of those plantings. Planting huge numbers of acres more as the honourable member for Murray-Darling is so strongly supporting would have consequences not just for those who invest in the new plantings but also for those who have already heavily invested in the citrus industry. So I have significant concerns about that. It is potentially one of the greatest threats to the citrus industry.

Another concern relates to trade. We already import navel oranges from the United States of America during our summer. We would all prefer to be able to lock up Australia and not allow imports of anything but we can be pretty certain that it would be a two-way street and we would be locked out of many markets. Coming from a very agricultural electorate, I understand absolutely the need for biosecurity. We do not want to import, particularly agricultural products, from anywhere without protocols or protections. We must ensure that all we import is the product and not anything that it may be transporting with it such as citrus canker. I agree absolutely that the strictest protocols should be put in place to protect the citrus industry from things such as citrus canker. But trade is a fact of life and trade with America has great potential. The one thing that has saved the citrus industry in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia has been the export of navel oranges to America.

Ten years ago navel orange prices became depressed and the domestic market was not doing too well, particularly table oranges. In winter citrus was the only fruit we could get but now with our ability to grow produce all over the place in wintertime consumers can get anything they like. This has put a lot of pressure on domestic demand for navel oranges. There has been a great push to export navel oranges to America, which in many respects has been the salvation of the citrus industry in the tri-state region. We can knock free trade with America, et cetera, but it is a two-way street, and America is a very important market for New South Wales citrus. Of course, every member of the House agrees with the motion stating that this House supports the New South Wales citrus industry worth \$140 million at the farm gate, supporting more than 3,000 jobs. But I suggest six things that the Government might do to support the New South Wales citrus industry, six issues that are important to the future of the citrus industry and important to the people who grow citrus.

The first issue relates to the ability of representative groups to raise levies. Industry groups, such as Riverina Citrus in the Murrumbidgee electorate, do a lot of work on behalf of growers, protecting them from prices that the producers might want to pay for citrus. They are always there, arguing the case for higher prices. They play a very important role in the provision of growing and marketing advice to citrus farmers, but they do have a difficulty raising levies. The New South Wales Department of Agriculture has an opportunity to assist Riverina Citrus. At the moment it is able to raise levies only from individual growers. Riverina Citrus would like the levy to come from the producer. If, for example, 100 farmers are supplying oranges to one packing shed, Riverina Citrus would like to be able to say to that packing shed, "When you pay the farmer for delivery, deduct a couple of dollars per tonne. You collect all the levies in one place and send it to us." Unfortunately, the Department of Agriculture has to date not permitted that, which means that Riverina Citrus has to approach every one of the 600 or so citrus growers in the Riverina to collect its levies.

The second issue deals with fruit fly funding. The discovery of fruit fly in any citrus growing region is disastrous because it restricts our exports, particularly to America and Japan. Fruit fly funding is important and numerous representations have been made to the New South Wales Government seeking the provision of additional assistance and funding for fruit fly monitoring and control. It has never been adequate. I believe that Riverina Citrus has had to set up roadblocks on roads into the fruit fly exclusion area. However, revenue from the fines levied on people found carrying fruit into the region goes into consolidated revenue; it is not channelled back into fruit fly control.

The third issue relates to the \$36 million in cuts to the Department of Agriculture announced in last year's budget. I understand that in the 2005-06 budget another \$56 million will also be cut from that department's funding. The Department of Agriculture is absolutely essential to the future of the citrus industry because it provides agronomic advice and extension services. It is my understanding that at the moment no field officer is available in the Riverina. I can only assume that that is the result of the \$36 million cut from the Department of Agriculture budget. The honourable member for Murray-Darling and some other Labor members might have kicked up a bit of a stink about that during the budget debate last year, but there has certainly been no argument put forward by Government members in opposition to those funding cuts.

The fourth issue relates to the closure of the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture, where so many of our terrific citrus farmers were educated and trained. There will be no more of that essential education to ensure that our citrus farmers—and their sons and daughters who will inherit their farms—are trained in world's best practice. That opportunity has gone. They have been told to go to the Hunter Valley, where I understand the same sorts of courses are not provided. The fifth item relates to occupational health and safety issues. Earlier this year I spoke in this Chamber about a particular citrus farmer. One of his employees was run over after alighting from a tractor that was still going. The citrus farmer was convicted of breaches of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and fined \$80,000. Under the new Workplace Fatalities Bill that farmer could spend as much as two years in gaol and be fined \$800,000. As it was, the provisions of the existing legislation meant that he and his wife lost their farm.

The occupational health and safety issue is significant, not only for big business but also for very small businesses, perhaps involving a husband and wife. The current and proposed legislative provisions relating to occupational health and safety will result in people turning their backs on small business and farming enterprises. The sixth issue relates to workers compensation premiums and the management of the workers compensation system. Another citrus farmer in the Riverina was contacted by a worker three days after an alleged accident had taken place. The man in question said that he had been poked in the eye by a branch of a citrus tree while he was picking fruit. The workers compensation insurer accepted his claim, paid out an amount in the order of \$200,000 and sent the citrus grower broke. These are the real problems. Those are only six initiatives that honourable members opposite could set in train right now to assist the citrus industry. If they were fair dinkum they would get up and speak and have a real go for the citrus growers of New South Wales.

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) [3.54 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I support the motion moved by the Country Labor member for Murray-Darling, who is a strong advocate in this place for citrus growers and other farmers in his electorate. This motion is yet another sign of just who is standing up for country New South Wales. Once again, today we have witnessed the Opposition—including The Nationals—seeking to debate another motion involving a bit of political bashing of a Minister, instead of putting forward something of interest to rural New South Wales. The Coalition has moved a number of urgency motions in recent sitting weeks but, instead of directing them at something of importance to New South Wales, they have related to Strathfield council and were an attempt to have a go at the honourable member for Strathfield, for some bizarre reason. They were totally wasting their time as she is such a committed member. It is one more example of what happens time and again in this place: Country Labor members bring forward issues of importance to New South Wales. The Government has moved this motion today to highlight the importance of the citrus industry to regional New South Wales. It is a demonstration once again of the Government's strong and detailed plans to support our citrus producers.

I refer to the background of the recent outbreaks of citrus canker in Queensland and the considerable anxiety it has caused for Australia's citrus growing regions. Four infection sites have been detected on two properties in the Emerald area of Queensland, dating back to June of last year. We can take comfort from the fact that surveillance efforts in New South Wales have been successful to date. We have witnessed the destruction of more than 250 hectares of Queensland citrus trees to help eradicate the disease. In New South Wales the State Government has been working diligently to protect local growers and our important export markets.

Mr Thomas George: It says a lot about the Government in Queensland!

Mr STEVE WHAN: I am sure that the Queensland Labor Government has taken very strong action in relation to the outbreak. Strict quarantine measures have been put in place and no citrus fruit or trees from pest quarantine areas have entered New South Wales since the disease was detected. Last month the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries continued its survey program to monitor for signs of citrus canker. The latest round of surveys carried out involved close examination of more than 120 citrus orchards in the south of the State. The honourable member for Murray-Darling referred to some of the places where these surveys were undertaken: the Griffith and Leeton areas, as well as the Hillston, Wakool, Murrumbidgee, Berrigan and Wentworth districts. The local growers played a vital role, with many providing detailed maps of the properties to assist with on-the-ground efforts.

I am pleased to note that the results of those surveys showed no sign of citrus canker in local orchards. In total, the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries and local growers have so far worked together to survey nearly 200 orchard blocks across the State. The Department of Primary Industries has examined an additional 81,000 trees in nurseries on the North Coast. In every case to date the citrus industry has been given a clean bill of health, with no signs of citrus canker. The survey efforts are absolutely vital to protecting our citrus industry. It is essential that they be undertaken so that we can reassure our export partners that our industry continues to be world class.

I take up one point made by the honourable member for Murrumbidgee about imports and exports. He spoke about the need for an established export industry and the need for a relationship with the people we export to, but he missed the point being made by the honourable member for Murray-Darling. The honourable member for Murray-Darling was not suggesting that there should be complex barriers to trade; he stressed the need for proper labelling of imports so that members of the public can make a decision based on full knowledge of the source of the citrus. Undoubtedly, like many members of this House, when I do my weekly shopping at the supermarket I look at the oranges. I do not buy oranges imported from the United States of America, even

though they may be a premium product, because I prefer to buy the local product. I know there are many people in our community who do that. We on this side of the House want to make sure that consumers have sufficient information to enable them to support the Australian product.

The Government is also working very hard to expand citrus exports. Already New South Wales accounts for 30 per cent of Australia's total citrus exports. Demand for non-concentrate orange juice in overseas markets such as Europe and Asia is growing, and the Carr Government has been spearheading a marketing push to Korea. This helped to boost our citrus exports by about \$1 million in 2004. The Government is providing strong support to the citrus industry. We want to do that because it is an important industry in regional New South Wales. Once again Country Labor is standing up for regional New South Wales.

Mr IAN ARMSTRONG (Lachlan) [3.59 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak to this important motion. I acknowledge the contributions of the mover of the motion, the honourable member for Murray-Darling, the honourable member for Murrumbidgee and the honourable member for Monaro. To save the time of the House and to assist it in executing governance in this State, next time the honourable member for Monaro delivers a contribution on rural matters it may be appropriate for us to move that his notes be simply incorporated in *Hansard*, because they are written for him by the department. The honourable member need not read the notes; they can simply be incorporated in *Hansard*.

Mr Gerard Martin: Don't be so churlish.

Mr IAN ARMSTRONG: It is not being churlish; it is simply being sensible and practical. We should save the money of this House because the Government needs it. The former Coalition Government fought Federal Labor for years regarding the importation of citrus fruits, particularly from Brazil. The Labor Party was determined to open up the doors for Brazilian juice, and also for fruit to come in from Florida. That was a very long and sometimes unpleasant debate between the State and Federal governments.

Mr Steve Whan: Where have you been for nine years?

Mr IAN ARMSTRONG: The honourable member for Monaro interjects, "Where have you been?" That is a good question. He is now acknowledging that Labor has been in power in this State for the last 10 years, yet it has taken a current Labor member to highlight the inadequacies of this Government. The honourable member for Murray-Darling has admitted that the Government has virtually gutted the Department of Agriculture. Where are the entomologists, where are the citrus breeders, where are the agronomists, where are the soil scientists and where are the salinity experts? They are not there because the Government has removed them. Indeed, there is only one salinity expert in inland New South Wales, and he is based at Orange. The Labor Party can take no credit at all for supporting the citrus industry in this State. As the honourable member for Murray-Darling said, the citrus industry is very important. It is a major employer and a major generator of income. The honourable member for Murray-Darling spoke about 14 varieties of citrus fruits, which I do not doubt for a moment.

Mr Peter Black: These are the new ones.

Mr IAN ARMSTRONG: Yes. Traditionally we have had valencias and navel oranges, and they are a wonderful food. I think every nation on earth gets most of its vitamin C from oranges. They can be stored, put in cool stores and carted as juice. Oranges are highly transportable, and they are a very simple and valuable foodstuff for the world. It is important that we maintain the rage against the importation of disease. The disease outbreak in Queensland has been occurring now for more than two years. Indeed, I am told that recently a further outbreak occurred on another area of the relevant owner's property. Yet we are told time and again that the outbreak in that State has been contained. I cannot see how the Government can allow the demise of the experts who have a great understanding of the fruit industry, particularly entomologists with regard to insects and the scientists involved with diseases such as fruit canker. We have seen the contraction of those facilities in New South Wales. We are highly vulnerable, probably more vulnerable now than we have been in the last 30 or 40 years, in terms of the invasion of fruit diseases into the citrus industry in this State.

The breeding of seed stock is paramount to any horticultural venture. The breeding and research stations at Gosford that were in existence until a few years ago were internationally recognised. Not only were they recognised internationally because of what we had here in Australia, but students used to come from all over the world to work here and we had the opportunity to learn from them. The students also took with them to other parts of the world, particularly South America and North America, some of the information we were able

to share with them regarding things such as biosanitary management of fruit and vegetables. I suppose in the general thrust and parody of this place it is a small issue, but with regard to the overall economy of New South Wales, and indeed as far as Australia is concerned, the citrus industry is of integral importance in the management of a major problem we face: looking after the security and health of our nation. [*Time expired.*]

Mr GERARD MARTIN (Bathurst) [4.04 p.m.]: I support the honourable member for Murray-Darling in this important urgent motion. Like the honourable member for Monaro, I have gone to the trouble of providing myself with quite copious notes to make sure that I do not stray from the subject matter of the motion. Perhaps if honourable members opposite adopted such an approach we would have better debate on these issues. In November last year the State Government launched a major new strategy to boost the citrus industry in central and north-western New South Wales. The strategy was announced by the Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon. Ian Macdonald, in Narromine on Friday 5 November 2004. Overall it is part of the State Government's plan to create new business opportunities for farmers, and more jobs for rural and regional New South Wales. Under the strategy, more than 1,200 hectares of orange trees will be planted in these regions, to deliver a year-round supply of quality, fresh orange juice from New South Wales. Key areas to benefit from the new plantings of irrigated orange trees include Narromine, Warren, Gunnedah, Narrabri, Moree and Bourke. Approximately half a million trees are being propagated and will be ready for planting in spring 2006.

The goal of the strategy is to tap into the rising demand for fresh citrus juice, a market that is growing nationally at up to 8 per cent a year. For the benefit of the honourable member for Murrumbidgee, that is why the citrus industry is a good investment. Demand for non-concentrate orange juice in overseas markets such as Europe and Asia is also on the rise, providing opportunities for Australian and New South Wales farmers. By boosting the plantings of citrus trees, we can ensure a more consistent, year-round supply of fresh orange juice, which is an important marketing strategy. Put simply, the strategy will allow growers to extend the citrus season in New South Wales. Obviously, it will also add to their financial viability. The benefits for growers will be significant. We estimate that the extra plantings will allow New South Wales growers to generate an extra 38 million litres of fresh orange juice per year. An extended citrus season presents a potential economic boon, with initial estimates putting the worth of this new sector at \$108 million within 15 years. The strategy is also forecast to deliver up to 500 new full-time and casual jobs, through orchard development, harvesting and other aspects of the supply chain. It is an extremely targeted strategy.

Citrus in New South Wales is already a very strong and vibrant industry. New South Wales currently has 12,000 hectares of orange trees in traditional citrus growing regions such as the Riverina and Murray districts, producing 275,000 tonnes of fruit per year. The New South Wales citrus industry is worth \$140 million at the farm gate—that is why Country Labor thinks it is important to support it—and supports more than 3,000 jobs. The orange industry alone is already thriving in areas such as the Riverina and Murray districts, and Bourke-Narromine and Central Coast regions. Growers are innovative and keen to grab any new opportunities that arise. In fact, the new citrus strategy announced last year follows four years of collaboration between the State Government and the industry. It is yet another example of the Government working closely with agricultural industries—

Mr Steve Whan: A strong and detailed approach.

Mr GERARD MARTIN: Indeed, it is a strong and detailed approach. Everyone was keen to be involved in the strategy, from existing and potential citrus growers in the central and north-west of the State to juice processors and retailers. The New South Wales Department of Primary Industries has provided significant expertise and advice—despite what we hear from the prophets of doom opposite—along with the New South Wales Department of State and Regional Development and Horticulture Australia Ltd. An estimated \$500,000 in financial and in-kind support has already helped to lay the foundation for the citrus strategy. That includes support from the State Government, industry groups and growers themselves. Those groups should be commended for their vision and patience.

However, one particular industry partnership deserves special mention: the partnership between the Best Juice company, representing growers, and Pure and Natural, a major juice processor and marketer. They have formed an alliance to help growers invest in these new citrus plantings. Through this joint venture growers are organised into cells, with allocated dates for harvest. That will help to manage the supply of orange juice and ensure it is consistent on a long-term contract basis. Finally, it will mean that fresh, local juice has a better chance of ending up on retail shelves because it has the backing of an established citrus marketer. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr PETER BLACK (Murray-Darling) [4.09 p.m.], in reply: It is a delight to see Mr Deputy-Speaker, a member of Country Labor, in the chair for this debate. I acknowledge, reluctantly, the contribution of the honourable member for Murrumbidgee to the debate. I also acknowledge the contributions of the honourable member for Monaro, the honourable member for Lachlan and the honourable member for Bathurst. What a difference there is between the honourable member for Lachlan and the honourable member for Murrumbidgee! The matters under debate include the issues surrounding citrus canker and the development of new varieties of old citrus. In answer to something that the honourable member for Murrumbidgee obviously did not appreciate or understand, I direct his attention to an article in the *Land* newspaper of 24 February, which stated:

NSW Central Coast citrus grower, Max Britten, is keen to see an inquiry into control and quarantine of Queensland's citrus canker outbreak ...

The article quotes Mr Britten as saying:

I don't think we've really seen a commonsense approach to controlling the disease.

On 18 March the *Land* reported:

Horticulture lobby group Growcom wants Federal Agricultural Minister, Warren Truss, to outline the details of investigation into the Emerald citrus canker outbreak.

Growcom chief advocate, Mark Panitz, says growers, who first requested an inquiry when the outbreak occurred in June last year, want to be consulted on the inquiry's terms of reference.

Then we get the king hit. On Tuesday 22 March the *Land* reported:

The Federal Government has rejected calls for a full judicial inquiry into the citrus canker outbreak.

Instead, it will review the handling of the canker outbreak after it has been eradicated.

Mr Truss's decision comes despite a fourth case being detected in Emerald last week.

At least the honourable member for Lachlan was aware of those outbreaks, not so the honourable member for Murrumbidgee. One would suspect he would have some interest, leading to knowledge, in the citrus industry, but on 24 March an editorial in the *Pastoral Times* stated:

Early this week there was a public stoush over who was responsible for having the sale of the Todd's Lane NSW Agriculture field station delayed.

Both Member for Murrumbidgee Adrian Piccoli and Member for Murray Darling Peter Black claimed credit.

To set the record straight, we can advise readers it was the efforts of Mr Black which delayed the sale.

This is a traditionally conservative newspaper! The editorial went on:

He has been working hard for this region, and is fully aware that following a redistribution of boundaries he will need Deniliquin and district votes to hold the seat at the next state election.

Presently, Mr Black is being given an armchair ride by the National Party who seem only interested in criticising his efforts to help our region.

Shadow Agriculture Minister Duncan Gay, during a recent visit, seemed obsessed with "bagging" Mr Black, instead of promoting the benefits his party could offer.

Being in opposition is not easy—

Look at the honourable member for Murrumbidgee—

because all you can do is establish policy, make promises and hope to have the opportunity to carry them out.

If the National Party wants to win Murray Darling, and give itself the best chance of being in government, it needs to start adopting a more proactive approach to issues and politics.

That debate is about the orange industry. The honourable member for Murrumbidgee, in leading for the Opposition, if you can call it that, did not once mention the new varieties of oranges coming on board. He talked about valencias. We are talking today about the 14 new varieties developed through co-operation between the government and the old citrus industry at Wakool. This is the only government in which a coalition is working: Country Labor and Sydney Labor. We are the ones working, not like that other lot. Why is it that the honourable

member for Lachlan could recognise that we have developed, both in his term and subsequently, over 50 new varieties of citrus, but the honourable member for Murrumbidgee does not know about them? What an incredible state of affairs!

There is deafening silence with respect to the McDonald's issue. New South Wales accounts for 30 per cent of Australia's total citrus exports. Demand for non-concentrate orange juice in overseas markets such as Europe and Asia is growing. The Carr Labor Government recently spearheaded a citrus marketing push to Korea. That has resulted in Korean retailers selling our fresh navel oranges. That, in turn, helped boost our citrus exports last year by \$1 million. The point is that we are standing up for the citrus and orange industry. We know what we are talking about it. We are prepared to take on both the Commonwealth Government and The Nationals, and all we get from the honourable member for Murrumbidgee is weak excuses.

Motion agreed to.

ILLAWARRA EXPORT DRIVE

Matter of Public Importance

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL (Keira—Minister for Regional Development, Minister for the Illawarra, and Minister for Small Business) [4.15 p.m.]: I ask the House to note as a matter of public importance a new export drive in the Illawarra, Southern Highlands, Shoalhaven and South Coast. This is an important matter for our State because one in four jobs in regional areas relies on exports, and exports are a proven way to increase sales and generate new jobs in our communities. We have launched an export drive in the Illawarra to encourage more businesses in the region to explore the option of selling their goods and services overseas. Our project has been backed by already successful Illawarra exporters who are featured as case studies in new material designed to encourage others to look beyond our shores for new sales. Our new export drive is designed to show our region's businesses that exporting is a great way for them to grow. As well as the advantages for individual businesses, such as new customers and increased sales, exporting creates jobs and prosperity in local communities.

The export drive aims to maximise the Illawarra's export capability. Our region has export advisers who are available to work with new and existing exporters and who want to tackle overseas markets. As part of our new export push, Illawarra businesspeople will be able to attend a series of workshops and seminars on specific markets and industries. To return to the case studies, Matthew Phillipott is the managing director of Wollongong company MP Enterprises, which exports a range of specialised motorcycle accessories. He says that without the help of the Illawarra export advisers his company would not have entered the European market. He has this to say:

We began exporting five years ago and now have markets in Belgium, Luxembourg, Chile, Germany, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, USA, Japan and the UK.

Mr Phillipot continues:

Exporting has been great for MP Enterprises—our sales have increased by 195 per cent since we began exporting and every year we have employed an additional person to meet the growing demand.

Last week I had the pleasure of meeting Dawn Fearnside, administration manager of MP Enterprises, when we launched the Illawarra export drive at Port Kembla. The honourable member for Wollongong was at that event, and she is also very supportive of this initiative. Dawn Fearnside is an enthusiastic advocate of the benefits of exporting, as anyone who generated a sales increase of nearly 200 per cent would be. Then there is Carmelo San Gil from Balgownie firm DYO Services, which produces computer software. He says a New South Wales Government trade mission to New Zealand last year was a great boost for the business. Mr San Gil said:

As a result of the trade mission we achieved sales of \$100,000 through a master distributor.

That is high praise indeed for the benefits of exporting. These are just a couple of the export successes we have in the Illawarra. But wait, there's more, as others would say. Recently I was able to visit two Southern Highlands businesses, one of them home-based, which have found their feet overseas. Put side by side, those two businesses show that the export market is available to every type of business in our State. One is a highly specialised service business with a theatrical bent. The other is a high-tech environmental operation which is at the cutting edge of science and commerce. The first business I visited specialises in murder mystery nights but

has diversified and is now selling corporate training packages internationally. Interactive corporate entertainment company Dial M Events of Bowral is one of New South Wales' most creative export success stories. Dial M, which trades internationally as TeamMania, is an excellent example of a home-based business that has achieved international success by not confining its vision to domestic markets.

Dial M has grown from humble beginnings organising murder mystery weekends in the Southern Highlands for private social groups to organising corporate training events in Edinburgh, Manchester, Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong, New Orleans, Atlanta, Washington DC, Dallas, Houston, Orlando, San Diego, Miami, Boston and New York. The New South Wales Government helped Dial M, which was established in 1989, to expand its markets and generate new business. Each event is designed to encourage team building and combines entertainment with strategic planning. Participants each have a role to suit their personality, with individual dossiers delivered in advance, ensuring maximum involvement and enjoyment. I am delighted to report to the House that Dial M's Managing Director, Chris Tarakson, told me:

The advice and support from the NSW Government has helped me take my business into the international arena armed with information about what to expect and provided me with some useful contacts.

Mr Tarakson continued:

Without this help I would probably still be thinking 'wouldn't this be a great idea?' The NSW Government helped turn the dream into a reality.

I was very impressed by Mr Tarakson's drive and creativity. His business success underlines the initiative and commitment of our small business sector. The second business I visited was Moss Vale's Enretech Australasia, which has received Carr Government support to sell its state-of-the-art pollution prevention products overseas. Enretech is a fine example of a thriving regional business which is working hard to expand its markets and generate more sales. The New South Wales Government has helped Enretech Australasia expand its export markets to Japan, Korea, the United States of America, the Middle East, Scotland and France.

As a result of this assistance and other initiatives, Enretech Australasia now has distributors in 16 countries. They include companies such as Mitsubishi Japan, Chevron-Texaco, and Shell in Asia, Oceania, Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Enretech is currently negotiating with companies in Iran, Turkey, Belgium and Ecuador. Enretech Australasia has a formal agreement with Mitsubishi Japan, granting it exclusive rights to a technology that is a unique and safe way of dealing with oil and fuel spills or contaminated soils in Japan. The technology is based on an environmentally friendly waste product of the cotton industry. When applied to contaminated soils it decomposes hydrocarbons into harmless natural compounds.

This one-step process contains the spill and destroys the pollutant. There is no need for surfactants, nutrients or bacterial additions and no special training or equipment is necessary. It is fantastic to have a waste product put to good use disposing of unwanted chemicals. I have seen this product in action and it is truly remarkable in the way it quickly and efficiently cleans up spills of chemicals and other products which have traditionally been hard to shift. Enretech's Managing Director, John Giltrap, said that exporting has been an important step in growing the company. He said:

It has enabled us to increase our employment in the area and develop new skills in all facets of offshore contracts, including finance and logistics.

Enretech is also the architect of a revolutionary spill clean-up system designed specifically for supermarkets. Spills are a fact of life for supermarkets but they are potentially dangerous and certainly inconvenient. When a mop and bucket is called to aisle 4, for example, it not only signals a spill, but a potential loss of income because of reduced traffic in that aisle during the clean-up. Enretech's system, which is now being used in one major supermarket chain and is likely to be exported shortly, means that spills are cleaned up more quickly and thoroughly than ever before. It has had a positive occupational health and safety outcome as well.

Highly absorbent material is dispensed straight onto the spill from a wheelie bin. The material is brushed back and forth over the spill until the floor is dry. Then the material is removed into the bin's disposal section. This industry-specific cleaning system is currently being examined by several major supermarket chains in the United States and Japan. It is an impressive application for this clever product, and I certainly look forward to learning that more and more supermarkets across the world have taken it up. I am proud to say that Enretech moved to Moss Vale from Sydney in 1997, with support from the Carr Labor Government. The business was established in Sydney in 1995 and had an office in Crows Nest and a warehouse in Leichhardt. When it left Sydney, Enretech had four staff. Now it has 10. This has been a great success story for our region and shows yet again that international trade can be conducted from regional New South Wales.

Our export advisers can assess whether a company is ready to take that next step into export. They can help develop market entry strategies, identify key overseas contacts and help find an overseas partner or agent. It is gratifying to me, as the Minister for Small Business, to hear the many success stories that come from exporting. Invariably, people tell me they were initially daunted by the logistics of selling goods and services overseas, and invariably they tell how impressed they were by the expert assistance they have received. It is a case of know-how, and our export advisers do know how. I say this to Illawarra, South Coast and Southern Highlands businesspeople: Watch out for upcoming export events and attend if you can. I note that the Deputy-Speaker is in the chair and the honourable member for Swansea is present in the Chamber, and a nine-person trade mission is going to Japan and a number of Hunter companies—

[Interruption]

Nine companies from the private sector, and it was New Zealand, if the honourable member for South Coast was listening.

Mrs Shelley Hancock: You said "Japan".

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The honourable member for South Coast had better listen. It was New Zealand. I note that the honourable member for Heathcote and the honourable member for Kiama are also present. I know they will support the export drive that I launched in the Illawarra last week.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) [4.25 p.m.]: I will start with some positive comments. I have noted on a number of occasions that the Minister for the Illawarra has come into this House and, to use his expression, talked up business in the Illawarra, the South Coast and the Southern Highlands. I applaud him for that. We need to talk up our small businesses and assist them wherever possible. I also applaud the Government for its efforts—if they are serious efforts—and I accept the comments of the Minister with respect to workshops and assistance given to businesses to help them increase their exports and markets. I do not dispute any of that. However, when the Minister talks up business, I would prefer that he match his words with actions. He should seriously address some of the problems being experienced by small business in the Illawarra, the South Coast and the Southern Highlands. He should be aware of the problems that impact on small business. The Minister referred to Enretech, and I applaud that company for its efforts in occupational health and safety.

I want to refer to something that may affect the ability of small businesses to export because it may affect their ability to exist. They have said that they may go out backwards because of the draft Occupational Health and Safety Legislation Amendment (Workplace Fatalities) Bill, which has been pushed by the unions onto the Labor Party. The bill is no laughing matter. If the Minister for the Illawarra, and Minister for Small Business were interested in business, he would do less talking up of small business and urge his Cabinet colleagues to withdraw the bill.

I turn to comments from business, councils and the Illawarra Business Chamber. I am sure the Minister is aware of those concerns because he is, after all, the Minister for the Illawarra. They want to draw concerns about the draft bill to the attention of the Minister, and I understand that they have made direct representations to him. They totally reject rogue behaviour that puts the safety of employees at risk. We all do. We accept that there are significant community expectations on business to protect workers and to punish those who recklessly disregard their safety. I have no dispute with that.

However, the bill proposes a new offence relating to workplace fatalities that will significantly increase financial penalties and gaol terms, even for first-time offenders. The draft legislation also allows trade unions to prosecute employers under the workplace fatalities provisions, allowing trade unions to receive 50 per cent of any fine imposed from any trade union inspired workplace fatality prosecution. With a maximum fine of \$1.65 million under the legislation, there is a real danger of the emergence of trade union bounty hunters. The letter I received from the Illawarra Business Chamber goes on and on. Recently it published its concerns about the Government's moves to push this legislation.

If the Minister wants to talk up business he should talk to his Cabinet colleagues, his caucus colleagues and his factional colleagues, whoever they may be, and ask them to withdraw this bill. If it is not withdrawn a number of businesses will go out backwards. Comments have also been made by the general manager of Shoalhaven City Council, who agrees with all the issues we have raised about the legislation. He feels that it will create considerable overhead costs for small business and larger corporations alike, and will be a disincentive to many employers to expand their business or force them to explore further means to outsource

their business activities. The general manager said that the legislation could be a disincentive to the type of thing the Minister is talking about, that is, encouraging export opportunities.

No-one would deny that encouraging export opportunities is an excellent goal. However, I warn the Minister that unless he gets the legislation right businesses will rise up against it and against and the Minister for ignoring their pleas. Mr Harry Ray from Gardchek said that it was with great concern that he read about the proposed legislation. He said that apart from a poor legal basis, the intent of the law is well covered by existing legislation, and the bill exhibits a terrible lack of fairness. He said:

... this legislation speaks to me of an appalling attitude towards business owners and managers.

That is what businesses on the South Coast, in the Southern Highlands and in the Illawarra are saying about the Minister and the Government. Serious concern has been expressed by Nowra Chemical Manufacturers, which stated that the bill is patently unfair and will provide no assistance to employers and employees to develop safe and productive workplaces. If the Minister wants to talk up small business, as he loves to do, and encourage businesses he should listen at the same time. It is one thing to talk but it is another thing to use one's ears and listen to what people are saying. And it is serious stuff!

Let us talk about some of the other disincentives to small business that the Minister could get his teeth into if he wanted to do something. He should get his little legs moving and take action. One disincentive was the closure of business enterprise centres. What did the Minister say about the closure of the Nowra Business Enterprise Centre? Nothing! Zilch! That was the assistance he gave to small business in Nowra. I have presented a petition in this House regarding the concerns of small businesses. The Minister comes in here and talks up small businesses, yet he closed the very facility that would help businesses. Not once did the Minister listen to businesses on the South Coast. He did not even respond to their concerns.

All the Minister can do is wave around a piece of paper. I could talk about the issues all day. I note that the honourable member for Bega is in the House. One main issue relates to the Princes Highway. How many times have we talked about the Princes Highway? It is a serious issue that affects business because it is the only strategic transport link. The NRMA has just identified the Princes Highway as the worst stretch of highway with the worst crash record in the State. What does the Minister do? What does he say? Nothing! He has done nothing to support the representatives of business who are forced to travel up and down the Princes Highway day after day, putting their lives, and perhaps the lives of others, at risk. Then we talk about the important strategic transport link—

[*Interruption*]

It is a shame that I must yell to make myself heard because of the Minister's unruly, stupid behaviour. These issues are serious for business. Another important issue relates to Main Road 92, which was declared a road of national importance in 1998. That has been an excellent project involving three tiers of government, with everyone supporting it financially. It is now 2005 and, due to the State Government's recalcitrance in getting the National Parks and Wildlife Service to revoke its boundaries, the project simply continues. Meanwhile, businesses on the South Coast and in the Illawarra and the Southern Highlands are forced to use treacherous, dangerous roads over Kangaroo Valley, without any resolution to the situation.

It is disappointing that the Minister comes into the House and talks about four or five businesses that are to be applauded, but does nothing about the serious and strategic issues about road and transport infrastructure on the South Coast. I have listened to the Minister talk about Illawarra business on a number of occasions, but he cannot offer any positive incentives or solutions for business.

Mr Matt Brown: Smile!

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: I find it hard to smile in the House today because some industries are in serious danger of going out backwards. One such industry is the South Coast oyster industry. Sometimes I wonder whether the Minister for the Illawarra has heard about the challenges facing the South Coast oyster industry. Like other members of Parliament, he probably gorged himself on oysters several months ago. However, the costs of water quality testing regimes have been put back onto oyster growers on the South Coast. At least one oyster grower has told me that by next year he may have left the industry. That is bad news. I am not talking down an industry; I am saying that that is bad news. The Minister is not talking to or communicating with these industries; he simply thinks that it will all happen easily. It does not happen easily for business. The Minister holds workshops, et cetera. That is great stuff, but the Government is not doing much for small business. [*Time expired.*]

Mr MATT BROWN (Kiama) [4.35 p.m.]: It is my pleasure to speak on this issue today. Unfortunately, I must follow the honourable member for South Coast. As usual, she whinged, whined, carped and complained. She did not want to talk up business. Indeed, she spent all her time talking down the whole of the Illawarra, ensuring that people do not want to invest there. I must ask: Where is the shadow Minister for the Illawarra, the honourable member for Southern Highlands, during this important debate? We are debating small business in the Illawarra, and the shadow Minister for the Illawarra is not here. It is a disgrace. I am pleased to have the opportunity to highlight several export achievers from the Illawarra.

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: The honourable member for Kiama is criticising members on this side of the House. We are debating a matter of public importance about the Illawarra and the honourable member for Illawarra is not even in the Chamber. Where is she?

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr MATT BROWN: It is a disgrace that the shadow Minister for the Illawarra is not in the Chamber. As for the interests of small business in the Shoalhaven, I invited small business representatives to a business breakfast with the Minister for the Illawarra, and more than 70 representatives turned up on the day. That proves that there is a lot of interest in having good dialogue with Ministers and members of Parliament.

[*Interruption*]

The honourable member for South Coast was still asleep when these small business representatives came to talk to us about small business. The Bega Co-operative Creamery Company was founded in 1899 when local farmers banded together to improve their individual production and marketing activities. The Minister often refers to the advantages of businesses working together so that they can each have a slice of the bigger pie, and I commend him for his efforts. The factory was established in 1899, and these days export sales make up 60 per cent of Bega's market. Bega Cheese exports 3,500 tonnes of bulk cheddar—it is doing exceptionally well—to all sorts of countries, including Japan, Korea, the Middle East and the West Indies. Since the 1990s Bega Cheese has established retail product sales in 17 countries. Bega Cheese says it has the potential to manufacture and distribute 25,000 tonnes of natural cheese and 20,000 tonnes of processed cheese every year. For export markets the Bega brand can be cut and packed to specific market labelling requirements. This cheese is well recognised as an export success story. I urge honourable members to get behind this business.

Another company expanding its international markets is Benchmark Estimating in Nowra. This company has developed an estimating software package that is used across a wide range of industries and on all scales of projects. It also provides training and support for the software. This is the difference between the Government and the Opposition. We are talking up small business and export opportunities; the Opposition is talking down our region. With advice and support from the New South Wales Government, this company is already exporting Benchmark Estimating software to New Zealand. One client in New Zealand, Ashburton Contracting, was most impressed with the new user course, and commented:

It launched me into using the software very quickly, and provided a unique insight into the potential of the Benchmark system. Every time I use Benchmark it impresses me ...

Another quiet achiever is Australian Holstein Genetics based near Gerringong. There is unprecedented worldwide demand for genetic material from Australian Holstein cattle. Australia is now recognised as a supplier of quality Holstein genetics and a country that has an excellent animal disease status. The company was founded by a group of 130 Holstein breeders from the New South Wales South Coast and Southern Tablelands and exports embryos and genetic material. With help from the New South Wales Government, Holstein Genetics has gained markets in China, Vietnam and India. I could go on. I could talk about the hot chilli wine from Disaster Bay Chillies, and a whole lot of other industries in the area. Unfortunately, the honourable member for South Coast and the honourable member for Bega want to interject and disrupt this important debate. Their idea of export is their next trip overseas. When they try to export themselves they are not invited back.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL (Keira—Minister for Regional Development, Minister for the Illawarra, and Minister for Small Business) [4.40 p.m.], in reply: The honourable member for South Coast just could not help herself. She said she was going to make a positive contribution to this debate and, as my good friend the honourable member for Heathcote noted, that lasted for less than a minute. Members opposite have nothing positive to say; they just whinge, whine and complain. They make no positive comments; they are well known for their negativity. The honourable member for Kiama noted that the shadow Minister for the Illawarra has no

interest in this matter and took no part in the debate, nor did any other shadow Minister. So the idea of the alternative government in this State—the Opposition—supporting exports is dead in the water. It has no policies, no plans and no ideas.

The honourable member for South Coast will not cop any criticism on this matter. She had the temerity to talk about factions at one stage. I would have thought that members of the Opposition in this place would be the last people to talk about factions, when one reads reports of how the Right is out to get the groupers, how the far Right is going to knock off the groupers.

Mrs Shelley Hancock: Get back on to this!

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: See how bad she is: she has picked up the urgent motion. Not once in her contribution to this debate did the honourable member for South Coast talk about the matter of public importance, which is the Illawarra export drive. She did talk about the Illawarra Business Chamber, which is part of Australian Business Ltd. In its mid-term report it said the Brogden Opposition was unwilling to enter into policy debate or address in any real detail issues such as labour and skill shortages, workplace relations, occupational health and safety compliance issues and expenditure reduction.

The New South Wales Opposition has no policies, no plans and no ideas—in contrast to this Government's strong and detailed plans—to encourage exports from the Illawarra through the Illawarra export drive. To back up that plan the New South Wales Government provides a network of export advisers across the State, including one based in Nowra, who can assist companies wanting to break into international markets or increase their exports. These advisers are part of the Government's strong and detailed plan to assist regional businesses expand their markets, generating new investment and establishing local jobs for local families.

Malcolm Lemaire has recently taken up the export adviser's position in Nowra, where he is available to advise exporters and potential exporters in the Illawarra, the South Coast and the Southern Highlands. He joins a team of six other export advisers across the State who are available to support and advise companies that want to export. During 2003-04 the export advisers worked with nearly 700 companies to help them achieve new export sales of \$15.3 million in those 12 months.

The export advisers are part of a range of State Government initiatives to promote exporting as a business development strategy. They include the New South Wales exporters network, which links exporters across the State with one another through an interactive web site where they can share their knowledge and experience and learn from one another. For more information on exporting I encourage honourable members to visit www.export.nsw.gov.au. If the honourable member for South Coast had taken the opportunity to look at that before she was sold the dump to be involved in this debate, she might have had something constructive to say about export as an economic development program. I urge New South Wales companies to take advantage of this service.

In 2002-2003 New South Wales companies exported goods and services worth close to \$35 billion. I want to see that figure increased and I would like to see more businesswomen, in particular, turn their minds to export opportunities. Women tend to be underrepresented in international trade even though close to one-third of small businesses in New South Wales are run by women. Exporting does not require the investment of huge amounts of money or months spent in strange locations a long way from home. For example, more and more businesses are using their web sites to sell their products and services to international buyers. The Internet is a great tool to support export, just as the Illawarra export drive will be a great tool to encourage exports in the Illawarra. [*Time expired.*]

Discussion concluded.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! With the leave of the House, I propose to proceed now to the taking of private members' statements.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GEMBOREE 2005

Mr PETER BLACK (Murray-Darling) [4.47 p.m.]: I recognise the affiliation of Mr Acting-Speaker Mills with the Royal Australian Chemical Institute [RACI]. I am delighted to report that as member No. 8480 of the Geological Society of Australia, as well as a member of the RACI, I had the great pleasure of attending the

forty-first Gemboree held at Bathurst from Easter Friday to Easter Monday last. It was an absolutely outstanding success, and I commend the endeavours of the honourable member for Bathurst and the Minister for Mineral Resources. The Minister made available to this Gemboree a great display. Bathurst proved to be a popular centre. Apart from the members of the various mineralogical clubs, faceting clubs, fossil clubs and palaeontological clubs of Australia, by Saturday afternoon 1,900 people had passed through the gates of Bathurst Showground to see the great displays.

In particular, I mention Martin Rosser, He Xin Jian from China, Bill Kettle, Dehne McLoughlin, Ben Nicolson of re-opening Tsumeb fame in south-west Africa, Peter Beckwith, Irvine Hay, Rob Sielecki, John Weir and Arthur Roffey, the convener of the show from Londonderry in Sydney. I also mention many of the tailgaters, including Allan Arnold, Harvey Healey, who works for the Minister for Mineral Resources, and Mark Rheinberger. On Easter Friday the honourable member for Bathurst took great joy in looking around the tailgating area to see what was on display and what was for sale or to swap, and how this hobby, fixation or fascination for many, works.

The Minister and the Department of Mineral Resources were represented at the Gemboree by John Chapman, who was originally from South Africa and has visited my minerals room at Broken Hill. He did an absolutely superb job. As I said, by the Saturday afternoon 1,900 people had visited the department's display. The other person at the display was Kevin Capnerhurst, who is now based at Orange. Kevin came to Australia from Canada and is a great collector of minerals, notwithstanding his interest working through the department. The display attracted a great deal of interest. A bismuth specimen, which is among the jewels held by the department at three locations around Sydney, was the subject of an offer of \$5,000.

If the Minister is short of a few bob he has the crown jewels there, but I would not suggest for a moment that they should be sold. The 2006 Gemboree will be at Claremont, a suburb of Hobart, Tasmania. In 2007 it will be at Gatton in Queensland, in 2008 at Murray Bridge in South Australia, and in 2009 at a Victorian location. In 2010 or 2011 the Gemboree will return to New South Wales. I would commend to the Minister that when it is held at Broken Hill we have a similar display with the same kind of enthusiastic members of his department promoting this hobby and interest.

Many graduate geologists attended the show. Many councils support fossicking clubs in Sydney, such as that at Bankstown. A new club has been formed with the collaboration of Canada Bay, and such clubs are quite prolific. Fossicking is a fascinating hobby that captures the natural wonders and beauties of earth science. New South Wales, through the Department of Mineral Resources, has been providing good maps and mineral deposit information for years. New South Wales is blessed with great collecting opportunities.

A few that were promoted at Bathurst include the sapphire and diamond fossicking areas of New England and south of Oberon, the quartz collection areas from old mines, numerous road aggregate quarries, and zeolite minerals from western New South Wales and New England. I conclude by referring to that great mineral-collecting area of New South Wales, Broken Hill. I am proud to say, speaking as a chemist, to you, Mr Acting-Speaker, a geologist or chemist, that I now have 80 different species collected from that great centre of propriety and sensibility, Broken Hill. [*Time expired.*]

Mr KERRY HICKEY (Cessnock—Minister for Mineral Resources) [4.52 p.m.]: It was a great honour for my department to be involved in the national Gemboree event held over the Easter long weekend at Bathurst. It is very pleasing to hear another member speak so positively about the part played by the department. The claim that only 1,900 visitors passed through the stall of the Department of Minerals may be short: I am told that up to 4,000 or 5,000 people in total attended the Gemboree. That shows the interest in minerals across New South Wales. Bathurst is a wonderful part of the State to visit. Its very dedicated and hard-working member of Parliament, Mr Gerard Martin, the Government Whip, promoted the Gemboree very well, and it was promoted throughout the media in the Bathurst-Orange region.

Fossickers and lapidarists from across the world, from all walks of life, attended the Gemboree. This shows a strong commitment to our minerals sector. The department put a lot of hard work into the display. The honourable member for Broken Hill can be assured that the next Gemboree held in New South Wales will be supported and promoted by the department. Not long ago the department launched a map of the Mole Tableland, which is 50 kilometres north of Glen Innes. The department informed people what they can do when they are fossicking in accordance with the legislation. It is great to see the activities of the department being promoted so strongly by the honourable member for Murray-Darling and the honourable member for Bathurst. [*Time expired.*]

WILLOUGHBY COUNCIL ELECTORAL DONATIONS DISCLOSURE

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.54 p.m.]: I raise matters relating to the disclosure of electoral donations received by Pat Reilly during the March 2004 Willoughby council elections. I do so after having first raised with the Electoral Funding Authority [EFA] issues relating to the non-disclosure of expenditure and income received at a function on 17 March 2004 held to raise funds for Councillor Reilly's campaign. I do so because 13 months after that election neither Willoughby ratepayers nor the public generally know who attended that function to support Councillor Reilly's campaign, how much money was collected or what it cost. I do so because it is vitally important that, in conducting himself as Mayor of Willoughby, Councillor Reilly avoid any conflicts of interests or perceived conflicts of interest in relation to those supporters and donors to his campaign.

By way of background I note that Councillor Reilly's return, its content and omissions and its late lodgement, have been subject of local media reporting since February. When the issue of omissions was first raised, Councillor Reilly's initial comment was, "It's all there." Subsequently he 'fessed up to a "bookkeeping bungle" and making a mistake in not handing over all details to the EFA. Importantly, in that article Councillor Reilly told the *North Shore Times* he had the details on file and could produce them if required. A fortnight ago the mayor's story changed again. In this latest version Councillor Reilly said the information was not provided because it was not required and he had confused a private donation of \$2,500 with the proceeds of the fundraising dinner at the centre of this controversy. Mid last month the EFA wrote to me indicating it was satisfied that Councillor Reilly had not breached local government electoral law.

The EFA supported its conclusion by two assurances from Councillor Reilly: firstly, that the dinner was neither organised nor conducted by him and, secondly, that although Councillor Reilly was a beneficiary of the event the proceeds were received by him after the statutory reporting cycle. In local media Councillor Reilly claims this letter clears him and has demanded that I apologise. In response I simply point out that local government regulates one of the most significant sectors of the economy—the property industry. The annual value of developments approved by local government is around \$15,000 million. The Carr Government's urban consolidation policy has turned Sydney councils into what one commentator describes as "developers' playgrounds".

Given the continuing commercial and residential development in and around Chatswood and other parts of Willoughby, the value of projects approved by Councillor Reilly's council is, by any measure, significant. So through votes on council, Councillor Reilly and others elected to local government deny or deliver profits to developers and those involved in the property industry. That is why disclosure of donors is so important in local government. Further, under the Department of Local Government model code of conduct Councillor Reilly has an obligation to avoid both conflicts and perceived conflicts of interest. Without knowing who attended the function how can ratepayers be assured Councillor Reilly is abiding by the letter and spirit of that code? If a property developer, real estate agent or some other person pays to attend the function and subsequently submits a development proposal to Willoughby council for approval, how is the public to know whether Councillor Reilly has acted properly or otherwise if the list of donors has been kept secret? So the public interest demands that Councillor Reilly release the information he has publicly stated he has on file and could produce if required.

But I want to return to the EFA's letter. Despite the claim that the function was neither organised nor conducted by Councillor Reilly, I note that the invitation: included a letter from Councillor Reilly urging people to attend; was authorised by his campaign manager, who also donated \$2,000 to the campaign; and was prominently marked "All proceeds raised on the evening will assist with the campaign to re-elect Pat Reilly as Mayor". The statement does not withstand even the most cursory scrutiny as it is clear that Councillor Reilly and his re-election effort were closely involved in both its organisation and conduct. Further, Councillor Reilly and public relations firm Markson Sparks! claim the entire profit from the function was only \$2,500. I note that there were more than 300 people present at the function held at Willoughby Town Hall. According to the table list on display in the Town Hall's foyer on the night at least eight groups involved with the development or property industry attended. They paid either \$1,500 or \$10,000 a table—the latter being the price of a VIP package which included a pre-dinner cocktail reception with Councillor Reilly, preferential seating and a full-page advertisement in the night's program.

If the more than 300 attendees paid the basic ticket price of \$150, the function took in a minimum of \$45,000. But there was also an associated auction on the night and one auction item alone—an autographed Rolling Stones guitar—was sold on the night for \$7,500. Invitees were also offered full-page or half-page

sponsorships in the night's program for either \$2,500 or \$1,500. On the basis of the little that is publicly known about the function, an alleged profit of \$2,500 out of gross takings of more than \$50,000 simply does not stack up. Finally there is the issue of when the funds were received. Only in local government does the arcane rule exist that if moneys are received later than a month after the election they do not have to be disclosed until the next council elections, that is, 2008. State or Federal candidates rightly cannot get away with such a dodge. Thankfully, the local government Minister tells me this issue is being reviewed and will hopefully be changed. But how convenient is it that Councillor Reilly can now refuse to disclose the full details of income and expenditure at his function because the payment of profits was delayed.

Markson Sparks! told the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 2 March last year that Councillor Reilly would make a full disclosure of donors at the dinner when he lodged his 2004 electoral return. They pledged "full transparency" despite their previous involvement in denying to State electoral funding authorities the details of donors to the Premier's 1995 and 1999 State campaigns. Pat Reilly's friends at Markson Sparks! are serial offenders in respect of breaches of electoral disclosure laws. Councillor Reilly does not deserve an apology; he deserves to apologise to the ratepayers of Willoughby for engaging in a tawdry cover-up of his fundraising activities during the 2004 Willoughby Council elections. Councillor Reilly can put an end to this matter. Rather than waiting until 2008 to disclose the full details of the function, Councillor Reilly could, and should, release the details immediately. Only then can the public be satisfied he is being honest and acting appropriately when voting on development issues before council.

PENRITH SMALL BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Mrs KARYN PALUZZANO (Penrith) [4.59 p.m.]: Small business matters, especially in the electorate of Penrith. It is important that an elected member stay in touch with his or her local community. Honourable members will be aware of just how diverse such communities can be. The small business community in the Penrith electorate ranges from the traders in Kingswood to those in Cranebrook, South Penrith, Jamisontown, Emu Plains, Emu Heights, Leonay, Blaxland and Glenbrook. Each small business comes with its own responsibilities and challenges. As member for Penrith I take those challenges very seriously and this morning, in conjunction with the Minister for Regional Development, Minister for the Illawarra, and Minister for Small Business, I hosted a breakfast with local Penrith businesses.

Approximately 25 local businesses took part in the forum, with 40 people attending the breakfast. The Minister outlined successful government programs aimed at helping small business and, importantly, took questions from the audience. The topics ranged from occupational health and safety to training and issues arising from the challenges experienced by small business enterprises. A point of particular interest related to communication between the small business sector and government. I express my thanks to Yvonne Howie and her team at the Penrith Valley Chamber of Commerce for their attendance and willingness to assist in any form of communication between the Minister for Small Business and Penrith businesses. One important topic related to the training of staff, and I have undertaken to raise these issues with the relevant Government Ministers.

This was not the first time that problems associated with small business have been explored within the Penrith electorate. Last year the Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Small Business visited the electorate of Penrith to speak to home-based businesses, via the Penrith Valley Economic Development Corporation hosting a "Speed Dating for Business" session at which approximately 100 businesses got together. They exchanged business cards and were allotted two minutes to talk, one minute each. They then moved around in rows of 25 by 25, and by the end of the day the various businesses had been able to communicate with each other. In the case of small business proprietors and home-based business proprietors, communication with one another is very important in dealing with a number of common issues.

I congratulate the Minister on making time to once again visit Penrith and on yet another initiative of his portfolio. I also want to thank some of the local businesses that attended—both new and emerging businesses and some old and well-established businesses. There were representatives from Hi-Craft Home Improvements, which has been established in Penrith for more than 30 years and undertakes home improvements in the way of patios and awnings. There were representatives from WestLink Finance, Penrith City Plumbing, Greygums Bistro, Ace Detailers, local real estate agency United Realty, Bratts Entertainment, Lavender Lingerie, Hix Electrical, Greenscapes Pty Ltd, Adams and Partners, Astral Electrics, local bookkeeper Unbound Business, Light Heart, My Music Megastore, P and A Pools, Spurry Engineering, Easy Web Page Design, Art-Is-Anne, Classic Conveyancing Company, the Workplace Safety Centre, and Serenity. Also in attendance was a naturopath and a representative from a company called Blue Mountains Honey.

I want to make particular mention of My Music Megastore, a long-established business in the electorate of Penrith. It operates from a number of locations in Penrith, providing musical instruments and assistance with the music industry. That company has begun to manufacture drumsticks and is the only manufacturer of drumsticks in Australia. It has set up in the Penrith local area and hopes to export its product. I applaud that company's initiative.

CAMPBELL HOSPITAL, CORAKI

Mr STEVE CANSDELL (Clarence) [5.04 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House concerns surrounding the proposed closure of services at Campbell Hospital at Coraki under the North Coast Area Health Service [NCAHS] draft health care services plan 2005-08. A brochure published by the NCAHS entitled "Better Health Services for the Richmond Valley", would be better replaced with a document entitled "Best Value for Richmond Valley Hospitals. Alternative Strategies for Campbell Hospital, Coraki", released by the Save the Coraki and District Campbell Hospital Committee.

The NCAHS brochure refers to the establishment of an Aboriginal health outpost at Box Ridge, a small Aboriginal community outside of Coraki with a transient population of between 70 and 90. Most of the Aboriginal people in the Coraki area live in town or at Woodburn, and prefer to attend Campbell Hospital. Even the Aboriginal community agrees that the estimated \$400,000 to \$500,000 that will be expended on the proposed service and supply of an Aboriginal health worker would be better spent by being channelled back into Campbell Hospital to enable retention of the existing 14 acute care beds and 24-hour emergency department. In the past six months alone there have been 470 after-hours presentations to the emergency department. The cost of attempting to transport these people to Lismore, Casino or Ballina, which are from half an hour to one hour's travel time away, mainly by ambulance or taxi, would be unrealistic. As I say, that money would be far better spent in the local hospital.

Another recommendation in the brochure relates to the establishment of a medical clinic at the hospital. There is already in existence a private clinic in Coraki that is available to the public. In fact, it has attracted two doctors, with a third to arrive shortly. The three doctors are willing to become visiting medical officers if the hospital is retained. The closure of the acute care beds at Campbell Hospital, Coraki, is at odds with the NCAHS Sustainable Access Plan, which identifies an existing shortfall of 74 beds across the North Coast Area Health Service, 42 in the Northern Rivers area. The establishment of a 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. medical centre to replace the existing 24-hour emergency department duplicates the existing services of the existing Coraki Medical Centre.

The plan to open an Aboriginal health post at Box Ridge is not supported by the Coraki or Box Ridge Aboriginal communities. NCAHS predicts it will save more than \$1 million in staff redundancies, which is at odds with its claim that no forced redundancies will occur. There are many discrepancies between the brochure and the reality. Making redundant visiting medical officer and nursing positions at Campbell Hospital is also at odds with the professed aim of the New South Wales Health Department to attract doctors and nurses to rural areas, as outlined in the document, "Securing our Health Workforce" released in March 2005.

It has been suggested in the discussion paper on the provision of health services for the North Coast that the North Coast Area Health Service has limited physical bed capacity and will not be able to open 74 beds without significant capital and infrastructure development. While that statement may be true of the larger hospitals, it is not true of Campbell Hospital, Coraki. Campbell Hospital has the existing infrastructure to support an immediate increase from 14 to 35 beds. This would provide an additional 21 acute care beds, half of the 42 beds required by the NCAHS in the Northern Rivers region.

This would be achieved at minimal cost, mainly a wage cost, and would provide additional jobs in a rural area that traditionally has a high unemployment rate. There are many reasons that Campbell Hospital should be retained. I believe the word "community" has disappeared from this Government's vocabulary, and that service, or provision for the community, has definitely been lost. The bottom line here is dollars, and yet there is not a great saving to be made. In fact, the retention of Campbell Hospital would ensure much better health service provision and better service for the indigenous people of the area. [*Time expired.*]

LUGARNO LIONS CLUB ROCK 'N' ROLL FUNCTION

Mr KEVIN GREENE (Georges River) [5.09 p.m.]: I wish to speak about an important community event held in my electorate last Sunday. While Government members may think I am referring to the success of the under-14 girls Forest Rangers soccer team—

Mr Michael Richardson: It was a great win.

Mr KEVIN GREENE: I acknowledge the interjection by the honourable member for The Hills. It was a magnificent performance from the young ladies. However, I wish to speak about the rock 'n' roll night, a magnificent community event, organised by Lugarno Lions Club and held last Sunday evening at Webbs Dam at Evatt Park, Lugarno. The Lions attracted in the vicinity of 800 people to the function, which was held between 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. on Sunday evening. I was there for an hour or so with my wife, Frances, and three of my children. It was a beautiful evening in terms of weather, but most importantly it was a great community function, with all the people in attendance enjoying the rock 'n' roll music provided by Kenny Ansett and the All Stars.

The music attracted great community involvement. The dance floor that was set up for the hour or so that I was in attendance was fully occupied. In fact, children were dancing on the grass around the dam area. Once again the Lions Club put together an event that brought people together, which is one of the most important things our service organisations do, while hopefully raising much-needed funds for the Illawarra Rural Fire Service. Most importantly, the evening provided an opportunity for people to come together, share each other's company and enjoyment, and certainly share a love for rock 'n' roll music. I have received a great deal of positive feedback regarding the event, not only from people in attendance but also from others who live in the neighbourhood. Indeed, a lady told me that she simply sat on her balcony on the Sunday evening enjoying the music, which is fantastic.

I congratulate Doug Smith, the Chairman of the Lugarno Lions Club Organising Committee, and committee members Col Bryant, Bruce Martin and Ken Easton on their efforts in organising the event. I also congratulate the large number of Lions Club members who assisted on the evening to ensure the event ran smoothly. Also co-opted into the organisation was Ken Mason, also known as Kenny Ansett, and his fellow musicians, who provided their expertise on the evening. I also congratulate Peter Moore from the Illawarra Rural Fire Service and Cas Foster from Hurstville State Emergency Services. I acknowledge the efforts of Hurstville State emergency services, whose volunteers organised car parking and seating arrangements for the function.

It was pleasing to see the Georges River Lionesses in attendance. Indeed, I admit I sampled some of the homemade cakes and biscuits they provided on the evening, which were beautiful, as was the hamburger the Illawong Rural Fire Service provided. My wife and my children also enjoyed their hamburgers. It meant that we did not have to go home and cook dinner that evening. The Georges River Lionesses worked co-operatively with the Lugarno Lions. I also acknowledge the support of members of other local Lions Clubs, as well as many community members, and Daryl Melham, the Federal member for Banks, who was in attendance on the evening. I also acknowledge the contribution of Phill Bates, who provided his stage truck. I am sure Government members who have seen Phill Bates's stage truck at various community events over the years would agree that it is of great benefit to functions such as this. As always, Phill provided his truck free of charge for the Lions Club to use, and it was a great venue for the band to provide the music. I have spoken about the role of Lions Clubs and other service organisations on many occasions in recent years. Last Sunday evening's event was another example of the Lions Clubs, in this case Lugarno Lions Club, providing community events for the people of my electorate.

HOLI MAHOTSAV FESTIVAL

Mr MICHAEL RICHARDSON (The Hills) [5.14 p.m.]: Last Sunday I was privileged to attend the Holi Mahotsav Festival organised by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, the Institute for Indian Art and Culture, at Tumbalong Park, Darling Harbour. The Holi festival is one of the great events in India, celebrating good harvests and fertility. People put on old clothes and throw brightly coloured powders and fire water guns at one another. As well as promoting fun, it helps break down barriers as it is hard to tell people apart when they are caked in coloured powder. I am sure it has helped ease caste consciousness in India. At Tumbalong Park the powder throwing took place in a special ring in the centre of the park. Young people in particular got into the spirit of things but everybody—powdered or not—enjoyed the entertainment and wide range of food and other activities on offer.

Not only does India have an extraordinarily rich and vibrant culture, it is emerging as one of the economic powerhouses of the world. I have admired the growth of India from afar, and its twin achievements of harnessing the abilities of one of the world's most populous nations and maintaining its democratic status now for almost 60 years. The fact that so many Indians speak English has no doubt played an important part in

India's economic expansion, as has the emphasis on education. My electorate has a high proportion of people from an Indian background, many of them professional people and all of them making a tremendous contribution to the prosperity of our nation. The Bhavan, which put on Sunday's event, plays an important role in maintaining India's millennia-old traditions as well as in inculcating the right values in people of all ages. Founded by Dr K. M. Munshi in 1938, it is described as an adventure in faith.

The Bhavan has a truly multidimensional focus. It runs programs on everything from Sanskrit and Indian classical music to science and the environment. It promotes yoga and karate, computer education and rural regeneration, as well as operating free primary health services. Its patrons include all past presidents and prime ministers of India and the Dalai Lama, as well as Nelson Mandela, Prince Charles and Bill Gates. The Bhavan runs schools recognised by India's Central Board of Secondary Education across India, as well as colleges of Arts, Science, Commerce and Engineering that are affiliated with various universities. More than 200,000 students participate in these courses. I was told on Sunday that it has more than 100 centres in India as well as seven centres overseas, the most important of which is in London. The Australian centre was opened by India's Minister for External Affairs, Mr Yashwant Sinha, in August 2003. Its director, Mr Gambhir Watts, long had a dream of establishing such a centre here in Sydney. He still hopes to be able to buy land and build a permanent centre for the Bhavan.

Bhavan Australia's activities include an annual essay competition—this year's topics include the relevance of Gandhian philosophies and the contribution of Indian culture to world peace; a youth week being organised from 9 to 17 April in conjunction with Campbelltown City Council; a multicultural festival being staged in partnership with Wesley Mission Quakers Hill in May; and a drama workshop for young people. India is emerging as an economic powerhouse with an economic growth rate of 8 per cent a year, second only to China. It has remained a democracy, against the odds, for almost 60 years since independence. An incredible 670 million people, or 11 per cent of humanity, vote in Indian elections. It is—and always has been—a country of great extremes, of enormous wealth and grinding poverty, but the goal of the Indian Government is to make India a developed nation and by so doing generate the wealth needed to free the beggars from the streets.

Mr Neville Roach, AO, the Chairman of the Australia-India Business Council, told me on Sunday that trade between Australia and India is currently running at around \$6 billion with our exports to India, mainly commodities, exceeding imports by around five to one. The lion's share of our exports to India is, in fact, gold to satisfy Indians' insatiable desire for gold jewellery. But there are other opportunities for us in India's information technology industry, now worth US\$77 billion.

Australia's links with India are enhanced by the large and prosperous local Indian community, by a common language and by our sporting ties. India was, of course, under British rule for 400 years and it is one of the world's great cricketing nations—in fact, it is the only country currently throwing down the gauntlet to Australia. As I often remark to my New Zealand-born wife at Bledisloe Cup time, the test of Australianness is who you barrack for in monumental tussles between great sporting nations: the country of your birth or the country that has adopted you. I congratulate Gambhir Watts and everyone associated with Sunday's Holi festival and with the establishment of Bhavan in Australia for their efforts at building peace, harmony and understanding in the world.

WEAKLEYS DRIVE, BERESFIELD, AND NEW ENGLAND HIGHWAY INTERSECTION

Mr JOHN PRICE (Maitland) [5.19 p.m.]: Today I speak about the intersection of the temporary F3 and the New England Highway at Weakleys Drive, Beresfield, a contentious issue in my electorate for quite some years now. The Federal Government had promised to provide funding to rectify safety problems connected with the road within the area on the New England Highway that was being used as the temporary F3. I am worried about the section of road where there are three sets of traffic lights within about 400 metres. They cover the intersection of Anderson Drive, Beresfield, and the New England Highway, the intersection of Weakleys Drive, Beresfield, and the New England Highway, and the intersection of Thornton Road, Thornton, and the New England Highway.

The Keating Labor Government Minister Laurie Brereton's commitment to fund an integrated elevated interchange and a link road between Thornton and Beresfield across the adjacent wetlands was well accepted by the community at the time. However, on the election of the Howard Government the proposed project stopped, no funding was made available and the commitments that had already been agreed to—and I understand in part funded—were deleted from subsequent budgets, in spite of the fact that there had been a series of community workshops that had finally agreed on a design that was acceptable and would provide the benefits that we were

looking for. We wanted to delete three sets of traffic lights in close order and provide a link road that would allow traffic to flow from two suburbs, one in Maitland and one in Newcastle.

The Carr Government was then criticised soundly by the Federal member for Paterson, the Hon. Bob Baldwin. Bob berated our Government and berated me because the State could not at that time afford to construct a link road, which had originally been promised by the former Federal Government. As history will demonstrate, the State Government, through Minister Scully, did construct the link road at a cost of \$7 million. The road was well sought after and it has been completed with an excellent lighting system, a cycleway, pedestrian access and provision for a further roundabout that will be required when the interchange with Weakleys Drive is finally constructed. We still wait.

In the last Federal budget there was a promise to provide \$25 million to construct the interchange. The Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] went out yet again, conducted community workshops, sought advice and came up with an acceptable proposal to the community. With regard to its total traffic requirement, the proposal was not as good as the former Federal proposal that had been agreed to by the community, but it was adequate for what we needed and it would resolve most of the problems associated with the intersection. The problem is that project has now ground to a halt. The Federal Government made only \$1 million available for the project; the RTA has proceeded as far as it can, but we have been told that there is a shortfall on the \$25 million. The State Government is expected to meet the shortfall, despite the fact that the Federal Labor Government was prepared to fund the entire project, including the link road. The Federal Government, which is allegedly awash with extra moneys—a \$10 billion surplus—now says that the State has to make up any shortfall on a project that is ostensibly a Federal road: it is the temporary F3. This is a road safety issue. People have died in that area as a result of road accidents.

I appeal to my Federal colleague the member for Paterson, Bob Baldwin, to start screaming as loudly at his Government as he screamed at our Government. He should make sure that the money that has been promised is not only provided but is also supplemented to make sure that the project can proceed. After all, that road services all The Nationals Federal seats right up to the Queensland border. It would be in their interests politically—if for no other reason—to provide the accesses that we need. Come on, Bob, get on the job, get on the back of the Minister, make sure it happens, give us the funding we need and let us get on with it for the community's sake. Forget the politics—do the job you were elected to do.

MR PATRICK O'KEEFE MEDICAL TREATMENT

Mr ANDREW STONER (Oxley—Leader of The Nationals) [5.24 p.m.]: This afternoon I make a plea for a chronically ill man, Patrick O'Keefe, who lives at Macksville in the electorate of Oxley. After Mr O'Keefe approached me for help, as his local member of Parliament, on 23 March I stood in this House and asked the Premier why Mr O'Keefe was being forced to wait 18 months for urgent back surgery when his surgeon had recommended hospital admission within 90 days. The Premier rose and stated:

The classification as to clinical category and urgency is made by doctors. In that context, I am happy to have this case investigated.

The following day the Premier used parliamentary question time to publicly belittle and humiliate Mr O'Keefe and launch an unprecedented attack on a private citizen. It was one of the most sickening displays of arrogance and stupidity I have ever witnessed inside or outside this Parliament. The Premier said:

in total, Mr O'Keefe was offered a date for his surgical procedure six times. Despite this, yesterday we witnessed another tawdry and astonishingly badly researched effort.

Not true. The only tawdry and astonishingly badly researched effort was the Premier's diatribe to this House. The Premier was talking about another man—a urology patient at Coffs Harbour. For the information of the Premier, urology and neurosurgery are two completely different things. The Premier had just made public the private medical history of a man from Coffs Harbour and in doing so he had humiliated Patrick O'Keefe of Macksville. In addition, the Premier instructed his health bureaucrats to issue a media release up and down the North Coast publishing a Coffs Harbour man's medical history and saying nothing about Patrick O'Keefe from Macksville, whose case I had raised with him. Today in question time I asked the Premier why he had done this. He lied to the House, saying, "I did no such thing"—a blatant and disgusting untruth by the leader of this State. I challenge the Premier to come down to this Chamber, explain his actions and detail how he is going to get Mr O'Keefe of Macksville into a hospital bed for his surgery. The Premier has demonstrated that he is out of touch with people in our community.

Mr O'Keefe lives with pain day in, day out. In fact, he is bedridden for most of the day and he survives on a cocktail of painkillers that are no longer effective. I tried to get his case dealt with in the Parliament, but the Premier is more interested in scoring political points. Instead he glibly tried to explain away a very serious situation for poor Mr O'Keefe of Macksville. In so doing, the Premier humiliated Mr O'Keefe and breached the privacy of another man. It is a disgrace. Mr O'Keefe has been on Labor's hospital waiting lists for an operating slot at Prince of Wales Hospital for 18 months. His surgeon said he should be admitted within 90 days to release compressed nerves in his spine, yet he has been told he will have to wait a further 18 months. Ten years ago the Premier promised to halve hospital waiting lists or resign. Mr O'Keefe will also need other surgery for different ailments once this operation has taken place. Mr O'Keefe from Macksville has again been in touch with me. He is angry and distressed at his public humiliation by the Premier. Mr O'Keefe has been besmirched by the Premier's statements and friends in his community are questioning him about whether he really is waiting for surgery. Mr O'Keefe has written to me and I quote in part his correspondence:

Where I was hoping for help from the Premier of NSW, I believe that I now find myself at war with him.

Members of Parliament, please listen to Andrew Stoner. He put before you a sensible question, an urgent case, an urgent operation. Give him your attention and support, help him instantly obtain a bed for me. With instant extra funding for my neurosurgeon to go ahead with the operation - do your job - give me a better quality of life.

He further stated:

Mr Carr, I believe strongly you have not quoted any truth at all, and not correctly quoted one date, one month, one person, doctor or hospital.

Mr Carr, you believe that you know so much about the life of Mr Patrick O' Keefe of Macksville. Mr Carr did you not know how sore my chest was, I had no energy, I could hardly walk, how bad my chronic back pain was.

I have written to the New South Wales Privacy Commissioner asking him to look into this gross breach of privacy of the wrong man.

F6 MOTORWAY PROTEST MEETING

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [5.29 p.m.]: On 15 March 2004 the Minister for Roads, Mr Costa, overturned, without notice, a decision made in September 2002 by the previous Minister to abandon the F6 freeway. The previous decision to abandon the freeway from Loftus to St Peters in favour of open space and public transport was gazetted in February 2003. This was a commitment I took to the last election in 2003. On 22 March I informed the House of the impact of Minister Costa's unilateral decision on my community and called for the Government to honour its election commitment. Last night I accepted an invitation to attend a public meeting at Kirrawee called by the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre and Citizens Advocating Responsible Transport for the Shire [CARTS] to protest Mr Costa's decision to put the F6 back on the agenda. The meeting attracted 378 residents. After lively discussion a motion was moved by Ms Marie Carl, the President of CARTS, and seconded by Mr Graham Quint, the Conservation Director of the National Trust of Australia, New South Wales Branch.

The motion called on the Government to reaffirm its 2003 election commitment as set out in the *Government Gazette*. It was passed by 370 votes to 8. I supported the motion and told the meeting, as I told the House on 22 March, that I would fight tooth and nail to have Mr Costa take the F6 off the agenda once and for all. That was, is and remains my position. The 378 residents who attended the meeting had the benefit of an excellent presentation by transport planner Ms Michelle Zeibots. She gave the meeting 10 convincing and cogent reasons for not building the F6. I shall inform the House of several of those reasons that I have not raised previously. First, the F6 was originally proposed under the County of Cumberland Scheme in 1948. It ran from Waterfall to the Sydney central business district. At that time traffic engineers did not understand that urban motorways encourage more traffic, increase congestion during peak hour and reduce access generally. Obviously, we can do better than rely on a transport proposal from 1948. As the Sydney Olympics showed, the solution lies in efficient and reliable public transport.

Second, the F6 is simply a road to nowhere. One will see from looking at a street directory that it ends abruptly at Campbell Road, St Peters, just near the duck pond in Sydney Park—in a congested, industrial area that is plagued by heavy vehicles. The F6 cannot continue on to the city because in 1977 a former government cut off the section from St Peters to the city. The F6 is a road to nowhere; it is a road that has lost its way. The third point raised by Ms Zeibots was that many local roads through the shire, along the path of the F6 motorway,

would experience increases in traffic, not reductions. She said that it is a common argument, used to support motorways, that traffic will shift to the new motorway and local streets will be for local traffic only. The problem with this argument is that in order to use the motorway traffic has to come through local streets. Streets that are used as feeders to a motorway would see an increase in traffic. Because the F6 would be built as a tollway, traffic avoiding the toll would use existing main roads and local streets.

The final outcome would be higher traffic levels on existing roads and additional traffic generated by the new motorway. The only way to reduce congestion on existing main roads and take it off local streets is to increase the frequency and reliability of rail and public transport services. The Carr Government is doing exactly that by spending \$200 million duplicating the Cronulla line and building a Bondi Junction turnback, and increasing the frequency and the reliability of our rail services. Ms Zeibots also stated that the F6 motorway would drive down local house prices, while public transport would enhance access and real estate values. Any real estate agent will agree that a house surrounded by noisy traffic will decline in value, whereas a house with good access to public transport and facilities will have a higher value. That is exactly what is happening in my electorate.

The latest F6 motorway proposal is having a catastrophic impact on house prices along its route. Families have made investments—buying new homes and renovating existing homes on or near the corridor—that are being undermined. It is reported that one house dropped in value by \$100,000 following Mr Costa's unexpected announcement. Families that have built and renovated their homes on or near the corridor now face a bleak future. The impact of freeways on individual house prices is often lost in these sorts of debates. Freeways can have a dramatic impact on the lives of individuals and families, as has been demonstrated in my electorate. My constituents rely on this Government to abandon the F6 freeway.

CHATSWOOD CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN (Willoughby) [5.34 p.m.]: Today I raise a critical matter in the House, one that I have been vocal about since entering Parliament: the upgrade of the Chatswood transport interchange. I raise this issue as a last plea before final approval is given for the construction of three additional towers in the Chatswood central business district [CBD] to pay for the upgrade to the railway interchange. On 25 January the Minister for Transport announced CRI Australia Pty Ltd as the successful tenderer of the project under a public-private partnership as part of the Epping to Chatswood rail line. On that occasion he also announced that CRI would submit a new development application to the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning in late March and that major construction works would start on this vital project in the second half of 2005.

We need a new Chatswood railway station and transport interchange. The current station is not able to be accessed by the elderly, the disabled or parents with prams because of the lack of easy access. Chatswood is the ninth busiest station on the CityRail network, yet for many years it has been run down and inadequate for the 35,000 or so commuters who use it on a daily basis. Similarly, the current bus interchange is badly designed and dysfunctional. I am a strong supporter of public-private partnerships and I accept that high-density residential development in appropriate areas is a fact of life. However, I reiterate that the proposal for an additional three towers in the heart of the Chatswood central business district—one exceeding 40 storeys—is too high a price for the community to pay. When I first raised this issue in the House on 29 May 2003 I stated:

The community must be guaranteed that its concerns about the provision of supporting infrastructure and potential environmental impact on residential amenity will be addressed.

I noted also on that occasion that a report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of April 2003 stated "more than 100 construction and development representatives have been briefed on the master plan". I repeat these quotes because almost two years later the State Government has failed to address the many associated infrastructure issues. It saw fit two years ago to provide briefings to prospective developers, yet the concerns of the local community fail to be adequately addressed. I am referring to the specific associated infrastructure issues such as traffic, demand on local schools, demand for greater bus routes—particularly from the eastern parts of the electorate to the Chatswood CBD—and general sustainability issues. On that occasion I stated also:

The State Government include provision for all those concerns to be addressed prior to tenders being formally issued.

It is a great shame that this has not occurred. Our community is on the brink of being changed irrevocably by 500 additional residential units in the heart of the Chatswood CBD—one of the three towers exceeds 40 storeys. However, since the announcement was made nearly two years ago there has been scant attempt to address these serious issues. Another point is that the community was not presented with different options for the

combinations of development that could occur. I ask: Why was greater consideration not given to commercial as opposed to residential units? Why was greater consideration not given to different housing mixes rather than the Government taking the easy route of imposing 500 additional residential units on an already congested central business district in the heart of a suburban area?

Furthermore, on 19 May last year the Premier commented at the Sydney Future's Forum that Chatswood was "a model city and an example that other CBDs in New South Wales should follow". On the one hand, the Government makes premature comments such as that and, on the other hand, it fails to address the critical associated infrastructure issues. Constituents of the Willoughby electorate are being asked to pay a high price in relation to the impact on residential amenity in the Chatswood CBD. However, ratepayers are getting a raw deal because, as I understand it, the local council is not being compensated in the usual manner through section 94 contributions.

The State Government must turn its attention to these associated infrastructure issues. The scale of these towers in a confined CBD, in close proximity to traditional suburban and residential areas, is unprecedented. The scale of development in Chatswood will have an impact on what happens to the skyline along rail routes in other suburban areas across Sydney in the future. I want Chatswood to be a model city but, regrettably, we are not there yet. I appeal to the State Government to address these issues in the best interests of the local community and for the future planning of our suburban cities.

SYDNEY CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT AIR-QUALITY MONITORING

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Bligh) [5.39 p.m.]: There is an urgent need for air-quality monitoring in the central business district [CBD] of Sydney. There are no monitoring sites currently operating in the CBD, and the one site that was located on George and Market streets has been shut down, with a claim by the Government that the technology had become obsolete. It has not been replaced and none are planned for the future, leaving the residential-worker community without proper assurances of the air quality and their health. According to the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA], vehicle kilometres travelled through Sydney are increasing at twice the rate of the population. The Department of Environment and Conservation acknowledges that vehicle emissions are the largest contributors to Sydney's air pollution, and the gases that make up vehicle exhaust are known to cause numerous health problems. There is an urgent need for air-quality monitoring to provide an honest assessment of the air quality conditions in the most heavily trafficked area of Sydney, Australia's only global city.

Although there are 19 monitoring sites in the greater Sydney region, these are mostly located in suburbs. None is located in the most heavily trafficked area of Sydney, the CBD. Other international cities have air quality monitoring sites in their CBDs. There is no reason why Sydney should not have a comparable, if not better, air-quality monitoring system. There is also an urgent need for monitoring around the cross-city tunnel ventilation stack in Darling Harbour because of the imminent opening of the tunnel. The cross-city tunnel is expected to open as early as June, and it is essential that the Government acts now to ensure that we have reliable background data on the levels of air pollution in that area. It is critical to take into consideration the health effects that could result from excessive or inadequately controlled emissions from the ventilation stack. The health effects of vehicle exhaust have been thoroughly researched and accepted.

Short-term exposure to carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and the other toxins found in vehicle emissions can cause headaches, coughing, and nausea, among other problems. Long-term exposure is known to cause more serious problems, including lung disease and other respiratory illnesses. New South Wales Health has recommended that the RTA place signs at tunnel entrances warning drivers of poor air quality and advising them to roll up their windows to minimize the risk of exposure. The RTA has steadfastly refused to do this, insisting that the warning will instead be given in information brochures. I call upon the Minister to reconsider that decision and act responsibly. It is no secret that there are problems with the design of the ventilation system in the M5 East tunnel. The problem lies primarily with air quality inside the tunnel. Two factors contribute to this serious situation. The first is that traffic volumes in the tunnel are far higher than those forecast by the RTA.

The second is the longitudinal ventilation system in the M5 East tunnel. That system, which was the lowest-cost option, uses jet fans to push unfiltered air through the tunnel, following the flow of traffic, to the ventilation stack located near the centre of the tunnel. That type of ventilation has proven inadequate to deal with the emissions from higher than projected traffic volumes. Despite knowledge of the problems in the M5 East, the RTA has installed a similar longitudinal ventilation system in the cross-city tunnel. Variations on the design will slightly improve inner air quality. However, they will create a larger external problem, as unfiltered air will be concentrated at the stack and released into the atmosphere. The Government has announced a trial of

filtration technology. However, this offer is deceptive as it is for only a portion of a tunnel and it is a trial of technology that is already being used elsewhere and has been proved to be valuable.

The potential risks created by the Darling Harbour stack are a genuine and urgent matter. It is critical to have background data of current air-quality conditions to determine how the ventilation stack will contribute to air pollution levels after the tunnel opens. With clear knowledge of current conditions, proper conclusions could be drawn about the effects of the ventilation stack. There is an urgent need for air-quality monitoring both in Sydney's central business district and around the cross-city tunnel ventilation stack in Darling Harbour to ensure the health of residents and workers alike. I remind the House that 600,000 people come into the city each day. I call on the Government to start monitoring background levels immediately and to make this information publicly accessible.

NORTHERN TABLELANDS ELECTORATE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [5.44 p.m.]: At the end of 2003 I spoke in this House about the success of extending year 11 and 12 options at Ashford Central School in my electorate. Today I want to elaborate on this outstanding success regarding similar results being achieved at the Bundarra and Emmaville central schools, which have also introduced years 11 and 12 for local students. Not surprisingly, the reports from the schools, which are all in relatively isolated rural regions, repeat the same message. Students who would normally have dropped out of the education system in year 10 are now continuing to the Higher School Certificate [HSC] and many are continuing to university and further education at TAFE. In some cases mature-age students are resuming study because they can now do it in their home town. They are motivated by the fact that they do not have to travel long distances to high schools in other towns and do not have to face the social dislocation that that involves.

The principal of Ashford High School, Mick Lewis, contacted me recently with the news that all five of the school's year 12 class—100 per cent—have gained entry to university. They are studying biochemical science, information technology, engineering, arts and science. One received a scholarship to study civil engineering at the University of Newcastle. Not many schools in this State can claim that 100 per cent of their year 12 students have gained a university place. Bundarra school also began its year 11 and 12 classes in 2003. Four students sat the HSC last year. One has a traineeship with AusStar, another is studying agribusiness at Longreach Pastoral College in Longreach, a third is entering an apprenticeship and the fourth has enrolled in a Bachelor of Accounting degree at Charles Sturt University. Currently, Bundarra school has two students enrolled in year 12 and seven in year 11. Emmaville started its program last year, with three students currently enrolled in year 11 and six in year 12.

The principals of the three schools, staff, parents and members of the school communities are all very positive about the continuity of education from kindergarten to year 12 in their local areas. All schools report an improvement in the attitudes of year 9 and 10 students who are now making decisions about whether they will stay on to complete the HSC. The maturity of the older students is having a good effect and reinforcing the value of further education to those younger students who previously would have dropped out of their studies. All schools report that their current retention rates are excellent. Retention rates are a key issue. A big advantage for the students studying in their home town is the wide choice of subjects offered through the Dubbo School of Distance Education. Students receive all materials, texts, assignments and assessments from Dubbo. I note the presence of the honourable member for Dubbo in the Chamber. She has lobbied me and reminded me about the great work being done by the Dubbo School of Distance Education. Indeed, the principal, Christine Mason, and her team are doing a fantastic job.

The students develop excellent work habits, with one assignment submitted per subject per week. They also receive face-to-face teaching from teachers at the local school each day and either go online or telephone their designated teachers in Dubbo. Teachers from Dubbo visit students once per term for two day class sessions and students often participate in social and sporting activities at the larger high schools in their nearest towns. I have visited each of these schools and met many of the students who have taken advantage of these new educational options. There is no doubt that the program has been a success and that the aspirations of students living in remote country areas are as high as anywhere else. They want to be doctors, teachers, veterinary nurses, engineers, information technology specialists, and scientists, and now that they have the opportunity they are taking it. The enthusiasm of the teachers and parents for these new classes is remarkable, and in some cases other members of the community are talking about going back to school to gain entry to university.

In one classroom I visited I saw a stroller and some young kids watching mum go back to school. It was a fabulous atmosphere. It is pleasing to report the success of this program to the House, and I hope that the

Minister for Education and Training will visit our area to see for herself the way that these small communities have responded so positively to new educational opportunities. It is a good news story for the Government. This program of introducing years 11 and 12 at these small schools is a positive measure introduced by the Government, and I hope that the Minister will have the opportunity to see the enormous benefits that continue to flow to the community.

Private members' statements noted.

The House adjourned at 5.49 p.m. until Wednesday 6 April 2005 at 10.00 a.m.
