

NEW SOUTH WALES
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Tuesday 8 May 2007

The House met at 2.15 p.m. pursuant to the proclamation of Her Excellency the Governor.

The Acting-Clerk of the Parliaments read the proclamation.

OPENING OF SESSION BY COMMISSIONERS

The Acting-Clerk of the Parliaments announced that Her Excellency the Governor had been pleased to cause a Commission to be issued under the Public Seal of the State appointing the Hon. John Joseph Della Bosca, MLC, Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for the Central Coast, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Finance; the Hon. Michael Costa, MLC, Treasurer, Minister for Infrastructure, and Minister for the Hunter; and the Hon. John Hatzistergos, MLC, Attorney General, and Minister for Justice; Commissioners for the opening and holding of this session of Parliament.

The Commissioners took their places on the dais.

The Usher of the Black Rod was directed to request the attendance of the members of the Legislative Assembly to hear read the Commission for the opening of Parliament.

The members of the Legislative Assembly attended.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Honourable members of the Legislative Council and members of the Legislative Assembly, Her Excellency the Governor has been pleased to cause a Commission to be issued under the Public Seal of the State constituting us Commissioners with full power, in the name of Her Excellency, to open this session of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly and to deliver messages to the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly, and to do all such things as may be necessary to enable Parliament or the Legislative Council or Legislative Assembly to proceed to the dispatch of business.

The Acting-Clerk of the Parliaments read the Commission.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: Honourable members of the Legislative Council and members of the Legislative Assembly, we have it in command from Her Excellency the Governor to acquaint you that Her Excellency desires that you take into your earnest consideration such matters as may be submitted to you.

Honourable members of the Legislative Council, it being necessary that a President of the Legislative Council be first chosen, it is Her Excellency's pleasure that once members of the Legislative Assembly have returned to their Chamber, you, honourable members of the Legislative Council, after members have taken the pledge of loyalty, proceed to the election of one of your number to be your President.

Members of the Legislative Assembly, it being necessary that a Speaker of the Legislative Assembly be first chosen, it is Her Excellency's pleasure that you, members of the Legislative Assembly, return to your Chamber, and there, after members have taken the pledge of loyalty, proceed to the election of one of your number to be your Speaker.

We are further commanded to acquaint you that Her Excellency desires that measures be taken by you, as may be deemed expedient, to provide for the peace, welfare and good government of the State.

The members of the Legislative Assembly withdrew.

PERIODIC LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTION

Return of Writ

The Acting-Clerk of the Parliaments announced that that she had received the writ for the periodic Legislative Council election held on 24 March 2007, which was returned to Her Excellency the Governor, endorsed with the names of the following members who were elected at that election:

John Della Bosca
 Charlie Lynn
 Lee Rhiannon
 Ian Macdonald
 Jenny Gardiner
 John Hatzistergos
 Don Harwin
 Lynda Voltz
 Matthew Mason-Cox
 Eddie Obeid
 Melinda Pavey
 Helen Westwood
 John Ajaka
 Amanda Fazio
 Marie Ficarra
 Henry Tsang
 John Kaye
 Fred Nile
 Mick Veitch
 Roy Smith
 Trevor Khan

COMMISSION TO ADMINISTER PLEDGE OF LOYALTY

The Acting-Clerk of the Parliaments announced that Her Excellency the Governor had issued a Commission under the Public Seal of the State authorising the Hon. John Della Bosca, MLC, Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for the Central Coast, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Finance; the Hon. Michael Costa, MLC, Treasurer, Minister for Infrastructure, and Minister for the Hunter; and the Hon. John Hatzistergos, MLC, Attorney General, and Minister for Justice; Commissioners to administer to all or any members of the Legislative Council the pledge of loyalty required by law.

The Acting-Clerk of the Parliaments read the Commission.

PLEDGE OF LOYALTY

The following members took and subscribed the pledge of loyalty and signed the roll:

The Hon. John Joseph Della Bosca
 The Hon. Charlie John Stuart Lynn
 Ms Lee Rhiannon
 The Hon. Ian Michael Macdonald
 The Hon. Jennifer Ann Gardiner
 The Hon. John Hatzistergos
 The Hon. Donald Thomas Harwin
 The Hon. Lynda Jane Voltz

The Hon. Matthew Ryan Mason-Cox
 The Hon. Edward Moses Obeid
 The Hon. Melinda Jane Pavey
 The Hon. Helen Mary Westwood
 The Hon. John George Ajaka
 The Hon. Amanda Ruth Fazio
 The Hon. Marie Ann Ficarra
 The Hon. Henry Shiu-Lung Tsang
 The Hon. John Kaye
 Reverend the Hon. Frederick John Nile
 The Hon. Michael Stanley Veitch
 The Hon. Roy Anthony Smith
 The Hon. Trevor John Khan

The Commissioners left the dais.

PRESIDENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**Election**

The Acting-Clerk of the Parliaments announced that, as this was the first meeting of the House following the periodic Legislative Council election held on 24 March 2007, under section 22G of the Constitution Act 1902 the office of President of the Legislative Council was vacant and it was necessary to choose a member to be President before the House proceeded to the dispatch of business.

The Acting-Clerk of the Parliaments called for nominations for the office of President.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA (Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for the Central Coast, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Finance) [2.56 p.m.]: Madam Clerk, I propose to the House and move:

That the Honourable Peter Primrose do take the chair of this House as President.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER (Leader of the Opposition) [2.56 p.m.]: Madam Clerk, I propose to the House and move:

That the Honourable Don Harwin do take the chair of this House as President.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE [2.57 p.m.]: Madam Clerk, I propose to the House and move:

That Reverend the Honourable Dr Gordon Moyes do take the chair of this House as President.

The Acting-Clerk of the Parliaments invited the three nominees to address the House.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I submit myself to the will of the House.

The Hon. DON HARWIN: I submit myself to the will of the House.

Reverend the Hon. Dr GORDON MOYES: I submit myself to the will of the House.

The Acting-Clerk of the Parliaments announced that, there being three nominations, a ballot would be held according to Section 22G of the Constitution Act 1902; and that before proceeding to the ballot the bells would be rung and the doors locked.

Ballot

The Acting-Clerk of the Parliaments announced that the House would proceed to a ballot; that the candidates were the Hon. Peter Primrose, the Hon. Don Harwin and Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes; and that the Clerks would distribute ballot papers for members to complete in their places.

The ballot was conducted.

Declaration of Ballot

The Acting-Clerk of the Parliaments announced that the result of the ballot was: the Hon. Peter Primrose, 25 votes; the Hon. Don Harwin, 15 votes; Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes, 2 votes.

The Hon. Peter Primrose was declared elected President of the Legislative Council.

The Hon. Peter Primrose was then taken out of his place by the Hon. John Della Bosca and escorted to the chair.

The President-elect (The Hon. Peter Thomas Primrose), standing on the upper step, said: I express to honourable members my deep sense of the honour proposed to be conferred upon me. I submit myself to the House.

The President took the chair.

The PRESIDENT: I acknowledge that we are meeting on Eora land. I convey to honourable members my deep consciousness of the honour that this House has conferred upon me in choosing me as its independent and impartial President. I express my profound thanks and gratitude for the confidence that is reposed in me.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA (Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for the Central Coast, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Finance) [3.12 p.m.]: Mr President, it is with great pleasure that I address you as Mr President for the first time to make a brief congratulatory statement on behalf of the Government. Obviously we believe that you are an outstanding candidate. You have served us well in the past as Whip of our party, as a distinguished member of committees, and as an outstanding representative of your local community and the people of New South Wales. We esteem you as a worthy member of our movement but, most importantly, we respect your abilities to undertake the position of President, in which you will excel with impartiality and with the dignity of which we know you are capable. Thank you very much, Mr President.

The Hon. MICHAEL GALLACHER (Leader of the Opposition) [3.13 p.m.]: On behalf of the Opposition I, too, congratulate you on your new role as President of the Legislative Council. I make a request of you, as I did of your predecessor, that in the role of President of the Legislative Council you be a champion of fairness and impartiality. There is no doubt that over the years members have had an opportunity to develop a good working relationship with you in your former role as Whip, and we look forward to continuing that working relationship with you as President of this very important Chamber to the people of New South Wales. Congratulations!

The PRESIDENT: I thank honourable members.

DEPUTY-PRESIDENT AND CHAIR OF COMMITTEES

Election

The PRESIDENT: I announce that, as this is the first meeting of the House following the periodic Legislative Council election held on 24 March 2007, according to Standing Order 15 the office of Deputy-President and Chair of Committees of the Legislative Council is vacant and it is necessary to choose a member to be Deputy-President and Chair of Committees. I now call for nominations for the office of Deputy-President and Chair of Committees.

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA (Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for the Central Coast, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Finance) [3.14 p.m.]: I move:

That the Honourable Amanda Ruth Fazio do take the chair of this House as Deputy-President and Chair of Committees.

The Hon. DUNCAN GAY (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.15 p.m.]: I move:

That the Honourable Jennifer Ann Gardiner do take the chair of this House as Deputy-President and Chair of Committees.

The President invited the two candidates to address the House.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: I submit myself to the will of the House.

The Hon. JENNIFER GARDINER: I submit myself to the will of the House.

The President announced that, there being two nominations, in accordance with the standing orders a ballot would be held, and that before proceeding to the ballot the bells would be rung and the doors locked.

Ballot

The President announced that the House would proceed to a ballot; that the Clerks would distribute ballot papers for members to complete in their places; that members were requested to write upon their ballot paper the name of the candidate for whom they wished to vote; that when voting was completed the Clerks would ask members to deposit their paper in the ballot box; and that the candidates were the Hon. Amanda Ruth Fazio and the Hon. Jennifer Ann Gardiner.

The ballot was conducted.

Declaration of Ballot

The President announced that the result of the ballot was: the Hon. Amanda Fazio, 24 votes, and the Hon. Jennifer Gardiner, 17 votes.

The Hon. Amanda Fazio was declared elected Deputy-President and Chair of Committees.

PRESIDENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Presentation to the Governor

The Hon. JOHN DELLA BOSCA: I will inform the House when I have ascertained it to be the pleasure of Her Excellency the Governor to receive the Legislative Council to present their President to Her Excellency.

ADJOURNMENT

The Hon. TONY KELLY (Minister for Lands, Minister for Rural Affairs, Minister for Regional Development, and Vice-President of the Executive Council) [3.24 p.m.]: I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

GOOLGOWI STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI [3.24 p.m.]: On the evening of Thursday 26 April I had the great pleasure of participating in the accreditation ceremony for six volunteers from the Goolgowi State Emergency Service unit as Community First Responders. First trialled at Captains Flat and Nundle in 2005, the Community First Responder Program is a joint initiative between the Ambulance Service of New South Wales and the State Emergency Service [SES], aimed at improving the safety of people in isolated communities throughout New South Wales. Underpinned by a memorandum of understanding, the Community First Responder Program provides training to State Emergency Service volunteers in potentially life-saving pre-hospital emergency care. All State Emergency Service volunteers already hold senior first aid certificates and must undergo rigorous training to become Community First Responders.

The training program builds on the State Emergency Service first aid course and consists of an additional six training days held, in the case of the Goolgowi State Emergency Service unit, over three weekends. Accredited Ambulance Service trainers provide the training, that to date has proved very successful. State Emergency Service volunteers learn techniques in using oxy-viva equipment, giving medication, identifying symptoms and conveying clear instructions to ambulance officers before they arrive at the scene. Also, very importantly, three quarters of a day is dedicated to learning more about caring for children in emergency situations.

State Emergency Service Community First Responder volunteers are also required to take part in follow-up training with the Ambulance Service to keep their skills up to date. In the case of the Goolgowi State Emergency Service unit, the men undertake a refresher course once a month with officers from the Griffith ambulance station and dedicate a weekend per year to a more intensive refresher course with an accredited Ambulance Service trainer. After completion of the initial training, Community First Responder volunteers carry out their duties on a roster basis, and can expect to attend to anything from cuts and scratches to life-threatening conditions such as heart attacks and serious injuries. Consideration is given to a local community being included in the Community First Responder Program generally where the Ambulance Service is unable to be at the scene of an emergency in less than 40 minutes, and the local State Emergency Service unit is prepared to take on the role of Community First Responder.

It should also be noted that New South Wales Fire Brigades participate in the Community First Responder Program in Uralla, Alstonville and Branxton. At present a memorandum of understanding is being developed between New South Wales Fire Brigades and the Ambulance Service. Once signed, it is expected that New South Wales Fire Brigades participation in the program will expand. The Goolgowi State Emergency Service unit is the fifth unit to become Community First Responders. I have always held the men and women of our State Emergency Service units in very high regard. It is a very important task that our volunteers such as those in the Goolgowi State Emergency Service unit carry out. Their commitment to assisting others in times of

emergency can often be a thankless task that sometimes goes unnoticed by people in the community who have not had to call on the State Emergency Service for assistance.

My congratulations go to the Goolgowi Local Controller, Brian Newman, and his fellow State Emergency Service members Llewellyn Friend, Lawrence Harris, Graeme Huxley, Roger Taurau and Mark Fielder on their successful completion of the Community First Responder training and their dedication to enhancing their skills to protect others. I am pleased that another 12 State Emergency Service units will become accredited as Community First Responders this year. This program is a great initiative that can make all the difference to the health and safety of local communities in isolated areas. I am sure that members of this House will join me in extending thanks on behalf of our local communities to the men and women who graciously volunteer their time to help protect our families and our communities. [*Time expired.*]

PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK [3.29 p.m.]: I have received representations from Councillor Ernie Bennett on behalf of the Pacific Highway Task Force representing the 18 councils that cover the area between Hexham and the Queensland border. The aim of the task force is to achieve funding to complete all upgrades for the highway by 2016. The task force has written to both the Federal Government and the New South Wales Treasurer asking for increased funding flows in this year's budget. A key reason is that the Pacific Highway death rate continues to exceed 40 per year, or more than 400 deaths in the past decade. In 2004 the NRMA estimated that the cost to the community of accidents on the Pacific Highway was more than \$190 million per annum. It is extraordinary that 44 per cent of the busiest freight route in eastern Australia, which services local traffic and a vast number of tourists, is still a single-lane highway. Yet we know that 90 per cent of fatalities are avoided by upgrades to dual carriageway.

The patchwork approach to upgrading the Pacific Highway has targeted and eliminated notorious black spots. Paradoxically, each improvement has resulted in a surge in traffic and freight volumes and the creation of new black spots. For example, when the Ewingbar and Burringbar black spots were eliminated, all forms of traffic increased, especially trucks and B-doubles, new black spots emerged at Tintenbar Hill and Mt St Helena, and the Ross Lane turnoff became more dangerous because of the increased traffic volume and types of trucks using the highway. I have raised these problems many times in the House. I acknowledge that over the past year safety improvements have been made to these three dangerous places.

The issue I wish to raise today is the urgent need for North Coast businesses, local communities and State government agencies to work together in planning for the changes that will flow from the completion of three important projects: the Tugan bypass in the Tweed shire, the Brunswick bypass in Byron shire and the Ballina bypass in Ballina shire. These three projects could reduce travel times to the Queensland border by 20 minutes and to Brisbane by more than 35 minutes. The day is approaching when West Ballina residents will find themselves 45 minutes from Tweed and one hour and 40 minutes from the centre of Brisbane. This will bring a profound change to our whole region.

If all things stay the same Ballina residents will be closer to Gold Coast airport than to Lismore airport and the travel patterns of health patients will change. Patterns of travel from Queensland will also change. We can expect to see a lot more green number plates. The implications for employment, education, consumption patterns, training, tourism, health and real estate will be profound. The regions for children's sports may change, with more competitions including the Tweed. Wardell will come under the magic two-hour mark from Brisbane, with consequences for tourism and real estate.

To put it another way, imagine relocating Lismore and Casino 20 kilometres west. Such an exercise would equate to the new travel time relativities that will occur when the bypass projects are completed. We need to think very carefully about our future and have a positive plan to capitalise on opportunities, and address the challenges posed by this transformation in access and travel times. Of greatest importance are the linkages to our regional capital, Lismore. We need to ensure that Lismore continues to anchor our region and does not suffer as a result of the upgrades. The most obvious way to do so is to upgrade the Bangalow Road and Buxner Highway sections that link Lismore to the Pacific Highway. For example, the Alstonville bypass has always been a high priority for the local Alstonville and Wollongbar communities, but it will be absolutely critical to the economic wellbeing of Lismore after the Ballina bypass is completed.

Tomorrow's brave new world of an upgraded Pacific Highway needs to be planned today. We need to think regionally. Given the rich and diverse characters of individual communities, that has never been easy to

do. However, it will be of vital importance. Based on my experience many years ago of the Yass bypass, which was embraced and planned in a positive and proactive way by the community, enormous benefits can be reaped if people think ahead. The Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] allocated considerable funds to Yass to plan for the future after the bypass, including capital funding for beautifying the main street and planning a major restructure of the local economy. A very detailed plan resulted, including targeting Yass's proximity to Canberra as a major economic strength and rezoning properties for hobby farms. Instead of slumping after the bypass opened, the Yass economy boomed—but only because they planned ahead and were prepared.

The issues facing the North Coast are very different, but the scale and importance of the task are of equal importance. We must move into a new phase of planning so that we can drive opportunities for the future and not lag behind as victims of unplanned change. The Roads and Traffic Authority, the Premiers Regional Co-ordinating Committee, the Pacific Highway Task Force and the Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils [NOROC] need to create a framework to ensure the community is able to reduce the risk and maximise the benefits of the new bypass projects.

BHP BILLITON AND WALKER CORPORATION DEVELOPMENTS

Ms LEE RHIANNON [3.33 p.m.]: Scott and Gina Roberts and their three children live on the outskirts of Appin on a stunning property known as "Elladale", an 1838 sandstone gothic-style cottage. I had the opportunity to visit Scott and Gina's outstanding home. The Roberts have been restoring this rich piece of Australian history. Now their life is on hold and they are experiencing great stress. BHP Billiton is conducting longwall coalmining under their property and the Walker Corporation has plans to establish a sewage works on the boundary of their property. The Roberts have been done over because the laws of this State favour big business over the rights of ordinary citizens. Mining companies like BHP Billiton and developers like the Walker Corporation get away with causing hardship to communities and devastation to the environment because Labor and the Coalition vote together time and again to weaken laws that lock communities out of having a say.

In 2002 the Roberts were advised by BHP Billiton that intending longwall coalmining—that is, mine 409—will cause subsidence of their home until works cease in 2006. They were given predictions of the subsidence effects. Those predictions have been vastly exceeded. I saw the cracks in the walls, and the Roberts told me that when they lie in bed at night they can hear the walls creaking. They have recently been advised that if the mine goes ahead their home will be subject to subsidence until beyond 2010. The continuing renovations they had planned are now on hold. Scott Roberts described BHP Billiton's attitude as appalling. To solve the problem the company said it would purchase the property at market value. But such a payment would not compensate for all the Roberts have put into their home. Further, the Roberts do not want to leave "Elladale". They want to grow old there and one day open a bed-and-breakfast.

On top of the hardship the Roberts have experienced because of the BHP Billiton mining, there are plans to build a sewage works plant on the boundary of their property. The Roberts were informed of this development in 2004. Huge storage ponds will be erected on both sides of their home and the remainder of the boundaries will contain large irrigation areas for the distribution of partially treated sewage. If the sewage works go ahead, it is estimated that during periods of heavy rain the partially treated sewage will end up in the Nepean River and possibly in the Sydney upper canal system, which is near their property. This canal system is an extraordinary piece of infrastructure that, to this day, functions as a water supply for Sydney. The thought that this water could become contaminated is alarming. Mr Roberts has brought this matter to the attention of Sydney Water and the New South Wales Government, but feels he has been totally ignored. The Roberts made a submission to the Government, but found out that Sydney Water had applied for work permits for this plant prior to their submission, and possibly other submissions, being considered. The work permit was granted before the impact of the system on the local community was addressed. Mr Roberts stated:

Studies also revealed this Sewage Plant is being built by Sydney Water at a huge cost of 30-40 million dollars, primarily for a private developer, Walker Corporation, to allow them to subdivide and develop large land holdings in Appin.

The sewage plant will not even service the existing township of Appin for many years. I have repeatedly requested Sydney Water provide us details of procedure they are following relating to our submission of objection to this Sewage Plant, and have yet received nil reply.

Mr Roberts further stated:

I must ask questions of integrity regarding Walker Corporation Pty Ltd obtaining such a sweetheart deal from the State Labor Government, allowing them to bypass all planning laws and Environmental Impact Statements due to NSW State Government exemptions.

He also stated:

This same developer is contributing large amounts of political donations for political fundraising to the same party that is allowing these developments. The same company has purchased nearly every large rural parcel of land at Appin, now totalling over 5,000 acres, often in questionable circumstances from elderly residents ...

We are experiencing effects on our health and wellbeing and our relationship due to the anxiety this situation has placed us in. We cannot finish the restoration of our heritage home for several years because of BHP Billiton's mining proposal ...

Mr Roberts went on to describe the impact of this problem on his family. It is a reminder of the inadequacy of the laws in New South Wales in relation to mining and development. People are locked out of decisions that affect their lives.

KAPYONG COMMEMORATIVE DAY

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN [3.38 p.m.]: On Sunday 21 April this year I represented Premier Morris Iemma at the annual wreath-laying and commemoration service for Kapyong Commemorative Day, which was organised by the Korea and South East Asian Forces Association of Australia, New South Wales Branch. The association represents veterans of wars and campaigns in Korea, Malaya, the Malay Peninsula, Sabah, Sarawak and Vietnam. This year the association commemorated the fifty-sixth anniversary of the battle of Kapyong in Korea. The battle of Kapyong was the most significant encounter for Australian troops during the Korean War. In April 1951 the Chinese launched an offensive, with the aim of retaking the city of Seoul. They quickly overran South Korean forces who were defending one of the major approach routes—the valley of the Kapyong River.

The Australian troops attached to the 3rd Royal Australian Regiment were in the process of organising an ANZAC Day commemorative service with the Turkish contingent of the United Nations forces when their plans were cut short. After months of fighting they again found themselves in a very difficult situation against advancing Chinese troops. They were sent to four hills to the east of the Kapyong Valley and Canadian forces were positioned to the west. Massively outnumbered, the Commonwealth forces—consisting of Australian, New Zealand, Canadian and British forces—occupied defensive positions throughout the valley and, against the odds, were able to halt the Chinese advance.

On the evening of 22 April 1951 Chinese forces launched an attack against the United Nations forces that were defending Seoul. Australian defence forces were responsible for defending the Kapyong Valley, which was approximately 60 kilometres from Seoul. As the Chinese troops descended on the United Nations line the South Korean and American units were forced to retreat past the line held by the Australians. By 10.00 p.m. on 23 April the Australian 27th and 29th Brigades were facing the Chinese 118th People's Volunteer Division and by midnight the battle was well and truly underway. Throughout the night and well into the day, the Australian defence forces along with a Canadian battalion supported by a New Zealand artillery regiment, held back the Chinese advance. By the time night fell on 24 April the Chinese forces withdrew.

Despite the overwhelming number of Chinese troops, the Australian, Canadian and New Zealand troops were too well disciplined for the Chinese Division. During the battle the Australian forces lost 32 men, had 59 wounded and 3 were taken as prisoners of war. The Australian troops assisted in holding off the Chinese forces and it is estimated that there were more than 1,000 Chinese casualties. This battle played a pivotal role in stopping the Chinese forces from gaining their objective of Seoul. In recognition of courage and brilliant conduct during the battle, Lieutenant-Colonel Bruce Ferguson and Lieutenant-Colonel James Stone of Canada were awarded the Distinguished Service Order and the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment were both awarded the honour of the United States Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation for their actions during the battle. They were said to have displayed "such gallantry, determination and esprit de corps in their missions as to set them apart and above other units participating in the campaign".

Captain Reg Saunders, who fought at Kapyong, was the first Aboriginal soldier to be commissioned by the Australian Army. Captain Saunders is probably the country's best-known Aboriginal soldier. He had a distinguished military record and fought in the Second World War and the Korean War. He came from a strong military family. His father and uncle served in the First World War, and his uncle received a military medal for his actions at Morlancourt Ridge in France. During the Second World War, Reg and his brother Harry both served in the Army. Unfortunately, Harry was killed in action in New Guinea. Captain Saunders was shot in the knee, but returned to the 2/7th Infantry Battalion after his recovery. Whilst fighting in Korea, Captain Saunders

led his company through some of the fiercest fighting. He was the first Aboriginal serviceman to command a rifle company and was well respected and very popular with his men. Private Joe Vezgoff who served under Captain Saunders said of him:

Reg Saunders was one of the best company commanders I had served under and he was admired by the company as an excellent leader.

Pilgrimage, a book by Garrie Hutchinson, mentions the story of Captain Reg Saunders. After the battle of Kapyong Captain Saunders was quoted as saying:

At last I felt like an ANZAC and I imagine there were 600 others like me.

Captain Saunders returned from Korea and took up a position with the National Service Training Unit, but left this position and the Army in 1954. Following his military career he joined the Office of Aboriginal Affairs as a liaison and public relations officer. He died in 1990. He will be remembered for both his skill and leadership and as a true ANZAC.

In October 2003 I had the honour to visit the memorial at Kapyong and to lay a wreath. I found the experience very moving because I had been told by many Korean friends about the respect afforded to Australian servicemen. I was very pleased to be able to attend this commemorative service on behalf of the Premier and once again to lay a wreath to honour Australian servicemen who fought at Kapyong.

ASSYRIAN LEVIES

The Hon. DAVID CLARKE [3.43 p.m.]: The commemoration of Anzac Day on 25 April each year is a special time in the life of the Australian nation. It is the day when we commemorate, honour and pay homage to the bravery and sacrifice of those Australians who have fought in wars to protect our nation's freedom and way of life. It is also a time when we remember and honour our allies in these conflicts. Here in Sydney and elsewhere, contingents of allied ex-servicemen and ex-service women, including the British, Americans, New Zealanders, French and others, march side by side with Australian ex-servicemen and ex-service women. Among those who march each year in Sydney on Anzac Day, and who again marched this year as part of the allied contingent, were the Assyrians, under the banner of the Assyrian Levies Association. Indeed, the Assyrian-Australian community treats Anzac Day with a special and praiseworthy reverence because in both the Second World War and the First World War Assyrian troops fought alongside Australian troops.

On our recent Anzac Day I was deeply honoured to have attended a special commemoration organised by the Assyrian-Australian community in St Hurmizd's Assyrian Cathedral and the community's cultural centre, the Edessa Auditorium at Fairfield. This is the occasion each year when the Assyrian community remembers all allied service personnel, especially the Assyrians who served with the allies.

While the Assyrian community worldwide is not a large group, the history of the Assyrian nation goes back thousands of years. In fact, it recently celebrated its 6,757th New Year. The Assyrians are noted in history for many things: They constituted one of the greatest empires of the ancient world; they were builders of great cities like Nineveh and Babylon; they were pioneers in science, astronomy and medicine; they were builders of some of the world's first universities; and they have the distinction of being the first nation to convert to Christianity. Their language is the language spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Because they were our allies in two world wars, the Assyrians have a special bond with Australia. What a great bond that is—Australia, one of the youngest nations of the world, was allied in both world wars with Assyria, one of the oldest nations of the world. Australian troops are renowned for their fighting qualities, as symbolised by Gallipoli, Tobruk and the Kokoda Track. Assyrian troops are also renowned for their fighting qualities, as symbolised by their efforts in the Middle East and southern Europe. As I have said, this bond goes back to the days of the First World War, when the Assyrians fought with such tenacity and valour in the Mesopotamia region. For the first few years of that war they scored a series of stunning victories over the Turks, and in so doing won the admiration and respect of Britain, Australia and others. However, after the collapse of Russia and her withdrawal from the war, events changed dramatically, and for the worse. The Assyrians, now fully exposed to the Turks, found that they were on their own and greatly outnumbered. They paid a horrifying price for their loyalty to the allied cause. The Turks unleashed a campaign of unparalleled genocide against the Assyrian population, annihilating some two-thirds of its number. In percentage terms, it was probably the greatest genocide against any people in recorded history.

Following the Second World War the British, in admiration of the Assyrians' fighting skills, created what has become known in military history as the Assyrian Levies. In the years leading up to the Second World War, the Assyrian Levies played a significant role as part of British forces in maintaining peace in the Mesopotamia region. With the coming of the Second World War, the Assyrians wrote a new chapter in their military heritage. They served as parachutists attached to the Royal Marine Commandos, and in their own Assyrian Levies formations saw active service in Italy, Albania, Greece, Cyprus, Lebanon and Palestine. History acknowledges that they significantly assisted in defeating Axis domination of the Middle East.

So tonight I pay tribute to the fighting men and women of the Assyrian nation who over the past 100-odd years have stood shoulder to shoulder with Australia and other free nations in the defence of freedom. I pay tribute to the Australian Assyrian Levies Association and its achievements. I pay special tribute to the president of the association, Gabriel Kiwarkis, who has done so much to document the proud record of the Assyrian Levies. Both the Australian nation and the Assyrian nation worldwide can take great pride in his achievement in documenting the alliance between Australians and Assyrians encompassing the two world wars. Mr Kiwarkis has been tireless in his efforts and is highly regarded by the Returned Services League of Australia.

I also acknowledge the good work of the vice president of the Assyrian Levies Association, Paul Azzo, and Zaya Toma, who leads the Assyrian Levies Youth Section. As representatives of the new generation of Assyrian-Australians they epitomise the good qualities inherent in both peoples. In modern times the Assyrian people have faced perilous and difficult times. Their support of the allied effort in the First World War brought annihilation of a major portion of their population. They have also suffered persecution at the hands of Saddam Hussein and even now they suffer persecution at the hands of Islamist extremists in Iraq. It is a miracle of the ages that they continue to survive. I am greatly moved by the reverence and importance that the Assyrian-Australian community affords to Anzac Day and I am greatly inspired by the efforts of Assyrian forces in time of war. I am greatly moved that after so many years both Assyrians and Australians ensure that their fallen comrades are not forgotten. Lest we forget.

AMAZING GRACE

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE [3.48 p.m.]: *Amazing Grace* is one of the most famous hymns known around the world. Pastor Peter Rahme has just released a new publication titled *The Man & The Story Behind Amazing Grace*, and I congratulate him on that and am very appreciative of it. The book tells us about two very important individuals, who both died at the beginning of this year 200 years ago, in 1807. One was John Newton, the author of the hymn *Amazing Grace*, and the other was William Wilberforce, a member of the British House of Commons.

John Newton had been a slave ship captain. He had been involved in that horrific trade in human life: shipping slaves from Africa to the United States and to other parts of the world. But then he had an encounter with Jesus Christ and became a Christian, and it changed his life completely and led him to write that very famous hymn, which is common in many funeral services and played in many church services and many civic events today. It is probably the most popular song of our time. We know the words. They commence:

Amazing Grace! (how sweet the sound)
that sav'd a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found,
was blind but now I see.

That was the way in which John Newton explained the change in his life from being an evil slave ship captain to becoming a Christian and finally becoming a Christian minister. But it did not stop there. John Newton had a major impact on the young politician William Wilberforce. John Newton published a book titled *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*, which outlined the brutality that was occurring in the treatment of the slaves. William Wilberforce read that book, and it changed his life. He made a commitment as a member of the British Parliament that he would do all he could to abolish slavery, particularly commencing with the abolition of the slave trade. So, in 1787 he introduced his bill. It took 20 years, until 1807, for his bill to be passed and become an Act of Parliament.

When William Wilberforce first introduced his bill he was criticised. I understand that even some of the Bishops in the House of Lords were critical of his bill, saying it would affect the British economy and society, because in those days slavery was so widely accepted as the norm. But Wilberforce persevered, and he was greatly encouraged by the support from John Newton. At some points Wilberforce was discouraged. When you

move a bill for 20 years and it does not get passed, it is easy to be discouraged. But he was encouraged by John Newton, who wrote to him saying:

My heart is with you ... May the wisdom that influenced Joseph and Moses, and Daniel rest upon you. Not only to guide and animate you in the light of Political Duty—but especially to keep in the habit of dependence upon God, and communion with Him ... I can honestly say, that were it practicable, I should not be unwilling to travel on foot, for the sake of spending two or three days with you ...

Before John Newton died he wrote his own epitaph, which is unusual. He wrote:

JOHN NEWTON, Clerk
Once an infidel and libertine
A servant of slaves in Africa,
Was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour
JESUS CHRIST,
restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach
the Gospel he had long laboured to destroy.
He ministered,
Near sixteen years at Olney, in Bucks,
And twenty-eight years in this Church.

The epitaph was placed in the vestry of St Mary's Church Woolnoth. We thank God for the life of John Newton and the impact he has had through his hymn *Amazing Grace*, but especially for the impact of William Wilberforce, who is an example of what can be achieved by one man who was committed to a vision of freedom for the slaves of that time. He is a good model for each of us as members of Parliament.

FEDERAL POLITICS

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY [3.53 p.m.]: It may be my imagination, but it seems to me that the verbal attacks of John Howard, Peter Costello and Joe Hockey on unions and the Australian Labor Party are becoming increasingly shrill and intemperate. No doubt the Federal election to be held later this year is leading to the feeding frenzy.

[*Time for debate expired.*]

Question—That this House do now adjourn—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 3.54 p.m. until Wednesday 9 May 2007 at 11.00 a.m.
