

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Mike Baird.

Agreement in Principle

Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Treasurer) [5.51 p.m.]: I move:
That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

I am delighted, having just finished a bill that delivered on a commitment of the O'Farrell Government as part of our 100 Day Action Plan, to introduce a bill to deliver on another infrastructure commitment under the Government's 100 Day Action Plan. This bill provides the establishment of the Restart NSW Fund to set aside funding for and secure the delivery of major infrastructure projects. Why do we need the Restart NSW Fund? I think the record for the past 16 years speaks for itself. Sound investment in infrastructure is essential to the prosperity of this State. Investment in infrastructure underpins business activity, employment and growth. The importance of sound infrastructure decisions has been ignored for too long in this State. We need to restart the New South Wales economy. We need to regain New South Wales reputation as Australia's number one place to live and do business.

The Government recognises this need. It is establishing Infrastructure NSW so it can identify and prioritise the infrastructure projects that will help to grow the New South Wales economy and improve the lives of people in every community. But being able to fund infrastructure is just as important as sound investment decisions. And that is why the Government is also establishing a specific fund for major infrastructure projects. I turn to the scope of Restart New South Wales. The Government's infrastructure fund will be called the Restart NSW Fund. It will provide the funding for essential infrastructure that enhances economic productivity. Projects to be funded by the Restart NSW Fund will be recommended by Infrastructure NSW and assessed in the budget process against the five-year Infrastructure Plan and the 20-year State Infrastructure Strategy.

Restart NSW would fund projects such as public transport infrastructure; roads infrastructure that addresses urban congestion and missing links; economic infrastructure to address the economic competitiveness of New South Wales, including freight, inter-modal facilities and water; local infrastructure in regional areas that are affected by mining operations; hospitals and health infrastructure; and improvements to workplaces for front-line workers including law and justice officers, teachers and nurses. This Government is committed to a whole-of-State development and will address critical infrastructure needs outside the metropolitan areas of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. To this end, 30 per cent of funding will be reserved for non-metropolitan areas, including mining-affected communities.

Payments from Restart NSW will be made in a transparent manner with the Auditor-General reporting annually to Parliament to ensure that moneys have been invested in line with the fund's investment mandate. This will include the extent of investment of funds in non-

metropolitan areas. Restart NSW will be funded from appropriations by Parliament and the budget process, including any such money certified as windfall tax revenue; realisation of the capital invested in assets, such as from the Sydney Desalination Plant; and potentially borrowings, including the issue of special bonds to the people of New South Wales such as Waratah bonds. Additional sources of funding will include the interest proceeds from investment of money in the fund; money directed or authorised to be paid into the fund by an Act or law; and money voluntarily contributed to the fund by a government agency or other person or body.

If additional borrowings are undertaken to be used to fund the Restart NSW Fund, they will be undertaken in strict compliance with the State's fiscal commitment to maintaining the triple-A credit rating. This bill provides Government with a dedicated fund to restart New South Wales and regain New South Wales reputation as Australia's number one place to do business. It is about restoring fiscal discipline to the operation of government, ensuring that as moneys become available they are directed to the future of the State, and not lost in day-to-day waste and mismanagement. Infrastructure NSW will be at the forefront of addressing New South Wales' infrastructure crisis, identifying the priorities by experts on a methodology that is clear and transparent, and provide funding to get this State moving again. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Dr Andrew McDonald and set down as an order of the day for a future day.