

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 3 April 2001

Mr Speaker (The Hon. John Henry Murray) took the chair at 2.15 p.m.

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

ASSENT TO BILL

Assent to the following bill reported:

Corporations (Commonwealth Powers) Bill

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE AND ETHICS AND STANDING ETHICS COMMITTEE JOINT HEARINGS

Message

Mr Speaker reported the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Mr SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

That the Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics have power to meet and hold joint hearings with the Legislative Assembly Standing Ethics Committee, for the purpose of its current inquiry into sections 13 and 13B of the Constitution Act 1902.

Legislative Council
29 March 2001

MEREDITH BURGMANN
President

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Mr SPEAKER: I draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association from the Cook Islands, Kiribati and Papua New Guinea. I welcome them to Parliament and hope they enjoy their stay in New South Wales. I also draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of four members of a Rotary International GSE group study exchange team from District 5320 California and the team's leader, Millard MacAdam. They have been visiting the Central West of New South Wales. I wish them all the best in their endeavours, particularly bearing in mind the sister State relationship between California and New South Wales.

LIVESTOCK DISEASE CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE

Ministerial Statement

Mr AMERY (Mount Druitt—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation) [2.20 p.m.]: I wish to make a ministerial statement in relation to disease surveillance and control. Last week there was a report that six piggeries in Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia had been granted exemptions to the ban on the swill feeding of pigs. I have since sought information from New South Wales Agriculture on this report. The information provided to me is as follows. Swill feeding of pigs involves the feeding of food scraps to pigs from places such as restaurants, kitchens, tables, and so on. This practice was banned in New South Wales in the mid-1970s under the Stock Diseases Act.

New South Wales Agriculture has allowed four exemptions under this Act for some feed materials. However, none of those materials meet the strict definition of swill, such as kitchen scraps. I am informed also that none of those exemptions have been used for at least two years. Two of those exemptions were revoked two weeks ago. They were for boiled offal, which was fed on site. Those products were not deemed to be a risk because of the cooking process involved and the six-monthly inspections, which were part of the exemption conditions. The third exemption was for a Victorian company that produced protein concentrate derived from

animal blood as an ingredient for pig feeds. The fourth exemption was for a Victorian pet food company to supply heat-processed dog and cat food in damaged cans to piggeries in New South Wales.

Strictly speaking, none of those four could technically be regarded as pig swill. Therefore it is arguable whether exemptions were even needed. Similarly, the feeding of dog biscuits to pigs could not be regarded as swill as they are heat-processed and cereal-based, and pose no disease risk. Notwithstanding these assurances, the current outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Europe has heightened our awareness and scrutiny of pig feeding practices and risks in New South Wales, no matter how remote those risks may be. Overseas authorities believe that the outbreak could be linked with swill feeding.

Here in New South Wales, I want to ensure the integrity of our pork industry, which is valued at about \$220 million. During the past three weeks New South Wales Agriculture inspectors have contacted the two Victorian businesses, and the inspectors have also visited the New South Wales businesses that were exempted from the feed ban. They confirm that while conditions had been complied with in the past, none of the four exemptions had been used for at least two years. However, last Friday afternoon, in the interests of risk minimisation I instructed New South Wales Agriculture to revoke all four exemptions and that has been done. New South Wales Agriculture and the Rural Lands Protection Board have also increased their awareness and enforcement against potential illegal swill-feeding practices.

Current legislation, policies and procedures governing swill feeding in New South Wales are also under review. The review will also consider whether the definition of "swill feeding" should be better defined. In conclusion, government agencies are very aware of the risk to this State's agricultural industries posed by the incursion of an exotic disease, such as foot and mouth disease, and will take any action necessary to stop or prevent outbreaks from occurring in this country in the future.

Mr SLACK-SMITH (Barwon) [2.23 p.m.]: The Opposition endorses the Minister's actions in curtailing the feeding of swill in the pig industry in New South Wales. We have about a \$225 million Australian export industry under threat and we must take every possible precaution we can to ensure that foot and mouth disease does not come to Australia. To date 716 cases of outbreaks have been recorded in England and outbreaks have also occurred in the Netherlands, France and other countries in Europe. Although the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service [AQIS] has increased its workforce from 400 to 700 personnel at ports of entry into Australia, more than one million people per year come from Britain into Australia.

I congratulate AQIS and I congratulate also the Minister on his proactive response. We do not want foot and mouth disease in Australia. We cannot afford this disease. Everything that can be done to ensure that Australia remains free from foot and mouth disease should be done. There are only six countries throughout the world that do not have foot and mouth disease: Canada, the United States of America, Argentina, Chile, New Zealand and Australia. We need to make sure that Australia never has foot and mouth disease.

PETITIONS

North Head Quarantine Station

Petition praying that the head lease proposal for North Head Quarantine Station be opposed, received from **Mr Barr**.

Willoughby Paddocks Rezoning

Petition praying that the Legislative Assembly will advocate for the retention of all vacant land in the area historically known as the Willoughby Paddocks and its development as public parkland for the enjoyment of the community, received from **Mr Collins**.

McDonald's Moore Park Restaurant

Petition praying for opposition to the construction of a McDonald's restaurant on Moore Park, received from **Ms Moore**.

State Taxes

Petition praying that the Carr Government establishes a public inquiry into State taxes, with the objective of reducing the tax burden and creating a sustainable environment for employment and investment in New South Wales, received from **Mr Debnam**.

National Australia Bank Gymea Branch Closure

Petition condemning the National Australia Bank's decision to close the Gymea branch and calling on the Federal Government to pass laws that require banks to maintain minimum customer service levels, received from **Mr Collier**.

National Australia Bank Jannali Branch Closure

Petition condemning the National Australia Bank's decision to close the Jannali branch and calling on the Federal Government to pass laws that require banks to maintain minimum customer service levels, received from **Mr Collier**.

Cronulla Police Station Upgrading

Petition praying that the House restores to Cronulla a fully functioning police patrol and upgrades the police station, received from **Mr Kerr**.

Malabar Policing

Petition praying that the House notes the concern of Malabar residents at the closure of Malabar Police Station and praying that the station be reopened and staffed by locally based and led police, received from **Mr Tink**.

Randwick Police Station Downgrading

Petition praying that the House notes the concern of Randwick residents at the major downgrading and possible closure of Randwick Police Station and praying that the station be staffed 24 hours a day by locally based and led police, received from **Mr Tink**.

Redfern, Darlington and Chippendale Policing

Petition praying for increased police presence in the Redfern, Darlington and Chippendale areas, received from **Ms Moore**.

Inner East Sydney Policing

Petition praying that the House prevents the closure of Woolloomooloo, Paddington, Redfern and four other inner eastern suburbs police stations and praying for adequate police resources, including uniformed foot patrols, in the inner east area, received from **Ms Moore**.

Inner East Sydney Policing Community Consultation

Petition praying that broad community consultation take place prior to any changes being made to policing in the inner east, received from **Ms Moore**.

Surry Hills Policing

Petition praying for increased police presence in the Surry Hills area, received from **Ms Moore**.

Eastern Suburbs Police and Community Youth Club Closure

Petition praying that the House stops the Board of the Police and Community Youth Club New South Wales Ltd from closing and selling the Eastern Suburbs Police and Community Youth Club, received from **Ms Moore**.

Paddington Policing

Petition praying that the House prevent the closure of Paddington Police Station and praying for increased police presence in the Paddington area, received from **Ms Moore**.

Dapto Policing

Petition praying that Dapto Police Station be manned for 24 hours each day, received from **Ms Saliba**.

Northside Storage Tunnel Gas Emissions

Petition praying for the installation of an acceptable system to address health risks associated with the discharge of sewage gases from the northside storage tunnel, received from **Mr Collins**.

Genetically Engineered Food

Petition praying that the House suspends the commercial release and trials of genetically engineered crops, supports the implementation of mandatory labelling of food derived from genetic engineering and funds independent scientific research to investigate the potential risks to health and the environment, received from **Ms Moore**.

Non-government Schools Funding

Petition praying that the Government reimburse the \$5 million in funding that has been withdrawn from non-government schools and reverse its decision to withdraw a further \$13.5 million in funding in 2001, received from **Mr Richardson**.

Queanbeyan Preschool Services

Petition praying that funds be made available to construct a new and permanent preschool in Queanbeyan, received from **Mr Webb**.

Berry Public School

Petition opposing the sale of Berry Public School, received from **Mr Brown**.

M5 East Tunnel Ventilation System

Petition praying that the Government review the design of the ventilation system for the M5 East tunnel and immediately install filtration equipment to treat particulate matter and other pollutants, received from **Ms Moore**.

South Dowling Street Traffic Management

Petition praying that the Roads and Traffic Authority investigates all possible traffic management options and implements measures to restore residential amenity and safety to South Dowling Street between Flinders and Oxford streets, received from **Ms Moore**.

Kempsey and Macksville Pacific Highway Upgrade

Petition praying that the House improve safety on the Pacific Highway and fast-track the proposed bypassing of Kempsey and Macksville, received from **Mr Stoner**.

Cardiff Railway Station Disabled Access

Petition expressing concern at the difficulties experienced by disabled and elderly patrons in accessing Cardiff railway station platform, and praying that Cardiff railway station be included on the Easy Access program and a lift or ramp installed, received from **Mr Hunter**.

Manly Lagoon Remediation

Petition praying that funds be made available to assist in the remediation of Manly Lagoon, received from **Mr Barr**.

Wagga Wagga Electorate Fruit Fly Campaign

Petition praying that the Government resources the Fruit Fly Campaign for the years 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003, upgrades the Wagga Wagga electorate to a fruit fly control zone, and develops and implements a fruit fly strategy to eliminate fruit fly from the electorate within the next five years, received from **Mr Maquire**.

Animal Experimentation

Petition praying that the practice of supplying stray animals to universities and research institutions for experimentation be opposed, received from **Ms Moore**.

Animal Vivisection

Petition praying that the House will totally and unconditionally abolish animal vivisection on scientific, medical and ethical grounds, and that a new system be introduced whereby veterinary students are apprenticed to practising veterinary surgeons, received from **Ms Moore**.

White City Site Rezoning Proposal

Petition praying that any rezoning of the White City site be opposed, received from **Ms Moore**.

Bega Valley Shire Council

Petition praying that extension of the term of the administrator appointed to oversee the affairs of Bega Valley Shire Council be opposed, received from **Mr R. H. L. Smith**.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

COMPULSORY THIRD PARTY INSURANCE PREMIUMS

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: My question is directed to the Premier. Did the Premier promise in September 1999 that he would do whatever is necessary to keep the costs of green slips down? Can the Premier explain to Mr Arnold Lockrey, a Vietnam veteran, why his green slip costs have increased this year by 50 per cent, that is, \$120? Are thousands of other invalid pensioners and single parents on a pension who are aged under 55 years also facing huge increases in green slip costs despite the Premier's promises?

Mr CARR: The GST would be a good starting point.

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

Mr CARR: If one is looking at any increase in costs anywhere in our State or in Australia, the big tip is to start with Howard's GST.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I place the honourable member for Southern Highlands on three to calls to order. I place the honourable member for Wakehurst on three calls to order.

ROAD SAFETY TASK FORCE REPORT

Mr McBRIDE: My question is to the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads.

Mr Hazzard: Point of order: How is it that when I was making less noise than anybody else I am placed on three calls to order?

[Interruption]

That is exactly right. Why am I placed on three calls to order when the others are not? You should answer the question, Bob!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Wakehurst has accused the Chair of exhibiting a certain bias. He sits directly in the line of vision of the Chair. The fact that he has been placed on three calls to order should indicate to him that he should be on his best behaviour for the remainder of question time.

Mrs Chikarovski: Point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chair will not hear further points of order. The Leader of the Opposition will resume her seat.

Mr McBRIDE: My question without notice is to the Minister for Roads.

Mr Hartcher: Mr Speaker, it is not—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Gosford will resume his seat.

Mr McBRIDE: What is the Government's response to the road safety task force report on road safety?

Mr SCULLY: Over the past 20 years major improvements in road safety have led to significant reductions in the road toll. I should remind honourable members who may be unaware that in 1978 the road toll reached an all-time high, with 1,384 fatalities on New South Wales roads. There was a steady decline in that figure, until the record low in 1998 of 556 fatalities. Unfortunately, since then the road toll has increased, both in 1999 and in 2000. Tragically, over the Christmas-New Year holiday period the road toll was 40, which was a record for the previous decade. The normal road toll for the Christmas-New Year period is in the order of 20 to 23—an unacceptable number in any case—but 40 was a terrible number.

The human cost of the road toll is enormous. Hardly a member of this House has not been touched in some way by the road toll, mostly by interaction with constituents, the families of victims or the seriously injured but also, in a small number of cases, through members of Parliament losing loved ones on our roads. In response to the terrible tragedy of 40 people being killed on our roads over Christmas-New Year, I established a road safety task force. That task force was chaired by the Chief Executive of the Roads and Traffic Authority and included senior representatives of the New South Wales Police Service and representatives of the Motor Accidents Authority and the Ministry for Police. I made a decision to include outside agencies to ensure that a level of expertise outside government was included within the task force. The NRMA was included.

Mr E. T. Page: Nick Whitlam? He needs a job.

Mr SCULLY: This is a serious matter.

Mrs Chikarovski: You should remind your colleagues of that.

Mr SCULLY: Dr Danny Cass from—

Mrs Chikarovski: It is your side interjecting, Carl. Wake up!

Mr SCULLY: As I said, this is a serious matter for all members, including the Opposition. Dr Danny Cass from Westmead Children's Hospital, as some honourable members would be aware, has made a very valuable contribution on the issue of road safety. Dr Jane Elkington, a health consultant, and Associate Professor Soames Job from the department of psychology, University of Sydney, all participated in the work of the task force. I record my appreciation for the effort that all of those task force members put into their work. I had a lengthy meeting with them early in their deliberations. They met on a number of occasions and canvassed a whole range of ideas, options and issues in dealing with road safety. This was a new level of co-operation between community, government and private sector experts.

There were hundreds of responses. Many people, organisations and companies with interest in this issue faxed, emailed and posted their comments, and many telephone calls were received from community members. The issues included driver skills and education, media campaigns, enforcement, speeding, the road network, attitudes and behaviour, fatigue, licence testing and penalties. I have accepted all of the recommendations in the task force report. Those recommendations cover four areas: driver and rider education and behaviour, technology, enforcement and deterrence, and monitoring and evaluation.

The recommendations on driver and rider education and behaviour include strengthening the Young Driver program in schools, and extending the Traffic Offenders program for serious offenders. I might add that I know that the honourable member for Miranda has a particular interest in the latter program. I have had a number of letters from people who have actually gone through the program and found it beneficial, as I know magistrates have in that they have effectively used it as a presentence program when sentencing people for serious traffic offences. We will accelerate development of driver rest areas, and there will be an extension of profile line marking on roads.

Technology sometimes becomes available in policy development, particularly with regard to road safety. The task force has recommended alcohol ignition interlock devices as a sentencing measure for drink-drive offenders. Alcohol ignition interlocks stop drivers impaired by alcohol from using their vehicles. The Roads and Traffic Authority, at my instigation, already has trialled interlocks to consider their use in sentencing drink-drivers. Participants were selected from the Traffic Offenders program. The trial found that 94 per cent of participants supported the program and that 88 per cent believed the interlock penalty would deter them from reoffending. This penalty could include an interlock-conditioned licence for all high-range and repeat driving under the influence offences and repeat offenders who refuse breath or blood alcohol testing.

In respect of enforcement and deterrence, the task force made a number of recommendations. One matter that I raise in particular—an issue of which all honourable members should be aware—is the non-wearing of seatbelts. It may come as a surprise to some colleagues on both sides of the House that each year thousands of infringement notices are issued for the non-wearing of seatbelts. I am absolutely astonished that anyone in a vehicle on our roadways would not wear a seatbelt. In fact, 10 of the 40 tragic fatalities over the most recent Christmas-New Year period involved not wearing seatbelts. The honourable member for Dubbo is in the Chamber. None of the three of those 10 who were young people from Dubbo—one was a 17-year-old, and another was pregnant—was wearing a seatbelt. I asked the Roads and Traffic Authority how many of those included in the road toll of between 550 and 600 each year are killed on our roads because they were not wearing seatbelts. One would think this problem had been fixed in the 1960s after a debate at the time involving Government, Opposition and community representatives. The RTA advised me that in the order of 80 to 100 people die on our roads each year because they do not put their seatbelts on.

I asked the Roads and Traffic Authority and the task force to examine what can be done, both in education and in deterrence, to get the message out that people must wear seatbelts when they get into motor vehicles. Also, I believe a greater degree of ownership of responsibility for passengers rests on the driver of a motor vehicle. A driver, while at the wheel, cannot abdicate responsibility for those in that vehicle not wearing seatbelts. The task force examined that particular issue at my request. The current penalty is only \$115 and three demerit points. The task force recommended that the penalty for not wearing a seatbelt be increased from \$115 to \$220 and that double demerit points apply to the non-wearing of seatbelts during holiday periods.

In addition, there will be a new penalty of \$220 for passengers over the age of 16 years who do not wear seatbelts, and there will be demerit points for drivers whose passengers fail to wear seatbelts, with a maximum of six demerit points. Double demerit points, of course, will apply over the Easter period commencing on Wednesday next week. That is a significant part of the task force's endeavours. It sends a strong message to motorists and the community that it is unacceptable that probably 15 to 25 per cent of the road toll is attributable to motor vehicle occupants not wearing seatbelts.

Speeding was of particular concern to the task force, which strongly recommended that motorists found to have been doing 30 kilometres or more over the speed limit should be dealt with by mandatory court summons rather than through the traffic infringement process. This is commensurate with the penalties for drink-driving offences. I have accepted that recommendation. The strong message from this Parliament to the community must be, "Drive at the speed limit, and if you drive at excessive speeds"—which I regard as 30 kilometres or more over the speed limit—"you will be taken to court."

The car industry must play a greater role in road safety. The task force determined what the car industry can do. I have accepted the recommendation of the task force that a forum of car manufacturers be convened to determine what additional car safety measures can be implemented. I will ask the forum to consider the greater use of road safety messages in motor vehicle advertising. The Australian Transport Council meeting, a meeting of transport and road Ministers, will take place in May. At that meeting I will suggest that tax incentives should be extended to car manufacturers who support greater safety in car design. The task force suggested that the outcomes of each recommendation in its report be evaluated to audit its effectiveness. I will ask the road safety task force to continue its expert work to check the effectiveness of our road safety initiatives.

One of the strengths of the task force established by the Government was the drawing together of expertise from a range of bodies. The task force does not have all the answers to the road toll, and it does not have solutions to resolve those problems tomorrow. However, it has come up with a range of interesting proposals that should be examined in detail and implemented. I believe that will make a difference. I have asked the chief executive of the Roads and Traffic Authority to include other community organisations, such as the Red Cross and St Johns Ambulance, to help it to get out those important messages about road safety, particularly as we enter the Easter period.

Pain, suffering and property damage result from road accidents. Whilst the road toll is at a much more acceptable level now than it was compared to, say, the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the present level is still not acceptable. We must continue to do all that we can to get people to drive at the speed limit, to wear their seatbelts and to not drink and drive. I invite honourable members to read the report of the task force and to share my appreciation for the terrific effort by the police, the Roads and Traffic Authority, the Motor Accidents Authority and the NRMA.

Mr Fraser: Point of order: Standing Order 104 states:

A Member may at any time raise a point of order relating to a breach of the standing orders or the practice of the House which shall, until disposed of, suspend the consideration and decision of every other question.

I draw your attention to the fact that, prior to the last question being asked, both the Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member for Gosford attempted to raise points of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat.

COMPULSORY THIRD PARTY INSURANCE PREMIUMS

Mr SOURIS: My question without notice is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier explain why as many as 280,000 motorists in areas such as Maitland, Camden, the Blue Mountains and the Central Coast are now being forced to pay up to \$200 a year more for their green slips, despite his promise that green slip premiums would drop by \$100 and that he would, if necessary, legislate to keep premiums down?

Mr CARR: These questions are coming from people who opposed our reform of the scheme and who tried to block it in the upper House.

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

Mr CARR: The simple fact is that in one year the majority of owners of metropolitan passenger vehicles were paying \$330 or less. In the second year, the majority of owners were paying \$318 or less. At the time of the reforms the average green slip cost \$440. Enter stage right the GST, falling like a blight on every aspect of the Australian economy.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I place the honourable member for Myall Lakes on three calls to order.

Mr George: Point of order: I point out to the Premier that the question related to green slips, and not to the GST, which does not affect green slips.

Mr CARR: In simple terms, the premium that the great majority of motorists are paying under the new scheme is more than \$100 lower than the premium they would have been paying without the Government's reforms.

AIDA PERFORMANCE CANCELLATION

Mr ASHTON: I direct my question to the Minister for Fair Trading. What is the Government's response to recent complaints about the failed production of *Aida*?

Mr WATKINS: Honourable members would be aware that, in the middle of last month, the Department of Fair Trading became aware that performances of the Verdi opera *Aida* would be cancelled. The performances were to take place at Darling Harbour and in the Hunter Valley. Some 10,000 tickets were sold, some for \$100 and many for \$180.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much conversation between members while Ministers are answering questions.

[*Interruption*]

I call the Leader of the National Party to order. Members should refrain from discussing personal matters whilst Ministers are responding to questions.

Mr WATKINS: In total approximately \$1.5 million for the production company, Operama Productions Pty Ltd, had been raised through advance ticket sales. This case is of concern because investigations to date reveal that no offences under fair trading legislation have occurred. However, that does not mean that the Government intends to let the matter rest. Opera lovers and ticket buyers generally deserve to get what they paid for. If things go wrong they should be able to get their money back. That is why I can advise the House today that I have instructed the Department of Fair Trading to review the existing fair trading laws and the entertainment industry code of practice to recommend ways to avoid a repeat of the *Aida* situation.

A reference group is being established to oversee the review and will comprise representatives from relevant industry groups and government agencies. After initial discussions with industry I am aware that a one-size-fits-all response to preventing a recurrence of the *Aida* problem could create major problems for certain parts of the arts industry. That is why those involved in the review process will need to carefully consider the impacts of any changes, whether voluntary or legislative, on a range of types of productions, from the smallest to the largest. For example, the local theatre group or the annual school play obviously is in a vastly different category from current productions such as *Shout* or the latest Sydney Theatre Company production.

The department will work with the relevant industry bodies and arts associations to ensure that any Government plan does not adversely affect certain parts of the industry, and that it is sensible and achievable across the board. I repeat: This is not about regulating the local school production or the local community musical or theatrical group. Fortunately, more than 90 per cent of consumers who bought tickets to *Aida* used their credit cards. They are, therefore, able to apply for a return of the payments through the charge-back system.

Consumers who paid for tickets other than by credit card remain unsecured creditors of the company. They might receive a refund or part refund, depending on the value of company assets. The review reference group that will examine existing regulations and options for reform will include representatives of bodies such as the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, the Australian Consumers Association, the Ministry for the Arts and relevant arts associations, as well as the Department of Fair Trading. The first meeting is due to be held within the next fortnight. I look forward to receiving the report.

WORKERS COMPENSATION LEGISLATION

Mr J. H. TURNER: My question is directed to the Premier. Does the Premier agree with the Police Association that the legislative changes to workers compensation approved by him and by the Special Minister of State are draconian, outrageous and frightening, because police officers who are shot in the course of their duties, including those in country regions, will in future be thrown onto the scrap heap?

Mr CARR: The Minister for Police advises me that the Police Association has advised him that its claims to that effect are wrong.

MYELECTORATE.COM WEB SITE

Mr GREENE: My question without notice is to the Attorney General. What is the Government's response to an Internet company marketing its services to parliamentarians?

Mr DEBUS: In recent days a number of members of this House have raised concerns about an Internet web site called *myelectorate.com*. This organisation has emailed members of Parliament inviting them to register on the site so it can provide their constituents with information. That appears to be an innocent enough invitation. Members are asked to pay \$10 a week to maintain the site. I regret to inform the House that this business initiative rests upon extremely shaky ground. The modus operandi of this group or organisation is very simple. Members of Parliament are invited to participate in the web site by paying a weekly subscription of \$10. If members of Parliament choose not to subscribe, the email goes on blandly to state that the electorate site will be made available to the next interested candidate in the electorate. Some members of this House may regard such an approach as a demonstration of free market enterprise. However, *myelectorate.com* has taken the additional step of posting web sites for individual members on the Internet without permission. If honourable members are unaware of this, I can inform the House that each member has a page posted on this site.

Mr Hazzard: Is mine any good?

Mr DEBUS: Yours is filled with inaccurate information. A significant proportion have all biographical and electorate details, and photographs. The remainder appears to be still under construction. The completed

web pages for individual members of Parliament bear a striking similarity to those contained on the official web site of New South Wales Parliament. The Crown Solicitor advises that the information contained on the pages of members of Parliament on *myelectorate.com* is virtually identical to that contained on those members of Parliament on the Parliament's web site. The Crown Solicitor advises that the information contained on the *myelectorate.com* site is a reproduction of relevant parts of the parliamentary web site. His advice continues that the operators of *myelectorate.com* are reproducing the text and the photos of members of Parliament in apparently identical fashion.

Without wishing to provide honourable members with a complex dissertation on the law of copyright, I point out that the owner of copyright has the exclusive legal right to reproduce literary and artistic work in material form. I note also that Parliament holds the copyright for the text and photographs contained on the parliamentary web site. The parliamentary site contains an extensive copyright notice that clearly protects Parliament's legal rights, which are vested in the Crown. The Crown Solicitor's clear advice is that *myelectorate.com* appears to have breached Parliament's copyright. The site contains no acknowledgment that the information on it has been lifted from Parliament's site. I am advised also that no permission has been granted by Parliament to *myelectorate.com* to reproduce this material.

This is a serious breach of Crown copyright. Although it is government policy that information subject to Crown copyright such as legislation and judgments should be freely available—and procedures exist for individuals and organisations to apply to me for a waiver of Crown copyright in other material—the unauthorised duplication of information cannot be tolerated. The web site contains no identification of its operators. However, I have now obtained the name and Brisbane address of the hitherto anonymous cyber author. Inquiries by my office have established that *myelectorate.com* is run by Mr Martin Grenfell, who calls himself a managing director and operates out of an address located at 147 Fletcher Parade, in Bardon, Queensland. I am sure honourable members will find it ironic that Mr Grenfell, the head of a business purporting to educate the community about its democratic representatives, is not enrolled at the address he lists.

Mr Brogden: Must be the Labor Party.

Mr DEBUS: It is Jackie Kelly, one of Jackie's chaps. I have written to the operators of *myelectorate.com* alerting them to the need to obtain permission to reproduce material that is subject to Crown copyright and drawing their attention to their prima facie breach of copyright laws. I have made it clear also that I regard this breach as a matter of the utmost seriousness, and that the Government will have no alternative than to consider the institution of legal proceedings should they continue their current operations without permission and appropriate acknowledgment. I might exempt the entry for the honourable member for Wakehurst. In addition, we have advised the Queensland Government of the operation of *myelectorate.com*. The proprietors of this web site are using information they have purloined from others. They are using this stolen information in a transparent attempt to stand over members of Parliament. That should be a matter of concern to all members of this House. Information already provided free to the public and to members of Parliament has been ripped off to assist in a cheap attempt at extortion.

HOSPITAL CARE MANAGEMENT

Mrs SKINNER: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Are proposals to combine management of waiting lists, operating theatres, nursing, anaesthetics, ultrasound and intensive care at the Royal Hospital for Women, the Sydney Children's Hospital and the Prince of Wales Hospital a merger or are those all just back-of-house activities, as the Minister described them on radio last Friday?

Mr KNOWLES: I am surprised to receive this question. I heard the honourable member on 2UE at 2.00 p.m. when she said explicitly that she supported the work being done to deal with administrative efficiencies, which is precisely what the study that has been undertaken is about. The results of the study were released two weeks ago for consultation with staff and unions. The terms of reference given to the consultants last year state:

Due to the unique identities and cultures of the Hospitals on the Randwick Campus, the review, as proposed should be undertaken within the context of maintaining the integrity of the executive management structures of the three facilities as separate entities.

The staff, the patients and the people who love those three hospitals can be assured that those three entities will remain three entities. However, like the honourable member for North Shore, we do not resile from looking at administrative efficiency in the back of house as originally specified.

Mrs Skinner: Point of order: My question specifically asked whether operating theatres management, nursing and intensive care were considered back-of-house activities. Will you please ask the Minister to answer the question in a relevant manner.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No point of order is involved.

AGED CARE FUNDING

Ms ANDREWS: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. What is the Government's response to the Commonwealth Government's funding of aged care services in New South Wales?

Mr KNOWLES: As members may have just gathered, I was listening to the 2 p.m. news on 2UE. I feel compelled to comment about some of the statements made by the Federal Minister for Aged Care, Senator Bronwyn Bishop, about the announcement of additional residential aged care places and her view that those additional allocations have solved the problem of bed shortages for the elderly, places for them to live in their final years of life. Sadly, what Bronwyn Bishop has been saying, not only today but in recent times, about the allocation of aged care beds as a consequence of her administration is a far cry from the facts—the practical impacts of her policies on the ground. There are about 50,000 nursing home and hostel beds throughout New South Wales. In addition, there are about 5,660 places allocated but not operational as at the beginning of this year. These are the phantom beds, as I prefer to call them, that Bronwyn Bishop talks about, because they are in fact not beds but bed licences.

As everyone would understand, it is very hard to sleep in a bed licence, especially when, contrary to what Bronwyn Bishop would have us believe, they are not being taken up further by the aged care industry. Indeed, it is quite the opposite; it is a cruel hoax on a very vulnerable part of our community—the elderly. Largely as a consequence of Bronwyn Bishop saying that there are additional beds, and equally because of the new accreditation procedures, it is worth looking at some of the practical impacts in her own neck of the woods, the northern Sydney region, because it gives one an idea of what is happening on the ground.

In fact, far from additional beds being created for the elderly to live in, it is exactly the opposite. It might interest honourable members on the northern side of the harbour to understand that in 2000-01 to date a total of 511 aged care beds have been lost in the Northern Sydney Area Health Service region. On the northern beaches alone, 185 beds have been closed as a result of the closure of Raywood Lodge, Lister and Rosemount. In the lower northern Sydney area 134 beds have been lost as a result of the closure of Montana and Bardwell. In Ryde, 82 beds have gone as a result of the closure of Chesalon in Eastwood, and 110 beds have gone in Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai.

Far from thousands of new beds being created, 511 beds have closed in one New South Wales area health service alone. We knew all that from members opposite. Of course, we had to look at the consequences of those sorts of closures. Last year, under the Federal Government's guidelines—Bronwyn Bishop's guidelines—21,600 people were assessed in New South Wales as being suitable for a nursing home or hostel bed. Of those, 6,700 elderly people have been waiting for more than one month and 4,200 have been waiting for more than three months. Those people have been assessed by the aged care assistance team as being ready to go to a bed, but no bed is available. Typically, many of these people stay at home in less than desirable conditions, and many of them end up in acute beds in hospitals. We all know that that is the case. Historically, this has been a country phenomenon; many of our country hospitals are filled up with people waiting for aged care facilities, because there are not many aged care services.

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

Mr KNOWLES: We now know that 511 beds have closed in the past year in the northern suburbs of Sydney alone. It is no good supporting Bronwyn Bishop when she is allocating phantom bed licences while at the same time nursing homes are closing.

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

Mr KNOWLES: The knock-on effect in New South Wales alone is that about 811 individuals who have been A-category assessed and who are better placed in a nursing home are occupying acute beds, which costs the New South Wales health system about \$83 million each year. Members opposite go on about services and demands for acute services. Honourable members can make up their own ideas about what they could do

with \$83 million, which has been shifted from the Commonwealth to the State as a deliberate cost shift, and see what they could do with that—a lot of hip replacements and elective surgery. That is all because 811 individuals who have been assessed by the Federal Government are occupying acute beds in State hospitals.

That is happening not only in New South Wales. The health Ministers conference two weeks ago identified for Michael Wooldridge exactly this problem in every State and Territory in Australia. And what do we get from Bronwyn Bishop today? More bed licences! The message to the Federal Government is clear: Allocating bed licences does not address the problem. What could address the problem is what the Federal Government had put to it by the State health Ministers last week: If people have been A-category assessed, and if the money has been provided in the Federal budget forward estimates, why not make the money available to the State and Territory health systems to allow the work to be done to care for those people properly?

On the *World Today* on 2UE this afternoon Bronwyn Bishop made it very clear that the money is available for these services but it has been locked up in Treasury and not allocated to the individuals who need it. As a consequence, there is a deliberate cost shift to the State system not only in New South Wales but around Australia. A simple solution would be for John Howard to direct the Treasury to make available that money that Bronwyn Bishop says is there in the forward estimates every time an individual is A-category assessed and to pass the money to the States to better care for the individuals who are presently occupying acute beds.

We could do a lot with the \$83 million that is currently parked in Peter Costello's budget. At the moment it is making the Federal Government books look good and not providing services for the aged. This used to be a phenomenon in the bush; it is now a phenomenon throughout Australia in urban areas as well, and all Bronwyn Bishop has to do is make the money available. However, all she does in the end is make more bed licences available. She allegedly announced another 9,000 licences today. However, there are already 8,660 licences in New South Wales that have not been taken up by the industry, and in her own area where she lives the Federal Government is closing them down. It makes sense that if Bronwyn Bishop were to provide an incentive to the aged care sector, as she says she does, she could make that money available.

We all know that people have been living in acute beds in small country hospitals for years. A man in Henty has been living with high-quality care by very good staff for eight years, but we all know that the better level of care for that man and hundreds like him is in nursing home facilities, as has been identified by the Federal Government. There is no getting away from the fact that as a consequence of the failure of the Federal Government's aged care policy, we are less able to do the work we would like to do in the provision of acute services, because no-one will remove these people from hospital facilities and no-one will short-change them on care. However, \$83 million worth of additional acute services would go a long way to addressing many of these facilities.

Last week I addressed the issue of multipurpose services [MPS], which is the linking together of aged care services and acute services in country towns. I note with interest that Michael Wooldridge has clawed back many of the services we wish to provide as a result of the Sinclair announcements. Honourable members may recall that last Thursday I read a letter to the House which indicated that the 34 MPSs proposed by the Government are being whittled back to 27. The Leader of the National Party might take an interest in this matter, because I remember talking about John Anderson being dazzled by Michael Wooldridge in that letter. Surprise, surprise! The very next day I received another letter from Michael Wooldridge saying, "Oops, I'm moving an MPS that is on the B list up to the A list".

Which MPS was that? Suddenly, in the Federal electorate of Gwydir that MPS has been bumped up. I wonder what that is all about! It would not be a marginal seat by chance! Perhaps the Leader of the National Party could look at the list and see if he can pull off the same deal from Wooldridge as the one Wooldridge has duded him on in Denman. As honourable members know, Denman is high on our priority list, because we wanted to sign contracts by the end of this financial year. Surprise, surprise! Michael Wooldridge has pushed it down the scale. If he can do it for John Anderson, he should do it for the Leader of the National Party as well. Give the Leader of the National Party a go. He needs all the help he can get.

MALABAR POLICE STATION

Mr TINK: My question is directed to the Premier. Four years ago today the Premier officially opened the upgraded Malabar police station, saying that it would protect our community and make our streets safer. Having spent almost \$1 million on the upgrade, why is the Premier now closing the station when 2,000 of his constituents are petitioning this Parliament, concerned that the closure will make their streets unsafe?

Mr CARR: I am advised by the police that 10 people a day visit Malabar police station and that eight of those visit the police station about matters relating to the adjacent Long Bay gaol. By the way, I must say I enjoyed what the shadow Minister for Police said about Daceyville police station. He has been waging a campaign to see that Daceyville police station does not close. But the Daceyville site closed as a police station in 1975! No wonder the honourable member for Monaro has told his local newspaper, the *Queanbeyan Age*, that "The National Party is now seen as the de facto Opposition in New South Wales." Isn't that a vote of confidence in the old Coalition! Heaven forbid if the National Party is now seen as the de facto Opposition in New South Wales. I think they were on 2 per cent the last we heard. By the way, Chris will bring us all up to date on some of these matters, so I will move over them briskly. The honourable member for Gosford glories in the title "swamp fox"—

Mr Hartcher: The American historian who doesn't know American history.

Mr CARR: I have to say you are right.

Mr Hartcher: You were caught out.

Mr CARR: His interjection is like a dog barking in a distant backyard at two in the morning. It has the mournful, distant, incessant sound of a dog barking over 10 rows of fences and nothing can be done about it. Every time you go to sleep you find yourself dreaming about a dog barking as the sound continues. But he is right on this. The swamp fox has a very interesting, revolutionary leader. I am happy to relay this to the House, but I do not think the Leader of the Opposition would be as happy to hear this fact: The swamp fox dealt with incredible daring. He terrorised the entire British Army in South Carolina, striking with fantastic swiftness and then vanishing ghostlike into the swamps. He is building himself up. Recently he gave notion of a motion about the swamp fox. According to the best American historians, "the swamp fox was described by contemporaries as 'a scrawny, semi-literate man'." He looks nothing like you, Chris.

Mr O'Doherty: Point of order—

Mr CARR: I am trying to talk about police matters, and you keep interrupting. I am trying to answer a question about the police.

Mr O'Doherty: Point of order: The Premier is anticipating debate on the motion of which the honourable member for Gosford has given notice. That is clearly contrary to the standing orders. I ask you to bring him back to the anniversary of what he said about keeping open Malabar police station, in his electorate, because it is going to close.

Mr CARR: Returning to these all-important police matters, I just happen to have a letter from the Police Association dated today, which reads:

Having now obtained some further advice, we understand that the proposed bill does not remove this requirement, and we regret the inaccuracy of our document.

Because the association has a good group of people with sound union leadership, it has the honour to say, "There was a misunderstanding. And because we want to maintain consultation with you and we want to be consulted about these things, we set the record right." How unlike the shadow Minister for Police. In all fairness, if he were motivated by the same qualities that motivated the leadership of this State's Police Association he would say to the House, "We acknowledge, in the spirit of accuracy and charged by a sense of generous and gentlemanly debate that has always characterised this Chamber and the give and take between the parties of town and country capital and the great Labor Party"—

Mrs Chikarovski: They didn't get it

Mr CARR: Well, you wouldn't get it; you get very little. But for those who are capable of knowing how democracy works, the shadow Minister for Police should have said, "We acknowledge that the Premier has always said that the Government will not endorse any trial unless it is guaranteed that there will be an increase in the policing of local crime, a decrease in police response times, and an improvement of working conditions for front-line police."

Mr TINK: I ask a supplementary question. In light of the Premier's answer that there are only 10 calls a day, if that is true why has the Premier lied to and misled his constituents in his community report to them about Malabar police station?

Mr CARR: I stand by what I, the Minister for Police and the Commissioner of Police have said about this matter. The Government will not endorse any trial unless it is guaranteed that there will be an increase in policing of local crime, a decrease in police response times, and an improvement of working conditions for front-line police.

Questions without notice concluded.

CONSIDERATION OF URGENT MOTIONS

Schools Capital Works Package

Mr W. D. SMITH (South Coast) [3.27 p.m.]: This motion is urgent because it relates to the single most important issue in country New South Wales—the provision of high-quality local schools. Country schools are the backbone of country towns. In many regions they form the focus of those communities; they often double as community centres and venues for adult education and public meetings. Both State and Federal governments are determining their budget priorities on this; they need to hear this urgent message that country schools deserve the strongest support for their future.

Manly Ferry Services

Mr O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.28 p.m.]: I again seek to advance the cause of those who each day try to commute by ferry between Circular Quay and Manly and who are without a reliable and safe service on that route. My motion is urgent because those people are trying to earn a living. If the Minister for Tourism had any nous she would be in this House to support my motion, because Manly ferries are a centrepiece of Sydney's tourist service. My motion is urgent because, as the *Daily Telegraph* reports again today, there is huge anger and ire amongst ferry commuters. My motion is urgent because, as Steve Chester said in the *Daily Telegraph* today, "It's just wrong, isn't it? They don't seem to care".

At the end of the day, that is what it is all about. Members on this side of the House care about the delivery of basic services, whereas Government members do not give a damn. The Minister for Transport will not raise his head in this House to talk about this issue and he will not initiate an independent inquiry into the matter. The Minister for Transport is basically sitting on his hands. This morning another ferry was taken out of service, and massive destruction was caused to commuters between Manly and Circular Quay. This morning a new SuperCat—an unnamed SuperCat—was put into service because of the seriousness with which this issue is being addressed.

No wonder that ferry remains unnamed! It is not known how long it will remain in service. We know that the SuperCats have trouble operating in swells over two metres. My matter is urgent because we know that at this time of the year, leading into winter, swells over two metres in the harbour are a common occurrence. My motion is urgent because, as the *Daily Telegraph* stated today, public confidence in ferry services on the harbour needs to be restored. My motion is urgent because if people are lucky enough to get on a ferry at Manly wharf or Circular Quay they do not know how far it will travel. This morning the situation was appalling: people were put off fast ferries and onto ordinary ferries. What is the significance of that? The significance is that those commuters paid higher prices to catch fast ferries between Manly and Circular Quay.

My motion is urgent because its debate will provide the Minister for Transport with an opportunity to come into this Chamber and explain why those commuters this morning were ripped off and why people did not get the service for which they had paid. They travelled between Manly and Circular Quay on ordinary ferries, having paid, in most instances, \$1.30 more than the ordinary fare per ticket. My motion is urgent because on Friday this week submissions to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] close in relation to its current inquiry into an increase in ferry fares of 11 per cent. My motion is urgent because the Minister ought to come into this House and deliver a clear message to the State Transit Authority that there will be no fare increases until reliability and safety are restored to ferry routes.

It will take the wheels of bureaucracy some days to get the submission from the mouth of the Minister to Tom Parry at IPART. My motion is urgent because the Minister needs to start that process today. My motion is urgent because the honourable member for Manly, who is denied a voice in this House on so many occasions, needs to be able to represent the interests of his constituents in this Chamber. My motion is urgent because we have yet another public transport shambles. My motion is urgent because it is long past the time when the Minister for Transport should have told honourable members his vision for public transport across this city. I say again that the most significant part of this motion is that SuperCats are operating on Sydney Harbour with serious question marks over their reliability.

Mr Hazzard: My constituents could not get to work last week.

Mr O'FARRELL: We need to have an independent review to determine that those SuperCats are both suitable and safe to operate on the Manly to Circular Quay route. As the honourable member for Wakehurst, the honourable member for Pittwater and the honourable member for Davidson tell me every day, various commuters in their electorates are being stopped from travelling to and from their workplaces.

Mr Hazzard: It was chaos in Manly last week.

Mr O'FARRELL: My motion is urgent because, as the honourable member for Wakehurst continues to interject, there is constant chaos at the Manly ferry wharf. My motion is urgent because, as the honourable member for Manly can confirm, the replacement bus services are experiencing delays and, as a result, hundreds of people are standing outside wharves every time a ferry service is cancelled, waiting for buses to get to work. My motion is urgent because, putting all politics aside, it must be said that this city deserves a reliable public transport service. The people need to have confidence in that public transport service. It is the role of the Minister for Transport to provide an efficient public transport service, and it is about time that he did so.

Question—That the motion for urgent consideration of the honourable member for South Coast be proceeded with—agreed to.

SCHOOLS CAPITAL WORKS PACKAGE

Urgent Motion

Mr W. D. SMITH (South Coast) [3.33 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) supports the \$433 million schools capital works package announced on 25 March 2001;
- (2) notes that this will pay for new school tractors, security fences, painting and air-conditioning at 550 schools in city and country New South Wales; and
- (3) calls on the State and Federal governments to recognise the need for continued upgrades for rural and regional schools to deliver a world-class education to all families in all parts of New South Wales.

I was delighted to receive a letter from the Minister for Education and Training last week informing me that a number of schools in my electorate were to benefit immediately from urgent minor capital works projects. I will mention those matters in more detail a little later. The projects are part of this Government's \$20 million priority capital works package for 550 schools that are in need of immediate upgrades. Some of that \$220 million package includes an allocation of \$10 million for school maintenance, which includes internal painting, roofing, new carpets, fences and landscaping. The package also includes \$1 million for new gas heaters at 40 schools, including 11 schools in country New South Wales.

The package includes \$2 million for new computer cabling and telephone services, especially in country areas. Schools in my electorate have benefited to a major extent from that allocation. There is also \$1 million in extra joint funding arrangements for parents and citizens associations; a \$2 million top-up for the school airconditioning program, which continues to provide airconditioning for schools in the hottest parts of the State, many of which are in country New South Wales; and a \$2 million allocation to upgrade school security, computers trackers and alarms at schools throughout New South Wales.

My electorate has done very well out of this allocation. The Falls Creek and Nowra public schools will receive new carpets, and Huskisson, Sanctuary Point and Vincentia public schools will receive new telephone systems. I am very pleased to note that the staffroom at the Nowra Public School will receive a major upgrade and, thanks to the joint funding program, Sanctuary Point Public School will be able to build an outdoor shelter for its students. The students at that school have a small outside shelter at the moment but it is certainly not adequate to meet their needs. I understand that these works will commence immediately and will be finished by July this year.

The Premier made it clear that this package is only the beginning. His announcement foreshadowed an additional \$433 million investment in school capital works across the State. This funding is the single largest capital injection for schools in 50 years. It brings the total budget over the next four years to \$1.12 billion. That

amount will fund 1,000 capital works projects, including a massive 31 new schools; 60 new school halls or gymnasiums; replacement of 330 demountable school buildings with permanent buildings; upgrading of 240 school toilets; ground improvements at 250 schools; expenditure of \$20 million for security improvements; \$50 million to provide better access for students with disabilities—and Havenlee school, which is in my electorate, will benefit from that; \$15 million to address occupational health and safety issues at schools; \$20 million to upgrade vocational education and training facilities in 40 high schools; and \$55 million to upgrade staffrooms and administration buildings.

As a former teacher I welcome this investment, which will ensure that my former colleagues receive the recognition and working conditions they deserve for their hard work. Having spent many years in staffrooms that were undersized or overcrowded, I believe that this package and some of the allocations are an acknowledgement of the hard work of teachers and a sign that the Government is acting in their best interests. As the Premier said in his statement on 25 March, there is no greater investment that a government can make for the future than in ensuring the future of our children. This package comes on top of the school capital works that are already under way in the current financial year in my electorate. In the 2000-01 budget, \$981,000 was earmarked for a major upgrade at Nowra Public School. So far \$57,000 has been spent to commence work on a new hall at that school. The hall will be used for dance, drama, music, assembly and other activities, while catering to the needs of the wider school community.

Late last year the Minister officially opened a new primary school at Callala Bay—a school that is of vital importance to the wellbeing of my electorate, particularly to the local community. The building of that school is testament to what Country Labor has been able to achieve. I point out that the attention to detail in that school is quite incredible. The front part of the school is painted blue to match the beautiful colour of the waters of Jervis Bay and as one moves towards the back of the school, the hues change to greenish tinges, which blend in with the bush.

The amount of natural light used in the school will save on electricity bills in the future. When the site was cleared the removed trees were mulched and that mulch was used on the beautiful landscaping of the school grounds. The Carr Government has served the concerns of the people of Callala Bay and Callala Beach and has responded with the building of a \$4.7 million state-of-the-art school to serve this growing community. That clearly shows that Bob Carr and Country Labor have been able to make a difference for country schools.

Since the Carr Government's election in 1995 more than \$11 million has already been spent on upgrading schools in my electorate of South Coast. Another \$5.9 million was spent last year on TAFE colleges on the South Coast electorate, with \$3.2 million allocated for the upgrade of Nowra TAFE for facilities for 900 students in adult basic education, prevocational studies and welfare training. As well, \$2.7 million was spent on the South Coast Education Network at west Nowra. That exciting project was a joint initiative with the University of Wollongong and involved linking campuses by microwave technology to provide a network for learning as well as new facilities for more than 700 students. More than 1,600 people are now able to study courses at TAFE to help them get jobs. Thanks to the South Coast Education Network campus at west Nowra young people in my electorate can now study for a university degree without having to move or travel to Sydney. No longer will the South Coast suffer a brain drain of academically capable young students who have to move away. They will be able to stay and complete their studies in their own area.

As a Country Labor member I refuse to rest on those achievements. I will certainly keep fighting in my community to achieve results such as I have mentioned for my constituents, and in particular for those who send their children to Nowra East Public School, the only school in Nowra without a school hall. Almost 500 school students have been unable to meet together, to participate in dance, drama or indoor sport or to hold community functions such as speech nights together. I have made representations to the Minister and to the Premier on behalf of that community. The Government has heard those representations, and has responded accordingly. I am proud to inform honourable members that \$1.5 million will be set aside in the next budget for a new school hall at east Nowra. The community is absolutely delighted and over the moon about that announcement. Last Thursday I received a letter from Nowra East Public School Parents and Citizens Association, which stated:

The news of the State's allocation of funds for the construction of a new hall has strengthened the committee's faith and belief in the public education system and how it caters for the needs of all children.

I take this opportunity to invite the Minister to officially open the new facility when it is completed. The Government has recognised the importance of investing in New South Wales public education and of course in country school facilities. As budget time draws near for both State and Federal governments, they cannot forget that schools in rural and regional New South Wales need to continue to be kept high on the capital works priority list. I and my country colleagues certainly do not wish to rest on anything that we have done so far. We need to ensure that we continue with our good work. [*Time expired*].

Mr O'DOHERTY (Hornsby) [3.43 p.m.]: It was interesting to hear the honourable member for South Coast talk about what has been provided to the South Coast electorate. During the first four years of the Carr Government the South Coast was represented by a Coalition member, who did a very good job. He hauled the Government to task for what it had failed to do in the electorate and persuaded it to spend money there. I, with the former member for South Coast, Eric Ellis, attended a meeting at the Callala Bay school. As I recall, that night the current member for South Coast was sick but was ably represented by his wife. To my recollection, the Coalition then made a firm commitment to bring forward stage two of that school and to make sure that it was built concurrently with stage one. In that way the Coalition was able to shame the Carr Government into providing for the electorate of South Coast. Now the South Coast electorate has a Labor member. I will wait to see whether the flow of funds continues.

Under the Carr Government the sad reality is that capital works funding in 2001 is still not at the level it was in 1995 when the Coalition left office. In the last Fahey Government budget capital works funding was in the order of \$199 million or \$200 million. This year under the Carr Government the Minister for Education and Training has fought in Cabinet to do his best for schools and has managed to have funding increased to \$177 million. Hold the front page! Under its new funding package the Government might eventually, within a few years, get back in real terms to the level that the Coalition was spending in 1995. The Coalition wants to see the figures on this funding package because they do not add up. The money that the Government has now promised for the next four years will be only about the same level of funding that the Fahey Government was spending in 1995 on schools. The Carr Government's cuts to public education funding are a shame.

Mr Amery: Rubbish.

Mr O'DOHERTY: The Minister says it is rubbish but the New South Wales Teachers Federation said to the Government—to the Cabinet of which the Minister is a member—in its budget submission in October 2000:

Outrageous cuts of code to capital works funding between 1996 and 1999. Cuts amounted to 17% in 1995/96, 9% in 1996/97, 16.3% in 1997/98, and around 15% in 1998/99.

The Minister has gone very quiet and is not interjecting any more because he knows that according to the Teachers Federation the Government made outrageous cuts to school funding. The submission continues:

The 2000/01 Budget saw capital works cut again by 5.32%.

That is the background, heritage, and legacy of the Carr Government. It likes to talk about public education but makes significant cuts to funding, particularly for facilities in public schools. Parents, voting with their feet by sending their children to non-government schools, reflect concerns about the continual cuts and the second-rate facilities—though not second-rate education—provided to students in government schools by the Carr Government. Teachers have said to the Carr Government that they provide first-rate education in New South Wales public schools but they do it in second-rate facilities because the Carr Government keeps cutting capital works funding.

In 1995 one of the first things the incoming Minister for Education and Training did was to cut the maintenance program. That program guaranteed that during a cycle of five to seven years every one of the 2,200 public schools in the State received maintenance funding, in some cases upwards of \$250,000, and ensured that during the cycle every school received the required funding to make sure that facilities were up to standard and maintained properly and that there were no major occupational health and safety issues. As the shadow Minister I visited Manly High School where I saw holes in the floor near the sink where students washed their hands after woodwork classes. At that school there were many other occupational health and safety issues.

My friend the honourable member for Coffs Harbour will make further reference to occupational health and safety matters in his contribution. Teachers throughout the State have said to the Coalition that when the Carr Government cut maintenance funding one thing that went down the tube was occupational health and safety standards in our schools. The Carr Government cut the cyclical maintenance program and moved to a new system that provided maintenance funding on a needs basis, with contracts. It was two years or more before some districts even managed to let contracts to do the work, and in that period nothing was done.

So all of the problems at Manly High School, Asquith Boys High School, or whatever school it was, simply got worse. The Carr Government's \$400 million funding package over four years—only \$20 million of which occurs this year—is just playing catch-up with the maintenance it has failed to undertake since 1995,

when the Government abandoned regular maintenance. It is playing catch-up with the capital works it has failed to provide since 1995, when, in its first year, in one fell swoop it cut the capital works budget from \$200 million to about \$170 million. The Carr Government has not returned that funding to its former level. We are now at the stage that new facilities required in areas of growth in New South Wales, particularly parts of Sydney, the Central Coast and the North Coast, just to keep up with growth in schools cannot be funded by the budget that the Carr Government puts in place each year.

Every honourable member of this Chamber who represents an electorate that has established schools will appreciate the plight of an electorate such as Hornsby, which has schools whose age range between 50 and 100 years. We are proud of our very old schools, but those schools will never get any significant money from the Carr Government. The reality is that the level of funding provided by the Government will not permit the building of the number of new schools needed in the north-west sector of Sydney, the Central Coast and the North Coast of New South Wales—in Lismore, for example—simply to keep pace with population growth.

What has the Carr Government been doing? For five years it said it would not close schools. It gave that election commitment in 1995 and again in 1999. "No schools will close," Labor was saying. Well, the Carr Government closed down Peter Board High School in 1998-99, effectively by allowing that school to close itself. How did it do that? The Carr Government went to the parents and started to seed those dreadful words of destruction through the school community: "We won't be able to maintain curriculum. We recommend that you start looking at other options." The parents simply moved their children from that school, to which they had been committed, because the department was saying that it could not guarantee curriculum beyond a certain date. So the Government made that school close itself.

The Government learned something from that bitter experience—but not much of a lesson, because just this year it has announced the closure of nine schools. At least on this occasion it had the gall to be upfront and say it was going to close those schools. The Government still had not consulted the community. Those schools will become like ghost towns because parents and children will vote with their feet: students will be moved from those schools because the Government has signalled clearly that it has no intention to save New South Wales public schools that have falling enrolments, that it will close those schools down. What will happen to the \$110 million that the Government says it will realise from those closures? That will go back into public education—but, once again, that will be to make up for the lack of funding coming from Treasurer Egan to education Minister Aquilina.

Everything that the Carr Government does is to try to cover up the fundamental fact that cannot be denied: that the Carr Government will continue to cut its funding for facilities in public schools in New South Wales. No wonder teachers and parents are asking, "Why don't our schools look like other schools around the State?" The answer is that the Carr Government keeps cutting funding to the capital program. Everything that the Government puts into the capital program now, including the funding mentioned in the motion, is just catch-up funding for work it that it should have been doing over the past five years. The Opposition says that the Carr Government should place urgency on its discussion of private sector initiatives to provide new and enhanced facilities for public schools, because that is what our community desperately needs.

Mr BARTLETT (Port Stephens) [3.53 p.m.]: I am very pleased to support the urgent motion moved by my colleague the honourable member for South Coast. I listened to the honourable member for Hornsby. I think the challenge for all governments is to keep up the level of funding, or to increase that level of funding when they are able. For the vast majority of country people the public school system has been tried, tested and found to be well and truly able to develop in their children the skills and attitudes to life required for successful citizenship. The public school system is one of which we can all be proud. With 2,221 public schools, of course there will be maintenance problems and growth problems. In many New South Wales country areas the school is at the centre of not only the child's life but also that of the child's parents through parents and citizens organisations, advisory committees, fetes, sports days, canteen rosters and classroom activities.

School buildings themselves form an important part of the heritage of country towns. Honour boards contain the names of families going back through the generations, allowing the children to see that they are part of a tradition, a way of life into which they fit, in which they feel accepted and can safely grow to their full potential. Teachers are professional, dedicated, and tertiary trained, and often put too much of themselves into their job. What netball team, cricket team, touch football competition, soccer competition does not have teachers playing, administering and training after school and on weekends? Last Saturday, for example, Geoff Cousins in the Port Stephens electorate, a mathematics teacher at Nelson Bay and then Tomaree High School, was honoured by the local cricket club for his years of service as a player and coach. I add my congratulations to a fine all-round sportsman.

The Port Stephens electorate is undergoing tremendous population growth. The population doubled between 1980 and 2000, from 30,000 to 60,000. It is expected to double again, to 120,000, by 2030. Some \$21 million has been spent on capital upgrades since 1995, with \$17 million of that going to the Tomaree High School. There is a huge and ongoing need for building and infrastructure. In Port Stephens, in the next three months \$170,000 will be spent at Irrawang High School, Raymond Terrace High School and Anna Bay Public School. New classrooms are needed at Soldiers Point and Anna Bay schools.

The Anna Bay student population has increased by 150 in the past 10 years, that is, a 60 per cent increase. The school needs infrastructure of some 21 classrooms that it does not yet have. That will cost \$4 million. The Soldiers Point school has four new classrooms that opened this year, and it has had a 77 per cent increase in student growth between 1991 and 2001. It needs to be a 21-core facility, at a cost of \$2.5 million. That upgrade needs to be completed over the next two years. Raymond Terrace Public School has a hall, which opened in 1883, it needs a \$1.75 million multipurpose centre, canteen and toilet block, and the library can then move into that still sound 1883 school hall. Like country members from both sides of Parliament all over the State, I am working on these matters, bringing them to the attention of the Minister.

Yesterday, 3 April, I attended the Raymond Terrace Public School parliament. The whole school took part. The issue of the week was bus behaviour. The member for Avery, from 4MD, wanted to know why passengers were required to use seatbelts in cars but not in school buses—a valid point, I thought. The member for Louis, from 4KC, was concerned about the condition of bus seats, which were ripped and otherwise damaged. He did not think that students should have to put up with that. The member for Fuller, from 5/6 KW, felt that it was not safe to stand on buses, that there were not enough seats, or seatbelts—issues being debated by Country Labor at the present time.

The parliament opened with a prayer and a school pledge and concluded with the national anthem. The prime minister and ministers conducted themselves with reasoned pronouncements, and even the opposition praised the government—"Not much different from here, really," I thought! All in all, what we in the Port Stephens electorate are trying to do is just a microcosm of what is happening throughout New South Wales. I say to every honourable member of this House: education is one of the most important issues administered by a government. I suggest that when funding can become available, funding should go to education infrastructure and resources for teachers.

Mr FRASER (Coffs Harbour) [3.58 p.m.]: In speaking to this debate I raise a number of issues immediately. It is interesting that the honourable member for South Coast raises this issue in Parliament today as he is known as "STRAWS" in his electorate. That comes from a rally "School teachers rallying against Wayne Smith"—because of the lack of work that he had done in his electorate. The motion moved by the honourable member speaks about capital works and the Federal Government. The honourable member knows full well that school maintenance and additional capital works for schools are State Government issues, not Federal Government issues. The honourable member again plays games. I move:

That the motion be amended by the addition of the following paragraph:

- (4) calls on the Government to immediately carry out occupational health and safety reports on all schools to determine future upgrades and investment.

I have a letter from Casino High School, which is addressed to the properties officer in Newcastle, which states:

Barry, as I have said I am grateful for your support and efforts and understand the budgetary climate we live in, however I believe the time has come to really fix the problem before a staff member or student is seriously injured. The rooms are, and always have been, poorly designed. The issue has I believe been raised over many years and simply put aside because it is "too hard".

That letter refers to occupational health and safety issues in schools. I refer in this debate to the gas heater program. Of the \$133 million that has been allocated for that program, only \$39,200 is to be spent on country schools and \$948,800 is to be spent on city schools. What a farce! That really demonstrates that Country Labor is not supporting regional New South Wales. It is supporting what the Minister wants to do in Labor electorates in Sydney. The total budgetary allocation for capital works in the Coffs Harbour electorate is \$262,685. That sounds fantastic. However, in reality only \$10,200 has been allocated for capital works in the Coffs Harbour electorate. An amount of \$252,485 is to be spent on things such as demountable airconditioning. Capital works allocations should be spent on replacing demountables and on building classrooms of a suitable size.

Schools on the North Coast and not just in the Coffs Harbour electorate must be upgraded. They need capital input. Whilst the \$25,000 allocation is required for airconditioning, bricks and mortar are also needed in

these fast-growing areas. Some of the capital works projects to be carried out include: telephone system replacement, part internal painting of a school, demountable airconditioning, tractor replacement, and the replacement of downpipes and stormwater pipes. These capital works projects, which relate to maintenance, are required because in 1995 this Government did away with cyclical maintenance programs in every regional school. Six years later, buildings are falling down. Schools are not able to obtain funding for maintenance, upgrading and basic necessities.

I draw to the attention of the Minister for Agriculture, who is in the Chamber, and to the attention of the honourable member for South Coast that two years ago Kate Schouten from Toormina High School wrote to me desperately pleading for airconditioning in the music room at that school, as that room had been sound-proofed. Toormina High School has one of the most fantastic school bands which wins prizes at eisteddfods every year. The school has a great drama group and its performing arts are fantastic. Yet this Government will not aircondition that room. Kids at that school are suffering in 40 degree heat in the summer in a small room that has been sound-proofed and which has no air flow. We are being told by the Government and by the Minister for Education and Training that no money is available to provide that airconditioning. What a joke!

I challenge Country Labor to support my amendment to the motion, as we are talking about occupational health and safety issues. About two years ago I paid a visit to Sandy Beach Public School to watch the Olympic torch relay. An area of that school had been roped off because the stairs to a demountable building had washed away. Teachers and children were not permitted to go down that path as they might have injured themselves. No allocation in the Government's capital works budget has been made to replace those stairs. The parents and citizens association and the school community pitched in and fixed those stairs themselves. This Government's funding to schools in regional New South Wales is laughable. The honourable member for South Coast should be ashamed of himself for praising the Government's funding package. No wonder he is called STRAWS—school teachers rallying against Wayne Smith. So they should. He is a disgrace. I ask all honourable members to support the Coalition's amendment to this motion.

Mr NEWELL (Tweed) [4.03 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the honourable member for South Coast. The Tweed is one of the fastest growing areas in New South Wales. State and Federal governments will need to make an ongoing commitment to funding school capital works projects if they are to continue to deliver world-class education for students in the Tweed. I thank the New South Wales Government for acting on this need. Last week I was informed that students in the Tweed will receive \$160,000 for urgent minor works, including: new telephone systems for Banora Point, Bilambil and Uki public schools; new floor coverings for Kingscliff, Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads and Tweed Heads South public schools and Tweed River High School; internal repainting for Kingscliff and Tweed Heads South public schools; an upgraded sewer at Stokers Siding Public School; new stormwater facilities at Murwillumbah East Public School; and joint dollar for dollar funding for projects in conjunction with the parents and citizens associations at Cudgen Public School, Kingscliff High School, Murwillumbah High School and Tumbulgum Public School—a total of 17 projects in 14 schools.

From 1995 to date the Carr Government has completed 63 projects in 24 schools at a cost of more than \$25 million, including libraries, covered outdoor learning areas, canteens, air cooling, new toilets, new classrooms and a new multipurpose centre. Amongst the projects announced the other day is one that has been well received. I have been asked to pass on thanks to the Government for its \$14,260 contribution for the multipurpose centre to be built at Murwillumbah High School. Major projects are also under way at Cudgen and Bogangar public schools. At Cudgen, \$525,000 is being spent to provide 235 students with a new permanent library to replace the current and totally inadequate demountable library. Only two weeks ago the Minister announced the calling of tenders for this important project. I look forward to visiting students soon at their new library in Cudgen Public School.

Bogangar, on the Tweed coast, needs a new public school to relieve enrolment pressure on surrounding schools. I know that the Government is committed to providing a 14-core state-of-the-art primary school, at a cost of \$4.4 million, to serve the needs of this young and growing community. I am sure that the students of Bogangar can look forward to starting at their new public school in early 2003. The needs of the Tweed do not stop with primary education. Based on current demographic trends, Tweed River High School will almost double in size over the next 10 years. Kingscliff High School will also experience significant enrolment pressures. Something has to be done. The Government has allocated a total of \$17.8 million over the next two years to provide a new secondary facility in the north-eastern part of my electorate. Exactly how that money is to be spent will be up to the local community.

The Minister for Education and Training released a consultation paper mapping out options for a comprehensive strategy for secondary education in the Tweed over the next eight years. Consultation on the

plan will continue over coming months. Options include: building a new year 7 to year 12 comprehensive school at Banora Point to relieve enrolment pressure; reorganising and expanding the delivery of secondary education at the existing Tweed River and Kingscliff schools; building a new year 7 to year 10 campus at Banora Point; upgrading Tweed River High School; and creating a senior campus at Kingscliff High School co-located with the TAFE college. Each proposal has its merits, but ultimately it is for the community to decide on the option which it wishes the Government to proceed with.

I look forward to hearing what my constituents have to say about their preferred model for ensuring world-class facilities and schools in the Tweed. I encourage them to submit their comments as soon as possible. That negotiation and consultation process will be under way in term two. Whatever they determine, the Government's investment will generate an estimated 200 jobs for local subcontractors, plumbers, carpenters and others during the construction. New teacher positions will obviously follow, securing more jobs and more investment for the Tweed. This investment has been possible only because of the determination of Country Labor and the Carr Government to listen to the concerns of country New South Wales.

Last Thursday night I had the good fortune of being able to attend the eleventh combined high schools concert on the Tweed, which was co-ordinated by Heather Martin OAM, a dedicated teacher from Murwillumbah High School. More than 2,000 students participated in that concert. While the Tweed keeps growing at its current rate, the Government's job will never be completed. I will keep knocking on the doors of the Premier and the Minister and asking them to continue to look after the needs of students in the Tweed.

Mr W. D. SMITH (South Coast) [4.08 p.m.], in reply: First I thank the honourable member for Port Stephens and the honourable member for Tweed for participating in the debate. I also thank the honourable member for Coffs Harbour and the honourable member for Hornsby. It is good to link up again with the honourable member for Tweed. Years ago we were colleagues at Bomaderry High School. I thank him for his support in this debate. I will take up only a couple of points raised by those opposite in comparing the amount of work the previous Liberal member for South Coast did compared to the work I have done. A couple of days before the 1999 election I asked a person working for me to go into the street and ask the first 100 people to name their local member. At that time 80 out of 100 did not know the name of the sitting member. That is a good reflection of the lack of work he did for the community of the South Coast. Anybody who knows me will understand that I put as many hours as I can into working for my community.

I also want to refer to the Callala Bay public meeting attended by the honourable member for Hornsby. I thank him for acknowledging that my wife was there in my absence as I was unwell on the day. My wife, my campaign director, who was also there, and members of the community informed me that the honourable member for Hornsby tried strongly to undermine the work the community and I had done to try to have a new Callala Public School built. He tried to put the wind up the community by suggesting that that would not happen unless a Coalition government was elected. It was irresponsible to do that when the community had worked hard over a long period to gain my support and the support of the Minister to get the school off the ground. The way he did that during that campaign was quite unsavoury.

Members on this side of the House made positive contributions compared with the contributions of members on the other side. I found the arguments from the other side of the House to be inaccurate. They were ancient history, almost from prehistoric times—perhaps the word "fossiliferous" comes to mind. One could say their arguments are so old that they are using the Hopoate defence: they are very dated in what they are saying.

Mr George: Point of order: The honourable member for South Coast referred to the inaccuracy of the statements made. The statement read out on behalf of Casino High School, I can confirm, was not inaccurate.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No point of order is involved.

Mr W. D. SMITH: After listening to that, perhaps I should invoke the Hopoate defence mark II: desperate and dateless. Members on the other side of the House are desperate because their arguments lack direction, just as the Opposition lacks direction. They are desperate because their arguments are not based on fact and they are in a policy-free zone. They are desperate for direction and for leadership that will take them somewhere, anywhere, so long as it is not down the garden path, which is where they are going now. I will not go down the dated path.

I mention a few specifics about my electorate. Falls Creek Public School received \$761 for carpet; Huskisson Public School received \$2,000 for telephone renewal; Nowra East Public School received \$27,500

for a staff room upgrade; Nowra Public School received carpet renewal at a cost of \$3,300; Sanctuary Point Public School received joint funding of \$19,430 for a shelter, as well as a telephone system upgrade at a cost of \$6,000; and Vincentia Public School received \$2,500 for a telephone system upgrade. When the principal, Steve Orton, from Nowra East Public School heard of the funds for the school hall he told the *South Coast Register* that it was magnificent. He predicted the hall would be a valuable resource, providing space for the school's 461 students. He also said the funding allocation for the hall was a reflection of public education at its best. I remind members opposite that the Government spends the \$5.2 billion the Government spends annually on public education. Of that, only \$450 million goes to private schools. Honourable members should compare that with the Federal Government, which gives \$408 million to public schools and \$950 million to private schools. [*Time expired.*]

Question—That the words be added—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 37

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|-----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Mr Barr | Mr Maguire | Mr Slack-Smith |
| Mr Brogden | Mr McGrane | Mr Souris |
| Mrs Chikarovski | Mr Merton | Mr Stoner |
| Mr Collins | Ms Moore | Mr Tink |
| Mr Debnam | Mr O'Doherty | Mr Torbay |
| Mr George | Mr O'Farrell | Mr J. H. Turner |
| Mr Glachan | Mr Oakeshott | Mr R. W. Turner |
| Mr Hartcher | Mr D. L. Page | Mr Webb |
| Mr Hazzard | Mr Piccoli | Mr Windsor |
| Ms Hodgkinson | Mr Richardson | <i>Tellers,</i> |
| Mr Humpherson | Mr Rozzoli | Mr Fraser |
| Dr Kernohan | Ms Seaton | Mr R. H. L. Smith |
| Mr Kerr | Mrs Skinner | |

Noes, 51

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|---------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Ms Allan | Mrs Grusovin | Mr Orkopoulos |
| Mr Amery | Ms Harrison | Mr E. T. Page |
| Ms Andrews | Mr Hickey | Mr Price |
| Mr Aquilina | Mr Iemma | Dr Refshauge |
| Mr Ashton | Mr Knowles | Ms Saliba |
| Mr Bartlett | Mrs Lo Po' | Mr Scully |
| Ms Beamer | Mr Lynch | Mr W. D. Smith |
| Mr Black | Mr Markham | Mr Stewart |
| Mr Brown | Mr Martin | Mr Tripodi |
| Miss Burton | Mr McBride | Mr Watkins |
| Mr Campbell | Mr McManus | Mr West |
| Mr Collier | Ms Meagher | Mr Woods |
| Mr Crittenden | Ms Megarrity | Mr Yeadon |
| Mr Debus | Mr Mills | |
| Mr Face | Mr Moss | <i>Tellers,</i> |
| Mr Gaudry | Mr Nagle | Mr Anderson |
| Mr Gibson | Mr Newell | Mr Thompson |
| Mr Greene | Ms Nori | |

Question resolved in the negative.

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Matter of Public Importance

Dr REFSHAUGE (Marrickville—Deputy Premier, Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister for Housing) [4.23 p.m.]: In May 1998 I announced one of the Government's most important programs in its first term of government, the Aboriginal Communities Development program [ACDP]. The ACDP is a seven-year, \$200 million program which will make significant and sustainable gains in the health and living standards of Aboriginal communities throughout the State. The program will involve working with selected communities with large-scale environmental health needs to install and upgrade water and sewerage systems, to construct housing, to repair existing housing, to upgrade internal roads, to provide landscaping and recreational and community facilities.

The ACDP is about Government working in partnership with Aboriginal communities at the grassroots level to find local solutions to local problems. These partnerships are facilitated through the development of the community housing and environmental plans, which are developed by the local communities, and identify priorities that will provide environmental health solutions to those communities. The program will improve co-ordination across all relevant agencies by identifying joint funding and construction opportunities, particularly those providing sustainable employment and training in these disadvantaged communities.

The program has been developed in accordance with the Government's commitment to Aboriginal community needs, self-determination and empowerment in decision-making. In this regard, the established community working parties have had direct involvement in the development of the community and environmental health plans in priority communities. The plans identify a scope of works and solutions that is regarded by the community as a means to provide a platform for the way forward. There are 22 priority communities, the majority of which have developed community housing and environmental health plans. The first seven communities in which work will begin are Bourke, Coonamble, Dareton, Goodooga, Gulargambone, Walgett and Wilcannia. The other priority communities are Armidale, Brewarrina, Cabbage Tree Island, Collarenebri, Condobolin, Enngonia, Kempsey, Lightning Ridge, Menindee, Moree, Muli Muli, Murrin Bridge, Tabulam, Toomelah-Boggabilla and Weilmoringle.

I have approved the expenditure of up to \$55 million for several communities to expedite urgent capital works for new and upgraded housing and infrastructure. Capital works have commenced in communities included in the Early Works program that will result in housing for 135 families, approximately 540 people, in 2001. In these first round communities, the living environment of more than 800 Aboriginal people will have major improvements through the implementation of major repairs and maintenance and upgrade works on their homes. As well as the 22 priority communities, the ACDP has two other major components: Housing for Health, and water and sewerage.

The Housing for Health component of the program has been implemented in communities such as Bellbrook, Condobolin, Armidale, Moree—Mehi Crescent and Stanley Village—Brewarrina, Kempsey and La Perouse. The Housing for Health program has delivered significant improvement in the basic health and safety of approximately 300 homes which house more than 1,200 Aboriginal people. Work will commence in a further eight communities this financial year, and a further 245 homes will have significant improvements in health and safety. Aboriginal communities in the 22 communities have also benefited from the water and sewerage component of the program. Expenditure of more than \$700,000 will ensure that those communities will enjoy a higher quality of drinking water through the repairs and maintenance or upgrade of current systems. They will no longer be forced to live with inadequate and inappropriate sewerage systems that for years did not work.

A further 22 projects are currently in progress, with 14 at the feasibility stage, four at the design stage and six under construction. The Department of Public Works and Services, in its role as program manager, will work closely with the community working parties and project managers to ensure that the work is undertaken efficiently and without undue delay, and that Government requirements and probity are maintained. The incorporation of training and employment opportunities within the ACDP has been a major focus, because our program is about employment and training as much as it is about houses. The training and employment strategies developed through the community working parties are an inclusive process and will enhance the long-term sustainability of the assets provided under the program.

We are working with communities so that when the program winds down we leave the community with infrastructure, skills, knowledge, expertise and opportunities to build sustainable healthy futures for themselves.

That also has the capacity to provide a firm base for Aboriginal enterprises to undertake the ongoing long-term maintenance responsibilities. Already more than 50 apprenticeships in the building industry have commenced under the program, including 12 at Dareton, 17 at Wilcannia and eight at Muli Muli. The implementation of the ACDP employment and training strategy involves partnerships with the Department of Education and Training, through the TAFE network, local government and the Aboriginal Housing Office.

An important element of the operation of the ACDP has been its co-ordination with other government programs at Federal, State and local levels. The ACDP has received requests from shires with small communities containing significant populations of Aboriginal people for the allocation of funds to upgrade existing town sewerage systems. Moree Plains Shire Council, Boggabilla, Guyra Shire Council, Tingha, Tumut Shire Council, Brungle, amongst others, have requested assistance. In 1997 the New South Wales Government announced a \$168 million contribution to provide increased financial assistance to local government councils for the provision of sewerage services to more than 150 small unsewered towns in New South Wales.

In 1997 the Department of Land and Water Conservation conducted a survey in which 69 Aboriginal communities were identified as requiring provision of, or upgrade to, sewerage systems. Under the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage program, the New South Wales Government can provide financial contributions of up to 50 per cent of the overall cost of sewerage works. Towns with significant Aboriginal populations can receive a 33 per cent contribution under the ACDP, with the balance shared by the Department of Land and Water Conservation and the shire council, effectively reducing the overall burden of costs to the councils. Consultations and negotiations between the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission [ATSIC], Guyra Shire Council and the Department of Land and Water Conservation secured a joint arrangement under the Small Towns Services program for the Aboriginal community of Tingha.

The work at Tingha will cost almost \$3.5 million, with contributions of \$850,000 from ATSIC, \$1.96 million from the Department of Land and Water Conservation, \$436,000 from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and \$200,000 from Guyra Shire Council. Negotiations between Tumut Shire Council and the Department of Land and Water Conservation which will ensure a major upgrade of the sewerage system for the Brungle community have also been successful. The Brungle work has a budget of more than \$766,000, which will be made up of contributions of \$372,500 from the Department of Land and Water Conservation, \$196,000 from Tumut Shire Council, and \$196,000 from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The Aboriginal Communities Development program is a landmark program that is beginning to make real inroads into the problems of poor health, inadequate housing and infrastructure facing Aboriginal communities as a result of decades of exclusion and neglect.

In the past the slow process of getting funding from the Aboriginal Communities Development program to communities has been noted. I have always made it clear that this program will work only when it involves partnership with the community. Communities need time, and take time, to determine the priorities and how those priorities should be fulfilled. I make no apology for that. It is important that we allow communities to have that choice and to work through their issues. Sometimes that takes longer than governments would like. However, I believe that once we have gone through that process we will get results that will not only be better, they will also be sustainable. The physical changes that the Aboriginal Communities Development program can bring about are important. No less important is its role in giving Aboriginal people real control over their lives and communities. It is part of the community renewal process that the Government is stimulating across the State. I look forward to continuing to inform the House of the progress of the Aboriginal Communities Development program.

Mr HAZZARD (Wakehurst) [4.32 p.m.]: The Aboriginal Communities Development Program, a \$200 million program to be implemented over seven years, was announced by the Government almost three years ago. The Coalition is concerned about the tardiness of the implementation of the program, and those concerns have been expressed on other occasions. There is no question that Aboriginal communities around the State need help with funding for infrastructure programs. In various locations around the State the programs identified by the Minister, including the water and sewerage programs and the Housing for Health program, all need funds urgently. If the Carr Government were truly committed to getting this program under way, it would be telling the House today that it had spent approximately \$30 million per year on implementing the program. In other words, about \$90 million should have been spent. Even allowing for planning and strategy, one would expect that the Government might have spent \$70 million or \$80 million if it were fair dinkum about implementing the program.

The budget documents for 1998-99 show that the Government budgeted \$10 million for the Aboriginal Communities Development program in that budget year. However, it spent only \$5.3 million on the program. In

1999-2000 the Government budgeted \$15.6 million for the program, and it claims that it spent \$12.3 million. In other words, over the past two years for which budget papers have been issued the Government has budgeted for less than one-third of what it should have spent. That means that Aboriginal communities in New South Wales have missed out on funding of about \$70 million for necessary infrastructure programs. The Coalition expresses its concerns about that.

Earlier today the Minister said that approximately \$700,000 had been spent in nine communities on water and sewerage programs. I do not know why the Minister is telling the House about that today, because that was referred to in public documents issued in March 2000. Perhaps the Minister is telling the House that today because \$700,000 is all he spent. That simply confirms the validity of the Coalition's concerns about the tardiness of the roll-out of these funds. The March 2000 program management report of the Department of Public Works and Services noted:

WATER AND SEWERAGE

A total of 81 communities have been identified for possible water and/or sewerage works.

Of these 33 are a waiting initial assessment—

I do not know what happened to the remaining 50 or so communities—

Works in 9 communities at a value of \$727,000 are complete.

It would appear that little had been done at that point. Indeed, a year later, again little has been done. The report also noted:

A further 4 communities have works in construction at a value of \$579,000.

Returning to the Government's pie-in-the-sky policies, under the same heading the report noted:

A total of \$9,350,000 has been approved to date.

One asks what has been approved. Alarming, the budget documents attached to the report show that about 20 per cent of the budget predictions in both the first and second 12-month periods were simply administration costs. Consultants' fees for the current financial year were estimated at approximately \$19 million. I ask the Minister to explain why such vast amounts of money are being spent on consultants' fees. It would appear that a great deal of money allocated to a program that I am sure was promised with good intentions by the Government is disappearing into consultants' pockets instead of being invested in the infrastructure services that the Minister has said the Government is committed to.

The Minister spoke about an issue that is of great concern to the honourable member for Burrinjuck, that is, the augmentation works that have been promised for the village of Brungle. Recently the honourable member for Burrinjuck received a letter from the Minister for Land and Water Conservation following her previous expressions of concern. For two years the honourable member for Burrinjuck has been fighting for the money to improve essential sewerage and water augmentation in the village of Brungle. The Coalition urges the Minister to address these sorts of issues. Communities should not have to fight to get every dollar they need. The Minister knows, as we all know, that different communities have different problems. The Minister has made certain promises. He must ensure that the money flows to the communities in which it is needed. He must ensure that the system is not run by bureaucrats and ruled by bureaucratic red tape and that members such as the honourable member for Burrinjuck do not have to go into battle. On 17 June 1999 Tumut Shire Council wrote to the honourable member for Burrinjuck in the following terms:

Council's Aboriginal Liaison Committee requested that representations be made expressing their concern over funding for water and wastewater upgrading works for the village of Brungle—

Brungle is near Tumut—

This village has a mixed Aboriginal and European population of about 80 persons. The village also includes a "mission"—

I note the use of the old jargon—

area which is wholly aboriginal population while the rest of the village is mixed population. The mission is supplied with water from Council's water supply and has its own wastewater disposal system which is not well maintained and is functioning poorly. The water supply does not meet drinking water standards.

For the benefit of the House I repeat that in June 1999 Tumut Shire Council stated that 80 people were living in a place that is a leisurely drive of 4½ hours from Sydney.

Ms Hodgkinson: Four hours.

Mr HAZZARD: As the honourable member for Burrinjuck says, it is a very leisurely drive of four to 4½ hours to Brungle. Under the Carr Government, it is a village which simply does not have a water supply that meets drinking water standards. The letter goes on to state:

The village itself is served with privately owned septic tanks, most of which do not work—

For the benefit of the House, I repeat that most of the privately owned septic tanks do not work—

—well due to the poor soils and low lying nature of the area.

For some time Council has been seeking funding assistance to upgrade the water supply, with a longer term goal to improve the wastewater disposal system.

Last December the Aboriginal Liaison Committee was advised by an employee of Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) that they had allocated \$700,000 to upgrade the Brungle water supply and sewerage system.

In case the Minister did not hear that, I repeat that in December 1998 the Department of Aboriginal Affairs advised that \$700,000 had been allocated at that time. That is three years ago. Why does a community have to struggle to obtain funds to carry out works that the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs says his Government is so committed to? On behalf of the honourable member for Burrinjuck and her constituents, I simply ask: Why? The Minister for Agriculture further complicated the issue by sending a letter to the council's general manager on 7 March 2001, in which he stated:

I have noted council's advice regarding an expectation that the State Government would contribute 50% of the scheme cost which council advises has now been revised to \$700,000. However, because of the limited funding available in the CTWS&S Program, it is necessary, for this scheme to proceed to early construction, that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs contributes one third of the cost with the balance shared equally between the council and the government in accordance with the CTWS&S Program policy.

That is just red tape and confusion. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs must tell this House, at least in this case, whether his department is going to make the funds available. Let us get just one thing right for the day; forget about the big picture for now and concentrate on the people of Brungle and the fight by the honourable member for Burrinjuck to get these funds. Do the people of Brungle have to hold out a begging bowl from now to eternity, or is the funding going to be made available now? The Minister should recognise that we need to know about Brungle and about all the other areas that are in need of similar works. Brungle is a pathetic indictment of this Government's program. I do not doubt the Minister's good intentions. What I do doubt are his management skills and his capacity to actually get the job done. Labor is great with vision but it does not deliver the goods. The people at Brungle and all the other remote communities of New South Wales want the goods delivered.

Mr MARKHAM (Wollongong—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.42 p.m.]: I wonder whether the shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has ever been to Brungle? I will leave my comment on his speech at that. In my many years in public office I have seen many government policy directions and initiatives that have had significant negative and positive impacts on Aboriginal people. This House will recall that on 18 June 1997 Parliament passed a unanimous resolution apologising unreservedly for the separation of Aboriginal children from their families. I have spoken on many occasions about the treatment and disadvantage of indigenous people in this country. I have witnessed at first hand during my many visits to communities, as Opposition spokesperson on Aboriginal Affairs and now as Parliamentary Secretary, the impact of those policies. That has been particularly evident where Aboriginal people have had limited involvement in the planning, development and implementation of programs and initiatives.

I am, however, now pleased to stand before this House today and talk about the positive outcomes of this Government's commitment to empowering Aboriginal communities to determine their future through the Aboriginal Communities Development Program [ACDP]. The Minister has spoken about the broader components of the ACDP. I want to enlighten honourable members on some of the more specific and practical outcomes of the program in a couple of the communities. The development of the ACDP at Dareton is facilitated through the Namatjira Working Party and is chaired by Rudolph Kirby. Rudolph recently took over this responsibility from the previous chairperson, Mr William "Smiley" Johnstone, who played a significant role in the initial stages of the current programs that are now being implemented at Dareton.

The Aboriginal community of Dareton, which resides at Namatjira Village and consists of more than 264 people, will benefit from the construction of an additional 12 new homes. Those new homes will add to the 15 homes that were provided under the Aboriginal Environmental Health Forum Strategy, which was also an initiative of this Government. This community has benefited from an employment and training strategy that has been driven by the community through the establishment of a community-based and controlled construction company. Urgently needed repairs and maintenance will also be carried out on existing homes. The lack of a filtered water supply to most of the existing development at Namatjira Village has long been a bone of contention in the community because of the impact on the health of local residents.

The ACDP has provided a filtered water main to service over 30 homes which were reliant on chlorinated river water for drinking, cooking and bathing. The Namatjira Village and the new Merrinee communities have no lighting, with the exception of the entrances. Wentworth Shire Council has declined to authorise Australian Inland Energy to provide appropriate lighting to power poles to the remainder of the sites. Emergency services have advised that a lack of streetlighting causes delay when they are called out at night. The ACDP will provide the only alternative, which is the installation of solar-powered streetlighting. Walgett is another community where the ACDP will be making a big difference to people's lives.

Mr George Rose is the chairperson of the Gamilaroi Goondi Community Working Party, which has worked tirelessly in its endeavours to develop strategies to improve the health and living standards of Aboriginal people of Walgett. I have had the pleasure of meeting with George Rose over many years to discuss the issues and concerns of his people. I am fully aware of his commitment to the advancement of his people. It is the George Roses of this country who have committed most of their lives and energies towards the improvement of circumstances for their people. George Rose's tireless work has included being chairperson of the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission [ATSIC] Regional Council as well as many other activities.

Mr Hazzard: I know George well. He is a good man.

Mr MARKHAM: He was recognised in the Queen's Birthday honours list in 1996, when he was awarded the Order of Australia Medal. I take this opportunity in this House to thank George for his contribution to the good work done by the Gamilaroi Goondi Working Party. Work has commenced at Walgett to provide urgently needed housing for the Aboriginal community of the town and its surrounds. More than 14 new homes will be constructed on the Gingie and Namoi communities, and major repairs and maintenance will be carried out to more than 40 existing dwellings.

New rainwater tanks to be installed on existing dwellings will result in a significant increase in the quality of the drinking water for approximately 510 Aboriginal people who reside in those communities. The sewerage systems at Namoi and Gingie will be upgraded, and further investigations carried out into the linkage to an upgraded town system. Landscaping and fencing will enhance the beautification of the communities and improve the safety of families. It is also important to note that this project, which has a budget of \$6.742 million, is supported and managed by an Aboriginal project manager, Daniel Rose Consultants.

[*Interruption*]

Get out and have a look. The shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs is absolutely blind. Being the shadow Minister, I thought he had more brains and more respect, but it is obvious that he is absolutely blind. How many communities has he visited? None. [*Time expired.*]

Mr Hazzard: Point of order: I am sure that the honourable member for Wollongong did not intend to be rude or disrespectful, but I point out to him that I have been out to quite a number of the Aboriginal communities, as has he.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lynch): Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for Wakehurst will resume his seat.

Dr REFSHAUGE (Marrickville—Deputy Premier, Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister for Housing) [4.47 p.m.], in reply: I thank honourable members for their constructive comments in regard to the Aboriginal Communities Development Program. I think it is fair to say that there is general support across the Chamber for the concept of this program. In fact it is generally acknowledged that people actually want the program to succeed. There is no indication that the program is heading in the wrong direction. There has been some debate about the time that it has taken to spend the money, and I certainly accept that it has taken some time.

Ms Hodgkinson: Point of order: The Minister should give a commitment to the people of Brungle.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lynch): Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for Burrinjuck will resume her seat.

Dr REFSHAUGE: I would have, but now that the honourable member for Burrinjuck has been so rude, I will not bother.

Mr Hazzard: Do not give her a hard time. Be reasonable.

Dr REFSHAUGE: No. If the honourable member for Burrinjuck had sought it properly, I would have done it. It is very important to make the point that communities must have a chance to make their own decisions. Sometimes that takes a lot longer than either the honourable member for Wakehurst or I would like. The people in those communities have to understand what the program has to offer so that the things that they may want, but which are not part of this program, might be achieved or, if it is not going to be possible, come to terms with it. It also takes time to work out a process for deciding the houses that will be built and where they will be built, as well as who will live in them once they are built. A lot of discussion takes place and it takes a long time. I do not hide the fact that the Government has not necessarily worked as a whole in Aboriginal communities.

Often a number of government agencies consult about similar issues. Part of the program is to ensure that it is understood that consultation is much more effective if government departments act as one rather than as a number of different departments. It is a learning process, and it is going our way as well as their way. To some degree that has slowed things down, but I am keen to make sure that we get changes on the ground. I insist that changes are not imposed from Sydney on the communities, and I believe that there is general support for that principle. I am happy to answer questions during estimates committee hearings about why the money has not been spent, or where it has been spent, and about the time frames, because it is important, irrespective of whether the questions are asked by the Government or the Opposition.

It is important to make it clear to the communities that there is generally strong support for the intent and general principles of the program. I am sure that all members of Parliament want to see the results in the communities of the implementation of this program, and it is in that spirit that I take all the comments. Some local shires and councillors in country areas see this as another way to get government money instead of fulfilling their own responsibilities. It is important that councils do not view this money—which is designed specifically for the improvement of Aboriginal communities—as a way to get out of their responsibilities. I do not say that has happened in any of the communities that have been referred to in this debate, but we certainly have seen an attempt, understandably, by councils to put in a bid for money if it is available. It is not a matter of putting in a bid for something that councils should be doing themselves.

Mr Hazzard: That is true. It is to be committed to Aboriginal purposes.

Dr REFSHAUGE: It should be for Aboriginal purposes. We can often work in consultation and in partnership with councils and communities to provide a better result—for example, some of the water and sewerage programs. I thank honourable members for their support, and I know that support from other honourable members is equally strong.

Discussion concluded.

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMMUNITIES' LANDS AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 28 March.

Mr HARTCHER (Gosford) [4.52 p.m.]: The Coalition has been in contact with the archdiocese of Sydney, represented by Father Brian Lucas, and also with the solicitors for the Catholic Church, represented by Mr Devonshire, and both advise that the proposed legislation has their support. Accordingly, the Coalition supports the legislation, which reflects the changed structure of the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council of 1962-65, especially in relation to religious orders. At the time the 1942 legislation was passed by this Parliament to facilitate the incorporation of various religious orders in this State, it was never envisaged that religious orders would get to the stage where their numbers declined to the extent that they were dissolved.

However, the changed structure of the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council has meant a considerable diminution in the number of men and women offering themselves for service through the religious orders.

Therefore, it is necessary to plan ahead in the case of each religious order when a number of them will have to contemplate that they will no longer have any active members and will no longer be able to carry out, at least in Australia, their established missions. That is a matter of historical inevitability, given that the world is in a state of constant change. But it is also a cause for passing regret, knowing the enormous contribution that religious orders have made to life in Australia through education, health, care of the neglected in our society, and the thousands of selfless men and women who have given their lives to the service of God and the communities through the various religious orders of the Catholic Church. I pay a personal tribute to each and every one of them for their service and the exemplary lives they have led. Accordingly, the Coalition parties support the legislation.

Mr DEBUS (Blue Mountains—Attorney General, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts) [4.54 p.m.], in reply: I thank the honourable member for Gosford for his support, and that of the Opposition, for this bill. I endorse his remarks about the enormous value of the work that Catholic orders have attributed to our community during the years. I commend the bill.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time and passed through remaining stages.

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH PROPERTY TRUST AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 28 March.

Mr HARTCHER (Gosford) [4.56 p.m.]: This legislation amends the Russian Orthodox Church Property Trust Act 1991. I am advised that the Coalition has been in contact with the authorities representing the Russian Orthodox Church in Sydney and have been advised by the offices of the archdiocese for Australia and New Zealand that the church supports this legislation. Accordingly, the Coalition supports the legislation. The Russian Orthodox church here is by far the largest of all the churches in the Orthodox family, which represents many millions of people in Russia and many emigres from Russia since the nineteenth century, many of whom went to the United States of America and Australia.

The church underwent terrible persecution under the Communist regime, especially in the 1930s under Joseph Stalin, and it suffered to an extent unknown by a Christian church anywhere in the world. The church has undertaken a considerable revival in Russia since the downfall of communism in 1991 and remains as it always has been, the standard bearer and the cultural centre of life for the Russian people. In Australia it has carried out that role through its cathedral in Strathfield and its various parishes. It represents not only the religious faith of the Russian people but also their cultural heritage and historical sense of identity. The Coalition is pleased to place on record its appreciation and support of the work of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Russian community in Australia, and indicates its support for this legislation.

Mr PRICE (Maitland) [4.58 p.m.]: I support this bill. It gives me pleasure to put on record the involvement of my late father-in-law, Canon Bill Childs, who was a foundation member of the Australia/USSR society and also, given the times in the 1960s, a relatively frequent visitor to Russia and the Eastern Bloc countries leading church delegations. It was also his parish church in Hamilton that was the home of the Russian Orthodox Church in Newcastle until such time as their community had sufficient funds to build a church of their own. Bill would certainly appreciate this legislation, having some significant background in the complexity of the administration of the Russian Orthodox Church. I know he would be delighted to think that this House was assisting in legislation that would solve a number of the problems in relation to property. I look forward to this legislation leading to a total resolution of the problem that has existed during the years.

Mr WEST (Campbelltown) [5.00 p.m.]: I support the Russian Orthodox Church Property Trust Amendment Bill, which will amend the Russian Orthodox Church Property Trust Act 1991. The Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia can trace its origins back to the tenth century, for while Patriarch Photius of

Constantinople sent missionaries to Russia in the ninth century, it did not become widespread until after 987, when Vladimir, the Varanian Prince of Kiev, also known as Vladimir the Great, was baptised and there was widespread conversion to Christianity. Moscow became a Patriarchate in 1589, when Greek Patriarch Jeremias II gave consent to grant Russia its own Patriarchate and Job was made Patriarch on 23 January 1589. The Orthodox Church spread across Siberia, into Japan and Alaska from the sixteenth century. The Patriarchate was abolished by Peter the Great to place the church under civil authority, a situation that lasted until 1917, when Tikhon was elected Patriarch.

In the wake of the Russian Revolution in 1917, strong pressure was placed on the church to declare loyalty to the Soviet regime, and in 1927 the head of the church made a declaration of loyalty to the Soviet State. Those who opposed the declaration were forced underground and formed what was to become the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia. Branches of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia are now found in western Europe, North America, Denmark, Ireland, Israel, New Zealand, North Africa, South America and Australia. The Church adheres to the Nicean Creed, first adopted by bishops at Niceaea in 325, and its doctrine, organisation and worship are much the same as that of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The first Australian parish was established in Brisbane in 1924. Soon after, the church established its first parish in New South Wales, at Strathfield. There are now 35 parishes in the Australian and New Zealand Diocese of the church. I am happy to advise the House that within my electorate the church has established a retirement village and a convent at Kentlyn, and I know that Archbishop Hilarion, Father Michael and residents of the village are a valued and vital part of our community. Members interested in learning more about the church in Australia can do so by going to the web site of the Australian and Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia at www.rocor.org.au.

As the Attorney noted in his second reading speech, this bill will bring the provisions of the Russian Orthodox Church Property Trust Act more into line with the laws of the church. The proposed amendments were ratified by the Diocesan Council and the Diocesan Assembly and the Synod of Bishops in New York. The bill continues the longstanding Government policy of assisting churches to organise their financial and property affairs. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DEBUS (Blue Mountains—Attorney General, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts) [5.02 p.m.], in reply: I thank the honourable member for Gosford, who spoke on behalf of the Opposition in support of the bill. I particularly thank the honourable member for Campbelltown for his erudite exposition of the history and present circumstances of the Russian Orthodox Church, which has indeed a long and extremely difficult history. It is with pleasure that I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time and passed through remaining stages.

CRIMINAL PROCEDURE AMENDMENT (PRE-TRIAL DISCLOSURE) BILL

In Committee

Consideration of the Legislative Council's message of 27 April.

Mr DEBUS (Blue Mountains—Attorney General, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts) [5.05 p.m.]: I move:

Amendment No. 1: That the Legislative Assembly agree to the amendment to which it had previously disagreed and the proposed further amendments; and

Amendment No. 2: That the Legislative Assembly agree to the amendment to which it had previously disagreed.

Mr HARTCHER (Gosford) [5.05 p.m.]: The Coalition supports the motion moved by the Attorney General. This bill has been subjected to considerable debate and discussion. I appreciate the assistance of the Attorney's office in seeking to arrive at a resolution, and I commend the courtesy of the Attorney's staff. This is groundbreaking legislation, and needed to be right. I hope we have now got it right and that this State will now have a system of pretrial disclosure that abolishes trial by ambush, which had been an historic legacy, and ensures a more level playing field between the prosecution and the defence.

Mr DEBUS (Blue Mountains—Attorney General, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts) [5.05 p.m.]: I have little to add to the very extended debate upon this bill. A satisfactory resolution of the matters raised by honourable members from both sides of both Chambers has been reached. I believe that this legislation will bring great benefit to the court system and allow both justice and efficiency. Of course, efficiency in the court system is an essential ingredient of justice, but in any event I believe that the new system of pretrial disclosure will ensure that each side in long, and potentially long, and complex trials is treated fairly while on the other hand ensuring that the time of the courts is not wasted. Each year a number of cases—some hundreds of cases in the District Court and a smaller number in the Supreme Court—will be conducted with more efficiency and dispatch but with no less fairness in consequence of the passage of this legislation.

Motion agreed to.

Resolution reported from Committee and report adopted.

Message sent to the Legislative Council advising it of the resolution.

CROWN LANDS AMENDMENT (COMPENSATION) BILL

In Committee

Consideration of the Legislative Council's amendments.

Schedule of amendments referred to in message of 27 March

No. 1 Page 4, Schedule 1 [1]. Insert after line 13:

- (b) the amount of any loss attributable to the reduction in public benefit from any loss of public open space that arises from the acquisition or vesting of the land,

No. 2 Page 4, Schedule 1 [1]. Insert after line 19:

- (c) the cost to the trust of acquiring additional land having environmental benefits that are comparable to the land being acquired or vested,

Mr STEWART (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.08 p.m.]: I move:

That the Legislative Council's amendments be agreed to.

Mr D. L. PAGE (Ballina) [5.10 p.m.]: Honourable members will be aware that the Opposition did not oppose the passage of the legislation through this House. In fact, we saw considerable merit in it. The Legislative Council's amendments appear to me to be reasonable amendments. In determining the amount of any compensation to be paid certain facts have to be taken into account. Those factors are set out in the bill. The Legislative Council's amendments are seeking to include additional matters that must be taken into consideration when determining the amount of compensation payable to a trust in the event of acquisition.

The first amendment deals with the reduction in public benefit of any loss of public open space that arises from the acquisition or vesting of the land. The Opposition does not have any difficulty with that amendment. However, the second amendment requires the Government to have regard to the cost of the trust acquiring additional land that has environmental benefits comparable to the land being acquired or vested. I understand the motivation for that amendment.

However, I point out what I think could turn out to be a practical difficulty in trying to measure the perceived environmental benefits of acquiring a piece of land and quantifying those environmental benefits into some dollar value in order to adjust the payment that will be made by the Government to a trust. The amendment is reasonable in principle, but I think there will be a practical difficulty in trying to measure, in this instance, the quantum of the environmental benefit.

Motion agreed to.

Legislative Council's amendments agreed to.

Resolution reported from Committee and report adopted.

Message sent to the Legislative Council advising it of the resolution.

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**NOEL MULLIGAN OVAL**

Mr MARKHAM (Wollongong—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.15 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of honourable members the naming on 31 March 2001 of Noel Mulligan Oval, at Darcy Wentworth Park, Warrawong—an event which my wife and I attended and a moment of truth for rugby league in the Illawarra. Noel Mulligan, who was born in 1926 at Port Kembla and who died in the year 2000 at Port Kembla, was one of the greatest rugby league players. Noel was a legend in his lifetime. Known affectionately as the Count, he represented New South Wales in 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950 and 1951.

Noel's career began in Port Kembla in 1940 when, at the tender age of 14, he played as a half-back in the under eighteens. In 1945 and 1946 he played for Newtown. In 1946, at the age of 20, he represented New South Wales against England and played for Australia in the first and third test matches against England. In 1947, as captain-coach, he led Bowral to a premiership win and represented country against city and New South Wales against Queensland. Selected as a second rower in the kangaroo team in 1948, Noel played in five test matches—three in England and two in France. In the third English test he played the whole second half with a fractured ankle.

Last Saturday, Wal O'Connell, who was in attendance at the naming of the oval, spoke at some length about Noel Mulligan's exploits. Wal O'Connell was the captain of the Australian side that toured England and France in 1948—the side of which Noel was a member. In 1949 Noel again represented New South Wales and toured New Zealand with the Australian team. During his absence his team, Bowral, lost its grand final. In 1951 he played for Sydney against France and for Australia in the first test. He came second in the *Sydney Morning Herald* award for best and fairest player in Sydney's first grade. In 1950 and 1951 Noel played for St George. He represented southern division against England in 1954 and in 1955 he captained the southern division against France. In 1956 and 1957 he played for Port Kembla.

He came out of retirement to lead Port Kembla to a grand final win against western suburbs in 1958, when Johnny Hunter, captain-coach of Port Kembla, was injured. Noel Mulligan continued to pursue his interest in and his love for the game by coaching country against city in 1959 and the Collegiate side from 1960 until 1962. Noel Mulligan was a real champion of rugby league. He was a man widely known and widely respected not only in Port Kembla and Wollongong but throughout New South Wales, Australia, and the world. Wherever rugby league was played the name of Noel Mulligan, the Count, was revered. It is fitting that, 12 months after Noel's passing, the oval was named after him—an oval on which he played many games of football during the many years of his career.

On the day that the oval was named and the plaque was unveiled by Noel's wife, Eileen, a major game was played between Wollongong Rugby League Football Club and Port Kembla Rugby League Football Club—rivals since the year 1907 when rugby league was first played in the Illawarra. That was a fitting end to that incredible ceremony. The mighty Port Kembla Rugby League Football Club defeated Wollongong Rugby League Football Club by 46 to 12—quite a magnificent victory for Port Kembla, which had only just been resurrected into first grade rugby league in the Illawarra. I say to Eileen and to her daughter Kay that Noel, their husband and father, was an outstanding rugby league player. He was an outstanding man and a gentleman amongst gentlemen. Eileen and Kay would be proud of Noel. They would be happy about the naming of a football oval which has such a history in Port Kembla. I reiterate how pleased I was to be able to attend this great event. [*Time expired.*]

EPPING BOYS HIGH SCHOOL

Mr TINK (Epping) [5.18 p.m.]: Last night I attended a large Epping Boys High School parents and citizens meeting, at which Mr Gary Johnson outlined plans for Ryde Secondary College at Malvina High School. Following the briefing, great concern was expressed about the impact of these plans on Epping Boys High School, which at present performs consistently above the State average, with 25 per cent of Higher School Certificate students getting over 90 per cent in the university admission index. In a nutshell, the community at Epping Boys High School wants to be part of any process to elevate public education. It is concerned that the Malvina plans will generate collateral damage and fallout at Epping Boys High School.

There is great concern that the proposed selective cohort for Malvina will be at the expense of Epping Boys High School and that, whilst Riverside Girls High School will get a \$3 million upgrade, Epping will get

nothing. A reading of the "Building the Future" plan clearly shows that the plans for Ryde, including the vital information and communications technology [ICT] links to Macquarie University, are limited to schools in the Ryde district. The Government has lost sight of the fact that, although Epping Boys High School is in the Hornsby district, 472 of year 7 to year 11 families are in the electorate of Ryde, compared to 294 in the electorate of Epping. So whilst Epping Boys High School is substantially a Ryde school, it is being treated as if it did not exist under this plan. Accordingly, the community of Epping Boys High School wants to be recognised as a school vitally affected by these changes on its doorstep.

One undertaking Mr Johnson gave the meeting last night was that the ICT links would extend to Hornsby district schools. This is vital for other schools in my electorate, including Carlingford, Pennant Hills and Cheltenham Girls High School. If the plan proceeds, Epping also wants and needs academically selective classes within a comprehensive high school context, a fair share of any asset realisation proceeds for technology and other upgrades, and links to the Macquarie ICT innovations centre and the new college. Mr Bill Biddle has children at both Epping and Riverside. On 2 April he wrote to the honourable member for Ryde and sent me a copy of his letter. He said:

I believe that the restructuring proposal outlined for the Ryde District is inequitable. While my daughter's school may see some benefit from the restructuring I feel that my son's school will suffer. Even though Epping Boys draws two thirds of its students from the Ryde District, it has been ignored in the proposals as it belongs to the Hornsby District. Surely the students at Epping Boys deserve the same considerations afforded another High Schools in the Ryde District.

I have had a brief opportunity today to discuss these concerns personally with the Minister for Education and Training. He has indicated that he will respond to them in writing. The Ryde proposal is dealt with on page 15 of the draft plan "Building the Future: an education plan for inner Sydney" under the heading "Ryde: Ryde district." Ironically, the first question is, "What is the problem?" One of the problems that is not answered in this document is that there is no mention whatever of Epping Boys High School in this document. I believe that is because it is a Hornsby district school rather than a Ryde district school. However, the department has to understand that overwhelmingly the students from Epping Boys High School come from within the Ryde district area. That point seems to have been lost sight of in this document.

If this plan proceeds I believe that page 15 has to be recast specifically to include Epping Boys High School, as it is in substance a school very focused on Ryde. It is also the closest school to Macquarie University. The ICT links proposed between the university and Malvina High School would bypass Epping Boys High School completely, yet one can stand in the yard of Epping Boys High School and literally throw a stone into the Macquarie University grounds. I would also like the Minister's confirmation that Mr Johnson's comments last night to the meeting of about 70 people, that the ICT links would be extended to schools in the Hornsby district, will be written into the plan in its revised form. It is an important concession and it should be in the plan.

Ms NORI (Port Jackson—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Tourism) [5.23 p.m.]: The Minister for Education and Training has provided me with some information that may be useful to the honourable member. The Government's "Building the Future" proposal stems from concerns about declining enrolments in some government secondary schools across the inner city. Enrolments in comprehensive co-educational high schools in the inner Sydney area have declined by about 50 per cent in the past 15 years, which is quite a serious reduction. Enrolments at Epping Boys High School are high and have remained at more than 1,040 students for the past six years. Year 7 enrolments have been capped at 180 students per year over this period, and annually there are more applications for enrolment at Epping Boys High School than there are places available. Two hundred students are on a waiting list.

Over the past three years at Epping Boys High School approximately 19 per cent of year 7 students—30 to 40 students—have come from Malvina and Hunters Hill high school areas each year. Students at Epping Boys High School will have the opportunity to participate in courses at the Macquarie University technology innovations centre that is proposed in the "Building the Future" plan. Epping Boys High School has excellent facilities. Over the past six years more than \$4 million has been spent on capital improvements—\$3.3 million on maintenance and about \$700,000 on upgrading and maintaining facilities.

CHARLES WENTWORTH HOSPITAL SITE

Ms ALLAN (Wentworthville) [5.25 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to report to both the House and my electorate of Wentworthville on concerns about the proposed relocation of the Charles Wentworth Private Hospital from Westmead to Wentworthville. I have spoken on this matter on at least two occasions in the

House. In the past few weeks events have been moving on. As some honourable members may recall, last year there was great to do in the electorate about allegations that a number of controversial facilities would be established at the new Charles Wentworth Private Hospital that was to be developed on the site of the current Wentworthville Community Hospital. They included a methadone clinic, a halfway house for recently released prisoners, public housing developments and some other matters that were being suggested for what in the past has been a traditional community hospital.

Unfortunately, as I indicated in the House last year, these allegations were led by known members of the Liberal Party. I hesitate to accuse the Liberal Party of these sorts of tactics, particularly in a non-election year, but this is the lead-up to a Federal election and unfortunately the Federal member for Parramatta, Ross Cameron, was also seen to be associated with these allegations. As a result of the concern expressed and the anxiety that has been indicated to me as the local State member, I had discussions with the Minister for Health. He gave assurances that there would not be a licence for such facilities unless there was full public consultation. He also undertook to ensure that Department of Health officers met with representatives of Alpha Healthcare, the new owners of the Charles Wentworth Private Hospital, to ensure that the new health facility they would develop would be in keeping with and appropriate to the needs of the local community. This area is a little cluster of health buildings nestled in a community of low-level residences.

As a result of my representations and concerns that were expressed as well by Holroyd council, Alpha Healthcare decided to give some reassurances to the local community. In February this year Mr Mark Compton, managing director of Alpha Healthcare, letterboxed a letter to residents in the affected streets. I should imagine Alpha Healthcare is a rather large organisation and it should have access to quite comprehensive public relations services. However, this is not reflected in the letter Alpha Healthcare distributed in my electorate. I am disappointed it did not ring me for my suggestions because, as most politicians are aware, it is desirable to make sure letters are relatively brief and certainly to the point when trying to notify local communities about important issues that concern them.

Unfortunately, this letter is a long letter—I will not read it to the House—and it is also written in a fairly fine type. I do not think everyone in the streets that were letterboxed would have taken the opportunity to read it in its entirety. Of course, this is also a multicultural community and it seems that this letter has been distributed only in English. However, I emphasise that the letter at least assures the community, even though the assurance is buried in the fourth-last paragraph of a letter, that the community hospital will be sympathetic to the local community. One paragraph of the letter says:

The services we are proposing to offer will cause little if any disruption to the local community and in many ways the hospital will operate less obtrusively in terms of traffic and parking than it has in the past.

Alpha also rules out absolutely some of those sorts of facilities, like a methadone clinic, that had been mentioned in the past. How I wish Alpha Healthcare had taken the opportunity six months ago, when I first raised the matter with them, to consult directly with local residents. That would have ensured that it received a warm welcome to a suburb that is well aware of the needs of the mentally ill in our society, and the battles of the past few months between Alpha Healthcare Limited and local residents would not have occurred. I also suggest to Alpha Healthcare that it continues to have community dialogue. Unfortunately it has not emphasised this in its letter, however I have since written back to Mr Compton indicating that I am more than willing to enter into a continuous dialogue about the operations and development of the hospital, and I am sure many local residents will do the same.

REMEMBERING THE PRESENT EXHIBITION

Mr WEBB (Monaro) [5.28 p.m.]: Tonight I shall speak about an exhibition in Fountain Court that is to be opened shortly by me and Robert McFarlane of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. This wonderful photographic exhibition, which is accompanied by Terry Milligan's book *A Portrait of Braidwood*, is called *Remembering the Present*—a salute to the centenary. To understand where we are going, we must capture the moment; we must stop and understand today. One way to do this is to look back and appreciate the past and learn both from the adventurous pioneers who have shaped our society and from the diversity of occupation that has helped to define the social parameters evident in Braidwood and echoed in numerous Australian country towns today.

The exhibition and book are an important record of the Braidwood district. In the words of Robin Wallace Crabbe, "... individuals are remembered and forgotten and remembered again." The photos are largely the work of Terry Milligan, who is supported by Virginia Wallace-Crabbe, Georgina Smith, Bob Reeves, Nevin Ellis and Peter Herbst. Terry was born in San Francisco and after many years and many occupations discovered

the Braidwood district. He later settled in Mongarlowe and ran the general store and gallery from 1994 to 1999. He is currently restoring the old Mongarlowe school. These photographs and the book are evidence of his intimate acquaintance with Braidwood, its history and its people. As one can see from the exhibition, he is an accomplished photographer, and he prints his own work.

Graphic photographs depicting people such as Vicki "Splinter" Blakeney, Bert Bosna, John McGrath, a volunteer firefighter, Billy Butcher, the dog trapper, Laurie Gumm, the sawmiller, and Bernie Waddell, the timber cutter, all tell stories of Braidwood's past and present. A photograph of Billy Radburn and his family features on the book's cover. There is a photograph of Jill McLeod, who was with Tallaganda tourism and who is involved with airing quilts in Braidwood on weekends. There is a great photograph of Arthur Boyd by Peter Herbst. There is also a photograph of Len Blake, who is here tonight for the opening.

Len was a former powder monkey. He served for the Navy, worked on the railways and then blew nitro holes from Mountt Brindabella to Captains Flat and all over the Monaro. His colourful life is a great example of the people of Braidwood. Although he was born in Botany, Braidwood is his home, and he has travelled to be here tonight at the opening of the exhibition. Some of the people of Braidwood are exhibited before us with this exhibition.

Remembering the Present was previously exhibited at the Canberra Art Gallery and Museum in December last year, where it was opened by Bernard Collaery, a barrister and former member of the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly. Bernard, along with the Australian Capital Territory Government and the New South Wales Heritage office, assisted Terry with publishing the book. The photographic exhibition is sponsored by the Arts Council of New South Wales, Regional Arts New South Wales and the Commonwealth Government through its regional arts fund. I thank the presiding officers and Jillian Harding for their efforts and co-operation in staging the exhibition in the Parliament House Fountain Court. In closing I shall quote from Terry's book *A Portrait of Braidwood*, a small piece by the late Judith Wright, previously a resident of Mongarlowe, that might have some relevance in this place. She wrote:

Now we must measure our days by nights, our tropics by their poles, love by its end and all our speech by silence.

I congratulate Terry and the other artists, and commend the exhibition to all honourable members.

HENRY LAWSON DRIVE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Mr ASHTON (East Hills) [5.33 p.m.]: I refer to a serious traffic problem on Henry Lawson Drive, Milperra, at the junction of Webster Street and the entrance to the Georges River Softball Inc. clubhouse and softball fields. The entry to the car park is on a particularly narrow bend in Henry Lawson Drive, where the road, despite its length and significance, has only two lanes between River Road, Revesby, and the traffic lights at Milperra Road. This covers a distance of six or seven kilometres. In my 14 years as a serving Bankstown councillor the widening of the road at the softball centre site was often canvassed, but nothing was ever done.

On 22 February this year there was a serious accident when a semitrailer crashed into a bus carrying a full complement of schoolgirls from Mary MacKillop school. Once again this highlighted the serious problem on this part of Henry Lawson Drive. Fortunately there were no deaths, but students were injured, and photographs of the injured girls laid out on the grass at the site were quite horrifying. A member of my staff who was at Bankstown hospital in the evening when the young girls were brought in said that it was a dramatic scene for the students and their families and friends, as well as the hospital nursing staff.

I have received more than 250 letters and 140 signatures on petitions that I will be presenting to the Minister for Roads requesting that action be taken to improve the safety of the access and egress to the softball centre on Henry Lawson Drive. On any particular Saturday and Sunday during the softball season up to 4,000 people enter and leave the park throughout the day. Cars are parked along Henry Lawson Drive because there is not enough parking in the carpark on the site. This matter is not easily resolved on one side because of the softball amenities block and insufficient parking. A slipway or roundabout must be provided in the area to allow heavy traffic proceeding towards the M5 motorway to pass cars that are trying to turn right into the softball centre, and to allow cars heading to East Hills or Hurstville to pass cars pulling up to turn left into the softball site.

What makes the problem even worse is that during the week when many school groups and sporting associations use the facilities and baseball is played on diamonds on the site, people playing those sports often need to park on Henry Lawson Drive. I am sure all honourable members have at some stage driven along Henry

Lawson Drive at Georges River, especially on weekends, and know that what I am saying is true. This matter takes on a regional note because the biggest team playing at the Georges River softball centre is a team from Illawong; the next biggest teams are the team organised by the Bankstown Sports Club and the team from the Revesby Workers Club in my electorate.

Softball is a big sport in Australia. Indeed, the Australian softball team won bronze medals at the Atlanta Olympics and the Sydney Olympics, where it should have made the final. I have spoken to my colleagues the honourable member for Bankstown and the honourable member for Menai. We believe that the problems with this stretch of road can be solved by joint action by the Roads and Traffic Authority, Bankstown City Council and the New South Wales Police Service. The problem around the Georges River softball centre is exacerbated by the lack of parking along the road on to Blue Gum Farm and back to Cheatle Street in East Hills. I have also spoken to staff in the office of the Minister for Roads, and I am seeking a meeting of RTA officials, police, councillors and Georges River Softball Inc. officials to examine proposals with the local members of Parliament, including myself and, as I said, the honourable member for Bankstown and the honourable member for Menai.

It may be that this site could be added to the Federal Black Spot Roads program. I hope that we can bring this site to the attention of the Federal Government as well. The Georges River softball association must be congratulated on its interest and proactivity on this safety issue. I hope that we do not need a further accident involving a bus full of schoolgirls being hit by a semitrailer to bring this issue to our imminent attention.

Ms NORI (Port Jackson—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Tourism) [5.38 p.m.]: I congratulate the honourable member for East Hills on his concern and the manner in which he is approaching a difficult issue. Increasingly in urban precincts traffic management issues can be one of the more important things that a local member—indeed, in this case, a group of local members—must address. Therefore I congratulate the honourable member for East Hills, as a relatively new member of this place, on the manner in which he is dealing with this issue.

CHERRYBROOK TECHNOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL

Mr RICHARDSON (The Hills) [5.39 p.m.]: I refer again to the upgrading of Cherrybrook Technology High School, an issue I have brought to the attention of the House previously. Cherrybrook Technology High School is the largest high school in the State, with more than 1,600 students. The school was originally established in 1992 for only half that number, and it currently accommodates the overflow in more than 30 demountables. This is an entirely unsatisfactory arrangement. The school community, the former member for Northcott, Barry O'Farrell, and I lobbied long and hard for a solution. Our efforts were rewarded in the last budget when it was announced that \$3.5 million would be spent to build 12 new permanent classrooms and teacher accommodation, \$1.4 million of which was allocated for this year.

By this time, 10 months later, one might have thought that work on the new buildings would be substantially under way, particularly as the school's administration block, which is to be rebuilt, has been evacuated in anticipation of the start of work. However, the development application, which was lodged in July last year, is stalled in Hornsby Shire Council. In August 2000 council asked the Department of Education and Training for additional information. That request was not based, as one might think, on the fact that the existing demountables were being replaced with permanent accommodation but on the historical increase in the size of the school population from 800 to 1,600. Council requires a development application to be lodged for portables if they are on site for longer than five years.

The major issue to be resolved in the current development application is parking for teachers and students. There are 123 staff at the school, including 107 teachers, but there only 78 parking spaces, which is perhaps adequate for a school of 800 students but not for one that is double the size. Last August council asked the Department of Education and Training to conduct a traffic survey, which the department did, when the year 12 students were at Higher School Certificate stavac. The department has had to repeat the exercise, further delaying the approval of the development application. Hornsby council does not help matters with its ratio of one parking space for every two students of driving age, a ratio which would mean that the school had to provide more than 300 additional car parking spaces at taxpayers' expense. The school grounds would effectively become one gigantic car park.

That ratio compares with that of Auburn and Ryde councils, which have a ratio of one space per 20 students; Bankstown council, which has a ratio of one space per 10 students; and Parramatta council, which has

no policy on student parking. Fortunately Hornsby council has not dug in its heels on its code. It says it would help to resolve the impasse if Cherrybrook High were to restrict the number of students allowed to drive to school. The school says that it cannot do that. The Cherrybrook case highlights an issue that needs to be addressed across the State: Should taxpayers' funds be used to provide parking for senior school students? Cherrybrook high school principal, Lynn Wendtman, says she cannot restrict students driving to school. Yet Oakhill College, which is also in Hornsby shire and in my electorate, does so; it allows only 38 students to drive to school, as do many other independent schools.

Schools do not operate in isolation from the community; they are part of it. As such, they have a responsibility to maintain good relations with their neighbours. Over the years I have received a substantial number of complaints from neighbours of Cherrybrook high school about cars parked in their streets or blocking access to their driveways. I accept that one cannot insist on students walking to school when there are no safe routes for them to do so. There is no footpath along New Line Road, which effectively prohibits students who live north-west of Pyes Creek from walking to school. Further, there will always be some students who have a good reason for driving to school, for example, those who attend TAFE courses, those who are disabled, and those who live out of zone and off public transport routes. However, there are buses, and I am sure that many of the students who currently drive could find their way to school by other means. After all, they managed to get to school before they turned 17.

In the case of Cherrybrook high school, there is a community centre car park behind the school with 126 spaces which remain empty during most working days. Students could park there. They might not be as able to show off their cars to their mates, but local residents would get a fairer go. If necessary, the department might pay Hornsby council a nominal sum to lease parking spaces there. The school council recently approached me, fearing that the money allocated for rebuilding the school might be taken away from the school in this year's budget because work had not yet started. The precedent for that was set with County Drive, Cherrybrook. I ask the Minister for a categorical assurance that he will not withdraw capital works funding for the new buildings, and request that his department and Hornsby council resolve their differences. I am happy to assist in mediating between the parties if that will help.

I also call on the Minister to issue guidelines for State schools across New South Wales for students who drive to school. That would make it much easier for high school principals to resist parent and student pressure. Some standardisation of council requirements for student parking across the State would also not go astray. Taxpayers should not have to fund car spots for students who are capable of walking to school or catching public transport, and those students should not be allowed to unnecessarily clog the streets around a high school with their cars. The Government shows its hypocrisy on greenhouse when its current policy on driving to school instils bad habits in young people from the time they can first drive a car. The issue of safety must also be addressed, particularly where a student drives some of his mates to and from school or goes off at lunchtime for "a bit of a burn". Trinity Grammar, under Rod West's principalship, had a strong policy on students driving to school. Indeed, that school strongly frowned upon the notion that students might go around the block with their mates at lunchtime. [*Time expired.*]

Ms NORI (Port Jackson—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Tourism) [5.44 p.m.]: The Minister for Education and Training has provided me with information which the honourable member for The Hills may find helpful. I am advised that the project to upgrade facilities at Cherrybrook Technology High School was approved in the department's 2000-01 major capital works program, with a total estimated cost of \$3.433 million. The project includes the provision of an upgraded administration facility by extension to the existing buildings, new classrooms and technology learning spaces, additional student amenities and staff facilities, increased car parking spaces and associated landscaping.

Planning has proceeded on the project in consultation with the school community. The development application was lodged with Hornsby Shire Council in September 2000. Traffic management issues have delayed approval of the development application, but with the recent submission of a revised traffic management plan it is expected that these outstanding issues will be resolved with council in the next few weeks to allow the calling of tenders for construction work by the end of April 2001.

JANNALI EAST PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr COLLIER (Miranda) [5.46 p.m.]: On 15 March, Public Education Day, I was pleased to attend Jannali East Public School, a small school nestled in bushland near one corner of my electorate. On that day I met with the principal, Mr Richard Morey; the new assistant principal, Mr Peter Banks; the staff; members of

the parents and citizens association, parents and grandparents. I visited each of the classrooms, talked with pupils of all ages from kindergarten to year 6, and looked at their work. I asked them questions, watched them work with their computers, spoke to the classes, and discussed their reading and writing with the children and their parents. I was extremely impressed with the enthusiasm of the pupils and the quality of their work. That is, of course, a reflection of the dedication and commitment of their teachers, the leadership of their principal and assistant principal, and the support of the parents and grandparents.

That support and commitment finds its tangible expression at Jannali East Public School in the construction of what is known as an environmental loop track through the nearby bushland. The environmental loop track was constructed by the parents, the principal and teachers on weekends. The State Government provided a \$1,500 environmental trust grant under the ecoschools program to help with the construction of the track. However, the hard work in the construction of the track, including the moving of the sandstone boulders and the placement of the telegraph poles in what is effectively a bush classroom, was performed by the parents, principal and teachers on weekends. I walked the track with Mr Morey, pupils and their parents during my visit. As a former schoolteacher I can say with some authority that the loop track is indeed a wonderful environmental education resource. I congratulate the principal, the parents and citizens association and the parents on the construction of the track, and particularly the principal, Mr Morey, on his foresight.

After walking the track with the principal, parents and pupils and having the variety of lilly pillies, mosses and other native plants pointed out to me, I enjoyed a picnic with the parents and grandparents in the upper part of the school just above the loop track. The teachers spoke of their plans for the track, and I was impressed with the parents and their commitment was readily apparent. I was surrounded by parents and grandparents, happy enthusiastic children, and dedicated teachers and staff. This was truly public education at its best and, of course, it was a wonderful advertisement for public education, not only throughout the Sutherland shire but throughout New South Wales. Jannali East Public School is a quality educational environment. It is a school which I am proud to have in my electorate of Miranda, and it is a credit to public education in this State.

NORTH COAST FLOODS

Mr D. L. PAGE (Ballina) [5.49 p.m.]: I will deal with two issues related to recent floods on the North Coast. Before doing so, I take this opportunity to congratulate all those who did such a marvellous job helping those affected adversely by the floods: State Emergency Service [SES] volunteers, the rescue squads, the police, ambulance officers, officers of the Department of Community Services [DOCS], council workers, community volunteers and many others. As a result of the flooding of the Richmond River, there was a total fish kill which extended approximately 30 kilometres from the sea to inland areas. That was an ecological and economic disaster. The fish kill was caused by organic matter on the land and in drains being washed by the floodwaters into the river, causing a loss of oxygen in the water which deprived the fish and resulted in their death.

There were problems associated with the fish kill in that no one person and no single agency would take responsibility for the clean-up. However, putting that issue to one side for the moment, the point must be made that the fish kill resulted in closure of the river for three months. That has severely impacted on fishers who derive their livelihood from fishing in the Richmond River. There are 17 commercial fishers, 12 of whom are licensed to fish only in the river, and they are obviously the worst affected. Other businesses that supply the fishing industry, such as bait and tackle shops, have also been adversely affected, as indeed has the tourism industry. The fishers' plight has highlighted the inadequacy of the current natural disaster assistance package, in particular grants to provide short-term carry-on assistance.

Low-interest loans of up to \$130,000 at a rate of 4 per cent over 10 years are available, but it takes at least two months, if not longer, to process the applications. There needs to be short-term assistance—probably small cash grants—to enable fishers to meet their loan obligations and enable them to survive the sudden cessation of income. In most cases, these fishers and other business people who are directly or indirectly affected, already have significant loan obligations so an additional debt, albeit at 4 per cent over 10 years, is not necessarily an attractive option for them. The interest-free and capital-free repayments for two years is a large step in the right direction, but that program does not overcome the problem of providing immediate carry-on funding to enable fishers to survive in the short term following a natural disaster. The Federal Government, to its credit, has acknowledged that a similarly urgent situation applies to those who are involved in the dairy industry and has made \$15,000 grants available. I believe that fishers are entitled to similar short-term assistance.

Another issue that emerged from the second flood is the warning system and the description of severe storm events used by the Bureau of Meteorology. I should like the bureau to conduct a review of the way in

which severe storm events are classified and a review of the associated warning systems that are attached to classifications. I well recall that on the afternoon the storm hit there were winds of up to 130 kilometres per hour and that the worst-affected places to the south of my electorate—Yamba, for example—suffered a lot of damage. Indeed, the Clarence River experienced its third-largest flood in recorded history. It is generally accepted that these events were equivalent to a category 2 cyclone. However, because the storm did not technically originate in the tropics, it could not be regarded as a tropical cyclone. I understand also that the warnings that operate for tropical cyclones are more detailed than are the warnings for a low pressure system, which is how this event was described.

In the eyes of the general public the low pressure system description was extremely misleading and did not reflect the reality or the intensity of the storm that was experienced. The key issue is that communities most likely to be affected by such an event need to be given adequate warning so that they can take protective measures, including bringing children home from school and enabling employees to leave work to secure their homes. Many constituents contacted me and complained of inadequate warnings on that occasion. Regardless of whether such storms originate in the tropics, it should be possible to tag these events in a way which ensures that the public receives the same type of warning for these storms as occurs for tropical cyclones, even if these storms, because of their origin, do not meet the scientific definition of a tropical cyclone.

I wrote to the Bureau of Meteorology about this issue and I also raised the issue in the media. To my pleasant surprise, I received a call from the Brisbane Bureau of Meteorology and was told that the bureau agreed with the point that I was making. I hope that the bureau will do something about its warning system so that the likely impact of severe storms is properly recognised. It does not seem sensible to me to have a comprehensive warning system that applies only to storms that originate in the tropics. A great number of storms originate in southern Queensland, below the tropics and off the coast of New South Wales. It is the impact of such storms that really counts. People should be given proper warning so that they can take protective measures.

ST BRENDAN'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr GREENE (Georges River) [5.54 p.m.]: I speak about a school that, although not in my electorate, is extremely close to my heart. In 1997 I had the pleasure and privilege of being appointed to the position of principal of St Brendan's Primary School, Annandale. On the first day I arrived in January to take up that position, I was somewhat shocked at the condition of the school following a slight storm. As a result I was somewhat depressed on my first day at the school. When I arrived, the school had 65 students, and I certainly intended to increase its enrolments during my period as principal. Many marketing strategies were undertaken to try to increase the enrolment at the school and in 1998 I was pleased to work with the then administrator of the parish, Father Julian Porteous. We approached the Catholic Education Office to examine a refurbishment program for the school.

In 1998 with the support of the Catholic Education Office, in particular the financial services director, Terry Keogh; the inner-western Regional Director of Catholic Education, Mr Mark Turkington; and the then regional consultant, Mr Kevin Hazel, an extensive refurbishment package was put together with the support of Bob Bow Architects. By the end of 1998, an extensive plan for the restoration of the school had been compiled. In 1999 my career changed dramatically and I was, therefore, unable to continue the program as principal of the school. However, the incoming principal for the year 2000, Mr Phillip Tax, with the support of the staff and parents and with strong support from the Catholic Education Office, was able to implement the program and bring the objective to fruition.

It was, therefore, with great pleasure that last Friday I was able to attend St Brendan's Primary School at Annandale when Cardinal Clancy blessed the refurbishment of the school. The dedication ceremony held last Friday, which was put together by Mr Tax, his staff and students, was truly a magnificent celebration for the St Brendan's community. In fact, 1998 was the centenary year of St Brendan's school and many functions were organised to celebrate the centenary. Last Friday's celebration of a new era for the school was certainly a significant occasion for the school community. I congratulate the new administrator of the parish, Father John Milliken, who is also the parish priest at Stanmore, on his contribution to the program. I particularly congratulate the principal, Mr Phillip Tax, on the work that he has done not only throughout the refurbishment program and in bringing the program to a conclusion but, most importantly, on maintaining the spirit of the St Brendan's community.

It is pleasing to note that there are now 99 students enrolled at St Brendan's. That is undoubtedly due to the hard work of the staff. I have contributed few legacies to Catholic education, but one of my great legacies to

St Brendan's is the employment on the staff of Mrs Rosemary Andre. She is now the assistant principal and is undoubtedly one of the best teachers with whom I have ever worked. She is certainly a real bonus for St Brendan's. I congratulate the staff who were at the school when I was the principal and who have continued at the school, namely, Nicole Arathoon, who is working well at St Brendan's, and Mr Jason Young, who continues his first-class work with the choir, which performed magnificently last Friday. I mention in particular Mr John Burland, who is a project officer with the Catholic Education Office and who attended at the dedication last Friday. I have worked for many years with John and have found him to be a great Catholic educator. I congratulate him on his contribution to the function last Friday.

I congratulate also Brother Kelvin Canavan for his vision as the executive director of the Catholic Education Office and commend him for the support that he has given Mr Turkington and Terry Keogh. I congratulate also Janis Haydon for work that has been done in ensuring continuity and ongoing growth of St Brendan's Primary School. Last Friday, as I looked at the children while they participated in the dedication ceremony, it was great to note that the current school captains, Jessica Andrews and Matthew Allan, made a contribution. It was also most appropriate that I was able to catch up with many long-term friends at St Brendan's, particularly my former secretary, Pam Scott, and the hardworking canteen supervisor, Marie Rose, who is still doing an excellent job. Well done, St Brendan's!

Mr PETER WAITE, OAM, AND HORNSBY SHIRE COUNCIL

Mr O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [5.59 p.m.]: Tonight I speak in support of Mr Peter Waite, OAM, who has spent many years serving the community of Pennant Hills and the northern part of Sydney generally. I take this opportunity to briefly summarise some of his achievements. He has been president of Pennant Hills Rotary Club and a member of that club for more than 15 years. He is a life benefactor of Hornsby hospital and was instrumental during the past term of Parliament in saving Hornsby hospital from the plans of the Minister for Health to close it. Mr Waite has been both president of the committee of Pennant Hills primary school and a member of it. He is a significant donor of money and time to various groups, including Scouts Australia and the Pennant Hills business group. Those scouts and cubs who use the Cherrybrook Scout Hall owe Peter Waite a huge debt of gratitude. I know he assisted during the construction of the hall. Indeed, he physically helped to build it. From 1980 to 1987 Peter Waite was a councillor on Hornsby shire council. In 1996 he received an Order of Australia medal for his services to the local community.

I have listed some of the significant contributions Peter Waite has made to the community surrounding Pennant Hills. When someone of Peter's calibre comes to see me about his concerns it pays me to listen, and that is why I am making this contribution. For some time Mr Waite has raised with me ongoing concerns about Hornsby shire council, initially and principally about Hornsby council's decision to establish a bioremediation plant at Thornleigh. I have spoken about this saga on numerous occasions during the term of this Parliament, but the short version of the saga is that between \$3 million and \$5 million of ratepayers' money was wasted, in my view, by the administration led by the general manager, who was seeking a miracle cure to the problem of green waste in northern Sydney. The general manager was led by the former Minister for the Environment to set such unrealistic quotas on green waste reduction that councils were essentially left open to every crackpot who promised a miracle cure and, regrettably for Hornsby shire ratepayers, their council accepted one. As I said, \$3 million to \$5 million was lost.

In addition to the bioremediation issue, Mr Waite is justifiably angry about the way he has been treated by Hornsby council, particularly by former Hornsby councillor Scott Cardamatis. In July 1999 Peter Waite raised what he believed to be the improper use of a council car by a Hornsby councillor. The council investigated the matter, as the relevant council car was being used by former councillor Scott Cardamatis for trips to and from the local gym. That was clearly an inappropriate use of a ratepayer-funded car. Mr Waite was subsequently subjected to what he conceded was an unnecessary interrogation at a Hornsby council meeting and was subjected to a politically motivated application for an apprehended violence order. The application was eventually withdrawn and costs were awarded against Mr Cardamatis on the basis that the application was frivolous.

Essentially Mr Waite, a good citizen of Hornsby shire, was pursued and vilified for base political reasons. Mr Waite had an outstanding record to that community and was subjected callously, wilfully and without regard to the impact upon himself and his family to scandalous accusations simply for asking whether ratepayers were getting value for money from councillors and, in particular, whether councillors were misusing council vehicles. I am concerned about the political nature of the apprehended violence order and the damage that was done to Peter Waite and his name in the media as a result of the apprehended violence order. That was all done to help to create a smokescreen around the his real concern.

I raise this matter because Peter Waite and his family have suffered as a result of this incident and the way it was handled by the former Hornsby shire council. Peter Waite is owed both an apology by Hornsby shire council and the local community owes him a debt of gratitude. Mr Cardamatis' unfortunate involvement represents the complete antithesis of Mr Waite's distinguished contribution over the years. The personal nature of his retaliation against Peter Waite for raising real concerns speaks volumes about the methods that Mr Cardamatis employs to gain advantage anywhere he can. Once again I state my strong support for Peter Waite regarding both of these issues, and I hope that his contribution to our community continues, and that it continues to be acknowledged.

AUSTRALIAN INLAND RAIL EXPRESSWAY

Mr McGRANE (Dubbo) [6.04 p.m.]: On Thursday and Friday of this week, 5 and 6 April, a major national conference will be held in Dubbo regarding the Australian Inland Rail Expressway project. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services, Mr John Anderson, will open the conference and the Minister for Employment Services, the Hon Mal Brough, and the shadow Minister for Transport and Regional Services, Martin Ferguson, as well as representatives from community and business groups throughout Australia, will attend. The Australian Inland Rail Expressway is a concept of Everald Compton for the redevelopment of Australia. It is unfortunate that I will not be able to attend the conference because of commitments in Parliament but I give notice of the conference because a project with such nation-building potential should be given the green light in a bipartisan fashion.

In the same way as the Snowy Mountains Scheme changed Australia's way of life, the Australian Inland Rail Expressway will have the potential to revitalise rural Australia. I urge the Government and members of the Opposition to embrace the Australian Inland Rail Expressway in a real and tangible way to sustain the building of the nation. Everald Compton, who has been the driving force behind this project for the past five years, agrees that an inland railway is not a new concept. In 1887 the concept was first talked about when a group of businessmen met in Melbourne to plan a railway from Melbourne through the mid-west of New South Wales and Queensland to Normanton on the Gulf of Carpentaria where there were goldfields. The proposal did not eventuate because the New South Wales and Queensland governments would not co-operate, and the concept of an inland railway collapsed for 40 years.

In 1927, some parliamentarians tried to get the project up and running, but the plans did not include the gulf area. Passionate speeches were delivered in this Parliament about this vital construction but again the proposal lapsed. In 1934 Lord Vestey of England took up the cause. He wanted to lease a large part of the Northern Territory as the base for his international beef empire. Provided he secured a long-term lease at a peppercorn rent, he offered to build the track, at no cost, from Bourke in New South Wales via Charleville, Longreach and Dajarra. His offer was rejected by the Lyons Government. The next attempt was in 1942, when General Douglas Macarthur offered to build a railway linking Cloncurry to Darwin at no cost to Australia, using American steel and labour, to allow the fast movement of troops to the Northern Territory. Strong Opposition from Australian unions killed that project.

In 1949, a Cabinet minute indicated that Prime Minister Ben Chifley had proposed the construction of a rail link to Darwin, following the same track as that planned by Lord Vestey. The primary motivation was said to be the defence of Australia, but in reality it was for trade reasons. Chifley lost the election later that year and the new Menzies Government abandoned the attempt because the Queensland Government opposed the proposal, and again New South Wales could not agree. In 1965 Sir Garfield Barwick briefly reviewed the matter but the Holt Government was not interested. Two well-known Australian engineers, Lance Enderbee and Ken Davidson, took up the vision in the 1980s and 1990s.

Now in 2001 the time has come. A lot of water has passed under the bridge since Everald's team started work in 1996. During that time the project has had its fair share of ups and downs. In July last year on the Gold Coast the Deputy Prime Minister announced the results of a project undertaken by Maunsells. That report was a positive step. The role of the Dubbo conference is to focus on industry relocation from the eastern seaboard along the proposed track. The studies identified the efficiencies that industries will be able to gain in their operations by relocating to greenfield sites along the track, which would be serviced by a number of ports. With the relocation of industries the possibility of benefit to rural Australia is immense. History shows that the American rail system opened up America. I commend this concept to the House.

[Mr Deputy-Speaker left the chair at 6.09 p.m. The House resumed at 7.30 p.m.]

GOVERNOR OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Governor's Response to Presentation of Address

Mr WHELAN (Strathfield—Minister for Police) [7.30 p.m.]: I move:

That this House notes with pleasure Her Excellency the Governor's answer to the Address of Congratulations adopted by the House on 7 March 2001, on the occasion of Her Excellency's assumption of the administration of the government of the State.

Mr MARTIN (Bathurst) [7.30 p.m.]: It is a pleasure to speak on the historic appointment by the New South Wales Government of the thirty-seventh Governor of New South Wales, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, AO. Her Excellency is a trailblazer for many reasons, quite apart from being the first woman Governor of New South Wales, Australia's oldest State. I congratulate the Premier on his choice. New South Wales has a long list of well-credentialed Governors. I recall Sir Roden Cutler, Sir William McKell, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair, Rear Admiral Sir David Martin and more recently Gordon Samuels. I echo the remarks of the Premier that the thirty-seventh Governor, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, arguably will be the best qualified of our Governors.

There was a tradition of the States and Commonwealth of Australia appointing Governors and Governors-General from pensioned-off members of the English aristocracy. But Labor governments have a tradition of trailblazing, and it was a Labor Government that first appointed an Australian to such a position. The Scullin Government in the 1930s appointed Sir Isaac Isaacs Governor-General. We all know the controversy that that caused at the time. Since then Australia has matured as a nation, and many fine Australians have held those positions.

Our thirty-seventh Governor has a proud ethnic background. She was raised in country New South Wales, initially at Narrandera. Professor Marie Bashir always speaks with great pride of her early days of country life and her humble Arabic heritage. Professor Bashir, a person of great intellect, a public health official and a medical professional highly qualified in psychiatry and particularly paediatrics, has a history of hands-on involvement in issues concerning indigenous Australians. The Governor, in her speech on being sworn in, told us that we can learn from our indigenous brothers and sisters who, for thousands of years, lived in rural communities in harmony with their environment.

Our new Governor asks our community to take on board the lessons to be learned from our indigenous community. We all know that one matter that raises its head in this Parliament is our environment. We are seeking ways to right some of the wrongs of the past 200 years of white settlement. Professor Bashir rightly urges us to look to the history of our indigenous people and their harmony with the land. I am sure that this Parliament, as it deals with salinity and other land problems, will heed the words of our Governor and find that many solutions will come from the experiences of our indigenous people.

The Governor's husband also is a well-credentialed Australian. Sir Nicholas Shehadie represented Australia in rugby union, is a former Lord Mayor of Sydney and Chairman of SBS. Sir Nicholas, who also had a rich public life, will be a great asset to our Governor as she moves about the State in the discharge of her role. I am delighted that the Governor has indicated to me that she will visit the electorate of Bathurst, which currently is working on a program with the Bathurst City Council. I think it appropriate that the Governor, having indicated her acceptance of the invitation to come to Bathurst, should make that visit early in her term of office. Bathurst is Australia's oldest and most important inland city. It was first settled in 1815 by Governor Macquarie. The first Christian service outside Sydney was held at Bathurst in May 1815. The Governor, through her husband, has a connection with Bathurst. The Shehadie family are well-known residents of the city.

I have had brief discussions with both the Governor and Sir Nicholas, who are delighted to be coming to Bathurst, not only to renew that family connection but also to see an electorate that personifies what this beautiful State is all about. For that purpose, I cannot think of a better place than the electorate of Bathurst, whose 14,202 square kilometres contain some of the most magnificent scenery in New South Wales. The only thing we have not got is a beach. But we have magnificent national parks, including the Blue Mountains National Park in the east, the Gardens of Stone National Park, the Kanangra-Boyd National Park, and the Abercrombie Caves.

During her stay the Governor will visit many such places as part of, we hope, a two-day or three-day program. In this year of the Centenary of Federation, Bathurst is recognised as one of the key cities that played a role in the Convention of Federation of 1896, got the Confederation issue back on the agenda and came up with

a framework that eventually led to Federation. It is therefore appropriate that the Governor should visit Bathurst in the year of the Centenary of Federation. As soon as the appointment of Professor Marie Bashir as Governor was announced, Sister Pat Linane of the Sisters of Mercy in Bathurst was quick to approach me and ask whether we could invite the Governor to Bathurst. Sister Linane, who runs the social justice group within the Sisters of Mercy in Bathurst, through her pastoral and community work, has for some years had an association with the Governor. Whilst in Bathurst the Governor will participate in some of the social justice programs and celebrations that the Sisters of Mercy of Bathurst will hold at that time.

I am pleased that the Governor is relaxed about this Government's decision, made in its previous term, that Government House should be a house of the people. We know about the controversy raised by the conservative members on the other side of this House, who suggested that it would be the end of civilisation as we knew it if Sir Gordon Samuels did not actually reside in Government House, just down the road from this parliamentary establishment. We heard the former Governor say what a wonderful decision it was that Government House was opened to the people. Hundreds of thousands of people have had access to that magnificent building. I am pleased that the thirty-seventh Governor reiterated that she is happy with those arrangements. She will continue to welcome people daily at that wonderful and historic setting. All those doubting Thomases in the Opposition thought that it was a terrible decision and that it would divide the community.

As the new Governor is the second Governor to adopt that positive attitude we can lay to rest any fear that Government House will become a fortress for the vice-regal representative. I make these comments as a committed republican but I recognise the ceremonial role that the Governor plays. When Governors visit rural communities the respect that is shown to the office of Governor can vary, depending on the Governor. In my role as mayor of a country city I have encountered Governors such as Sir David Martin and Governor-General Sir William Dean. The strength of the person and his or her personality make those visits memorable. I am sure that Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir will further enhance that tradition.

In my brief encounter with her today I found her to be a humble, warm and compassionate person—things which are obvious if we take into account the history of her public life. As a health professional she extended her hand to those in the community who were less fortunate than others, particularly young people with problems and indigenous Australians. I look forward to her forthcoming visit to Bathurst and I will view with interest her period in office. I am sure that she will bring a new dimension to the office of Governor. The decision of the Premier and the Government to appoint her to this position will be well and truly justified. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr FRASER (Coffs Harbour) [7.43 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to extend to Governor Marie Bashir the warm welcome of the Coffs Harbour electorate. My wife and I have had great pleasure in welcoming to the Coffs Harbour electorate former Governors of this State. Governor Peter Sinclair, a unique man, visited the Coffs Harbour electorate on more than one occasion. I extend to our new Governor the same invitation that I extended to former Governors. I invite her to visit the Coffs Harbour electorate—the best electorate in regional New South Wales. All honourable members are well aware that Coffs Harbour electorate, Bellingen, Dorrigo and Raleigh are suffering badly as a result of recent floods. It would be nice if the Governor visited people in those areas and gave them some support.

As the honourable member for Bathurst said earlier, politics is a funny game. People in regional and rural Australia—a conservative group of people—believe that the role of the Governor is to protect their interests. I draw the attention of honourable members to a book written by Clive Evatt, a great stalwart and patriarch of the Labor Party, entitled *The King and his Dominion Governors*. I have referred on other occasions in this House to the book that was written by Clive Evatt. I think he was given an instruction at the time by the then Labor Government or the Labor Opposition to investigate the dismissal by the Governor of Labor Premier Jack Lang. The basic idea behind his writing of that book was to debunk the role of Governor.

In Todd's thesis, which Clive Evatt included in his book *The King and his Dominion Governors*, Todd concluded that it was the Governor's role to protect the welfare and wellbeing of all Australians. If a government is not being fair to all Australians it is the role of the Governor to take action to protect the welfare of the people. Today the honourable member for South Coast moved a motion for urgent consideration relating to the Government's announcement last week of its \$433 million schools capital works package. The school funding package announced by the Premier and his Government was nothing other than a gloss. It was demonstrated quite clearly that \$39,800 of that funding was allocated for the heating of country classrooms and over \$900,000 was allocated for the heating of city classrooms. So there has been what I would suggest is political bias in that regard.

Funding has been given to metropolitan New South Wales, or New South Wales as the Labor Party recognises it—Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong. I am sure that the Governor, with her great humanitarian record, would be interested in the fact that this Government has seen fit, once again, to allocate funds in a disproportionate manner. At the same time the Government sent out 40 media releases stating what a great job it and Country Labor have done for regional New South Wales. I note that the honourable member for Cessnock acknowledges that statement. As a spokesman for Country Labor I am sure that he is ashamed of this Government's disproportionate education funding.

The honourable member for Cessnock acknowledges that this funding was made available only for maintenance. The honourable member for Wallsend knows that Newcastle is part and parcel of New South Wales, just as Wollongong and Sydney are part of New South Wales. The honourable member for Cessnock realises that as his electorate is on the fringe of those areas he does not receive the same consideration from this Government as do his city cousins. He is good at issuing media releases that criticise people. He puts his name on those press releases because he thinks it will give him some notoriety. He issues media releases criticising people who have bettered themselves—people who have obtained an education and who have a right to put initials after their names.

The honourable member for Cessnock, in conjunction with people from the Premier's Office, decided to criticise someone for doing that. I am sure that he and all other honourable members aspire to a better education for future generations. Someone with an education should not be sneered at by a milkman from Cessnock. This Government's disproportionate level of funding in regional New South Wales is reflected in its funding of Coffs Harbour hospital and the Mid North Coast Area Health Service. I am sure that this humanitarian Governor, who has a history in health care in New South Wales, will feel embarrassed about the way in which this Government has allocated funds. I hope she will visit regional New South Wales and take back to the Government her views about its disproportionate funding. Coffs Harbour hospital, which was allocated funding under the previous Government was to be completed—on the words of by Dr Refshauge—by the end of 1999. However, I am sure that that hospital will only be completed in 2002.

The budgetary allocation for Coffs Harbour hospital is well below what it requires to service the people of the North Coast as well as they would like to be serviced. Our waiting lists have blown out incredibly, and that is unacceptable. When this Government came to office it put a two-year freeze on capital works spending in regional New South Wales. Projects such as the Coffs Harbour hospital were delayed. It is now crowing about what a great job it has done, but we will get only 148 beds for general hospital care. We will get a 30-bed psychiatric unit, and that is fine except that it is a regional psychiatric unit. A rehabilitation unit is to be built there but, once again, it will be a regional unit.

The hospital currently has 157 beds, down from 169 beds when this Government came to office, and the brand new hospital will have 148 beds, although an increasing number of people are moving to the Coffs Harbour area because it is such a magnificent area. We have a decreasing dollar value in health, an increasing waiting list and frustration for those who retired to the North Coast because they cannot have their elective surgery. If the Governor visits Coffs Harbour, and I am sure she will, she will see that disparity in funding and she will see that the action claimed by Country Labor in providing services to regional New South Wales is nothing more than window-dressing of the worst kind.

It is interesting to note the comments of the honourable member for Bathurst concerning the dedication and use of Government House as a residence for the Governor. The Parliamentary Secretary assisting the Premier on matters concerning the Illawarra is known as the vice minister because he is a Parliamentary Secretary and because early in his career, when he was in China, he thought being the minister for vice or vice minister would give him further credence. He used that title for a number of weeks. I draw his attention to the fact that in 1917 the site of Government House was dedicated as the residence and office of the Governor.

The Carr Government knows that it cannot do whatever it wants with it because it would have to change the dedication of this Parliament. That would result in demonstrations far larger than those we witnessed when the Government tried to do away with the office of Governor. At that time 15,000 people demonstrated loudly in Macquarie Street over the Premier's proposal. The conservative people of New South Wales, including those who vote for the Labor Party, know and believe that the Governor has a role to play in protecting their welfare, and this is confirmed by Dr Evatt in his book. I believe this Governor will fulfil that role.

Only six or eight weeks ago I had the great pleasure of meeting with Sir Roden Cutler, who, I must admit, was a childhood hero of mine. He was a man larger than life—and he still is. He was a great

humanitarian Governor and he continues to care about the people of New South Wales. When I saw him I was given an autographed copy of his biography. When one reads the hardships that he went through as a lad, and that his family went through, and the way he supported his family—Madam Acting-Speaker is claiming that this is tedious repetition.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Beamer): Order! The honourable member for Coffs Harbour will not cast aspersions on the Chair. His claim is not correct. The member for Murrumbidgee described him as tediously repetitious and I merely said he was tedious.

Mr FRASER: I accept your personal explanation, Madam Acting-Speaker. When I forward a copy of *Hansard* to Sir Roden Cutler I am sure he will understand the intent of the House this evening. I will defend that man until the end of my days for the job he has done for returned service personnel and the people of New South Wales. He is a magnificent man. The duty he performed for this State and Australia in several offices will never be forgotten. He was injured in the war and lost a leg. He still takes a great interest in this Parliament, especially in the National Party. He was related to Charles Cutler, who came from Bathurst. I believe that Dr Bashir will be cast in the same mould as Sir Roden Cutler and other Governors before her. Sir David Martin and Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair were also loved and revered by the people of New South Wales.

It is fitting tonight that as the representative of the people in the Coffs Harbour electorate I should extend a formal invitation to the Governor to visit the best electorate in New South Wales. It has the most magnificent scenery and the most magnificent climate. Its climate has been recognised by the CSIRO as the most temperate climate in the world—not only Australia. I invite the Governor to see how hard it is for people in country areas, especially after the recent major disaster that we suffered. I invite her to attend the local shows, as Governor Peter Sinclair did. We would love to see her in Coffs Harbour filling her constitutional role as Governor, a role I trust and pray will be maintained in this democracy long after I have gone so that those who follow her will protect the rights and privileges of the citizens of New South Wales.

Mr MILLS (Wallsend) [7.56 p.m.]: It is a pleasure to support the motion moved by the Leader of the House:

That this House notes with pleasure Her Excellency the Governor's answer to the Address of Congratulations adopted by the House on 7 March 2001, on the occasion of Her Excellency's assumption to the administration of the government of the State.

The Premier, in his speech at Government House on that day, referred to Governor Marie Bashir as the best qualified Governor in New South Wales history. I pay tribute to the extent of her professional and personal qualifications. Since 1993 she has been clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of Sydney and a senior specialist in child, adolescent and family psychiatry. Since 1994 she has been area director of mental health services in the Central Sydney Area Health Service. Since 1996 she has been senior consultant to the Aboriginal Medical Service at Redfern and Kempsey.

Since 1983 she has chaired a wide range of organisations including the Council of the Women's College at the University of Sydney, the New South Wales Juvenile Justice Advisory Council, the Metropolitan South-west Region Customer Service Council of the New South Wales Police Service, the New South Wales strategy for Aboriginal mental health, the third world health group in the University of New South Wales, the New South Wales task force on children's mental health, the review of northern Sydney child and adolescent services, the non-English-speaking background suicide prevention project, and New South Wales mental health implementation group. That is a very impressive professional record indeed.

The Premier in his address at Government House referred to Dr Bashir's deep and continuing concern for indigenous health, prevention and early intervention in child and adolescent health, innovative health service delivery using new technologies, raising professional health standards in developing countries, and advancing reconciliation. I agree with the Premier that there has never been a more highly qualified Governor of New South Wales. Her interest has touched so many people in the community of New South Wales, it has touched individuals all over the State. In particular I refer to the way her interests have touched the indigenous people of New South Wales. I look forward to a strong contribution from the reflections of our Governor and the advice and considerations she will give to New South Wales governments on indigenous issues, because she has insights and deep understandings in that area and a lot of experience in dealing with the indigenous people of New South Wales.

Dr Marie Bashir is the first woman to be appointed to the position of Governor of New South Wales. The Premier rightly said that the appointment of another woman to the position of Governor would no longer

occasion special comment or surprise, and that is real progress for the women of New South Wales in all walks of life. The governorship of New South Wales should be open to the widest possible range of Australians. The office of Governor is at the apex of our system of constitutional government. The Premier described the office of Governor as the symbol of the legitimacy of parliamentary democracy. The Governor represents the Queen of England, who is the head of State of New South Wales.

As a Republican, I know that one day the head of State will obtain legitimacy not from being the representative of the Queen of England but from the people of New South Wales, and that should be the constitutional position of the Governor—a proper Australian head of State in New South Wales, not the representative of a foreign monarch. Nevertheless, that constitutional position pertains, and in the meantime we respect that position, although we look forward eventually to change. Earlier the honourable member for Bathurst referred to the shameful attempt, a few years ago, of quite a few Coalition members to feed a media frenzy about Government House and its place—

Mr Richardson: For a few months.

Mr MILLS: For a couple of years. The honourable member for The Hills says a few months. It was certainly longer than that. Should the Coalition ever return to government in New South Wales, one wonders whether some Coalition members would not put a bayonet to the face of the Governor to force the Governor to live in the pile of sandstone at the northern end of Macquarie Street. The Governor's speech at the swearing in ceremony is worthy of congratulations and of note. She acknowledged in her speech that she was the first woman to undertake this role in New South Wales and appreciated the historical significance of the responsibility that that role invoked. I indicate to the Governor that her appointment has raised the expectations of the office of Governor among many people in New South Wales.

I reported the Governor's appointment and Dr Bashir's acceptance of the position of Governor to the Wallsend branch of the Australian Labor Party. At a large meeting led by women the branch cheered and applauded Dr Bashir's appointment to the office of Governor. They were pleased that someone such as Dr Bashir had been offered and had accepted the role. I trust that Dr Bashir will accept those congratulations from the working people in the Hunter with the good intent that they were given. I trust also that Her Excellency will respect that the role of Governor is one of responsibility to all the people of New South Wales, not just the high-flyers who in many previous governorships have been those who surrounded the Governor. In the speech at Government House Dr Bashir said:

My upbringing and working life have afforded me the privilege of continuing contact with a great many citizens of New South Wales of considerable social, ethnic, and cultural diversity—some great achievers, but also the vulnerable young, the indigenous, our refugee citizens, and people whose lives have been significantly marginalised—all individuals who have taught me much about courage, resilience and dignity.

That Dr Bashir should say those things in her speech of acceptance of the position of Governor leads me to complement her for her courage, resilience and dignity in accepting the role. I know she will bring her lifetime of experiences as a healing professional and as a communicator to the job. Her position regarding Government House, on which the Coalition has been so divisive previously, is worth quoting. Dr Bashir said:

Government House will continue to serve as the magnificent focal point for Vice-Regal receptions, State functions and other important ceremonial occasions such as investitures. The Historic Houses Trust will continue to supervise with their meticulous care the intricate restoration of this historic building which will remain open to the citizens of New South Wales and other visitors when not engaged in Vice Regal functions. In this way, our people will be able to share, in part, the historical legacy of their State.

To give an example of Dr Bashir's insights, in the same speech she contrasted the present to colonial times. She said that we now live in a country where an expectation of harmony and peace is placed at the highest level by most citizens. She referred to inclusiveness, tolerance, the will to learn from one another and the stability of political structures not being dependent on military intervention. She commented that we live in a time of market pressures with unfortunate consequences, in some cases, for our sense of community. She said:

For a State and a people to prosper in the longer term, I believe that there needs to be a climate of reciprocity, involving the ordinary citizens as well as the powerful.

I commend those words of the incoming Governor for the careful consideration of honourable members of this House and of the people of New South Wales. Dr Bashir further said:

Such a society rejects, as its highest aim, materialism ...

Once again I commend the Governor for her insights and her affinity with the ordinary people of New South Wales. She said that she expected to find an enormous reservoir of generosity not only amongst groups of health

and welfare workers but amongst artistic and cultural people, performing and visual arts people, and the young and the old, both in rural areas and on the outskirts of the city. She was heartened and encouraged that more people were searching for a fuller and richer life extending beyond acquisitions to more intangible ethical and spiritual considerations, such as serving others. Once again I commend the words of the Governor to honourable members of this House and to the community. Finally, Dr Bashir said:

In this, we can learn from our indigenous brothers and sisters, who for thousands of years lived in real community as well as in harmony with the environment.

The Governor encouraged further development of our sense of community. She wished to see the State of New South Wales continue to prosper in harmony and strength. A wonderful woman has accepted the position of Governor of New South Wales. I wish her well. I wish her a peaceful and positive experience in that role, and trust that she will continue to contribute to public life in New South Wales as she has done for many years.

Mr PICCOLI (Murrumbidgee) [8.08 p.m.]: I welcome the appointment of Marie Bashir as the thirty-seventh Governor of New South Wales, particularly as she was born and raised, at least in her early years, in Narrandera in my electorate of Murrumbidgee. It is a great privilege and honour for the people of Narrandera and, indeed, the people in my electorate that the new Governor is a resident of that fine town in my fine electorate.

Ms NORI (Port Jackson—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Tourism) [8.09 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I speak on the appointment of Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir as Governor of New South Wales. There is a long history of distinguished service to New South Wales by previous Governors, all of whom have been men. The nomination of a woman as Governor was not tokenistic. Few people, if any, in New South Wales would have the experience and character to fulfil the role of Governor of New South Wales at the start of the twenty-first century. She is a woman who has dedicated her life to serving people. Quietly and without fanfare she has built up a history of service that few people in this State could equal.

Previously, in her role as Director of Mental Health Services for the Central Sydney Area Health Service, Her Excellency was located in my electorate of Port Jackson. Obviously, I had dealings with her in that capacity. In her office on the Rozelle Hospital site she delivered an excellence in service to New South Wales that few outside the health care system would have been aware of until the announcement of her appointment as Governor. Her Excellency was a healer. She did not have a job that gave her great fame or wealth. She dealt with people from diverse backgrounds and life experiences. On a number of occasions when I had meetings and dealings with her, her level of compassion towards people with mental illness and problems was really quite touching. In her swearing in speech Her Excellency paid homage to the people with whom she has had contact in her personal and professional life. Her Excellency described these people as having taught her much about courage, resilience and dignity.

I am sure that the people of New South Wales will benefit from a Governor whose life has been enriched by her life experience and who has the humility to learn from people who have often been disregarded and marginalised by mainstream society. I would like to add my thanks to Her Excellency for her outstanding work for the people of New South Wales. My electorate of Port Jackson is very much a microcosm of the State of New South Wales: it is home to people who are great achievers as well the vulnerable and those who have been marginalised by society. I know that over the years Her Excellency has given a great deal of herself to helping these people. I assure the House that her hard work has not gone unnoticed.

The appointment of a woman as Governor caused a great deal of discussion when the announcement was first made, but it is not surprising because it is quite an historic appointment. I am very pleased to note that in none of the discussions to which I have been privy has the appointment been described as controversial, nor should it have been. Her appointment is clearly historic, but it is not controversial and it is not tokenistic. As a woman who came into this Parliament when women were still very much a rarity in the Legislative Assembly—and we are still outnumbered—it is comforting to see the general acceptance by the public of women in important roles. I look forward to the day when the appointment of women to important and prestigious positions is so common that no member of Parliament would even consider mentioning her gender in this House.

Mr GLACHAN (Albury) [8.13 p.m.]: I can remember a number of Governors who have served this State really well, going back to Sir William McKell, Sir Roden Cutler, Sir James Roland Sir David Martin, Admiral Peter Sinclair and the Hon. Gordon Samuels. Now, for the first time in this

State, we have a woman as Governor and I welcome her appointment. She is a very special and outstanding individual, and a wonderful citizen of this State. Her Excellency Marie Bashir grew up in

Narrandera in the Riverina of Lebanese descent. She learned all of the values that the Lebanese people hold dear—strong family values, honesty and integrity—and inherited them in great measure. When I was younger I saw Australia play rugby against Fiji. Her husband, Sir Nicholas Shehadie, was playing for Australia, and I remember thinking what an outstanding rugby player he was. He went on to be the Lord Mayor of the City of Sydney. What a great family!

I was introduced to Her Excellency at Government House. Honourable members can imagine my surprise when, on hearing my name, she said, "Mr Glachan, I knew your daughter when she was at Women's College." My daughter was there about 16 years ago. I know that my name is unusual, but it is remarkable that she would remember my daughter then connect the two of us. Although I had not previously met the Governor I had heard of her from my daughter. Some 16 or 17 years ago, when my daughter was senior student at Women's College, Professor Bashir was involved with the board. She was particularly kind, understanding and helpful to my daughter and to the other women at the college and was highly regarded by them. They thought that she was an outstanding and wonderful person, and she knew many of them very well. Even though it was a big college with many students, Dr Bashir took the time to get to know most of them. She always had a kind word for the students, and was always encouraging and helping them. Those who had any problems or difficulties could go directly to her and she was always ready to help and support them.

Dr Marie Bashir is a wonderful woman. She is an outstanding choice for Governor of this State. She will set an example to everyone in the State. Previously I listed some outstanding people who have acted as Governor, but she will be as good as or better than most. She will be one of best Governors this State has ever had. The people of New South Wales will be thrilled to have her as Governor and they will be very proud of her. I look forward to the wonderful things that will happen in this State while this magnificent woman is Governor. I very much support her appointment. I wish both she and her husband well as she carries out her duties of Governor for the people of this State. I know that she will bring dignity, sincerity, kindness and consideration to the people she serves.

Mr LYNCH (Liverpool) [8.17 p.m.]: On one level it is a tad ironic that I would participate in this debate. I regard the position of Governor, constitutionally, as one that is thoroughly and completely flawed. The position of Governor is representative of the British Crown. My constitutional position is that the most admirable Head of State of Britain ever was Oliver Cromwell. I certainly would not have any sympathy for the policies he pursued in Ireland, but his approach to decapitating Kings was probably a fairly sensible one; at least it moved away from a monarchical system of government. The problem with the monarchy and thus with the Governor's position is that it is fundamentally undemocratic. This powerful position is handed down on the basis of birth and heredity, not on the basis of democratic election. That must mean that the monarchy is fundamentally wrong, fundamentally flawed and fundamentally undemocratic. At least that is the theory of it.

In practical historical terms the monarchy grew out of and represented an oppressive, elitist society in which one class ruled and other classes were made to serve them. It was fundamentally undemocratic and fundamentally wrong. When one looks at some of the people who have held the position of Governor, one would hardly expect an appointment of a fairly high calibre. We certainly hear of great things about the early Governors, like Phillip and Macquarie. They were at best, however, autocrats. Once you get past Macquarie in the nineteenth century there is not a lot to be said for most of them. Ralph Darling, for example, was one of the great autocrats. He is still talked about as someone whose actions ought to be considered when we look at the development of press freedom in New South Wales.

Robert Pullen wrote a book about the subject not all that long ago. Despite the best efforts of historians, like Brian Fletcher, people such as Darling are reasonably unattractive individuals. We then move on to more unattractive Governors, like Philip Game, who dismissed a democratically elected Premier, Lang. On any view of it that was a wrong, appalling and undemocratic action. There was Bligh, who, despite the defence of people I greatly admire such as Doc Evatt, was a pretty unattractive character. The actions that Bligh took against Irish prisoners in Australia, as well as against Michael Dwyer and the other 1798 rebels, were quite appalling—although I certainly would not defend the awful people who removed him in the Rum Rebellion.

Having said all of that, some interesting things can be said about the present Governor. The reason I wanted to participate in this debate is that she is so very different from all of that, and her choice as Governor and the qualities she brings to the position are against the tradition of Governor appointments. She is far more representative of Australia and New South Wales than other Governors have ever been. That is something that I think we should welcome. As a number of people have said—and it is totally appropriate to note here—she is the first woman to be appointed as Governor. It would be nice to have people appointed to the position of

Governor without any comment being made about the person's gender. It is an indictment of what has happened until now that people get excited about the fact that a woman is being appointed, because it has taken so long for that to occur.

Another aspect about Marie Bashir's appointment and her qualities that I would particularly like to point to is her non Anglo-Saxon background, the fact that she has a Lebanese and Arabic background. I think that is particularly significant, given that historically, in accordance with the repressive and undemocratic aspects of the Governor's position, all of her predecessors have been not only male but also Anglo-Saxon males. It is not surprising that an electorate such as mine—65 per cent of my constituents were either born overseas or have one parent who was born overseas—feels a little alienated from this continuous run of ex-military, middle-class, middle-aged blokes, all of whom are Anglos, being appointed to the position. It is particularly pleasing to an electorate such as mine to have a person with a Lebanese background appointed as Governor.

Various people, such as the lunatic from Queensland and sometimes people in this House, argue against multiculturalism as a policy, saying it is a bad thing. What such stupid people fail to understand is that multiculturalism is not a policy that we should either oppose or support; it is a description of how a large part of Sydney lives and is. Multiculturalism is a description of how we are; it is not something to be supported or rejected. People who do not understand that do not understand the nature of our society and our community. The appointment of a person of Lebanese background to the position of Governor is an eloquent statement of that; it is a declaration that people of the highest level accept that that is precisely the sort of society in which we live.

It is particularly significant not only that Marie Bashir has a non Anglo-Saxon background but that she has a Lebanese background. Periodically we have served up to us in the press racist stereotypes attacking the Lebanese community. On other occasions in this place I have spoken about how appalling that sort of nonsense is. Whether it be people describing Lebanese crime gangs or whatever, those sorts of attacks are fundamentally racist. They come from people whose view of the world is incredibly narrow and who have no understanding of the sort of society in which we live. The appointment of a person of Lebanese background to this position is a useful rebuttal of those sorts of approaches to our society. Marie Bashir is an excellent choice. My only regret is that she has been appointed as Governor and not as a State President or as a Republican Governor.

Ms HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [8.23 p.m.]: I support the appointment of Dr Marie Bashir to the position of Governor of New South Wales. One of my first memories of this place is when I was a candidate the first time round to be a member of this House. I was unsuccessful on that occasion. I remember collecting many hundreds of signatures to support the retention of the position of Governor in New South Wales. At that time the Labor Party sought to have the position abolished. It struck very much at the hearts of the people whom I sought to represent, and it was very easy to collect their signatures. Indeed, it was wonderful to have the position of Governor retained within this State.

As a woman in this place and as the only female member of the National Party in the lower House, I can totally identify with how Dr Marie Bashir must feel being the first female Governor of this State. It would not be an easy task. No matter how you go about your daily duties, it will never leave the minds of those who seek to work against you that you are a female; that will always be at the back of their minds. As other members have said, not only this evening in speaking to the motion but also on other occasions, it would be nice to reach the position where being female did not become an item in its own right; where it would be expected that men, as well as women, had the right to represent the State and to be a representative in Parliament, and it did not matter which political party we represented but we were all here to represent our electorates.

Dr Marie Bashir is an outstanding person—she is an outstanding woman. I attended Government House at her swearing-in, and was quite astonished to hear the level of success that she has achieved in her own right, not only as a female but as a person. She is totally outstanding in all of her professional fields. Dr Marie Bashir grew up in a country area, as did I. I was probably at the end of that particular generation that was of the view that women were brought up not to have their own roles but to be there to serve the males of the same generation.

Thank heavens for people such as you, Madam Acting-Speaker, other female members of this Chamber and I, who have sought to beat down that miserable role play and make names for ourselves, just as has the Governor of New South Wales has. Dr Marie Bashir is an absolutely outstanding woman, a person whom we could all aspire to in our lives. Dr Bashir holds all the decorum that a country woman should hold: she presents herself well, she looks immaculate, and she speaks in an outstanding manner. She is a very upstanding, refined, genteel country woman who has all the intellect, education and work experience that any citizen would hope to aspire to in his or her entire life.

I may be contravening the rules of this House by doing so, but this evening I am wearing a Country Women's Association badge, and I am very proud to wear that badge. The motto of the Country Women's Association is: "Honour to God, Loyalty to the Throne, Service to the Country, Through Country Women, By Country Women, For Country Women". We represent country women, and that a person like Marie Bashir has achieved as much as she has is extremely satisfying to all country women, who now know that such goals are achievable. I hope that Dr Marie Bashir is now happy in her chosen career. I know that she will be a better Governor than many of her predecessors. I am very proud to be able to call her my Governor, and I trust that she will find comfort in knowing that the members of this place are giving her such sound support.

Mr ASHTON (East Hills) [8.28 p.m.]: Dr Marie Bashir was an inspired choice for Governor of New South Wales. Her appointment has been welcomed by all sides of politics and the wider community. Of course, Dr Bashir becomes the first woman Governor of New South Wales. As other people have commented, it will be nice when we do not have to make that observation. We will no longer make an observation that we now have the first female Governor of the State of New South Wales. I am sure she will not be the last. Dr Bashir breaks the mould of Governors that so often represented the legal or military fraternity. I use the word "fraternity" in its true sense: the old boys network of generals, naval commanders, brigadiers and colonels, and people such as Sir Philip Game and others of true infamy. Dr Marie Bashir has had a long career in medicine, especially in the field of psychiatry and young people, and her innovation and creativity in that field resulted in her receiving the highest honour at Sydney University of clinical professor in psychiatry.

That medical field, with a faculty comprising largely Anglo-Saxon men, was not an obvious choice for Dr Bashir as a woman with an ethnic background. Dr Bashir showed great courage and commitment in pursuing that field of medicine and medical research. That is to her credit. We are only now understanding fully the problems associated with mental illness, particularly how it affects young people. Australia has a horrifyingly poor record of youth suicide and mental illness, and it is to Her Excellency's great credit that she became involved in that field at an early stage. I remind honourable members that Dr Marie Bashir is of Lebanese descent, which is further proof of Australia's success as a multicultural society. Previous speakers have made that point, but one cannot avoid the fact that it is an observation of some note. When public appointments are made that break the traditional mould of white, Anglo-Saxon males, it behoves Parliament to place them in their historical context. We will have achieved a great deal when we no longer feel compelled to highlight that fact.

Dr Bashir has shown great concern for Australia's indigenous people. While she represents those who came to Australia as migrants, her commitment to the health of Aboriginal people reflects great credit on her. Dr Bashir recognised the lifestyle, employment and health problems of our indigenous people long before the various State and Federal governments. Although I do not seek to introduce a note of disruption into the debate, let us be honest: the Federal Government pays no attention to such issues and hopes to divide Australia at the next Federal election over the issue of race. It comes as no surprise to learn that Dr Bashir feels acutely that the views of indigenous people must be represented. She has commented that she will be prepared to rock the boat and make statements that may not prove completely acceptable to the establishment—whether that is the New South Wales Government or any other government. That is a breath of fresh air. Our Governors must obviously play a ceremonial role, but they also have opinions about their spheres of influence that they should be prepared to voice. Perhaps that breaks protocol, but I think we should do it anyway.

Mr George: You usually do.

Mr ASHTON: Yes. Dr Bashir's husband, Sir Nicholas Shehadie—whom I have had the privilege of meeting several times at cricket or football games—advised me that, despite his distinguished career in business and local government, his great ability as representative of Australia in rugby union and his more recent appointment as chairman of the Sydney Cricket Ground Trust, his role would be that of a handbag to the new Governor; that he would merely be an escort to the Governor. He is very aware that the New South Wales Government appointed Dr Marie Bashir to the position of Governor on the basis of her abilities, not her connection with Sir Nicholas. I approve strongly of that comment.

I know that Dr Bashir will bring vigorous individuality and creativity to the role of Governor of New South Wales and she will do so with great pride as a person of the highest professional standing. She also has great personal qualities. The honourable member for Albury remarked on how Dr Bashir remembered his daughter from her university days 16 years previously. Dr Bashir also knows Daryl Melham—this may not be a good recommendation—the Federal member for Banks, who is also of Lebanese descent. She speaks highly of him, as he does of her. Her contacts cross political and ethnic divides, and she will bring much integrity and honesty to her position. She will also bring a degree of humility, as was obvious to those who had the privilege of meeting her at various functions over the past few weeks.

Her Excellency will visit my electorate on 11 April—this is particularly interesting for me— to present a prestigious award to a local high school. I am proud to announce that that school, Picnic Point High School, is the high school that I attended from years 7 to 12 and where I was head history teacher between 1987 and 1999, before my election to this place. Dr Bashir is to present the school with a trophy for raising the most money for the refurbishment of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. The students at Picnic Point High School sold badges and the like—many of them to me, I must admit—to raise money for the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. This is the second or perhaps the third time that the high school has received this award and on previous occasions the school captains visited the then Governor at Government House to accept the award.

The school, which has 600 or 700 students, is not a wealthy private school from which the parent of one of the schoolchildren can donate \$1,000 or make a similar commitment in order to win this prize. Governor Marie Bashir will visit this ordinary, average but very good government high school in my electorate to give teachers and students the recognition that they deserve. They will get nothing from this exercise—apart from the honour of having raised the most money—as the funds will go to the refurbishment of the Australian War Memorial. I am proud of that achievement because I was a head teacher at that school when a decision was made to raise money for that cause through our Anzac Day ceremonies. I further congratulate Dr Bashir on her decision not to live in Government House but to throw it open to the public as the previous Governor did, despite the pressure and intimidation from the previous Opposition. I note that this time Opposition members have not made the silly mistake of threatening to terminate the Governor's contract—it does not exist—

Ms Allan: Michael Photios is not around any more.

Mr ASHTON: The vertical corgi is no longer here—despite attempts to rope him into various seats. The Governor has made the commitment that Government House is for the people of New South Wales, not for her and Sir Nicholas, some servants and assistants. It will be used on ceremonial occasions when it is needed and the rest of the time will be open to the people. Many thousands of people—perhaps hundreds of thousands—have visited that building and it is most appropriate that the people of New South Wales should be able to visit their own Government House.

Not all Labor members, such as the honourable member for Liverpool and my colleagues sitting behind me, are monarchists. Perhaps none of us are. We do not believe in the appointment of the monarchs of England, and the outcome of the republican debate was rather tragic for many on this side of the House. We now know that when informed of the 1975 sacking of the Whitlam Government the Queen said: "What is going on over there?" and "Why wasn't I told? It should never have happened." Perhaps someone would like to focus on that point. In conclusion, I make the point that the Government has chosen for the people of New South Wales a fine Governor and it is fortunate that honourable members on the Opposition side of the Chamber agree with the choice that has been made. But whether members opposite agree with the appointment, the candidature of Dr Marie Bashir cannot be denied. I commend the motion.

Mr GEORGE (Lismore) [8.40 p.m.]: I support the appointment of Dr Marie Bashir as the Governor of New South Wales. On behalf of Lismore electorate, I congratulate her. In doing so, I am also proud, as a person of Lebanese descent, to speak on behalf of the Lebanese community, not only in this State but in this country in passing on congratulations. I have no doubt that each and every member of the Lebanese community would want his or her congratulations passed on to the Governor and to have recorded in this House that the Lebanese community is proud to have a Governor of this State who is of Lebanese descent. Dr Marie Bashir is an outstanding person. She is an outstanding woman. She is immaculate. She is also an intellectual. Dr Bashir represents what country women represent and she represents advancements in redressing mental health problems and the problems faced by Aboriginal people in this State.

The Governor must be concerned about the problems that the Lebanese community has had foisted upon it in relation to Lebanese gangs. It would be remiss of me not to address this issue because it is my duty to defend the Lebanese community and I do so on this occasion. Many of the young people who are said to be members of these gangs are born in Australia; they were not born in Lebanon. I acknowledge that the Governor would be concerned about comments relating to the Lebanese community. Dr Marie Bashir is a caring, articulate and courteous person who will definitely advance the future of the people of New South Wales. In acknowledging Dr Bashir, I also acknowledge the contribution made to this nation by her husband, Sir Nicholas Shehadie. In his inimitable style he will, I am sure, support Dr Bashir. In my mind Dr Marie Bashir will undoubtedly become the Lady Di of New South Wales and of Australia.

Mr McBRIDE (The Entrance) [8.42 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the Leader of the House. On behalf of the people of my electorate, it is my great honour to welcome Professor Marie Bashir as this State's thirty-seventh Governor. Professor Bashir's distinguished career and her contribution to a vast array of

community groups are well known throughout the community. I also believe that she is best qualified to be the Governor of our State. Her work with children and young people with mental illness is especially deserving of praise. In the light of the fact that there is such a high suicide rate among young males in particular, that attribute is especially worthy of acknowledgement. I should mention that youth suicide and the suicide of young adults is a major problem on the Central Coast. It is a matter of great concern to the wider community and it is wonderful that our Governor has direct experience in the treatment of mental illness as well as extensive experience in dealing with young people.

Professor Bashir was born in Narrandera. She is the first woman and the first person of Lebanese descent to be appointed as Governor of New South Wales. On completion of her Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery at the University of Sydney in 1956, she embarked upon a career in medicine and psychiatry. In 1994 Professor Bashir became the Area Director of Mental Health Services in the Central Sydney Area Health Service. In 1996 she was appointed as a senior consultant to the Aboriginal medical services at Redfern and Kempsey. Through her appointments to the mental health service in central Sydney and particularly as a consultant to Aboriginal health services in Redfern and Kempsey, Professor Bashir brings unique skills to her new position as Governor of New South Wales.

Professor Bashir has chaired numerous bodies. Since 1983, those bodies have included the Council of the Women's College at the University of Sydney, the New South Wales Juvenile Justice Advisory Council, the New South Wales Strategy for Aboriginal Mental Health, the Third World Health Group of the University of New South Wales, the New South Wales Task Force on Children's Mental Health, the Non-English-Speaking Background Suicide Prevention Program, and the New South Wales Mental Health Implementation Group. Her involvement in so many groups represents hard work and many hours of her precious time. Professor Bashir has made a considerable contribution to her community over a long period. Her contribution was recognised by the award of the Order of Australia in 1998 for services to children and adolescent health, especially mental health. That was due recognition of her efforts for our community as well as of her skills and commitment as a professional.

I have no doubt that as the first female Governor of the State of New South Wales and its first Governor of Lebanese descent, Marie Bashir's unique experience as a woman and as a first-generation Australian, which is an important factor in the cultural mix of Australia today, will bring to the office of Governor a new insight into the community. I foresee our new Governor, Professor Marie Bashir, becoming an outstanding public figure in the same way as Sir William Deane has done as Governor-General of Australia. Marie Bashir is a woman who is capable of achieving greatness and bringing great distinction to the position of Governor of New South Wales.

Ms ALLAN (Wentworthville) [8.46 p.m.]: What a marvellous sense of achievement there is in the fact that at long last, after a couple of hundred years, New South Wales now has a woman as Governor. It has been interesting to listen to this debate and to note the varying views that have been presented by honourable members on both sides of the House. It is unusual for a debate in this Parliament to invoke so much unanimity and goodwill. I was most impressed that the honourable member for Albury perceived the Governor, Professor Marie Bashir, as a woman of gentility. Perhaps it was only a case of the honourable member for Albury, unlike the honourable member for Coffs Harbour, recognising a kindred spirit and a synergy in similarity between gentle people, qualities not shared by the honourable member for Coffs Harbour.

Mr Fraser: There is nothing gentle about you.

Ms ALLAN: It depends on the circumstances. The honourable member for Burrinjuck was impressed by the sense of womanhood surrounding the appointment of our new Governor. The fact that Marie Bashir is a woman has given even the honourable member for Burrinjuck a role model in this Parliament. She is also impressed by our colleague Madam Acting-Speaker, the honourable member for Mulgoa, but at the same time is particularly impressed by the fact that we now have Her Excellency in this State. I was a little disappointed by the contribution made by the honourable member for Liverpool. All members on the Government side of the Chamber are, of course, republicans but this is not the time to be churlish about the republicanism or monarchism of honourable members, whatever the case may be. The reality is that New South Wales now has a woman who is the Governor of this State and that is a significant achievement.

I am pleased to note that as recently as during the last few weeks, New Zealand has begun to catch up to Australia's performance. Only two weeks ago Dame Sylvia Cartwright became New Zealand's first female Governor-General. The point must be made that in Australia we still have a little way to go before we begin to

match New Zealand's profile. I say that because the appointment of Dame Sylvia Cartwright has completed an historic hat-trick for New Zealand. All three top constitutional positions in New Zealand below the Queen are currently held by women. I can hear a chorus of endorsement and support from members of the Coalition for the proposition that even more women should be appointed to high office! With Dame Sylvia Cartwright as Governor-General, Helen Clark as Prime Minister and Sian Elias as the Chief Justice, women control almost all the levers of constitutional power in New Zealand. That gives us yet another benchmark to match.

The New Zealand Leader of the Opposition, Attorney General and Mayor of Auckland are also women. Frank Sartor, eat your heart out! Even the chief executive officer of Telstra is a woman. New South Wales, the premier State of Australia, now has a woman as Governor. That is a great achievement but we still have a way to go. Like Her Excellency Marie Bashir, who struggled through her life to achieve all the things she has achieved, whether professionally, educationally or in family life—it must say something about women who get to these positions in their life—the New Zealand Governor-General, Dame Silvia Cartwright, is the daughter of a shoe shop owner turned wool merchant. So she had a bit of Labor Party heritage and a bit of National Party heritage. She was the first female university student to study law and she became the first female judge.

We cannot pay tribute to Her Excellency Marie Bashir without also paying tribute to her husband, Sir Nicholas Shehadie. Many times we have read about and listened to the wonderful contributions that the partners of Governors have made, and I am sure that Sir Nicholas Shehadie, who has already made such an outstanding contribution—with commercial, local government and sporting achievements—will also make an outstanding contribution as the partner of the Governor. A number of speakers have noted that the National Party has already appropriated Her Excellency as a country woman. She grew up in the Riverina region of New South Wales and spent a large part of her life in Sydney. It is important that the Governor of this State has had a breadth of personal experience, having lived in both the country and the city and having a wide educational and professional background.

Governors of New South Wales have not always made an outstanding contribution. I am speaking more as a former history teacher than as a commentator on the performances of recent Governors. The Governors I have met or had experience with have impressed me with their sheer dedication and professionalism in their civic duty. The honourable member for East Hills was a history teacher more recently than I and he has documented the performance of some of the State Governors. It is a refreshing experience to meet a Governor who is such a personable practitioner of public policy. Marie Bashir has an academic background as well as a medical background. She has had much community experience and she is obviously already sending signals to the people of New South Wales that she will maintain those strong links. I was particularly impressed that in her speech she used the words "with joyful anticipation to serving the people of New South Wales". The atmosphere in this House this evening is such that it is obvious that the joyful anticipation is being effectively reciprocated by the Parliament of New South Wales.

Mr MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [8.53 p.m.]: I speak on the motion to note the answer to the address of congratulations on Her Excellency's assumption of the administration of the Government of New South Wales. My first meeting with Professor Marie Bashir was in 1992 when I was somewhat suddenly appointed to the office of Minister responsible for justice, juvenile justice and courts administration. I had been in office for about a day and my receptionist told me that there was someone to see me, Professor Marie Bashir. Immediately I met the professor I appreciated her commitment, dedication, sincerity and zeal to assist young people of New South Wales in her capacity as chair of the Juvenile Justice Council. She performed her duties in an utterly professional and committed way, which exemplifies her whole life and professional history and background.

Previous speakers have said that Professor Bashir was born in Narrandera, rural New South Wales, and came from a rural background. She became a qualified medical practitioner, a high calling of itself. Her life became one of commitment to serve the community. To this role she devoted her every effort. I congratulate her on her appointment as the first woman Governor of New South Wales. She richly deserves the honour and she has attained it by many years of community service. I know that she will perform the functions of the office with distinction. She comes from an excellent and solid family background. Her husband is former Lord Mayor of Sydney Nick Shehadie, who in his own right has been an outstanding servant of the public. He served the people of Sydney and New South Wales in his role as Lord Mayor and in other distinguished roles he performed in the administration of New South Wales.

I welcome Professor Marie Bashir to the role of Governor of New South Wales, a role that she will carry out with charm, sophistication and commitment. She has involved herself in so many aspects of service to young people, with compassion, concern and feeling. Her whole life and being were wrapped up in her

innermost desire to help young people experiencing difficulties. That impressed me 10 years ago. Since then her commitment has been nurtured and has become more intense. Her appointment as Governor is not only a reward but an opportunity to serve the people of New South Wales in that elevated role as the Queen's representative in the wonderful State of New South Wales. Professor Bashir and her husband will carry out their roles with distinction, dignity, pride, achievement and commitment. Professor Bashir said in her response that she was looking forward with joyful anticipation to serving the people of New South Wales. On behalf of the Opposition I am pleased to congratulate Professor Marie Bashir on the distinction of becoming the Governor of New South Wales.

Mr GIBSON (Blacktown) [8.58 p.m.]: On behalf of the people of Blacktown I welcome Professor Marie Bashir to the office of Governor. I recognise that she is the thirty-seventh Governor and the first female Governor of New South Wales. That is appropriate because over the last 40 or 50 years there has been a concerted effort to achieve female representation that is equal to male representation in most areas. Over the years there has been a push for equal pay for women. The Premier has pushed hard and often for equal representation in Parliament, not only on the back bench but also in Cabinet. It is appropriate that Professor Marie Bashir has taken up the mantle as the first female Governor of this great State. She is the best qualified governor we have had. I have no doubt that by the end of her term she will prove to have had by far the best reign of any Governor of this or any other State of Australia. She has reached the top in the fields of psychiatric medicine and health administration. She has worked closely with young people and Aboriginal communities in New South Wales. Her work with children and young people and mental illnesses is especially deserving.

No matter whom you speak to, they will talk about this lady's great compassion, warmth and work with Aboriginal people and communities and the young people of this State. Many honourable members were born in country New South Wales and Professor Bashir was born in Narrandera. I was born in Young and can identify not so much with members of the National Party, who are all fine people, but with some of its policies. Professor Bashir has had the experience of living in the country and in urban areas of this State and knows the problems of living in both areas. She is the first Lebanese to have taken on the mantle of Governor of this State, which typifies the multicultural aspect of this great nation. I have often said that this nation is fortunate because we live under the big umbrella of multiculturalism.

Mr Fraser: Louie Bayeh!

Mr GIBSON: He was Lebanese as well. Australia is probably the envy of most of the world today because we live in peace and harmony under the big umbrella of multiculturalism, mainly because we have love and respect for each other. I am certain that Governor Professor Bashir will expand that during her term as Governor of this State. The experience of Her Excellency extends beyond her medical career; it includes working with the Council of Women's College at the University of Sydney, the New South Wales Juvenile Justice Advisory Council, the New South Wales Strategy for Aboriginal Mental Health, the Third World Health Group of the University of New South Wales, the New South Wales task force on children's mental health and the people of the Non-English Speaking Background Suicide Prevention Project and the New South Wales mental health implementation groups.

Professor Bashir has had an important, long and distinguished career in the basic humanities. In her first speech as Governor, Professor Bashir said it is important to worry not only about wealthy people but about poor people, who are not as fortunate as others. I am certain that will be reflected throughout her time as Governor of this State. Professor Bashir identifies with, and gives hope to, all classes of people in our society. She has an affinity with the working class that, I am sure, no other Governor of this State has had. She has done great work for charity. She reflects, and has been part of, our great sporting nation. That is important because our greatest export is our sporting ability, and it is nothing short of remarkable for a nation as small as Australia to have developed the champions we have in most sports.

I first met Professor Bashir probably 20 years ago with her husband, Nick Shehadie, who has not only done great work in public administration but played rugby union for Australia for a long time. I do not suppose there was ever a better or tougher rugby union player than Nick Shehadie. I attended many of his games. I am certain that Professor Bashir has picked up on the fact that being a spectator or participator in sport teaches people how to win and lose. I have spoken to many groups in Blacktown since Professor Bashir became Governor and have found that she has been accepted overwhelmingly.

Aboriginal people in Blacktown are glad that at last they have a Governor who not only talks the talk but walks the walk, because this Governor has visited many Aboriginal communities and has developed many policies with Aboriginal people. They are ecstatic that they can identify with her and can go to her at any time with any problem or request for information. Professor Bashir has been warmly accepted by those people.

The Country Women's Association at Blacktown was established a long time ago when Blacktown was part of country New South Wales. In those times it took half a day to get to Blacktown by horse, or, if you went by train, sometimes you did not arrive at all—some people might say that has not changed much today. The Country Women's Association at Blacktown was ecstatic that Professor Bashir was elected as Governor not only because she is a female but because she identifies with country people. It is important to have a Governor who knows the feelings of rural and urban people because a Governor governs not one class of people but the whole State.

Friendly faces—a term that could apply to members in this Chamber—is a group at Blacktown that does community work and gives free advice to visitors at Blacktown railway station. For example, they give information to visitors on how to get to a tourist attraction at Blacktown or how to see the local member for Blacktown. Before being elected as Governor, Professor Bashir came in contact with that group, and they were ecstatic to find that she was a great lady who was prepared not only to talk with them but to spend some time with them. That is another instance of one group in the community that has totally accepted Professor Marie Bashir as Governor of New South Wales. One does not normally find the widespread acceptance that has been evident upon the appointment of Professor Bashir as Governor.

The Blacktown show society is one of the oldest in New South Wales. The honourable member for Londonderry, having been mayor of Blacktown for many years, is nodding his head and knows that the Blacktown show society prides itself on running the best show possible for the people of Blacktown. Blacktown is now part of this great city, but it used to be regarded as a country area, and every year its show society tries to put on a show that epitomises both the country feeling and the city feeling in that part of western Sydney. They totally identify with the Governor because she has spent part of her life in rural New South Wales and part of it in the city. I have spoken to rugby union people in the Blacktown area and they all identify with her. They feel that they know the Governor of this State well because they have met her husband, Nick Shehadie, and that gives them a very warm feeling about her.

The Shehadie family is very compassionate and shows great humility. Marie Bashir has set a high standard not only by what she has done in New South Wales but by the heights she has reached in her personal life. Often in a partnership or marriage one person is extremely successful and the other partner takes on a supportive role. However, in this case both Marie Bashir and Sir Nicholas have excelled in everything they have done. We are fortunate to have a Governor who is classy and well educated and can speak with the top end of town just as easily as she can speak with the battlers of New South Wales and feel equally at home. Her appointment is symbolic and supportive of what the Government has done in New South Wales.

A few years ago the Government made a decision that the Governor should no longer reside at Government House. This led to considerable debate in this Chamber for many months. Until the appointment of Professor Marie Bashir, the Opposition consistently presented petitions to this House praying that the office of Governor not be downgraded. Millions of people have now been through Government House and most people throughout New South Wales would now realise the historic significance of the building, which should not just be the home of the Governor and his or her family but should belong to the people of New South Wales. Opening up Government House as a major tourist attraction has also had the effect of reclaiming some of the foreshores of this great nation.

Governor Professor Marie Bashir has elected not to live at Government House. Without wishing to be political, that justifies the difficult decision that the Government took quite some time ago. The Government knew that it would receive a lot of flak because of that decision but that further down the track the decision would be justified. Previously, ordinary people did not have the opportunity to visit what is probably the prettiest and dearest piece of real estate in the nation. Only those invited to a cocktail party or to some other major function would have the opportunity to visit Government House—and that would never have been the ordinary people of Blacktown, Mount Druitt and other parts of New South Wales. It is significant that Government House has now been returned to the people of New South Wales. I am sure that Marie Bashir will turn out to be the greatest ever Governor of New South Wales and it gives me great pleasure to welcome her on behalf of the people of Blacktown.

Mr McGRANE (Dubbo) [9.13 p.m.]: I endorse the sentiments expressed by previous speakers. I congratulate the Carr Government on its excellent choice of Governor of New South Wales. Professor Marie Bashir is the first lady to be Governor of this State, and the many attributes she brings to the office have been referred to. Her husband, Sir Nicholas Shehadie, is a household name in New South Wales in sport and business. He is a former Lord Mayor of Sydney. Both he and Marie Bashir have excelled in their individual

fields. I first met Professor Marie Bashir at Government House but I have known her husband, Sir Nicholas, for a number of years. It says a great deal about Professor Marie Bashir and her husband that they both have had such distinguished success in different fields. She originally came from Narrandera.

Many of the Lebanese immigrants to Australia migrated to regional New South Wales, in particular. Most towns in my area have Lebanese families. In the main they have not been recent arrivals; they came in the 1940s and earlier. They were business people, basically in the rag trade, but in other trades as well. The father of a former councillor of Dubbo Shire Council, Col Shibble, came out from Lebanon and subsequently earned his living by travelling by train from Dubbo to Bourke, Coonamble and Cobar selling his wares. The Lebanese people brought merchandise to regional New South Wales and Australia. They are extraordinarily hard workers and are successful tradespeople in regional New South Wales.

When I met Professor Marie Bashir at Government House I spoke about my involvement at Gilgandra and particularly with the Shalhoub family. When I mentioned the Shalhoub family she said, "Tony Shalhoub was the person who gave me my black poodle. I will never ever forget him." That was a great statement from the heart. That night I rang Tony Shalhoub's daughter-in-law and spoke about my having met Marie Bashir. Tony is about 97 years of age. He has been in hospital for the past five years but still has most of his faculties. Judy Shalhoub said, "When the Governor's name was mentioned Tony told us this story about a dog and we could not make head nor tail of it."

However, it made sense when coupled with what the Governor said to me. The Governor remembered it and Tony remembered it. It is pleasing that she can bring such a personal touch and sentiment to this office and display warmth to me because I knew Tony. That typifies Lebanese people in Australia. They are close and hardworking and have done a lot to open up regional New South Wales and Australia. I congratulate the Government on its appointment of Marie Bashir as Governor of New South Wales, because she is a person of the people for the people.

Ms BEAMER (Mulgoa) [9.19 p.m.]: It is not often that a person in public office has so many of the wonderful qualities that Dr Bashir has. I refer not only to qualities that stem from her professional life but to her personal attributes as well. Often, some people—migrants, indigenous people, country people and indeed women—feel marginalised by their positions in our community. Anyone who knows Professor Bashir's past is at once astounded by the range of different duties she has taken on as chair of community bodies. The Premier listed quite a few of those in his speech. All of them relate to the charring of organisations of marginalised people in our community. When we look for role models we find few who can represent so well the marginalised in our society. I refer not to white Anglo-Saxon males but to women and migrants.

Our new Governor typifies a good role model for the marginalised. In her acceptance speech she spoke of her "continuing contact with a great many citizens of New South Wales," and of having met a number of great achievers "but also the vulnerable young, the indigenous, our refugee citizens, and people whose lives have been significantly marginalised—all individuals who have taught me much about courage, resilience and dignity." I think it is wonderful that a Governor of New South Wales, appointed in the year of the Centenary of Federation, a person looking for the best for the marginalised in our society, has those qualities of courage, resilience and dignity. She will bring those qualities and compassion for fellow human beings to her office.

I often have sad reflections, when watching and listening to television and news programs, that our young have few women role models. All too often it is difficult for young women to see a place for themselves in public life. Many have reflected on the number of young women who may want to become involved in politics and the reasons that they decide not to do so. However, the role model provided by our new Governor will send a positive message to not only young women but migrant women and women from country New South Wales. It is excellent that country New South Wales has in the Governor an example of a person who has achieved such high office. I noted chortling and laughter when the honourable member for Blacktown mentioned the Blacktown Country Women's Association. I have attended many meetings of the Penrith Country Women's Association. The reasons that such organisations still exist is that historically they have been meeting places for women who have enjoyed that interaction. The Country Women's Association in Penrith is alive and well, though few outside Sydney would describe Penrith as country. That is just an aside.

Mr R. H. L. Smith: It would have been country in 1788.

Ms BEAMER: In 1788 Penrith would have been considered a long way from town. I return to the fact that our new Governor means so many things to so many different people. It has been mentioned that Dr Bashir

is of Lebanese descent. At a time when some elements in our community are being attacked—and attacked unfairly—it is a wonderful and sensible message that we send to the people of New South Wales that in our Governor we have a woman who is not only highly intelligent and well educated but whose strong Australian identity has been, as she described, "woven as a rich tapestry into the Arabic heritage" of her forebears, whilst always retaining from her past a history and identity that is strongly Australian.

It is wonderful that we can say such things about the Governor of New South Wales. To me, it is like a breath of fresh air—something really new and exciting! The honourable member for Liverpool made some strong comments about his belief about the role of the Governor of New South Wales, that is, whether we should have one. This breath of fresh air might put his cause back a great distance, because the people will enjoy having a woman of dignity, calm and great perception as their Governor. The fact that New South Wales has such a great appointment as Governor is a great reason to put back the honourable member's cause.

I have mentioned the bodies that Dr Bashir has chaired over the past 17 years. Another body of people she has dealt with is those who suffer from mental illness. It is wonderful that a woman with a rural upbringing and such capacity has taken up the duties of Governor, but it is extraordinary that such a woman would have such a profound understanding of people who are so marginalised and discriminated against. We have in Dr Bashir a woman who brings to the role of Governor a depth of understanding that few of us could hope for in our lives. Dr Bashir spoke of the people she met who had courage, resilience and dignity. We have found as a Governor someone who has demonstrated that she has those trademarks. When I listened to Dr Bashir I heard a calm, quiet and dignified voice. But there was also great power in her words.

Another aspect of the life of our new Governor is prevention of suicide. The rate of suicide is a real blight on our society. I must admit that my understanding of the issue is limited, having never confronted it within my family until recently. It is anathema to me, and remains so despite recently being touched by the suicide of a family member. The questions that he asked of his sister, relayed to me, was how we can help. Dr Bashir chaired the Non-English Speaking Background Suicide Prevention Project. This role gives great depth to the task of looking after those in our society who have difficulty looking after themselves. These are important ways in which we in public office carry out those roles. We do so as representatives of constituents and groups that approach us. But it is very important to have as Governor someone who can say, "I know about this issue because I have worked in the field, so tell me about your story." Her role will be that of a great communicator, of someone who will find the ear of the people of New South Wales.

This will be very important for those who have never had such a contact. I can remember being quite struck by the message that Sir William Deane gave to the people of St Marys in his time as Governor. I look forward to the day when I will welcome Dr Bashir to the electorate of Mulgoa. She will find there a group of people who are willing to take to heart the issues that she herself holds so dear, and she will be able to give them so much. It is important that she intends to be so open to the public. Dr Bashir praised the fact that the building in which Governors, until Sir Gordon Samuels, had generally resided would remain open to the citizens of New South Wales. The symbolism in that gesture is in the opening up of the residence so that the people could see in that building part of the history of New South Wales and the residence of many of our former Governors.

I believe that Marie Bashir will be an example to us of decency, fairness and ethical conduct. Some people face hardship and challenges and she is a person who has had a bountiful life. What I suppose I wish for the Governor is that she will get as much back as she will undoubtedly put into her role. Reference has been made to this being the Year of the Volunteer—I am not suggesting at all that her job is one of volunteerism, but I often find that those who put a lot into the things they do get so much back for their efforts. I hope that Dr Bashir will get as much out of this job as I am sure she will put into it, because that will be ample reward for her new position. I join with all of those who have welcomed her appointment. I look forward to a time when I will be able to chat with her at Government House or listen to her interesting asides as she speaks about various issues. I join with all my colleagues on both sides of the House in wishing her well during his tenure as Governor and I commend the motion to the House.

Mr COLLINS (Willoughby) [9.30 p.m.]: This is an opportunity for this House to reflect not only on the individual who has been chosen to represent the people of New South Wales as Governor of this State but also on the role of Governor. I must say that it is one of the important decisions that government gets to make and it is equally important that we document it. I recall an afternoon in 1988 when Nick Greiner as Premier elect, Wal Murray as Deputy Premier elect and I as Deputy Liberal leader—the incoming Government—sat down in the office of the Leader of the Opposition on the 10th floor of this building. Nick Greiner looked at Wal Murray and said, "One of the first things we need to do is to fill the position about to be vacated by Sir James Rowland." Wal Murray and I looked at each other and said, simultaneously, "David Martin." That is when, where and how the decision was made to appoint David Martin as Governor.

Rear Admiral David Martin, the very popular naval commander in eastern Australia, had recently retired or was about to retire from the Australia Navy. I believe it is important that we put these things on the record to demystify some of these institutions and to explain to the citizens of New South Wales how such decisions are made. I happen to believe that the decision made by the Carr Government to appoint Marie Bashir as Governor of this State is one of the most inspired decisions taken by the Carr Government. It was a surprisingly excellent decision; an atypical decision, in that—as so many members have said in contributing to this debate—Marie Bashir did not represent, if you like, the standard candidate for the position of Governor. She did not satisfy the criteria met by so many of her distinguished predecessors, but I have absolutely no doubt that she will carry out the role with distinction.

I have had an opportunity, as someone who has spent almost 20 years in the New South Wales Parliament, to get to know five Governors of this State. We are exceptionally fortunate to have been continuously well served. In addition to Governor Marie Bashir, Governors that I have worked with in different capacities have included: Sir James Rowland, Sir David Martin, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair and Sir Gordon Samuels. I consider that they served this State extremely well. Many in this Chamber have also had an opportunity to meet that iconic former Governor, Sir Roden Cutler, a great Australian who served in many capacities. The role of Governor is not dependent on pomp and circumstance; it is not dependent on uniforms and the trappings of office. Some in the Chamber may recall previous British appointees who also served the nation well in the role of Governor-General. To mind come people such as Viscount Dunrossil and Viscount De Lisle. They were British citizens who served Australia as Governor-General for a short time. During that time much was made of pomp and circumstance which, I suppose, we sought to have grafted on to our own culture through those appointments.

The appointment of Marie Bashir is a uniquely Australian appointment. As Governor she will not depend on the trappings of office, uniform, or pomp and circumstance; she will shine through her humanity, her warmth, her personality and her intelligence. I was extremely fortunate when I became Minister for Health in the Greiner Government in 1988 to get to know Marie Bashir in a professional capacity. It was through bodies such as the Aboriginal Medical Service in Redfern that we met. Indeed, on one occasion Marie Bashir and I visited the Aboriginal Medical Service and, as a result of that visit, I was absolutely determined—and completely supported by her in my determination—to make sure that funds for Aboriginal medical services were not regarded as a hollow log by the rest of the Department of Health, as had been the case before then. In other words, we needed to quarantine funds for Aboriginal health. As so often happens, funds set aside for Aboriginal health would be dipped into for other health purposes and the money desperately needed by one of the most disadvantaged communities in this State would be depleted.

Of course, it did not end there. Mental health was another area in which Marie Bashir excelled and she strongly encouraged me in my efforts to tie up the many loose ends in mental health with some extremely conflicting legislation on the books. That was done by the introduction of the Mental Health Act, which was passed by this Parliament in 1990. Marie Bashir also made a great contribution in the juvenile justice area. The theme that has been picked up by many members during this debate is that we are talking about human issues; some of the most difficult issues that confront our society today. They were the areas where she worked—quietly, confidently, authoritatively, day in, day out, throughout her professional career. Indeed, I would say that if it was a tough issue, an insurmountable issue, one of those really confrontational issues that we needed health and professional advice on, it was often the case that Marie Bashir would be the first person we turned to—as I am sure has been the case in the Carr Government in respect of those issues.

Marie Bashir has served this State with enormous distinction, but this is only the beginning. Some members during the debate have sought to make comments about the role of Government House, as well as the role of Governor. I want to turn to that very briefly. Governor Bashir has decided not to live in Government House, as is her right and choice. But, let us not confuse the issue too much. We on this side of the House have never objected to the opening up of Government House—in the same way that Americans have never objected to the opening up of the White House. The White House remains a residence, a functional building in two senses: the ceremonial sense, which the people of the United States of America can participate in, can visit to see where their President works; and the private sense, the place where the President lives.

It must be put on the record that that choice will remain open to future governments, regardless of their political complexion. As many Government members have said, the people of New South Wales enjoy visiting Government House. That is to be encouraged. That was a reform that was necessary. The right of the public to visit Government House was a desirable step forward that is not inconsistent with having a governor resident in Government House. Indeed, the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales has plans on its books that enable

either a resident governor or a non-resident governor. They are both quite achievable. The Historic Houses Trust has probably worked out a more sensible and pragmatic solution than has been the case since Government House was vacated by Governors—that is, a building beside Government House which is far more habitable, as I understand it, than Government House.

The Chalet, I believe it was called, which was the residence of one of the senior staff of the Governor—the private secretary to the Governor—would be quite suitable accommodation should that option be exercised by a future government. When that option is eventually exercised by a future government that will in no way prevent or diminish the public visits that have become so much a part of the life of Government House. It is a great symbol of our democracy which should be enjoyed by as many citizens as possible in as many ways as possible. It is entirely consistent to have large, frequent and daily public visits to Government House, to see Government House used for ceremonial and constitutional occasions, to see Government House used for cultural events and, at the same time, to have a Governor resident in Government House. The fact that the new Governor has not chosen that option does not preclude that possibility in future. That possibility, which remains on the books, is a possibility that I am sure will become a reality at some stage in the future.

I go back to the contribution of Marie Bashir. Some of the obvious things have been stated. She is a woman of immigrant background. The fact that she is the first female Governor of this State has already been commented on by a number of honourable members. But the wonderful thing about the announcement of Marie Bashir as the State's new Governor was that she is so impeccably qualified in so many fields that being a woman of ethnic background was simply a bonus to an already illustrious career, which made her an ideal choice. I congratulate the Government on its recommendation. This is a home town decision. Let us be quite frank about the fact that the decision was made in Sydney—it was not made in London—by the Government of the day. It is a good decision, just as the appointment of the Chief Justice and Lieutenant-Governor, the Hon. Jim Spigelman, was an excellent appointment.

Honourable members differ on many issues, but when we agree it is important that people understand those issues on which we agree. We agree on some fairly fundamental points. To get our constitutional framework right, to have honourable and distinguished Australians filling those positions is a point on which we should be proud to agree. We are fortunate indeed with those appointments. Finally, all of us in this Chamber have the utmost confidence in the appointment of Marie Bashir as Governor of New South Wales. We wish her well in what will be a distinguished and historic career. I was proud that my eldest son, Ben, who was able to be with me on the day of her swearing in, saw that historic occasion. We all wish Marie Bashir, the Governor of New South Wales, and her husband, Sir Nicholas Shehadie, the best of good luck in the years ahead.

Ms SALIBA (Illawarra) [9.46 p.m.]: I add my congratulations to Professor Marie Bashir on her appointment as the thirty-seventh Governor of New South Wales—the first woman Governor of New South Wales. As has been stated, Dr Bashir is an Australian born child of Lebanese parents. She is not unlike many of my constituents, who either are migrants or are born of migrant families. I have said before in this House that I am a migrant. I came to Australia in 1964 with my family.

Mr O'Farrell: You must have been young.

Ms SALIBA: I was a babe in arms. It is great that a woman of ethnic background has now taken over the role of Governor. As I stated earlier, the Illawarra has a migrant population, many of whom come from non-English speaking backgrounds. It is pleasing to them to know that the Governor of New South Wales understands issues that affect immigrants and people from different ethnic backgrounds. Only a few weeks ago I had the pleasure of attending a function hosted by the Australian Philippine Association Illawarra Welfare Service. The function was the first Filipino women's achievement awards to celebrate International Women's Day 2001. The awards recognise the outstanding achievements and significant contribution to the community of Filipino women in the Illawarra.

This is the sense of community that Dr Bashir has spoken about—encouraging a community, though culturally diverse, to work together for the good of all. My family is a little like the community about which Dr Bashir has spoken. I migrated to Australia from Scotland. My husband, who is Maltese, migrated to Australia. Two of my children are migrants—they both come from Korea. One of my children is of Lao-Hungarian background and one of my children is Australian. We all choose to be Australians, to live here and to make Australia our home. We respect each other and we respect and appreciate one another's backgrounds. We try to foster our family's cultural diversity. Dr Bashir is also trying to encourage and foster a community, though diverse, to work together for the sake of a common goal—that is, for the sake of New South Wales.

Dr Bashir dedicated much of her time to the issue of mental health—a problem that is continually escalating due to drug and alcohol abuse, and an issue which we, the community, have to face and with which we have to deal. Dr Bashir's credentials speak for themselves. She brings to her new role a wealth of experience that will be of great benefit to all in New South Wales. Take, for example, some of the committees that she has chaired. I see Dr Bashir as a woman of passion. Some of those committees include: the Council of the Women's College at the University of Sydney, the New South Wales Juvenile Justice Advisory Council, the Metropolitan South West Region Customer Service Council, the New South Wales strategy for Aboriginal mental health, the Third World health group of the University of New South Wales, the New South Wales task force on children's mental health, the review of Northern Sydney Child and Adolescent Services, the non-English speaking background suicide prevention project and the New South Wales mental health implementation group.

Dr Bashir has shown great passion for those groups, which she has chaired. She is committed to the community and she obviously deals with issues of real concern to those who are not able to be understood and the disadvantaged who do not fully understand what is going on in the community. They really need the kind of help that Dr Bashir offers them. She has wide-ranging experience in a number of areas, including mental health, women's issues and Aboriginal issues. She will be a great asset to New South Wales. Her commitment to fairness and social justice is reflected in her participation on bodies such as the Juvenile Justice Advisory Council and the Aboriginal Mental Health Service.

Dr Bashir has shown a real commitment to those in need and those socially discriminated against. I share her views in all those areas, which need our undivided attention. Unfortunately, people are discriminated against. She has been invited by some community groups to visit my electorate. I look forward to her visit and to her joining in with the community, which looks up to her. I am sure that they will benefit from her experiences and her input into New South Wales. As was stated earlier by the honourable member for Mulgoa, Dr Bashir is a role model for women. She comes from country New South Wales and is a role model for young women in school and people who want to contribute to the community but do not know how to go about it.

Dr Bashir is a role model for migrants. She has demonstrated how migrants make a great contribution to the community and to the State. The Illawarra was built by migrants. From the 1950s to the 1980s people migrated to the Illawarra, mostly to work with BHP and Lysaghts. The Illawarra has a great cultural diversity and recently celebrated Viva la 'Gong—a great cultural festival. People from the Solomon Islands and Aboriginal communities were involved in many cultural activities, as were young gymnasts, artists and musicians. It was great to see so many communities coming together as one. It was like families coming together, and that is what we are about, and that is what I believe Dr Bashir is promoting in New South Wales in her role as our Governor. I congratulate her on her appointment. I look forward to working with her in State Parliament for the sake of the community.

Mr O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [9.54 p.m.]: The Office of Governor of New South Wales has existed for 213 years, and for 133 of those years our Head of State has been a female monarch—Queen Victoria from 1837 to 1901 and Queen Elizabeth II from 1952 until the present. It has taken us only 213 years to appoint the first female Governor of New South Wales. Along with all honourable members, I welcome the appointment of Professor Marie Bashir. Professor Bashir is the thirty-seventh Governor of New South Wales and the seventh Australian-born person to occupy that office. It was not until 1946, under the Labor administration of Bill McKell, that New South Wales was able to make a decision on who it wanted as its Governor. Prior to that the choice had been made in London. It was not until 1946, when Sir John Northcott was appointed to that post, that an Australian-born person was appointed to that office.

As the honourable member for Maitland and I have discussed previously, Dr Bashir is the third person from a non-military background to occupy the position of Governor. The debate between the honourable member for Maitland and me was that we might have overlooked that Sir Roden Cutler, who occupied that position, had been appointed from the foreign service, not directly from the military. Sir Roden Cutler, Gordon Samuels and now Professor Bashir are the only three people in 213 years to be appointed as Governor from outside the military. Much has been made during this debate of the contribution that Marie Bashir made in a number of areas, including Aborigines, mental health, children's services and suicide prevention—not areas normally associated with members of the establishment who have occupied Government House in the past. It is long overdue that people with that breadth and depth of experience in those areas should occupy the role.

Dr Bashir, as well as being well credentialled for the post, is of Lebanese extraction. The Lebanese have a long history of settlement in this country, dating back to the nineteenth century. They have made a significant contribution to the development of the country. The Lebanese community welcomed the decision of

the Carr Government to appoint Dr Bashir to the post. Last Sunday, along with my colleagues the honourable member for Epping and the honourable member for Hornsby, I attended the consecration and reopening of the St George Maronite Catholic Church at Thornleigh. Amongst those present were Bishop Joseph Hitti, Father El-Badaoui Habib and Mr Anthony Socari, who organised the ceremony. There was great joy that the Governor of New South Wales is of Lebanese descent.

It says much about the multicultural nature of our community that Dr Bashir is as welcome to the post as a Scott or an Irishman—as someone from the mother country had been previously. A few weeks ago when I met Dr Bashir at Government House I thought I should present her with a uniquely Ku-ring-gai gift—but not one of my speeches, which are always unique! I am aware of Dr Bashir's great love of music so I presented her with a recently released CD of Australian music by a Ku-ring-gai resident Deborah de Graff. Ms de Graff is a clarinetist and is a founding member and artistic director of the chamber music ensemble, the Ku-ring-gai Virtuosi. The CD presented to the Governor and Premier on that occasion is of music composed in Australia.

To my mind the gift was appropriate, not only because it reflected Ku-ring-gai's strong musical heritage but, as the pieces were by contemporary Australian composers, it also demonstrated the uniqueness of our community. Like Ku-ring-gai, the CD built on our past and embraced the future. I also note that the cover of the CD featured work by the late artist Shay Docking which was inspired by Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park.

Fortunately the Carr Government has made an excellent decision in the appointment of Dr Bashir as Governor. It is an appointment I would have hoped a Liberal government had the wisdom and foresight to make. I am sure she will serve the community with distinction. I hope that she, like the Governor-General, seeks to use her role and her particular and peculiar background to push the envelope of the role of the office of Governor of New South Wales. At the present time in our community there is clearly a disconnectedness between many people and the political establishment. Dr Bashir, given her past, her concerns and her understanding, can do much to overcome that divide in New South Wales.

Mr COLLIER (Miranda) [10.00 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak tonight on the appointment of Professor Marie Bashir, AO, as Governor of New South Wales. I was privileged to attend her investiture along with my colleagues at Government House on 1 March. Like others, I was impressed and captivated by her warmth and the compassion with which she spoke. Her dignity, her poise and her grace were obvious for all to see. Her Excellency spoke of history, the footsteps in which she follows, Governors from Phillip to Macquarie and to her predecessor, Sir Gordon Samuels. She is well aware of the importance of her role and is committed to fulfilling it. Her Excellency spoke about how important it is to nurture a sense of community. She spoke about her belief that the long-term prosperity of the State and its people depended on a climate of reciprocity, involving ordinary citizens as well as the powerful. Here we have a Governor for all the people.

I was pleased to hear her comments about keeping Government House open for the people of New South Wales, continuing the tradition begun by Sir Gordon Samuels, choosing not to live in Government House but keeping that house as a people's house. Professor Marie Bashir is obviously well qualified both personally and professionally. As the Premier said, she is in a very real sense the best qualified Governor we have ever had. Professor Bashir completed a bachelor of medicine and a bachelor of surgery at the University of Sydney in 1956. Thereafter she embarked on a career of medicine and psychiatry. She joined the Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists in 1971 and received a fellowship in 1980. She was foundation director of the Rivendell Royal Prince Alfred Hospital child, adolescent and family services. In 1987 she became area director of community health services of the Central Sydney Area Health Service.

In 1994 Professor Bashir became area director of mental health services in the Central Sydney Area Health Service and in 1996 she was appointed senior consultant to the Aboriginal medical service at Redfern and Kempsey. She has been a teacher, a lecturer and a mentor to students at the University of Sydney and the University of New South Wales since 1972. Since 1993 she has been clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of Sydney and senior specialist in child, adolescent and family psychiatry.

I was interested in listening to and reading about Professor Bashir's work with children and young people in the areas of mental health and youth suicide. Clearly, suicide is a problem in all communities. It is a problem in the Sutherland shire. There we have a particular community-based non-partisan group formed in 1999—the Sutherland shire suicide safety network—with the key objective of reducing suicide in the Sutherland shire. The group is chaired by a former partner in a large law firm, Mr Paul Malliate. The group has both Liberal and Labor members of Parliament as patrons, as well as police, church leaders and community leaders in medicine, psychiatry and education. They all give their time freely and willingly in an effort to reduce suicide in the shire, with a view to providing information and contact points for those at risk and to helping those families and individuals touched by the tragedy of suicide.

In July this year the Sutherland shire suicide safety network is holding a partnership day for some 80 people. It has not escaped the group that Her Excellency has a wonderful background and a wealth of experience in the field of suicide prevention. I know the group has invited Her Excellency to speak on that day. If she cannot, perhaps one day she will be able to attend the group and we would be delighted to have her share her invaluable experience with us. Her Excellency was born in Narrandera. She has experience in both the country and the city. She has worked with the young and no doubt the old. She has worked with those who have suffered mental illness. She is a Governor who has worked with our Aboriginal people and is committed to Aboriginal reconciliation.

No doubt it has not escaped members in the Chamber that she is a person of Lebanese descent, and that is in keeping with our multicultural society. It will also not have escaped members in the Chamber and the general public that Professor Bashir is a female, the first female Governor in 203 years. She is a woman of exceptional talent and diverse experience and is clearly a woman of distinction. This is a sign that anything is possible—all things are possible—and gender is not and should never be a barrier to attaining the highest office in the State. We are fortunate to have such a person as Professor Marie Bashir, AO, as the thirty-seventh Governor of the first State—the State of New South Wales. I join in welcoming Governor Bashir to that office. I know her term as Governor of New South Wales will be a distinguished one.

Mr ARMSTRONG (Lachlan) [10.06 p.m.]: It is with a great deal of pleasure that I participate in this debate tonight. We are recognising the appointment of our Governor, holder of the oldest and most continuous office in this nation. The Governor of New South Wales was the first office in this country. In its early days Western Australia was also governed from that office, as was New Zealand for a short time. It is an office for which throughout my life I have had absolute respect. The first Governor of New South Wales I met was Sir John Northcott in about 1948 or 1949. I still remember the day quite vividly. It was at the Young Agricultural Show. Sir John Northcott arrived with enormous dignity, moment and presence. He wore a homburg hat and a dark three-piece suit with a gold watch and chain. His entourage of very nervous local officials—the show president, mayor, shire president, et cetera—welcomed that very warm Governor of New South Wales. As a boy of 10 or 11 years of age I stood very rigidly to attention, my father demanding that I do so, to meet the Governor—it was one of those moments that one never forgets. It has been my very good fortune, one way or another, to have met every Governor since then.

Tonight I welcome in particular the new Governor of New South Wales, her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir. I concur with the many speakers this evening who have had much to say about her commonsense and practical measures, and the great choice of Professor Bashir as the Governor of New South Wales. I agree it was an excellent choice and I look forward to being a constituent of this State with Professor Bashir as Governor. Her appointment has been most fortuitous but no more fortuitous than her capacity to understand the broad depth of our modern society. It has been said that Her Excellency has wide experience in health administration and in teaching, and she has considerable experience, assisted by her ethnicity, of the State and the nation. Her many talents, but primarily her high intelligence, her passion for Australia and her passion for people will stand us in good stead at this time in our history. If one were to watch the evening news, listen to the radio or read the newspapers in recent weeks or months, one would think that the greatest change occurring in this country is financial and economic change.

The greatest change is cultural change: The culture of Australians, irrespective of where we come from, the colour of our skin or who our parents were, is changing. When we look back in 10 years time at how we communicate, and at what we expect from society and from each other and from government and its various officers and agents, including the governorship of New South Wales, we will recognise that since about 1996 we have gone through considerable and dramatic change. I do not know how long that change will continue, but I daresay it will be for a long while.

The electronic communication revolution is new to us all. We relate to each other differently from the way in which we did 10 years ago. We will need Dr Bashir's wisdom to assist us through this changing culture. As a country member of the New South Wales Parliament I am aware that many people these days talk about the increasing division between city and country. I am not necessarily of that view. Certainly there is a gap between country and city in the economic structure. In the last 40 years there has been a reversal in wealth possession between country and city people, but I believe the communications gap between them is ever widening. That is one reason I look forward to a country-born person, such as Professor Bashir, a highly intelligent person and excellent communicator, being able to help, assist, cajole and guide the people of New South Wales through these changes.

Change is, first, inevitable and, second, beneficial if we understand it. Of course, it is up to us to understand it. That is one reason Professor Bashir's appointment is so welcome. It is with considerable relish

that I look forward to Professor Bashir visiting country areas. I will have great pleasure in offering my homage to her as the Governor of New South Wales. I indicate also my delight at having Sir Nicholas Shehadie, that great old rugby player, as the consort of the Governor of New South Wales. I look forward to welcoming him also in country areas. I am quite sure they will be warmly received and as often as they would like to visit they will always be welcomed. We look forward to a happy relationship for the duration of Professor Bashir's tenure as Governor of New South Wales.

Ms MEGARRITY (Menai) [10.12 p.m.]: On behalf of my electorate I welcome Professor Bashir as the thirty-seventh Governor of New South Wales. A great deal has been made in the Chamber of the fact that Professor Bashir is the first woman and the first person of Lebanese descent to be appointed Governor of New South Wales. Mention has been made also of her professional qualifications of bachelor of medicine and bachelor of surgery from the University of Sydney in 1956 and, obviously, her subsequent career in medicine and psychiatry. Rather than gloss over such qualifications, we should pay attention to the fact that she received those qualifications in 1956—a significant achievement in itself. I do not imagine that in those days too many women achieved such results and took on roles that today we assume are open to women on a much wider scale.

That she was able to achieve those qualifications back in the 1950s says a lot about Professor Bashir. Just like the good members of this place, I know also that whilst qualifications may be important, they sometimes are not as important as communication skills and the ability to work with others. I refer to the community backgrounds of members in this place, particularly those from local government or from one-on-one community work. In addition to Professor Bashir's qualifications, her valuable contribution to a vast array of community groups really shone through in her first speech and in my subsequent conversations with her. We all know she has chaired a number of bodies. Since 1983 they have included the Council of the Women's College of the University of Sydney, the New South Wales Juvenile Justice Advisory Council, the New South Wales strategy for Aboriginal mental health, the Third World health group of the University of New South Wales, the New South Wales task force on children's mental health, the non-English speaking background suicide prevention project and the New South Wales mental health implementation group. Indeed, the Premier summed it up best, as has been mentioned but perhaps not quoted absolutely by other members, as reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, when he said:

I venture on a bold but simply factual statement: in terms of direct experience, knowledge and understanding over a range of issues and problems of deep community concern, there has never been a more highly qualified governor of NSW.

The Premier referred to a sense of community. Professor Bashir highlighted that sense of community in her speech. I should like to repeat a section of her speech that particularly impressed me:

In contrast to colonial times, we now live in a country where an expectation of harmony and peace is placed at the highest level by the vast majority of citizens; where inclusiveness, tolerance and the will to learn from one another are enacted in daily transactions between many people; and where the stability of political structures is not dependent upon military interventions, as in so many other countries. However today we also live in a time of market pressures, with unfortunate consequences, in some cases, for our sense of community. For a state and a people to prosper into the longer term, I believe that there needs to be a climate of reciprocity, involving the ordinary citizens as well as the powerful.

Such a society rejects, as its highest aim, materialism, but strives for the participation and contribution of all citizens in our common wealth. All too often it seems that we only glimpse such a genuine, widespread sense of community at times of bushfires, floods and other disasters, when our people and institutions give so selflessly of themselves. We may also see it at times of great national celebration. However, I do know that there is an enormous reservoir of generosity—not only to be found among the caring groups of health and welfare but also in our dynamic artistic and cultural endeavours where many groups within the performing and visual arts are reaching out in an inspired way to people, young and old, on the outskirts of our city and into the rural areas as never before.

I was impressed because the sense of community comes through her words when you meet her in person. I certainly hope that her experience with young people in particular will benefit people in my electorate. The honourable member for Miranda mentioned the group operating in the southern end of my electorate, aimed at reducing the regrettably high rate of youth suicide. I have seen first hand the commendable efforts of our high schools helping to address the problem of a sense of hopelessness amongst young people that seems to pervade their activities and lead to such a tragic end. Federal and State members of Parliament, Sutherland council members and religious and community groups are working together on a strategy for political community action to prevent this tragedy.

As the honourable member for Miranda said, we sincerely hope that Professor Bashir, the new Governor of New South Wales, has an opportunity to share her experience and give guidance as we try our best to deal with this problem. I hope also that her experience with indigenous communities may be incorporated into the work, hopes and aspirations of the Gangangarra Land Council in my electorate. In pursuing a significant

land claim along Heathcote Road that council at the moment is trying to work out a way to finance the building of a cultural centre and to make the best use of the land for the purpose of cultural traditions. I certainly hope that, with Professor Bashir's experience in that field, we may have the opportunity to include her in some of those activities. Even after just a brief meeting, I look forward to seeing more of her.

Professor Bashir was awarded an Order of Australia in 1988 for services to child and adolescent health, especially mental health. I was particularly impressed: How many governors of New South Wales have been involved in a national program on Triple J radio for young people suffering from depression and severe stress? Traditional barriers have not been barriers to Professor Bashir. She has used every medium available to get involved with helping young people. As I said, I sincerely look forward to seeing whether her talent and broadmindedness can play a part in my electorate, which has such a large youth population going through teenage years, finding outlets in perhaps ways that we would not like them to find outlets—whether it is the terrible scourge of drugs or simply adolescent behaviour that, as I said, can be disruptive and destructive to other parts of the population. Honourable members in this House need to work on that and do their best on youth policies.

Other honourable members have commented on Professor Bashir's humility, which certainly impressed me when I met her. In her speech she referred to herself as bringing "a lifetime's experience as a healing professional, a communicator and an administrator" to the position of Governor. She said also that the Premier's "generous" words "touched her deeply", and she expressed her appreciation for the "considerable confidence" that had been placed in her. She also acknowledged the great historical significance and sense of responsibility that the position invoked.

Professor Bashir talked extensively about contemplating the role of Governor before she took on that role. She said that it was "appropriate and awesome" to reflect upon the lives and contributions of her predecessors. That comment particularly struck me because I have had the opportunity to be involved in the small business mentor program implemented by the Minister for Small Business. Involved in that program are women in small business who take on the role of mentor. Although each group is different, the mentors have all said they sat down and seriously thought about what they had to offer. Indeed, they asked themselves whether they were good enough to give their time and expertise to take on the role of advising others. Inevitably they are good enough, of course, but it is a trait I notice more in women—I hope honourable members will forgive me for making one gender specific remark—than I notice at times with the confidence and brashness of some young men. When she talked about contemplating the role of Governor of New South Wales and reflecting on her predecessors, Professor Bashir said:

I am filled with admiration at the lives of many of the early governors of New South Wales, whose role was, of course, much different from now. The wisdom, integrity and strength of character of governors such as Arthur Phillip and Lachlan Macquarie made enormous and lasting contributions to our very understanding of what it is to live in New South Wales and indeed to be Australians. Their examples of decency, fairness and ethical conduct, especially amidst hardship and relentless challenges, still resound.

I mentioned Professor Bashir's humility. That aspect of her personality reminded me of Hazel Hawke, who has done a lot for me, in terms of helping me with my election campaign, and for Australia. When I met Marie Bashir I noticed a great similarity between the two women. Hazel Hawke talked about being a partner of a famous person and that she was only famous because she was the partner of a famous person. This is particularly relevant to Marie Bashir. Hazel said that in today's modern world more men are also the partners of women undertaking very important roles.

In a speech Hazel made in the parliamentary dining room she spoke about my situation and how she helped me campaign in my electorate. She said that many young women were entering Parliament and politics in general, and that they needed strong partners to help them in that role. We see that sense of partnership with Professor Marie Bashir and her husband. I suppose she is fortunate that she has been appointed Governor at a time of her life when she has no young children, as do many of us in this place. I refer to the sense of partnership and how well Professor Bashir and her husband work together. Our good wishes go to both Marie and Nicholas. Professor Bashir said:

My husband will bring his rich experience and skills in the public domain to his own unique role.

While Professor Bashir's husband deserves to be acknowledged and deserves our good wishes, it is Professor Bashir who has the title and, therefore, the responsibilities that go with the role of Governor of New South Wales. She talked about the extraordinary coincidence that in the centenary year of Federation she will be surrounded by the furniture in the grand suite of Sir Henry Parkes. She also talked about Sir Henry Parkes'

dream of "one people, one destiny, which reinvigorates us in this year of celebration." Once again she was reflecting on what it means to be the Governor of New South Wales. She appears to be cherishing every opportunity to communicate with people. Indeed, the *Daily Telegraph* of 2 March summed it up by stating:

Her goal is to achieve what politicians so far have failed to do—to be the catalyst that unifies all cultures and ethnic divisions in the state.

Born in Narrandera, Ms Bashir is well qualified through her work with indigenous people, refugees and the vulnerable in our society to realise her goal.

Ms Bashir maintains that her work among these people has enhanced her sense of courage, resilience and dignity.

That is an admirable goal for the thirty-seventh Governor of New South Wales. On behalf of my electorate, I offer Professor Bashir best wishes. I hope that her experience over these next few years will further enrich what she calls the "rich tapestry" of her life and the life of her husband.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr R. H. L. Smith.

BILL RETURNED

The following bill was returned from the Legislative Council with amendments:

Nature Conservation Trust Bill

Consideration of amendments deferred.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That the House at its rising this day do adjourn until Wednesday 4 April 2001 at 10.00 a.m.

House adjourned at 10.26 p.m.
