

*Announcements***SIMON JOHNSTON, DIRECTOR PROCEDURE AND SERJEANT-AT-ARMS**

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge Simon Johnston, a member of our Clerks team. Simon is 50 years old today. Happy birthday, Simon.

*Members***REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS**

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: On behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian: In the absence of the Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, the Minister for Transport and Roads will take questions on his behalf.

*Question Time***WESTERN SYDNEY ROAD TOLLS**

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) (14:20): I direct my question to the Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney. Economic modelling shows that over the next decade the average Camden family will pay almost \$10,000 in tolls. By 2033, tens of thousands of families in Liverpool and Fairfield will pay \$10,000 in tolls every single year. Minister, how is that fair to western Sydney?

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney) (14:20): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. You can tell when the Leader of the Opposition is under stress—she runs back to the issues that she is never going to change. She has never gone out to anyone in western Sydney and said, "I am going to change the tolling position on any road in New South Wales." If the Leader of the Opposition is going to do that, she should go out to Camden and tell the people what she is going to do. Until that stage, we will believe that the Leader of the Opposition has no plan for people in western Sydney. Chris Minns might have a plan for people in western Sydney. Prue Car might have a plan for people in western Sydney. Even Ryan Park will have a plan for people in western Sydney. But the one thing we all know is that Jodi McKay does not have a plan for the people of western Sydney, and she just made that clear to everyone in western Sydney with her question today.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (14:21): I address my question to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on how the Government is providing students with education and skills of the future?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Premier) (14:21): I thank the member for Oatley for that outstanding question. I thank him for his efforts in supporting public schools in his electorate and Catholic and independent schools as well and for his commitment to pursuing not just the bricks and mortar of education but also what happens in the classroom. I digress and acknowledge the Speaker's guest, a former Treasurer of Australia and former Ambassador to the United States, Joe Hockey. I think he started his career a couple of decades ago in the exact same spot he is in now. It is good to have him visiting the Chamber today.

The issue the member for Oatley raised is a very pertinent one because COVID has taught us that disruption means people are worried about their jobs. A good grounding in education allows people to adapt, to acquire new skills and to participate in the workforce, no matter what it looks like. That is why the Government is redoubling its efforts, not just in preschool and primary and secondary schools but also in the vocational education and training sector. I acknowledge the outstanding work done by local members in advocating for their communities, as well as the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning in the other place and the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, Dr Geoff Lee, who is in the gallery today.

The Government is reviewing the school curriculum, for the first time in 30 years. The last time the curriculum was reviewed—and I know I am getting on—I was sitting the HSC exams about 30 years ago. Since that time the curriculum has not been reviewed, and, regrettably, the curriculum was cluttered with subject upon subject. It was not allowing teachers and school communities to focus on literacy and numeracy skills, which are so important in making sure our students—our children—have the capability to transfer their skills to any industry and emerging technology.

For that reason, I am pleased that one of the three major planks of our curriculum review is to declutter the curriculum by reducing unnecessary subjects. The Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning and I announced recently that already about 80 courses have been removed. Those courses included subjects like circus skills and bushcraft puppetry. They are noble professions but those subjects can be included in an art course or another area of study rather than being a specific study course. This allows teachers both the time and resources to deliver those essential things for students. In addition to decluttering the curriculum, the second plank of the

curriculum review is to make sure that we get back to basics so that every child, no matter their postcode, no matter their circumstances, has the ability to be their best through having a good grounding in literacy and numeracy. We are making sure that as well as literacy and numeracy the teaching of science and the teaching of technology are key platforms in all the areas that I have outlined. Our students need to be equipped with the skills to be able to transfer their learnings from one occupation or one job to another, and that has been brought home to us in the past 12 months.

I am very pleased that in addition to the great work done by Dr Lee, Mr Gonski and Dr Shergold are supporting the Government in providing a wholesale list and range of pathways for us to improve the system of higher learning in this State. The Government is absolutely committed to doing that. It is extremely pleasing that during COVID, whilst many of our citizens were confined to their home, especially during Easter last year, 100,000 free training courses were offered. Many people took up the offer and many people, especially in the area of medical administration and in other areas where there was a demand for more employees, were able to do their courses free of charge and then get a job in those key areas. That is an example of how our Government, through flexibility, managed to provide those essential services.

We are also pleased to see the development of further vocational education training courses in years 11 and 12. We want those students who do not necessarily want to go to university or to enter the workforce immediately to have the ability to start their apprenticeships or courses in year 11. We know that happens to some extent, but we want this available to most students across the State and it will be an area of focus for us moving forward this year. It is important for us not just to back in these new policy reforms but also to back in the resources. That is why it is so important for us—whether it is education, health or transport—to be in the strongest budget position we can be. That is why we are grateful, through the efforts of the Treasurer and the team, that we have the resources to make sure we are building the bricks and mortar of our education system and providing the extra courses. *[Extension of time]*

Yesterday I was asked a number of questions by the Opposition about our school infrastructure program. I stress that in the past two years alone we have upgraded or opened 100 new schools throughout the State. Yesterday a number of members opposite asked me questions about various schools in their communities. Before I move on, I particularly acknowledge the staff and students at Peshurst Public School. When the member for Oatley, the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning and I visited that school the students were ecstatic about their new school buildings. It is a wonderful school community. I thank everybody for our warm welcome to the school that day and I wish the students well in their studies this year and beyond. Peshurst Public School alone had 47 new classrooms—a \$45 million upgrade delivered on time and on budget. I thank the school community for that wonderful progress.

Those opposite might be interested in some of the schools that we have delivered for their electorates because these are facts that they like to forget. Under this Government, as I said yesterday, Macquarie Fields has four new schools. Other new schools are: Canley Vale High School; Fairfield High School; Canterbury South Public School; Banksia Road Public School, Lakemba; Ashbury Public School, Summer Hill; Hunter School of the Performing Arts, Newcastle; Bolwarra Public School, Maitland—surely the member for Maitland can smile about that; Gwynneville Public School, Wollongong; Yagoona Public School, Bankstown; Jordan Springs Public School, Londonderry; Gosford Public School; and Marie Bashir Public School, Strathfield.

The SPEAKER: I call the member to Keira to order for the first time. I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the first time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Never before have we had so much investment in our schools. We look forward to delivering even more schools into the future.

TOLL ROADS

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG (Macquarie Fields) (14:28): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Roads. Greg Paltar is a disability support worker in my electorate. As a result of the Minister's rising tolls and the new M5 East toll, he has had to stop working with a client in Bondi. Why is Greg missing out on work and vulnerable people missing out on support because of the Minister's tolls?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Roads) (14:29): I like the question from the member for Macquarie Fields. Before he comes in here and highlights an individual case like that, particularly one involving a person with disability, he might have had the good sense to have contacted me so we might have been able to get some support for that person.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields has asked a question. He will listen to the response.